

## **Library of Congress Study on the Current State of Recorded Sound Preservation and Restoration**

Statement by

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The University of Georgia Library preserves a substantial amount of archival audio material of all formats in both the Peabody Awards Archives and the Walter J. Brown Media Archives.

The Peabody Award is one of the most respected and coveted awards in broadcasting. It was conceived in 1939 by Lambdin Kay, manager of WSB Radio in Atlanta, and sponsored by John E. Drewry, dean of the Grady School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Georgia. The first awards were given in 1940 for radio broadcasts of 1939. Television entries began in 1949. Just this year, over 1,100 audio and visual entries were received at the awards office, totaling approximately 5,000 physical documents which will be added to the archives after judging is complete. The Peabody Awards Archives is administrated by the University of Georgia library and is housed in the Main Library on campus. This archives is important for studying the history of broadcasting, since every entry submitted—not just those which win Peabody Awards—has been kept, along with any paper material and ephemera submitted with the programs, preserving a snapshot of the best in annual broadcasting from around the world.

The Library's Walter J. Brown Media Archives is made up of a broader range of campus, local, and southeast regional archival audio and visual materials. Most of them are unsolicited, though we are branching out into seeking donations of known audio materials. Our holdings include:

- Arnold Michaelis Archives of Living History--Mr. Michaelis donated his personal archives of audiotaped interviews to the Media Archives in 1999. Michaelis was an independent producer in New York who interviewed politicians, world leaders, celebrities, and musicians over forty years. He was the only person to interview Martin Luther King, Jr. and Coretta Scott King in their home in 1965.

- The Protestant Radio and Television Center Collection (PRTVC) contains thousands of radio transcription discs, reel-to-reel audiotape, film, and videotape of Southern religious broadcasting from the 1940s onward. Some other archives have portions of PRTVC recordings, but we have the largest and most complete archives since it came directly from Emory University, the Center's original home. The center's radio program, "The Protestant Hour" received a Peabody Award in 1985.

- The Georgia Folklore Collection—hundreds of original field recordings of regional music and storytelling made by UGA art professor and professional musician, Dr. Art Rosenbaum.

- The UCLA Radio Collection--In 1997, UCLA's archives deaccessioned several radio collections and dispersed them to various archives. We received 1,368 of their transcription discs of radio programs such as 'The Carnation Contented Hour', 'The Louella Parsons Show',

‘Mystery Is My Hobby’, ‘NBC Symphony’, ‘The National Farm and Home Hour’, ‘Suspense’, and ‘This is Your FBI.’

- The Himan Brown Collection – over 1000 transcription disks of programs Mr. Brown (a Peabody Award winner) produced, including ‘Mystery Theatre’, ‘Stella Dallas’, ‘Young Widder Brown’, and ‘CBS Is There’.

- Art Chimes Collection—Mr. Chimes, producer and host on Voice of America, donated his collection of over 3,100 radio programs taped off air.

- Allan E. MacLeod Collection—Features UGA College of Journalism and Mass Communication radio series “Reflections” documenting Georgia native folkways, games, blues music, etc. Twenty reel-to-reel tapes.

- Allan Sloan Collection—Blacklisted writer and Peabody Award winner Allan Sloane donated to us over 100 audiotapes and radio transcription disks of programs he wrote.

- Elmo Ellis Collection—This Peabody Award-winning Atlanta radio station programmer and broadcaster donated approximately 175 reels of audiotapes of some of his editorials for WSB radio.

- The University press office’s “University Almanac”, radio press releases created by the university for regional distribution, for which we hold program tapes c. 1952-1987 featuring interviews with Robert Frost and Fred Wolfe (Thomas Wolfe’s brother), Franklin Roosevelt, Jr., and many others.

- Home recordings on disk which came with a donation of home movies made by Louis C. Harris, once editor of the *Augusta Chronicle* newspaper, as well as on-location recording disks of UGA campus events.

As with most archives, our problems are primarily: (1) a lack of sufficient funding for curatorial care and transfer to new media for the large amount of audio-visual materials we hold, (2) a lack of sufficient cataloging staff and staff time to do the work, (3) a need for more storage space, and (4) the variance of storage temperature and relative humidity in the spaces we do have.

What drives our preservation efforts are, variously, our annual budget, user demand, our hope to complete transfers of all Peabody Awards Archives material yet untransferred, condition of material, and educational need. Increasingly, what drives some transfers is whether we hold copyright in the material so that it can be streamed online. We have found that material we are able to stream is easier for researchers to view or hear before licensing footage.

We are fortunate to have an annual budget for preservation transfers and supplies, but the allocation for that account has remained the same for the last seven years, while our material ages (increasing the need for transfers) and laboratory transfer costs and shipping costs to get the materials to the labs both increase. That account must serve both the Media Archives and the Peabody Awards Archives. Footage licensing helps fund preservation transfers so, in that sense, our preservation program is design to be sustained for the long-term, but it depends on actual sales. We regularly review grant opportunities for audio materials (*e.g.*, NEH, Grammy Grants, ARSC).

Although we can do limited in-house access transfers of legacy formats to new formats (analog and digital) on our equipment, full archival-quality preservation work is not something we can do in house. We must send original archival audio material out to labs for transfer, and our

current budget does not allow for more than a few preservation transfers per year. Fortunately, we have partnered for two years with WNYC's archivist, Andy Lanset, on a repatriation/copying project. WNYC's entries for Peabody Awards consideration over the years for which the station did not retain a copy are sent to Mr. Lanset, who makes a copy for their archives and two gold CD copies for us (one master, one access).

Related to funding is the issue of digitization costs—the storage, management, and migration of digital files. We have been partnering on an IMLS grant-funded project (obtained by the Digital Library of Georgia) through which some computer storage was obtained, but if we are to digitize our audio holdings and maintain them for the future, we will need more computer storage, and grant funding will likely be our primary source of funding for it.

We are very concerned about the industry shift towards discontinuing legacy analog formats (audiotape and videotape) and moving into a strictly digital realm. The responsibility of computer systems staff members partnering directly with archival staff to store, refresh, and migrate digital files, as well as incorporating the costs of digital storage into both areas' budgets, is of major importance to the future of our profession and of the material.

Many of our Media Archives materials were acquired to avoid immediate destruction or an otherwise uncertain future. Our audio material is in good condition and is well stored. Yet for being a major audio archives, this is the most under-cataloged material we have, consequently, it is our most underused material. Our staff and budget has not been able to keep up with what is required to catalog, describe, or provide inventories for access to these large collections. The PRTVC Collection is very large and could use a full-time staffer dedicated solely to working on that collection for several years. As of 2003, the Peabody Awards Archives held approximately 5,000 radio transcription discs dating from 1938; 7,500 reel-to-reel audiotapes; 7,000 audiocassettes; and 1,100 compact discs. The Awards takes in approximately 160 audio submissions each year, now mostly entered on compact disc, a fragile format with an undetermined longevity. Media Archives collections can be acquired at any time, often unsolicited, and they require a great deal of space, a commodity we are running low on.

Only a tiny percentage our Peabody audio holdings and very few Media Archives audio holdings appear in the UGA Libraries online catalog. Approximately 1,000 Peabody audio entries are in our searchable open-source online database named "Ultimate" and those are only for the entry years 2000 through 2003. Ultimate was created by a UGA library systems employee to provide deeper access to the Peabody Awards Archives holdings. It has been adapted for other special collections and provides keyword and complex searching for materials which have dozens of potential points of access, opening the material up to stronger use. However, with only one full-time cataloger for the material, who must listen to programs in real time in order to provide full cataloging, the process is slow and primarily allows only minimal level cataloging from paper entry forms submitted with the program.

We do not "withhold" information on our collections due to limited resources for transfers. In the event that someone inquires about our audio holdings and requests material which is not yet transferred, we work with the researcher to ascertain a deadline, then we check our budget for

our ability to transfer the material ourselves or at a lab. If neither is possible, we also discuss the possibility of the researcher paying for the transfer, but that is a rare occurrence.

We do not hold copyright to the majority of our holdings (we do hold the rights to the Arnold Michaelis Library of Living History). In acquiring collections, when possible, we ask for rights and draw up a deed of trust with the donor which includes rights. We do not have rights to any Peabody Awards submissions in the archives. For researchers who want to view or listen to material in our department, this is not a problem. We do not loan audio-visual material through inter-library loan. For researchers at a distance (including high school students) who need to listen to something only we hold and who cannot travel, we require written permission from the copyright holder for us to make a copy for the researcher. This is often either impossible or too expensive for most researchers or students, and a great deal of scholarly work is hindered because of this situation.

We definitely need more collections information on our website and in our catalog so that our holdings are more transparent. We also need funds to update our department's brochure for publicity at public events, at conferences, and to give to donors and patrons.

Keeping the proper equipment to play and/or transfer these audio materials is a challenge. We have reel-to-reel audiotape players and recorders, a turntable, audiocassette decks, a DAT deck, and computer programs for audio transfers, but our in-house staff with experience in handling audio material fluctuates. We prefer to send older materials out to audio transfer specialists, but budget restraints require that some transfers must be done in house. It would be helpful to have a one-source, LOC 'best practices' website for information on playback equipment and stylus requirements. Since audio cataloging requires playback (unlike film which can be seen and sometimes understood by holding it up to a light source), archivists need good, basic information about equipment for in-house listening and low-budget transfers. Low-cost, traveling, or regional workshops to teach the basics of audio handling, preservation, and transfers would be very helpful.

We manage three different storage areas (for disaster mitigation purposes), each with its own average temperature and humidity levels, one of which is full and two of which are nearly out of shelf space for projected growth. Humidity fluctuations in our area are a problem, and there is no way to reduce them with our current HVAC system. The larger issue is that some of the material is stored in an area which is not dedicated solely to archival materials, but which also must accommodate staff, so temperature and humidity settings must conform, to some degree, to those required for people. HVAC for the entire building requires settings for the comfort of employees, and our archives spaces do not have dedicated HVAC equipment. There is a plan for a new special collections building which would address all of these issues, but it is unlikely the university will break ground for it for another five years.

Our goal is to find funding to hire a full-time audio archivist; that would require that we create a position in our department, fund that position, increase our supplies and preservation budget, and find appropriate and sufficient space (in a building where work space is at a premium) for an audio specialist's work. With recent and ongoing state budget cuts, this is one of our most difficult challenges. Without a full-time audio archivist, the materials continue to be virtually

unknown. We hope to apply for grant funds to finance such a position on a two- or three-year basis.

The staff at the Walter J. Brown Media Archives & Peabody Awards Collection, as well as the Peabody Awards Offices, thanks this Committee for undertaking this study. We hope that the testimony and statements gathered in the course of the hearings will provide impetus for a Congressionally funded grants foundation (such as NFPP) and more readily available and trustworthy audio preservation information online. The amount of audio material being held but unused and untransferred is huge and deserves our nation's attention.