

TO: The National Recording Preservation Board

FROM: Jean Morrow

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RE: Sound Recording Preservation Comments from New England Conservatory

DESCRIPTION OF INSTITUTION'S COLLECTIONS

New England Conservatory (NEC) is an institution of higher education that grants music degrees at the undergraduate, masters and doctoral level. The major portion of its sound collection consists of commercial recordings that support the curriculum and listening needs of its students and faculty. NEC's archival materials fall into two categories: those recordings that were produced by NEC and document NEC performances, and those recordings that were produced by an outside agency and document non-NEC performances.

The first category consists primarily of NEC concert performances, dating back to 1969. NEC places strong emphasis on contemporary music, especially works by local and American composers. Many of its concert recordings provide the only available listening source for works that have not been commercially recorded. NEC's concert recordings number over 10,000 and include a variety of formats – analog tape, DAT, CD and computer sound file.

The second category of materials, those not related to NEC, include the Voice of Firestone Radio and TV programs, The Vaughan Monroe Camel Caravan Radio and TV programs, and the Charles Rhodes Private Collection of off-the-air recordings from the 1940's. The Firestone and Monroe Collections include acetate discs and analog tapes, numbering several hundred; the Rhodes Collection consists entirely of acetate discs which number over 4,000.

ACQUISITIONS POLICIES

NEC does not currently seek or accept any archival audio collections that do not directly support its educational goals. The preservation and space requirements for such collections as the Firestone and Monroe collections place a tremendous strain on the institution's resources. Collections such as these were accepted many decades ago, before the institution understood the serious implications of long term preservation for archival

materials. Although NEC takes its preservation responsibilities for these unique collections very seriously, the institution does not have the resources to take on any additional collections of this nature.

NEC will continue to develop its archive collection of NEC concert performances, however, and will actively seek out other recordings directly related to the history and mission of the institution, such as recordings of prominent members of the NEC faculty.

PRESERVATION ACTIVITIES

NEC's primary preservation focus is on NEC related materials. Current preservation activities for these materials are funded entirely by the institution and the activities are usually performed by NEC staff. These activities include:

- periodic transfer of analog and DAT masters to more modern formats, including CD and computer sound files
- identification of specific categories of concert performances that need not be maintained permanently

Preservation work for materials in non-NEC related collections has been limited to date. With the exception of transfers made on request, NEC has funded all activities. These have included:

- Resleeving into acid-free archival envelopes all acetate discs from the Rhodes and Monroe collections
- A complete inventory of the condition of each disc in these collections
- Transfer to CD, upon request from outside parties, of individual titles in these collections

Future preservation activities for the Rhodes Collection, the largest of the non-NEC related collections, should include identifying what is truly unique in the holdings, estimated at about 20% or roughly 800 to 1,000 acetate discs.. These acetate recordings need to be transferred to a modern format and funding will have to come from an outside source. The Voice of Firestone and Vaughan Monroe Collections also need to be transferred to modern format. All of this preservation work should take place within in the next few years and must be funded through outside sources.

Storage conditions for these collections vary, depending on their location. The audio library has one self-contained Vault with its own HVAC controls. Materials shelved in this area have the best environment for long term preservation but this space is filled to capacity and houses less than one third of NEC's archival sound collections. NEC's current building program for a new library allocates several thousand sq. feet for the housing of archival materials and should be able to accommodate archival sound collections for many decades to come.

ACCESS

NEC concert recordings are each cataloged individually into the library's online catalog, using standard library practices. Access is available through the library webpage at: <http://www.newenglandconservatory.edu/libraries>

Content information for archival sound materials not related to NEC is only available via in-house files that use excel or file-maker pro. Requests for such information must be sent to library staff.

COPYRIGHT CONCERNS

NEC takes a very conservative stance in applying copyright law to the use of its archival materials. NEC concert recordings must be listened to in the library. Duplication is prohibited.

NEC will make copies of archival materials not related to NEC for private study purposes only. Anyone wishing to use such materials publicly must first gain permission from the copyright holders.