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Sound Recordings and Radio

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I. Introduction

This Collections Policy Statement pertains to sound recordings as a format, as well as sound recordings and radio as subjects. As such, it is related to acquisitions policies of the Music Division and the American Folklife Center which make reference to sound recordings. The policy also includes guidelines for transfer of sound recordings to the Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division from other Library of Congress divisions.

This document also reflects the legislative mandates of the American Television and Radio Archives Act and the National Recording Preservation Act of 2000.

II. Scope

This Collections Policy Statement refers to all manner of sound recordings regardless of content or physical/digital format. The term sound recording is intended to include all carriers of sound which may be reproduced, and includes cylinders, discs, piano rolls and other devices intended to activate mechanical musical instruments, magnetic wire and tape, digital discs, and any other sound carriers which may be devised. It also includes digital audio files of various types, whether stored on physical media or transferred electronically. It covers all music, non-music, spoken word, and radio broadcast recordings in all languages from their earliest historical physical manifestations up to, and including, "born-digital" items. It does not cover unpublished ethnographic sound recordings which are the purview of the American Folklife Center Archive of Folk Culture. This Collections Policy Statement also pertains to the books, manuscripts, periodicals, computer programs, web sites, relevant corporate records, etc. whose intellectual content is about sound recording or radio, with the exception of scientific and technical materials on these subjects, which are covered in the Science and Technology Collections Policy Statements.

This statement does not pertain to Musical Instrument Digital Interface (MIDI) files. These files, a form of digital musical scores, are the purview of the Music Division.

III. Strengths

The sound recordings collections of the Library of Congress offer great depth in a number of fields as well as general breadth of subjects and fields of music represented. Particular strengths include:

- Unique jazz and classical music 'live' performance recordings
- Authors reading their works
- Recordings of historic speeches, public remarks by notable individuals, and news broadcast recordings
- Early (pre-1915) sound recordings
- Network radio broadcasts 1935-1950
- Political talk radio programs 2005-present
- Jazz and American popular music
- Published recordings of classical music including obscure 20th century works
- Topical songs copyrighted as cassette and CD-R sound recordings
- Opera recordings, published and unpublished
- Aural documentation of World War II
- Documentation of American broadcasting

IV. General

The Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division has custodial responsibility for all commercial and master sound recordings held by the Library, with the exception of the recordings produced by the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. In the case of American Folklife Center collections, responsibility for the master recordings is shared with the Center. Access copies of recordings are often held by subject divisions, such as the Hispanic Division and the American Folklife Center, for use by patrons in their reading rooms.

It is acknowledged that many significant publications, in all fields, are created in audiovisual formats, exclusively. The Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division welcomes collections in subjects and areas outside of its primary areas of expertise and encourages Recommending Officers throughout the Library to help build the Library's audiovisual holdings in all fields. The division is dependent upon the expertise of the Library's subject and area specialists to ensure that audiovisual recordings of high research, historical, or cultural value in all fields are held by the Library. The division welcomes written guidelines on selection of recordings outside its own fields of expertise as well as active involvement from selecting officers in all subject and area studies fields.

Transfers of sound recordings from special collections to the Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division

MBRS is the recipient custodial division for sound and moving image materials that are included in multimedia special collections acquired by other divisions, most commonly the Music, Manuscript, and Prints & Photographs divisions, and the American Folklife Center. The American Folklife Center takes responsibility for processing of AFC collections. In the case of most materials acquired by other divisions, such as Music, Manuscript, and Prints & Photographs, it is recognized that MBRS does not have the subject expertise to identify and process these items. The following guidelines, recommended by the 1996 Library Services committee which studied issues related to custody and the transfer of audiovisual materials to MBRS by other divisions, govern acquisition and transfer of portions of such

special collections.

1. In order to gain better control over the transferred material MBRS will be involved to the maximum extent feasible to review materials and participate in negotiations with the donor/owner for any collection being considered for acquisition that contains over 100 or more sound recordings or moving image items.
2. Divisions acquiring collections which include over 100 audiovisual items must complete an impact statement to address storage, processing, and preservation implications for the audiovisual items in the collections. MBRS will receive a proportionate share of all funds available for its processing and preservation.
3. Audiovisual collections transferred to MBRS must be accompanied by an inventory of the items in the collection. Staff will assist MBRS by providing information for descriptive cataloging records.
4. To aid in the determination of the priority for preservation of audiovisual collections transferred to MBRS, acquiring divisions will also provide MBRS with an assessment of the cultural and historic value of the audiovisual items transferred to MBRS, as well as a judgment of the collection's uniqueness.
5. Subject divisions transferring materials to MBRS will designate liaisons to MBRS. In addition to coordinating negotiations, acquisition, and transfer of audiovisual collections to MBRS, the liaisons from these divisions will also assist in the selection and processing of published foreign language and subject audiovisual materials.

V. Policy

A. General

The Library of Congress places primary emphasis on acquiring sound recordings produced in the United States, including recordings of music, the spoken word, sounds, naturally occurring phenomena and historical occurrences. The Library acquires recordings that document American culture regardless of contemporary views of their aesthetic value, yet special efforts are made to acquire recordings of recognized cultural or historical significance. Significant recordings released outside of the United States are also acquired. Except in rare instances, the Library does not collect recordings about medicine and agriculture, or material used for training or instructional purposes.

1. Edition of Sound Recording. When a published sound recording is available in more than one edition, the Library will seek to acquire the most complete, uncut, and authentic edition available. When feasible, the original form of an unpublished recording is preferred under the assumption that the sound quality is closest to the master recording.
2. Artifactual Value of Sound Recordings. The collection of monographs and serials accompanied by sound recordings, previously called the "Phonocase" collection, is now divided by format, with the general collections receiving the print materials and the Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division maintaining the sound recordings. However, MBRS will retain the complete

item when the packaging has significant artifactual value. Such packaging is that which exceeds its purely functional utility and the intrinsic value of the item would be diminished by separating its components.

The Library will not necessarily retain the original packaging or recording for consumer magnetic media (e.g., cassettes) and that have been reformatted for preservation. In these instances, too, the artistry or importance of the original packaging will guide the Library's decision of what to retain.

When sound recordings are re-housed in acid-free containers for conservation purposes, generic packaging is not retained for the collections. Examples of such packaging are classical music 78-rpm albums and long-playing record inner sleeves with general, company advertising.

3. Physical Form of Recording. The current preservation standard at the Library is 96khz / 24bit broadcast wave file, so that is the preferred format. However, this quality is not always available, so the Library seeks to acquire the product with the highest bit rate and word length. The Library will acquire the following media in descending order of preference: DVD audio formats, compact discs, vinyl discs, reel-to-reel tape, and cassette

4. Hardware. The Library does not actively collect audio "hardware," that is, phonographs and other playback devices. However, antique and obsolete playback machines are selectively acquired for two purposes. A representative sampling of restored antique playback devices is acquired and maintained for demonstration and educational programs and to recreate the listening experience contemporary with older recordings. Machines are also acquired for use by the Library's preservation program, to ensure that the Library can playback obsolete media, such as cylinders and wire recordings.

B. Musical Sound Recordings

1. Published Musical Sound Recordings. This collection policy acknowledges that much music is published as sound recordings only and will follow the guidelines outlined in the Music Division collection policy. This policy advocates the comprehensive collecting of most forms of musical sound recordings published in the United States, excepting educational children's recordings and pedagogical recordings. For music published outside of the United States the Library samples popular music and comprehensively acquires scholarly editions of recordings (i.e., those with analytical or contextual program notes) and those containing authentic performances of vernacular music.

The Library seeks to acquire, through gift and copyright deposit, a comprehensive collection of recordings published in the United States of all popular, vernacular, academic, and artistic musical traditions including, but not limited to, the following genres: western concert music, opera, musical theater, jazz, folk and ethnic, blues, rhythm and blues, reggae, gospel, soul, country and western, rock and roll, and dance music including hip-hop and rap. Special efforts-through copyright deposit demands and purchases-will be made to acquire recordings of recognized artistic or cultural merit.

2. The Library retains recordings of standard repertoire received through copyright. It does not actively solicit or purchase recordings of standard repertoire classical music, with the exception those which contain significant performances.

3. Unpublished copyright deposits of music are selected for their cultural or historical significance with special emphasis placed on music by known performers and songs of a topical or political nature.
4. The Library holds copies of all musical events recorded at the Library.
5. Educational music and music instruction courses for children are representatively sampled to document production techniques and pedagogical methods.

C. Non-musical Sound Recordings

1. Radio Broadcast Recordings. In the 1976 U.S. Copyright Act, Congress specifically empowers the Library of Congress to save copies of radio programs that are "of present or potential public or cultural interest, historical significance, cognitive value, or otherwise worthy of preservation, including copies and phonorecords of published and unpublished transmission programs." Within this broad mandate, the Library concentrates on maintaining a comprehensive collection of original and access recordings of network radio broadcasts from the 1920s on. The American Television and Radio Act authorizes the Library of Congress to collect radio programs streamed on the internet and since 2005 MBRS has been recording various political talk radio programs directly from the web.
 - a. The Library makes special efforts to acquire and preserve broadcast recordings made prior to 1935.
 - b. The Library selectively acquires local radio broadcasts, focusing on significant historical events, cultural phenomena, or recordings documenting important programming trends and formats.
 - c. Disc jockey programs (i.e those featuring programs containing primarily previously released commercial recordings) are sampled on a highly selective basis.
 - d. The Library will endeavor to develop its "broadcasting" collections by capturing and preserving musical and spoken word cybercasts and radio broadcasts from internet and satellite sources. This will include capturing traditional radio programs now simulcast through the internet and audio productions distributed via the internet exclusively.
2. The Library endeavors to maintain a comprehensive collection of commercially released comedy recordings to document humor in the United States.
3. Audio books read by the author are collected intensively. Full length books are sampled, as are works read by critically acclaimed readers. The Library maintains a research collection of audio books and dramas which include production values such as sound effects and music.
4. The Library acquires all poetry readings and recorded scholarly programs produced by the Library.
5. The Library's Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division acquires oral history recordings of nationally and internationally prominent individuals and recordings of individuals whose lives or careers relate directly to subject expertise within the division or to other collections

held by the division.

6. Instructional recordings, including those created to teach a foreign language, are sampled to document production techniques and pedagogical methods.

7. The Library maintains a research collection of documentary recordings, including speeches of persons important in the arts, sciences, humanities, politics, and government; recordings of audible scientific phenomena; and other non-musical recordings of enduring research and cultural value.

8. Instructional sound recordings in law, which are most often produced for continuing education, are acquired only when they relate to constitutional law and copyright law.

9. Materials that are in the scope of the National Agricultural Library and the National Library of Medicine are not acquired.

D. Archival Materials and Personal Papers

Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound acquires and maintains strong collections of the papers of individuals, and the records of organizations, whose work is primarily in the fields for which the Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division are responsible. Of particular interest are radio scripts and other production materials, photographs, and correspondence. Because both broadcast and commercial recordings are produced by corporations, the Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division will accept the records of corporations active in these fields.

E. Recordings Significant to the History of Sound Recording

The Library acquires examples of experimental recordings and foil recordings, pre-1950s stereo recordings, and other items that exhibit significant developments in recording technology.

F. Books, Periodicals, and Other Materials that Relate to Sound Recordings

In addition to the large collection of record manufacturers' catalogs maintained by the Library's Music Division, the Library collects the following classes of print material relating to broadcasting and sound recording at the comprehensive level:

HE 8660-8688	Radio. Wireless telegraph
HE 8689-8700.9	Radio and television broadcasting
ML156-ML158	Discographies
ML100-ML109	Dictionaries, encyclopedias
PN 1991	Radio broadcasts
TK5101-6702	Telecommunications (includes radio)

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