Comments for the Library of Congress - National Recording Preservation Board Notice of Inquiry Study on the Current State of Recorded Sound Preservation

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The University of Maryland (UM) Libraries is home to large collections of unique sound recordings in several repositories. The genres run the gamut from concert rehearsals by well-known classical musicians to oral histories and interviews to radio advertising spots to sports broadcasts. While there is no breakdown of items by format at this time, the collection numbers are very significant. Some of UM Libraries' most important collections include:

- 5,000+ one-of-a-kind noncommercial recordings of live piano performances derived from radio broadcasts and from in-house recordings in the International Piano Music Archives (IPAM), Michelle Smith Performing Arts Library (MSPAL)
- 2,000 LPs and 500 16" discs of radio ads from the 1950s through the 1970s in the Radio Advertising Bureau Library of American Broadcasting (LAB) collection
- 3,000 wire recordings and 1,900 open-reel tapes from the Arthur Godfrey collection in LAB 1,000+ interviews, oral histories, and event recordings from the University Archives 1,000+ recordings from the Sound of Music in Special Collections in Performing Arts (SCPA) MSPAL
- 5,000+ open-reels from the Bob Sherman collection in SCPA MSPAL Interviews and research materials from the Katherine Anne Porter collection. Literary Manuscripts
- 1.000s of recordings from the American Bandmasters Association Research Center in SCPA MSPAL
- 400+ VOXPOP Radio Program transcription discs from the 1940s in LAB
- 22,000 7" and 10" open-reel tapes in the National Public Broadcasting Archives (NPBA) National Public Radio (NPR) collection.

The UM Libraries' sound collections encompass many formats including wire recordings; transcription discs; vinyl, acetate and glass discs; wax cylinders; open-reel tapes; cassette tapes; and CDs.

UM Libraries has not yet undertaken a comprehensive condition survey of its sound recordings although one is planned. A pilot survey of open-reel tape in IPAM, however, determined that 88% of the collection has condition issues, including creasing, edge damage, failing splices, warpage, and mold. The degree of sticky shed syndrome (SSS) is unknown, as

detection is feasible only during playback or by detailed item-by-item inspection. Each format has it own specific condition concerns. Grooved discs and cylinders, for example, can have scratches, warpage, or broken pieces; wire recordings can easily become tangled and unplayable; CDs suffer many of the same issues as grooved discs but can also be rendered unplayable due to substrate degradation. While UM Libraries does not yet have survey statistics, anecdotal evidence suggests the Libraries' sound collections are in immediate need of stabilization and reformatting before they are lost to the research community forever. Less than ideal environmental and storage conditions contribute to the condition issues. UM Libraries has received a National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) grant to stabilize wildly fluctuating humidity levels in Hornbake Library, the dedicated special collections building built in 1972 that is home to some of the largest collections of sound recordings including LAB, NPBA, and University Archives The building envelope is porous and subject to outdoor humidity fluctuations. Indoor humidity readings have registered at 10% in mid-winter and 65% in mid-summer. The construction phase of this project will begin later in 2007 and is scheduled to be completed in 2008. The Michelle Smith Performing Arts Library (MSPAL), home to SCPA and IPAM, is the newest library building on campus. It opened in 2000 as part of the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center. Environmental conditions are relatively stable in MSPAL and much closer to recommended ideals than those in Hornbake.

UM Libraries is committed to the long-term preservation of its sound collections. Sound material is housed in appropriate preservation-quality enclosures as it is accessioned or processed. Many of the archival collections are not yet processed, however, so they remain in whatever housing in which they arrived; very often this housing is not protective and at times, even hastens damage and deterioration.

The majority of UM Libraries' sound collections are unique primary source archival collections. This means that the principal means of intellectual access is through finding aids created when the collection is processed. Finding aids for most processed collections are available online through ArchivesUM (http://www.lib.umd.edu/archivesum/index.jsp). The electronic finding aid for the papers of Martha Brooks (LAB) is an examale of a processed collection with sound materials (http://www.lib.umd.edu/archivesum/actions.DisplayEADDoc.do?source=/MdU.ead.lab.0012.xml&style=ead). Very little archival sound material is locatable through the Libraries' online public access catalog, ALEPH. This means that if a collection has not been fully processed, and a complete finding aid is not generated, intellectual access is difficult. Staff shortages and large collections mean that some collections are not even inventoried for years. Curators can help researchers locate material but independent off-site research in unprocessed collection is challenging. There is no online access to any archival sound materials via ArchivesUM or the online catalog at this time.

With the recent hiring of an audiovisual archivist and an audiovisual cataloger as well as the establishment of an audiovisual team/working group, UM Libraries actively is starting to address both the physical and intellectual needs of its AV collections, including sound recordings. The AV Team is composed of technical experts, collection curators, project managers, and preservation specialists. In the near future, the UM Libraries expects to develop a

comprehensive preservation program for AV materials, including:

- best practices for digital and analog AV reformatting for preservation and access
- best practices for metadata creation in machine-reading cataloging (MARC) and non-MARC, formats in collaboration with other appropriate groups
- identification of common needs of AV material and strategies for acting as a unit where appropriate, such as bulk-ordering supplies, sharing existing equipment, and consulting on new equipment purchases
- establishment of priorities for survey needs, reformatting, and rehousing in collaboration with the Preservation Committee and other appropriate groups
- clarification of copyright issues pertaining to the reformatting and distribution of AV materials

In addition, UM Libraries has a wide selection of playback equipment and plans to organize a centralized reformatting facility for AV materials, including sound materials. One current initiative is to create a "digital audio toolkit" which will build a systematic approach to creating a scalable and standardized tool set to 1) collect and integrate audio metadata and digital audio objects into the Fedora architecture, and 2 ) assure long-term, managed file storage for the digital-end products, especially the uncompressed master files. This toolkit will include:

- appropriate metadata schemas and controlled vocabularies for both analog and digital audio material
- a metadata input tool that integrates appropriately into the Fedora architecture to collect information for both the analog and digital object. .
- a sustainable file-naming protocol for digital audio files following Best Practice guidelines
- managed storage for master digital audio files.

The digital audio toolkit project will proceed with a pilot examination of 128 open-reel tapes from the at-risk IPAM collection. However, the high, ongoing costs of a comprehensive digital preservation system will limit large-scale reformatting of all collections.