Section I
Workshop and Recommendations

ARCHIVES AND THE FUTURE

WHAT are audiovisual archives and why should anyone care about whether they exist in the 21st century? Archives are often imagined as silent dusty places filled with a jumble of boxes and piles of things that no one wants any more. Why should anyone want them in the future? Actually, that stereotype is mostly wrong. Many archives are well-organized, serve a wide audience and have good reason to believe that their collections will be considered useful in the future if they survive the ravages of time and the damage caused by unpredictable budgets and local disasters.

An audiovisual archives is a place where recordings are stored for the purpose of both preservation and use. Archives differ from libraries in that they collect unpublished material as well as published recordings. They also place a stronger emphasis on preservation for the future than most libraries, which make the recordings more easily available to the public. Libraries, for example, give patrons access to the original recording; archives give patrons access to a copy of the original, which is carefully stored.

Most people are more familiar with paper archives than they are with audiovisual archives. Paper archives have been around for hundreds of years and sometimes do live up to the image of a huge room filled with dusty boxes. In the past century and a half, however, a great deal of information has been recorded on audio and visual media. These media capture a different reality than those of paper documents. Non-literate people can speak for themselves, events are captured without the bias of the writer and certain phenomena that

almost completely escape the written word can be fully documented, such as dance and music. These non-written parts of human culture are recognized everywhere to be highly significant. A written transcription of a speech is almost always a reduction of the content because it eliminates the tones and rhythms of speech and the silences that orators customarily put into their presentations. The same is true of transcriptions of music and dance. They may be useful for analytic purposes but they are not particularly representative of the art form. Since they provide information not available in writing, the technological transformations of the past 150 years have produced audiovisual media that need to be conserved for future use.

Unfortunately, the media on which sound and images have been stored are much less hardy than good paper with good ink. While we have paper records that are hundreds of years old, most audio recordings will not last more than a few decades unless they are carefully stored. In addition, media players change frequently. We can easily read a book from 1900; practically no one has a cylinder player to play the music from that year. There are yet other problems with archiving these media. It is also difficult to browse a recording the way one can a book or manuscript and therefore the amount of documentation required to make a collection of recordings useful is different from that for a collection of papers.

Many kinds of organizations collect audiovisual materials. Radio and television archives keep copies of broadcast footage. Record company archives keep session tapes, including outtakes and other unique materials. National archives often include recordings and photographs in addition to the massive amounts of paper documents generated by a government. Most of these are supported by a business or a government agency.

Apart from these, however, another type of archives is found in most countries. These are archives that specialize in audiovisual recordings generated as a part of research. A number of disciplines that thrived in the 20th century relied on the emerging technologies for collecting their data. Among these were Linguistics, Folklore, Anthropology, Oral History, Musicology and Ethnomusicology, as well

as certain fields of study such as the recording of bird songs, animal sounds and other specialities. The researchers who collected the materials often imagined them to be of temporary usefulness to their own research. As time passed, however, they discovered that communities they had recorded were often more interested in the original recordings than they were in the publications being made of them. This led to the development of university-based archives on many university campuses. In addition, some archives were established for the collection and analysis of sound—first among these was the Vienna Phonogrammarchiv, soon followed by a similar institution in Berlin. Many music programmes eventually founded archives for training their students.

Who would want to use archives anyway? While many archives were originally founded for a specific audience, for example, bureaucrats who would use national archives and scholars who would use university-based ones, the potential audience is much larger than originally conceived. The collections in audiovisual archives may be of the greatest interest to the families and communities that were recorded. This is especially true as the recordings and archives grow older. As Don Niles' paper in this volume makes clear, the early recordings in Papua New Guinea have tremendous significance to the population there today. They certainly appreciate them more than the publications written about them in the early decades of the 20th century.

Almost everyone who works in an audiovisual archives has received copious thanks from people who discovered recordings they never imagined existed of their relatives or their community. In some cases, these recordings have made it possible for communities to renew traditions that were long abandoned and nearly forgotten. In other cases the benefits have been more material. Audio recordings from archives were used in court cases in both Australia and South Africa to reclaim property and land titles. Audiovisual recordings are far more than entertainment; they may, in fact, allow communities to recover rights and individuals to recover livelihood. Similarly, recordings made today and deposited in archives will gain importance as the many local home and commercial recordings disintegrate. Even

though dozens of people may be recording contemporary events in a community on video cameras and audio recorders, in a decade or two the only playable recordings will be those that are archived. Changes in format, deterioration of the media themselves and probable loss will mean that the recordings in archives will take on a far greater significance as time passes.

In the 20th century there was an imbalance between new research and assembling and preserving the results of earlier research. As a result, thousands of hours of recordings were made without much thought given to their organization and future use. In the 1980s, one of the most important international funding agencies for research began to finance the establishment or improvement of audiovisual archives. The Ford Foundation soon became one of the principal supporters of the professionalization of university-based archives. But it was not alone. National archives and private archives in many parts of the world have been growing and developing. Several national and international organizations provide information and advice for archives. These include The Association of Recorded Sound Collections, http://www.arsc-audio.org/, the International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives http://www.iasa-web.org/ and various UNESCO projects related to cultural preservation http://www.unesco.org.

Challenges to Audiovisual Archives in the 21st Century

One of the reasons for assembling this group of archivists in India was to see to what extent archives in different places, under different governments, in different climates and housed in different institutional settings, faced the same kinds of problems. During the SWOT[1] exercise on the first day it became clear that in spite of the great differences in the materials they held, and the purposes for which they were organized, most of the archives faced the same problems. On the basis of this sample, we have generalized for research-based archives around the world and have proposed actions that might improve the strength of the archives within its own organization and with respect to the communities they serve.

The challenges reported by the 15 archives participating in the

conference can be summarized under just a few headings, including (i) the relationship of the archives to the organizations of which they are a part, (ii) the collections themselves and (iii) the physical conditions of the archives. In each of these areas we encountered similarities. We summarize these below, because they give a clear indication of the challenges faced by the research-based archives that participated in the conference, and probably many others as well.

Institutional Affiliation

Every one of the 15 participating archives is an administrative unit of a larger, non-archival organization. This has both advantages and disadvantages. One advantage noted by 12 of the 15 archives is the prestige of the overarching institution. The disadvantages are that the larger units may not understand archiving or share the same objectives as the archives and thus may neglect its needs. Ten archives felt the administration that supervised their unit was not sympathetic to their activities; eight of them felt the larger institution lacked clarity of vision regarding archives, 10 of them felt the administration did not support archiving and nine of them felt they had insufficient autonomy within the organization. It is significant, however, that only two institutions felt the existence of their archives to be threatened by shifting priorities in the institutions of which they were a part. In most cases, research-based archives could not survive as independent operations outside of a larger institution. In many cases the audiences for the recordings, as well as the researchers that deposit materials in them, are found in the larger institution of which they are a part. There are real benefits to being part of a larger institution as well as some challenges.

Whatever the relationship, conflict within institutions often boils down to setting priorities for money and space. Archival operations require a constant operating budget as well as occasional special funds for upgrading equipment and undertaking special projects. They also use accessible air-conditioned space which is always at a premium in growing institutions. The relationship between archives and the administrative units of which they are a part is clearly perceived to be a difficult one. The role-playing debate between archivists and

administrators presented as Appendix B probes the relationship further. The workshop documents on 'archives advocacy' and 'an ideal archives structure' in Appendix A represent attempts to find ways to reduce conflicts in the relationships between the archives and the superior administration, or to turn a weakness or threat into an opportunity and future strength.

Collections

Twelve of the archives felt their collections were strong, important and significant. Ten participants reported they had opportunities to build their collections. The three organizations that did not feel their collections were strong also had no opportunities to build them. Adding new materials to a collection provides an opportunity to redirect the goals of the organization and ensures that there will be a more representative collection in the future—but it does require space and staffing.

Equipment and Storage

Most of the archives had received fairly recent equipment grants. Nine of them felt they had good equipment. Only five of them felt their preservation standards were adequate: they cited problems of humidity, storage and other issues. Only four had materials that were actually in poor condition but 10 archives felt their collections were disintegrating rapidly due to inadequate storage conditions. Four archives felt they had serious technical shortcomings. Seven reported that the space allocated for the archives was inadequate. This situation is particularly serious because audiovisual materials have a fairly fixed lifespan after which they will be unplayable, and because recent developments in digitization finally offer a better way to store and disseminate audiovisual materials than has been possible in the past. Research-based audiovisual archives around the world are probably falling behind in the digitization effort and various kinds of programmes need to be developed to help them move to the new media and implement policies that make the best use of the materials in the new format.

Archives face constant problems creating and maintaining adequate storage conditions for their materials. Tapes, photographs

and digital media are quite fragile. They are especially affected by dampness, light and heat. The better the storage, the longer the life of the medium. No one expects a tape to last forever but since digital formats are constantly improving, many archives will find it to their advantage to preserve the originals as long as they can. This requires space with constant humidity and temperature which can be difficult in hot, humid places where black-outs are frequent.

Conflicts between archives and their administration are usually about funding and space. If an archives is part of a teaching department in a university, the Department Chair has conflicting demands for teaching and research space. Archives appear to require an inordinate amount of space for the number of people who work in them (the storage area should have no people in it and the listening area is often under-utilized). By university policy, department space is supposed to be intensively used for instruction. Archives need strong advocates or they will find themselves losing space. Archives also continue to grow as collections are added, creating repeated rounds of conflict over space.

Staffing

Archives require staff with a number of different skills, ranging from computers to reference work to field research. Ten of the participants mentioned the high quality of their staff as a strength of their organizations. Five did not. Eight institutions reported a staff shortage, including half of those who were happy with their staff. Staff mobility was a problem in only four institutions but eight mentioned lack of technical training of the staff. Administrators often suggest hiring lower-cost employees but a lack of technical training for specialists in the area of culture has been reported worldwide. As the technology required to operate a successful audiovisual archives increases in complexity, so the training needs will increase. The importance of cooperation among archives appears later in this book and is one way in which the lack of training can be addressed.

Funding

Funding is the largest problem for archives in both industrializing countries and wealthy industrialized ones. Funding issues arose

frequently in the SWOT presentations and also in the papers at the end of this volume. Only five of the archives thought their source of funding was secure and four of those were part of government agencies in industrialized countries. This means that nearly every archives felt its funding was insecure. Nine of them felt that it was not only insecure but also insufficient (one had secure but insufficient funding). One of the reasons for the insecurity was that most of the archives were dependent on a single source for their funding. Only archives in industrialized countries that were supported by their governments felt secure with only one source. While their administrative units paid for some costs, most of the archives in industrializing nations were dependent on an outside source for funding–often fixed-term grants from foundations like the Ford Foundation but sometimes only government funds of a temporary or unpredictable nature.

Outreach

Nine of the archives have strong publishing programmes (many of them supported by temporary funding). Six of them have cooperation relationships with other archives. Eight of them felt their public and users were supportive of their activities. Nine felt they were successful at networking (not too surprising, as among other things they were invited to this workshop—an indication that they had some ties beyond their archives). Five archives felt they lacked support for either ethnomusicology or their own operations. Publishing audiovisual materials can be quite complicated because of the changing intellectual property rights over the materials.

Impact of National Policies

Archives are affected by more than just the policies of the institutions of which they are a part and the funding they receive. National policies have a tremendous impact on archives. Changing priorities given to culture, or indigenous rights or tourism can profoundly affect the budget and prestige of an archives. Five archives felt that national policy was supportive of their activities. A number of archives mentioned being threatened by national policies and the larger framework within which they operated. The broader contexts mentioned ranged from the threat of floods, earthquakes and other natural disasters to

which their part of the country is prone, to war and concerns about national policies regarding culture and preservation. One national government policy was often mentioned as having a very strong impact on archives. This was government policy on tariffs and currency. In many countries, the already high price of equipment is further raised by high import duties, even on materials designed to protect the national heritage without profit. Similarly, countries with non-convertible currency had more difficulty obtaining supplies and printed materials. Archives felt there should be exemptions for their equipment and specialized supplies.

There is little in audiovisual archiving that cannot be fixed with a lot of money, apart from collections that have been totally destroyed through inadequate care. The question is how to obtain such funds and how to justify asking for them in the first place. This was the purpose of our first debate (see Appendix B). The terms of the debate, and the ideas expressed in them, may well be useful to archivists in similar situations. The debate is a way of highlighting the issues we will subsequently address in Appendix A.

Following the SWOT and the debate, the participants decided that some issues needed further thought. The group was divided into several smaller working groups to create documents that might have a general utility for archives in the 21st century. One group was assigned the task of developing an advocacy statement for archives since it was clear that archives were not too good at justifying their activities to administrators. The second group was assigned the task of creating recommendations for the optimal administrative structure for archives. The third group was to come up with recommendations to overcome the weaknesses and threats archives faced from the wider social context. Each group was given a room of its own with a computer to write on and the completed documents can be read in Appendix A. Although the documents are available, some of their general ideas are worth summarizing here.

Archives Advocacy

All the participants thought it would be important to have some kind of advocacy statement for every archives prepared and ready to

present to administrators and the general public. Very few non-specialists understand the particular challenges of preserving the audiovisual record of events and very few of them recognize the potential significance of the materials. An advocacy statement should clearly describe why a given audiovisual archives is to be considered significant within the particular institutional and national context in which it operates. It cannot be taken for granted that just because an archives exists, it is good. These are times in which priorities are constantly being re-evaluated by administrators with limited budgets.

Strategies for Archives

Since non-specialists often fail to understand what archives do, archives need to develop certain strategies to improve their relationships with the various communities with whom they interact. Among these are a clear definition of the nature and scope of the collection. Collections should also grow; culture is constantly changing and it is important to include new materials that will be of interest in the future. Often, this involves changing the focus of the collection and—in the case of popular music—requires careful attention to issues of copyright and control. All the archives' basic contractual documents and mission statements need to be reviewed regularly in order to adapt them to changing collection strategies.

There is a great benefit to be gained from consultation and collaboration. Archives should be very careful about making decisions on their own regarding contracts and equipment. They should take advantage of the expertise of other institutions, and archives. The document on strategies includes very specific suggestions regarding how to choose a technology appropriate for the materials. Funding strategies are important and the document lists a number of strategies because archives should be careful not to limit their search for funds to one or another source. The section on funding and financial considerations may be one of the most useful for archives using this book.

Archives also need to pay attention to public relations. A number of kinds of materials may be produced, including brochures, posters, websites, compact discs, CD-ROMs, promotional videos and educa-

tional materials of various kinds. Some archives prepare radio shows, others organize concerts, yet others produce recordings.

Public Service

Archives have many kinds of potential publics and many types of services they can provide to each of them. University-based archives should not limit their publicity activities to the university. Often some of the most interested users will be found outside it. Many archives are better known and more highly respected by scholars in other countries than they are in their own region. When this is the case, archives need to develop specific strategies for making that support effective for them. The document lists a number of specific strategies which archives can use to improve their relationships with various kinds of audiences and foster support for their activities.

Networking with other people and institutions is also an important part of archival development in this century. Local communities like the Archives Resource Community or international associations like the CAN project in Africa or various units of the International Association of Audiovisual Archives are also very useful.

Disaster Relief and Prevention

While no one wishes to contemplate it, disasters do happen. Every effort should be made not only to avoid them but to have a plan ready to recover quickly from floods, earthquakes and other kinds of disaster. Digital copying makes multiple copies in multiple archives easier than it used to be but it does require clear agreements as to use.

Administrative Structure for Archives

The document on the ideal administrative structure for archives should be especially useful to those who are establishing new archives. The size of the staff is not as important as the ability of those staff members who are hired to handle the functions required. Some jobs can be shared with other units within an institution, for example accounting and personnel. But every archives needs to carefully consider the nature of its advisory and executive boards, the expertise required in the different areas of its operations and the technical functions.

The topics of funding, advocacy and administrative structures did not exhaust the subjects which the participants in the workshop felt required more in-depth discussion. All of them felt the need for clear technical information about equipment and for more information about intellectual-property rights over the materials in their collections. The following chapters address these two subjects in considerable detail beginning with a valuable and extensive presentation by Dietrich Schüller on technology.

Note

1 An exercise that allows participants to measure their 'strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats'.