Documenting the Arts

A Practical Handbook for Cultural Organizations

Douglas DeNatale, Ph.D., New England Foundation for the Arts **2005**

New England Foundation for the Arts

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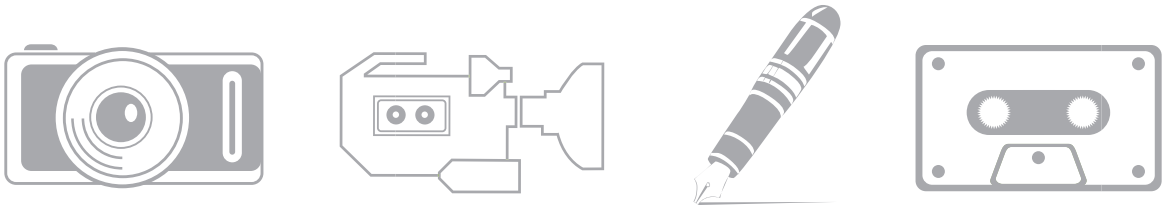

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INTRODUCTION 1

TELLING THE STORY: SORTING OUT APPROACHES TO DOCUMENTATION 4

The Call of Video 5
Evaluation 6
Documentary Voice 7
Practical Constraints 8
What Gets Documented (and What Doesn't) 10
Who Gets to Tell the Story (And What Gets Told) 11
Charting Your Course 12
Defining an Approach 14
Potential Benefits 18
Two Scenarios 20

WRITTEN DOCUMENTATION 23

Working With Your Existing Materials 24
Step 1. Inventory Existing Documentary Assets 24
What are your public documents? 24
What are your internal documents? 25
Make a list and test it 25
Where does your documentary record go? 26
Step 2. Assess Your Documentary Assets 27
Review current and potential uses 27
Evaluate the relative value of what you are producing 28
Step 3. Develop a Records Management Strategy 28
Decide which materials to keep - and which to discard 28
Set up a regular processing schedule and set of tasks 29
Establish an organization-wide electronic filing system 30
Building Organization Capacity for Documentary Writing 31
Note Taking as an Art and Science 32
Types of Note Taking 32
Note Taking Techniques 34
Draw a Road Map 34
Focus on a Few Elements 35

Develop Your Own Shorthand 35
Revisit and Reconstruct as Soon as Possible 35
Prepare Your Notes for General Use 37
Using a Computer for Note Taking 37
Making Documentary Note Taking a Part of Your Organization Process 38
Putting Your Written Documentary Notes to Work 39

CREATING A WORKING ORGANIZATIONAL ARCHIVE 41
Why You Need an Archives – Right Now 41
Things Fall Apart: Environmental Conditions, Time and common Storage Formats 42
Paper 42
Photographic Film 42
Magnetic Tape 44
CD-ROM and DVD-ROM 47
Creating a Formal Storage Space 48
Establish a Basic Organization Scheme 48
Establish Access Strategies and Procedures 49
Keep an Eye on Changing Technology 50

AUDIOVISUAL DOCUMENTATION 51
Planning for Audiovisual Documentation 51
Addressing Ongoing Needs 52
Determining the Most Cost-Effective Approach 53
Emergence of Interactive Media 54
Planning for Use 55
Intellectual Property and Copyright 55
What about copyright law? 56
The rights of those who document 57
The right of those documented 58
Social Contract and Angle of Vision 58
Photography 60
Should You Do It Yourself? 62
Working with a Professional Photographer 64
What you need to know 65

Finding a photographer 66
Defining the project 67
Developing a contract 68
Your responsibilities 69
Maintaining and Using Photographs 70
Creating a photographic library 70
Creating a written record 72
Audio Recording 74
Should You Do It Yourself? 75
Working with a Professional Audio Engineer 79
What you need to know 80
Finding an audio engineer or producer 81
Defining the project 82
Developing a contract 83
Your responsibilities 84
Maintaining and Using Audio Recordings 85
Creating an audio library 85
Creating a written record 86
Video Documentation 89
Should You Do It Yourself? 90
Working with a Professional Videographer 90
What you need to know 90
Shooting styles 92
Video documentation roles 94
Video formats 95
Finding a videographer 96
Defining the project 97
Developing a contract
Your responsibilities 99
Maintaining and Using Video Recordings 101
Creating a library 102
Creating a written record 103

ETHNOGRAPHIC APPROACHES **105**

What Is Ethnography 105

Taking an ethnographic approach 107

Ethnographic Methods 108

Participant Observation 108

Structured Interviewing 109

Open-Ended Interviewing 110

Life History 112

Social Network Analysis 112

Sociolinguistics and Discourse Analysis 113

Disciplinary Approaches to Ethnography 114

Cultural Anthropologists 114

Linguists 116

Sociologists 117

Folklorists 118

Oral Historians 119

Uses of Ethnography by Cultural Organizations 120

For Public Products and Presentations 120

For Exploring Cultural Forms and Traditions 121

For Understanding Internal Organization Processes 121

For Supporting collaborative Work 122

For Examining Your Organization's Role in Social Context 123

Working With a Professional Ethnographer 124

Finding and Ethnographer 124

Defining a Project 125

Developing a Contract 126

Practical considerations 126

Setting responsible boundaries 127

Your Responsibilities 128

Obtaining releases 128

Creating space for reflection and interaction 128

Social consequences 129

Using Ethnography 130

CONCLUSION **131**

Appendix A: Sample Release Forms 132

Sample Adult Photographic Model Release 133

Sample Minor Photographic Model Release 134

Sample General Audiovisual Recording Release for Education Use 135

Sample Agreement for Audiovisual Production 136

Sample Video Location Release 137

Appendix B: Suggestions for Further Reading 138

Archival Practices 138

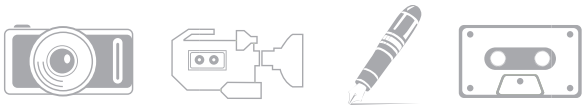
Records Management 138

Photography 138

Audio Recording 139

Videography 139

Ethnographic Approaches 139



Introduction

This handbook provides cultural organizations with practical guidance on developing written and audiovisual documentation of their work or improving the quality of existing efforts. It is intended to help small and medium-sized organizations that often struggle to create a lasting record of their accomplishments or to find the space to examine and reflect upon their accustomed ways of doing business.

If you are an administrator or staff member at a cultural organization, this handbook is designed to do the following:

- Explain which documentation tools and techniques can help you do your work better and convey your story more effectively.
- Help you determine the areas in which you can reasonably establish or improve your own documentation practices — and how to judge when you need to seek outside professional help.
- Offer strategies for finding appropriate professionals who can help you accomplish your documentation goals at a reasonable cost.
- Suggest ways to use documentary materials and practices to help you do your own work more efficiently, responsibly and effectively.

Before you read on, please be aware of what this handbook is not intended to do. This is not a professional how-to manual on audiovisual recording techniques. It is not a textbook on ethnographic or oral historical methods. It won't make you a skilled cultural documentarian, videographer or audio engineer. It doesn't offer current theories or case studies on employing art and artistic processes as a mode of documentation.

Instead, this handbook provides a more general approach to understanding and using cultural documentation. This approach is grounded in the working practices of most small and medium-sized cultural organizations.

These institutions regularly face many difficult decisions about where to apply hard-earned financial and human resources. A small museum, local performing arts program or community gallery may want to describe their work in more compelling ways. They might also want to create an enduring record of a powerful project or more effectively communicate the value of their program to funders, the government or the public. At the same time, they probably feel uneasy about where to begin when it takes all of their energies and talents just to accomplish their basic mission (a situation by no means limited to smaller cultural organizations).

Such organizations are the intended audience for this handbook. Its goal is to provide a framework that will help

you develop an effective *documentary strategy.* We outline an approach that has several basic steps:

1) *Assess your current practices* to identify activity with existing and potential documentary value.

2) *Modify your current practices* to capture that value and ensure it continues to provide benefits in the future.

3) *Define a set of documentary goals* that will guide your decision making about what additional tools and resources make sense for your organization.

4) *Identify available resources* within your community that can help you reach your goals.

5) *Build internal documentation capacity* where it is feasible and promises meaningful benefits.

6) *Obtain strategic professional help* that will enable you to complete special projects and address technical needs beyond your capacity.

The most common tools for documentation today are the pen, camera, tape recorder and video camera. We devote space to each of these tools within the framework described above. If your documentary aim is to produce a professional-quality audio CD or video for your organization, we hope you will find useful guidance here. At the very least, you should have a good sense of where you can turn next to get the job done.

Another important goal of this handbook is to enlighten cultural organizations about all the possibilities for documentation. The usual emphasis on photography, audio or video as the natural means for documenting the artistic process is artificially self-limiting. It raises the bar too high for organizations that don't have the resources to produce polished media. In addition, it keeps organizations of all sizes from thinking about how to integrate documentary methods into their everyday practice. Cultural organizations miss out on an important opportunity to refine and extend their own professional practice through reflexive methods of documentation.

WHAT IS "REFLEXIVE DOCUMENTATION"?

It's the discipline of creating a space in which you can observe yourself and others interacting during the course of a project. For most cultural organizations, this is equated with evaluation – especially evaluation of the sort imposed by an outside funder or critic. This is an unfortunate consequence of the environment in which many cultural organizations live.

Many organizations begin with one or more basic propositions about the work they do and the effects it has on the lives of artists and communities. Reflexive documentation is a powerful tool for examining those effects in process and making adjustments that will increase the probability of success.

There are a wide range of methods, approaches and tools for documentation. In one setting, one of these may provide the right blend that will produce the most effective results, whether the goal is to tell an artist's story from a particular perspective or to better understand the web of relationships in which you do your work.

If the goal is to produce a finished audiovisual or interactive media product, this may indeed require a serious commitment of labor and expense. But in many

cases, there is some documentation tool that can work effectively without straining staff and resources. Our intention is to help you find the right fit between your needs for telling the story and the tools available for doing so.

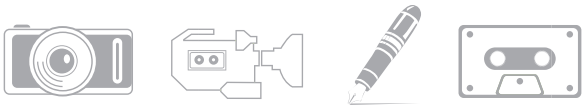
Our hope is that organizations will move from a common misperception about documentation: that it is only about producing a single, defined piece of work (e.g., a written article, recorded CD, packaged video) in relationship to a particular performance, exhibition or event. Instead, we encourage you to view documentation as an ongoing process and strategy that you can incorporate into your entire way of doing business.

Because it takes time and effort to introduce systematic documentation into the work of an organization, there's a natural disincentive for taking it on. We hope to prove that with a reasonable amount of investment and a focused plan, instituting a documentary program within even the smallest volunteer cultural organization can yield benefits that far outweigh the cost in staff time and financial resources. The key is to recognize that documentation can begin with small steps that are rooted in things your organization already does.

While this is not a how-to guide for a professional documentarian, it should help you transform your internal processes that are documentary in nature — and use these to create an ongoing resource. Anyone can build a set of skills for effectively observing and recording his or her work in written form. At a minimum, this is a documentary skill that you and your organization should try to cultivate as an internal resource. Where you can change your work habits to transform current activity into documentary resources, we will urge you to build your own practice.

Sometimes, however, it is not cost-effective or practical for your organization to develop internal capacity. So this handbook also covers what you need to know about the available tools and methods for audiovisual documentation and interactive media. As a result, you will be able to work effectively with professionals who can help you achieve your documentary goal. We've tried to take a practical orientation throughout, providing suggestions to alert you to the possibilities and pitfalls in building a working relationship with outside documentarians.

We hope you find this handbook a useful tool, and we welcome your feedback. If you have any comments, criticisms or suggestions for improvement, please contact NEFA at 617-951-0010 or info@nefa.org.



Telling the Story:
Sorting Out Approaches to Documentation

In its most neutral sense, documentation is simply the creation of an enduring record of something that has taken place — making a document. The formats that documentation can assume are diverse: from the establishment of a consistent system for tracking business transactions, to a book-length description of a cultural system, to a stylized film depicting a performance or event.

Documentation generally has two major connotations among cultural organizations and artists. The first is that documentation involves capturing a slice of reality in an audiovisual format — creating a visual, audio or moving-image media record of something that has taken place. Examples include a performance, event, artistic process or meeting. Within this framework, an effective piece of documentation should capture the reality of an event with the highest degree of fidelity. Ideally, it should bring the viewer close to the lived experience of the event.

The second connotation seems almost diametrically opposed to this: Documentation is a form of evaluation in which an outside person observes an artistic creation, project or public event and then renders a summary judgment on the outcome. Alternatively, an organization documents its own activities or an artistic production it is presenting. The organization then offers these as a proposition in the form of a written report presented to an interested party (e.g., a funder, an audience, a group of colleagues).

For most cultural organizations, the first connotation is positive, while the second has slightly negative overtones. The first is about telling a compelling story that raises the profile of the organization or artist; the second is an unavoidable requirement of doing business.

Although these two modes of documentation seem very different, they are often framed in a similar way. Each is usually presented as an objective rendering of reality. That is, the audiovisual product portrays the work or event as it actually happens, while the written report presents a set of straightforward observations.

Obviously, the situation is more complex than this. The audiovisual record usually has a specific perspective and a limited focus that filters what is presented. The written report brings a set of external experiences and biases to the situation, or it has a natural incentive to assert that the project has achieved all of its original goals.

Neither of these modes of documentation is intrinsically positive or negative. Each can have its own benefits

or drawbacks depending on the intentions of the documenter, the resources available, the relationships of the parties involved and the orientation of the intended audience. And taken together, these are by no means the only options available for creating an enduring and valuable record.

The Call of Video

The positive attraction of audiovisual documentary for those working in the arts is natural — and in many cases, an appropriate fit. In many of its manifestations, art is by its very essence experiential, sensory and multidimensional. This results in a natural bias toward thinking about the documentation of the arts in audiovisual media.

As we experience art through our senses, it's natural to feel that the documentary product should provide a sensory experience. Even when the result is unsatisfactory — when a two-dimensional audiovisual medium is unable to capture a three-dimensional experience — anything less than a dynamic audiovisual record seems by its very nature to be totally inadequate.

For this reason, when cultural organizations think about documentation, the first impulse is often to think about using video to record a performance, event or process. But that impulse can sometimes be counterproductive. It takes a certain level of resources and forethought to effectively capture performance through video. The fact is, there's an awful lot of bad amateur video documentation that doesn't create any real value for the organization or artist.

A narrow focus on documentation formats modeled on performance-based art forms also ignores the degree to which other forms of documentation have been directly influenced by artistic genres and modes of working. For example, life history is a recognized genre of documentation used by anthropologists and oral historians that borrows from biography and the novel. As ethnographers have abandoned the pose of objectivity, many have experimented with overtly stylized forms of documentation that recognize the degree to which experience is structured through perception and interpretation.

There are often other audiovisual and even written options that can provide better value given the same level of resources. The following examples may well produce more positive results than an awkwardly composed video of a poorly lighted performance:

- An audiovisual presentation combining audio and photographs that focuses on an artist's description of their work process
- a written summary of a process that participants have reviewed and revised
- a transcript of an engaged conversation

Cultural organizations need to recognize that while our attraction to video as a compelling means for capturing art seems entirely logical in our media-saturated world, video, carries certain requirements that necessarily raise the bar:

- Using video as a means for documentation entails issues of quality and ownership that the cultural organization must understand.

- Video documentation that is low in quality is almost worse than no video at all.
- Video is often the best medium for achieving the desired fidelity of reproduction. However, the closer video comes to replicating the art work itself, the more complex the issues of ownership become.

Organizations need to deal with the quality issues to make the investment in time and resources worthwhile. And they need to understand the issues of ownership to effectively carry out their role in relationship to the artist and their community.

As we'll discuss at some length below, the bottom line for effective audiovisual documentation is that it requires thoughtful preparation with a specific result in mind. Otherwise, an organization risks wasting considerable time, effort and money to produce a muddled result.

The Audiovisual Documentation section of this handbook provides an overview of the issues involved. It also includes guidelines to help you choose the most appropriate method of audiovisual documentation and make the necessary preparations to ensure a successful outcome.

Evaluation

The second framework in which cultural organizations address documentation is that of evaluation. Within this framework, attitudes and experience vary to a large degree by type of cultural institution.

In broad terms, evaluation is usually brought to bear before, during or after some process of human interaction. The term *formative evaluation* describes a process that assesses the initial response to a work in progress, with the aim of adjusting the work to better achieve its aim. *Summative evaluation* describes an assessment of the results of a work after it has been accomplished.

Among cultural organizations, museums in particular have devoted a considerable amount of attention to formative evaluation for developing exhibitions and programs. The more general tendency among arts organizations is to view evaluation as a summative process — one that rates the relative success of a performance, work or event.

Cultural organizations typically rely on one of two methods of summative evaluation. The first involves a person or agency outside of the organization making a judgment about performance. A local newspaper critic rates the outcome of a performance. A site visitor attends an event and writes an evaluative report for a funder. Among nonprofit cultural organizations that depend on philanthropic dollars, both of these scenarios are familiar and stressful realities that directly influence their ability to garner resources necessary to continue their work.

TWO KEY FORMS OF EVALUATION: FORMATIVE AND SUMMATIVE.

The second common method for summative evaluation among cultural organizations is the construction of a final documentary report — usually to a funder. In this case, the organization itself makes an assessment that is

an inevitable companion piece to the original funding proposal.

Where the original proposal made a set of propositions on the benefits to be realized by the project, the closing report must answer those propositions in the light of the actual event. For this reason, organizations sometimes find themselves in an uncomfortable conflict of self-interest. Driven by a perceived need to convey the overall outcome of the project as a success if future funding is desired — a perception that may or may not be correct depending on the funder's orientation — final narrative reports may have a positive spin that is influenced by the original proposal as much as by the actual event.

Documentary Voice

A final (non-objective) observation of the way in which documentation usually takes place among cultural organizations: Whether in the form of audiovisual presentation or written evaluative summary, it is usually offered as a declarative statement. "This is what actually happened." "This is what was accomplished." "This is what I observed."

In reality, documentation is never objective or neutral, and it is always the product of a range of subjective responses to a set of interactions. This may seem heretical to anyone who sees the goal of documentation as producing a neutral, scientific account. Yet among anthropologists, sociologists, linguists and other specialists for whom documentation is a central craft, the notion of objectivity as an inherent characteristic of their work no longer has much credibility.

Instead, a more complex view of documentation as the outcome of an encounter between multiple subjective frames has gained widespread acceptance. The term "intersubjectivity" has been used to describe this encounter of multiple perspectives. Where earlier documentary works placed the author offstage, contemporary documentation is more likely to acknowledge the subjective standpoint of the author and attempt to describe the author's role in the interaction.

DOCUMENTATION IS NEVER OBJECTIVE OR NEUTRAL, AND IT IS ALWAYS THE PRODUCT OF A RANGE OF SUBJECTIVE RESPONSES TO A SET OF INTERACTIONS.

This changed stance came to public notice most clearly with the emergence of New Journalism in the 1970s. Then, a circle of authors including Tom Wolfe, Norman Mailer, Truman Capote and Hunter S. Thompson challenged the accepted norms of journalism with their openly subjective description. The spirit of New Journalism persists today to varying degrees in the work of writers such as John McPhee, Tracy Kidder, Susan Orlean and others.

Among the academic disciplines concerned with cultural documentation, modes of writing descriptive prose also shifted to acknowledge the degree to which an observer's own beliefs and history influence the perceived reality being described. That's not to say cultural documentation has moved to an extreme in which nothing can be described as reality — only that the rhetorical dimension of documentation is something that can no longer be glossed over. Cultural anthropologists, for example, learned this lesson when the cultures they had described in

the early 20th century began to produce their own trained anthropologists who challenged those earlier works as products of colonialism and Western bias.

The presentation of documentation as a neutral declarative statement is a *rhetorical* stance that is not by itself inherently positive or negative — unless the author fails to reveal something of his or her own values as a stated set of principles. This rhetorical frame of documentation has become but one mode of creating cultural documentation. Others examples include:

- the presentation of multiple perspectives on the same interaction within a single documentary work
- the creation of a co-authored work in which multiple perspectives have been negotiated to develop a mutually acceptable framework
- a work in which one perspective is offered as a proposition, and a serial dialogue with one or more other perspectives ensues

We are suggesting here that cultural organizations need to move away from their two accustomed ways of viewing documentation: on the one hand as an objective exercise that will produce a faithful reproduction, and on the other hand as an outside judgment upon their performance. Instead, organizations' approach to documentation can be more productive if they view it as a range of qualitative responses that can expand their practice.

MANY OF YOUR ORGANIZATION'S NORMAL BUSINESS ACTIVITIES CONSTITUTE DOCUMENTARY ACTIVITY. TRY TO THINK OF THESE ACTIVITIES IN DOCUMENTARY TERMS — AND MAKE ADJUSTMENTS TO CAPTURE THEIR POTENTIAL VALUE.

Once you have recognized this, you can move from a stance that documentation is something done to you — with sometimes positive and sometimes negative outcomes — to one in which your organization actively sets a documentary research agenda and acts as a collaborator in the process.

Practical Constraints

Without a doubt there are constraints on the ability of small and medium-sized cultural organizations to build self-documentation of their work. Documentation does require a level of time and effort. And given the range of pressing needs that cultural organizations have to address, the work of documentation is difficult to justify if the benefits aren't immediately obvious. Let's look at the most common constraints — and what can be done about them.

Staffing: The great majority of nonprofit cultural organizations have at most one or two paid staff members, and many work with all-volunteer staffs. For such organizations, the idea of instituting a formal documentation program with staff time dedicated to the effort is nearly inconceivable. Even for those medium-sized organizations with two or more full-time staff persons, staff burnout and turnover are common in the face of insufficient resources and the already considerable pressure of achieving their program goals.

The key to addressing these limitations is to realize there is no set formula or requirement for establishing

a documentary program. As we'll discuss at greater length below, many of the normal business activities of any cultural organization constitute documentary activity. What is necessary is to think of these activities in documentary terms and make adjustments to capture their potential value.

Even when there is no full-time staff, an all-volunteer organization can often find someone among the pool of local talent who is interested in recording its activities in some form and maintaining that information. For those organizations with one or more staff members, taking a few steps to formalize the ways in which internal information is recorded and stored is often enough. And as it becomes easier to put your hands on information when it is needed, you may find that some of the pressures on your staff actually decrease. Even if burnout and turnover remain an issue, anything you can do to build institutional memory by documenting your activities can help ease the inevitable periods of staff transition.

Expertise: Another constraint on cultural organizations is the availability of appropriate expertise, the necessary level of technical knowledge that leads to success in documentation. You can either buy expertise at a premium or cultivate it through an internal investment of time, resources and professional development.

Because many cultural organizations only think of documentation in terms of audiovisual media, smaller organizations often assume that documentation is too expensive to even consider. We've begun to make the point that documentation doesn't have to involve a media production at all.

Any organization, whatever its size, should begin by revising its thinking to consider documentation in its most basic terms and look at internal record-keeping and note taking. This is an area of documentation in which any organization can build a level of expertise. And doing this will lower the barriers to other types of documentation.

DOCUMENTATION SHOULD BE PART OF AN INSTITUTIONAL PLAN THAT INVOLVES MORE THAN ONE PERSON — NOT JUST AN INDIVIDUAL.

The key is to think of this not on an individual level but as an institutional plan that involves more than one person. The overriding goal is to ensure that any one person could leave without robbing the organization of its ability to build and maintain its documentary record. Cultivation of a strategic documentation plan and the building of volunteer or full-time staff skills should be a gradual process. You can begin by looking at where your existing skills exist and planning for how these can be institutionalized and extended in a manageable way.

Here's a common scenario among cultural organizations that hardly anyone thinks about in terms of documentation — but should: a small cultural organization is founded by a passionate and articulate individual driven by a vision to address some need in his or her community or creative discipline. As a leader, this person can draw people to the cause and articulate a compelling vision that draws the support necessary to build and deliver cultural programs. This person's work may thrive on the local level. It may even grow regionally or nationally as he or she conveys the organization's work to outside funders and garners more resources.

Then the founder-director retires or moves on, and the organization stumbles because its ability to tell its

story was centered in that individual. In the ensuing crisis, the organization may go out of existence. Or, it may struggle for several years before a new leader energizes its staff and friends or it finds a more modest level of sustainable activity.

Now consider what could happen if that organization had been able to build an institutional capacity to tell its story that didn't depend on a single storyteller.

Even if you are unable to institute some level of internal program, you can increase your knowledge of the tools and methods of documentation — which is one of the primary goals for this handbook. With this knowledge, if a one-time need arises for some kind of documentary product, you will have some sense of where to turn for assistance and a basis for judging what is reasonable for your organization.

Maintaining Documentary Materials: One additional need that many cultural organizations struggle to address is managing documentary materials in a reasonable manner over time.

There is little point in trying to build a documentary record if you cannot put your hands on these materials when you need them. In the pressure of daily production, many cultural organizations produce materials for particular publication, reporting or publicity needs, and then shove the materials into a filing cabinet or desk drawer somewhere.

At best, materials such as photographs are put in a common location. Later, those photographs get raided for another use and aren't returned. Eventually, after it becomes too difficult to find anything from a particular project, whatever is left gets tossed away. Alternatively, materials sit unused and neglected in adverse storage conditions. Eventually, they physically deteriorate to the point that they are unusable.

The alternative is to start from the premise that the completion of the production work does not signal the end point of a project. Instead, you must first take steps to preserve the knowledge that has been gained so it becomes an asset you can draw upon again and again.

New technologies have considerably lowered the obstacles to instituting working archives of your institution's documentary material. In the section of this handbook on creating a working archive, we'll suggest some ways to preserve your materials without introducing new burdens on your staff.

What Gets Documented (And What Doesn't)

Given the constraints on cultural organizations, as well as the common assumptions concerning the tools and methods of documentation, smaller cultural organizations tend to follow a pattern in what they record. Artist performances receive some measure of documentation — usually in amateur-quality photographs and video. There may also be some registering of audience opinions in solicited comments or video shots of audience reactions. There are also statements recorded about the organization's opinion of the value of an event or project through grant reports or promotional materials.

What isn't usually documented is the process of interaction and collaboration between the organization and the creative personnel involved in a project. The organization's internal decision-making processes and production process are not usually reported. The organization's initial hopes and dreams for an event or project are not set down, and these are not revisited once the project is over.

It may seem these are subjects that are just part of an organization's basic set of knowledge and don't need to be documented. Furthermore, it may seem they would involve too much work anyway and would not provide any substantial benefits. We hope to convince you otherwise by pointing out the potential benefits of including these in your thinking.

Who Gets to Tell the Story (And What Gets Told)

A quick aside: There is another reason why cultural organizations should think seriously about putting at least a minimal level of ongoing documentation work in place. In recent years, the cultural sector in the United States has made some progress in developing better research on the role of cultural organizations in the communities they serve, particularly regarding their place in local and regional economies.

Nonetheless, it remains difficult to define the value proposition of cultural organizations in anything beyond economic terms. Developing a more consistent habit of self-description and ongoing reflection — even a minimal one — would make it far easier for cultural organizations to consider how they operate as social institutions within our society.

Not long ago, there was an organized effort to portray the nonprofit cultural sector as a set of anti-social and amoral special interests that made inappropriate use of public resources. During the "culture wars" of the late 1980's and early 1990's, a glaring light was cast on several controversial projects as cause for eliminating federal funding for arts and culture. Except in a few areas, federal funding for individual artists was eliminated, and the budgets of federal agencies for providing support to cultural organizations were reduced. A second wave of budget cuts took a significant toll on state cultural agency budgets. Since that time, there has been a slow and uneven shift back toward increased public funding of the cultural sector.

Our intention in citing this recent history is not to argue the merits of one side or the other. Rather, we are simply noting that it took place in a vacuum of information about publicly-supported cultural nonprofits beyond the few major institutions at the center of the storm. To a real degree, these few were taken to stand for the whole. In response, advocates for public cultural funding scrambled to solicit anecdotal evidence from community organizations to answer claims that such funding ran counter to the best interests of American society.

If cultural organizations had had a better record of documenting their activities, the "culture wars" probably would not have been less vituperative. However, a slightly more constructive dialogue might have occurred.

This era gave rise to the awareness that the cultural sector needs to be considered from the standpoint of public

policy on the federal, state and local levels, and that we need more comprehensive data on the cultural sector to support that process. Cultural organizations can play a role in moving toward that goal by participating in the work of documentation.

Charting Your Course

The typical documentation scenario for many cultural organizations is reactive: "Hey, we really should try to get some good photographs of the program tomorrow." Because so much time and energy goes into producing and marketing an event, there is often little space to think about documentation until the last minute. Even when a scramble to produce some form of documentation results in a useful result, little thought has been given to how it might be used. More often than not, the final product languishes unused on a shelf somewhere.

Your organization will benefit tremendously if you can shift your thinking about documentation. Instead of a reactive afterthought or an add-on to your central work, documentation should be a strategy for enhancing your practice and moving forward your organization's goals.

Rather than a one-shot activity focused on a single program or event, documentation should be a strategic *program* with several levels:

- a set of long-term goals for bringing your organization's work to greater focus and visibility
- an ongoing process of consistent documentary activity you can sustain internally
- a strategy of decision-making for amplifying your internal efforts with targeted professional documentation where it can be most effective

Let's look at each of these levels:

1) Long-term documentary goals: Your organization has a story to tell about the role it is trying to play in your community and the cultural sector. The activities your organization produces and supports are integral to that role.

What do you want to capture about the work of your organization?

- Do you want your community to understand how your organization's philosophy makes it uniquely effective in contributing to community life?
- Do you want to strengthen a particular art form or support the development of new forms of expression?
- Do you want to be a gateway for your community to experiences that would not otherwise be available?
- Do you want to cultivate the creative spirit in children?
- Do you want to enrich the lives of elders?
- Are you a force for community revitalization?

Your organization story has a set of central themes to explore, illuminate and reflect upon. You should build your documentation strategy in relation to your organization's story — the principles that drive it forward.

Doing this will ensure the products of documentation have practical value to your organization and that they will serve your organization's communication needs effectively.

You will also ensure that the work of documentation will be cumulative. Rather than a one-shot activity with little long-term effect, each documentation activity you pursue will support existing and future documentation. As a result, you will be able to connect and reuse work you have already done to gain new insights and create new communications tools.

2) An ongoing process of internal documentation: There is a great deal of practical documentary work that you can and should do as part of your normal business practice. As we discuss below, you already may be doing far more than you realize to create a useful record of your activities. However, without a strategy for bringing a level of consistency and focus to this activity, its potential for strengthening your work will almost certainly be lost.

With a little effort, you can cultivate a documentary work habit to help address needs that cultural organizations often find problematic:

- When you need to review the history of a project to develop a grant report, the information necessary will be there at hand.
- When you need to develop educational materials for a particular performance, you won't have to begin from scratch.
- When you need a photograph of an artist you've presented in the past, you'll be able to find it.

If you can cultivate a documentary habit, you will also have new tools for reflecting upon and improving the core work of your organization. Hard-pressed cultural organizations often find it difficult to pause in the daily rush of activity to examine their own practices and develop more effective approaches. You can clear this space by making documentation and reflection part of your normal practice.

When a problem arises in a project, you can often gain new insights if you have the tools to review what has happened to that point. Often the work of documentation opens up new communication channels that help collaborating organizations and artists negotiate differences toward a successful outcome.

3) Targeted documentary projects: At some point, all cultural organizations will need to go beyond their internal capabilities to produce a documentary product for communicating with the public. If your organization has built a framework for documentation, you will be able to considerably lower the obstacles to producing high-quality documentation or creating an in-depth record of your work with outside assistance.

With a thoughtful overall documentation strategy in place, you will no longer be reactive when it comes to such efforts. You will be able to identify the most fruitful opportunities far enough in advance to plan effectively and lower the costs involved, and the returns you receive will be far greater. With a good body of internal documentation in place, an outside documentarian can work with you more effectively. With a

clear sense of your organization's core story, over time you will be able to build a compelling set of documentary products that can serve a range of purposes.

Defining an Approach

Before you begin to develop your organization's documentary strategy and program, we should more closely examine three dimensions of documentary work: *focus, frame and format.* As you consider various documentary approaches, a basic understanding of these three dimensions can help you identify the most effective strategy for your needs.

Focus describes the relationship between the observer and what is being observed. You can be in the role of the documenter yourself, or you can enlist an outside observer. The documentary focus can be cast on the following:

- yourself or another person
- an activity being undertaken by one or more people other than yourself
- an activity involving you together with one or more people

Imagine a room with several people interacting and a disembodied camera floating above. Where the camera is placed, where it is facing, and whether it has a close or distant depth of field all will affect what is being seen and how it is interpreted.

Each of these relationships has its own implications for the documentary process. If the focus is on yourself and you are the documenter, you will certainly have full access to your interior thoughts and motivations — but your observations will likely not be partial. Nonetheless, an autobiography can be a powerful work of the documentary art.

If the focus is on yourself and you are *not* the documenter, then an inherent tension exists between your motivations and narrative goals and the outside observer's orientation, biases and abilities. That creative tension may be counterproductive, or it may be just what is needed to pry out your internal vision and communicate it effectively through a process of dialogue.

Suppose you want to document the creation of a new dance work. Is the goal of that documentation to illuminate the choreographer's journey and the nature of her vision? Is it to examine the process that the dance troupe undergoes to bring the work to performance? Is it to capture the expectations and reactions of the new work's opening-night audience?

THREE MODES FOR DOCUMENTARY FRAMING ARE NARRATIVE, PERSUASIVE, AND ANALYTIC (OR REFLECTIVE).

Now consider where the focus of the documentation process will be placed. As you can see, a set of decisions about the documentary tools to be used (video? sound recording? survey?), as well as the role and position of the documenter, will flow from where the documentary's focus is placed.

Suppose you want to capture the experience of a third-grade class in your museum's activity room. Is the goal to capture the children's interactions with the learning objects in the room? Is there an educational process you want to highlight? Do you want to look at the interaction between your staff and the children? Do you want to engage the teacher in a dialogue about the role your museum plays in enriching the quality of the children's learning? Again, a different focus will suggest a different set of tools and relationships.

Where there is alignment between documentary focus, relationships and tools, the outcome is more likely to successful. Otherwise, you may have a confusing or misleading result.

Frame involves the rhetorical structure of the documentary product. This dimension relates to our previous discussion of the documentary voice. A work of documentation can be framed in one of a set of classic modes, as a combination of these, or as a new and experimental work.

The first of these is the *narrative mode*, where an experience or set of experiences unfolds in a sequential order, a journey in which a series of events informs a meaningful whole. This is a deep structure in our understanding of reality; it is the wellspring for art itself. Narrative documentaries — whether an autobiography or life history, the recounting of the development of a moving artistic work, or a first-person testimony to history — carry with them a strong sense of subjective truth: "This is what happened as I experienced it."

EXAMPLES OF DOCUMENTARY FORMATS:
- **WRITTEN**
- **AURAL**
- **VISUAL**
- **AUDIOVISUAL**

A second mode for documentary framing is the *persuasive mode.* Here, the documenter attempts to move the audience to a different orientation in relation to the subject of the documentation. The portrayal of an artist's work used in marketing is an example of this mode, where the depiction of an experience conveys a sense of excitement and discovery.

The use of documentation in advocacy is another case in which qualitative evidence presented through testimony is used to promote a particular viewpoint. In speaking of this as a documentary frame, the important element is that the work of documentation clearly signals the goal of transforming the audience's position by considering the experience depicted.

A third mode is *analytic*, or *reflective*, in which experience is turned back upon itself with the goal of gaining a deeper understanding of complex realities to form a basis for future action. Multiple positions and voices are considered, without a clear a *priori* viewpoint offered and perhaps not a clear conclusion reached. An example might be the examination of a writer's legacy. In this case, a range of acquaintances and critics discuss the meaning of the writer's work as they experience it, and the audience is left to draw its own conclusion.

There are other modes of documentary framing, including satire and irony (consider the films of Michael Moore

Sociolinguist Dell Hymes has traced the movement of speech into the artistic realm through narrative, a passage that he describes as a "breakthrough into performance." See, for example, Dell H. Hymes, "In vain I tried to tell you": Essays in Native American Ethnopoetics. 2nd Edition. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004.

as one controversial example). These modes can also be mixed and blurred to create new documentary frames. At one end of a continuum, a formal documentary frame can be overtly signaled to an audience. At the other end, it can be concealed through misdirection.

When people speak of *media literacy*, it is the ability to read the distance between underlying intention and overt frame that is at issue. There is nothing inherently positive or negative to any of these framing modes, but there is an ethical bottom line here in how they are used. If your work of documentation leads to a public product, we contend you have a moral responsibility to align your intent with the frame you are signaling to your audience.

Format entails the various methods and media that can be used to produce a documentary record. A number of these have been mentioned already. Here's a quick overview that will be discussed in greater detail later in this handbook.

Written formats include business records that your organization produces in the course of normal activity and which constitute a qualitative and quantitative record of your organization's activities. These include correspondence with collaborators or audience members, grant applications and reports, budgets, contracts and other financial records. These can be considered raw materials for documentation, but they can also include observations and opinions that constitute a form of documentary commentary.

Written formats may also include materials that your organization produces for an outside audience, such as posters, flyers, brochures, program notes, program books, or web pages. Again, some of these are not intended as a form of documentation but may constitute a set of observations with documentary value.

Beyond these types of written materials that cultural organizations normally produce, you might go further to develop a written documentary product. Examples include:

- a set of formal fieldnotes — a formal description of an event set down as soon as possible afterward that attempts to maintain a consistent level of observation
- a weblog organized around a performance that invites audience response
- a compiled and edited oral history based on a series of formal interviews
- a work of written analysis, or ethnography, that is based on a long-term process of observation, interviewing and dialogue, and analyzes a set of relationships, a process or a system of beliefs.

Aural formats include products that use audio recording to capture some dimension of experience and communicate it to a listener. Examples include:

- a produced radio program, such as an examination of an artist's life and work
- a public discussion forum
- a theatrical production
- a music or spoken-word CD that records a musical performance or poetry reading
- a piece of streaming audio that presents a live performance on a website

Visual formats include products that convey the visual dimension of experience, most commonly in photography.

Examples include:

- a photographic exhibit on the development of a dance work
- a web publication with images of a museum collection
- a visual artist's sketches of a theater work in progress involving a collaboration between community members and a visiting artist

Audiovisual formats include products that combine still or moving images with sound through video, film or other media. Examples include:

- a multimedia web-based journal with images and recorded reflections by workshop participants
- a short video presentation mounted outside an exhibition that provides background on a visual artist's working methods and philosophy
- a modern-day filmstrip presentation with background audio developed in a presentation graphics software program such as Microsoft PowerPoint™ or Apple Keynote™
- an hour-long documentary film retrospective on a modern choreographer

Where documentary rises to an art is in finding the most effective mix of focus, frame and format. The examples above are intended to demonstrate that there is a great variety of ways to carry out documentation — and an even greater variety of products through which a documentary exploration can be expressed.

A cultural organization operating with the assumption that documentation can only be successfully produced by large institutions through expensive media projects could easily preclude itself from a cost- and time-effective approach that would bring significant benefits. With some basic groundwork and clever uses of resources, a range of effective media products may well be within the reach of even a small organization. By rethinking its work within a documentary framework and considering the dimensions outlined above in relation to its staffing and resources, an organization can begin to chart an effective strategy that can produce new tools, new forms of communication with its constituency, and new insights for its work.

Where an effective balance is reached, documentation can provide a platform in which the organization, creative worker and community can interact. It can also set the stage for a richer series of linked interactions rather than a set of disjointed interactions.

Documentation can itself become part of the creative process, a way of checking the channel that can cut through the underbrush of complexity generated in the heat of the creative moment, a cross-cultural interchange, or a collision between an artist's vision and a community's mores. The form and extent of documentation may vary, but a cultural organization with a basic grounding in the approaches and techniques of cultural documentation will be able to serve its mission, audience and collaborators far more effectively.

Potential Benefits

We'll return to this subject throughout this handbook. But first, we'll try to summarize a few of the concrete benefits of instituting a documentation strategy. These will vary, of course, depending on how formal and

sustained a program your organization is able to establish. But even a minimal effort to develop some organized documentation activity will begin to yield some of these rewards.

Institutional Memory: This is the most straightforward and profound change that a documentation effort can bring to your organization. The vast majority of cultural organizations depend on individual memory to plan, produce and promote their work. As a result, they are often far more fragile than they realize when it comes to the loss of a particular individual. Even when not immediately evident, internal knowledge is steadily eroded whenever there is staff turnover. Documentation is a means of ameliorating these effects.

Here's an example: The New England Foundation for the Arts conducted a six-year-long team documentation project for the Ford Foundation.[±] The subject: a series of international artistic collaborations developed by a working group of seven producing and presenting organizations throughout the United States. These were all established, stable and professionally staffed organizations with a normal rate of staff turnover.

Over the course of Ford's initiative, one or more professional ethnographers worked with each organization. One of the surprising outcomes of the project was that in every case, the ethnographer(s) began to play the unanticipated role of unofficial historian. Upon hiring a new staff member, it became a common practice for the organizations to send him or her to the ethnographer for an historical overview of the project.

Few cultural organizations would go to the extent of hiring an outside observer or agency to maintain an organization history. However, anything you can do to create a repository of information that does not depend on a single individual's memory — and which can become a resource for orienting new staff members — will help your organization maintain its resiliency in the face of change. This can be as simple as creating a set of project summaries or as rich as a set of staff interviews that reflect on an organization's development and its portfolio of activities.

EXAMPLES OF DOCUMENTARY APPROACHES:

- A consistent series of notes compiled over the course of an important project can provide the basis for an organization to examine its own role in that process and address shortcomings that are revealed when it tackles future projects.
- An ongoing documentary record can also help future staff members to understand the history of an organization's involvement in a particular area of the arts and culture, and to build upon its hard-won achievements.
- An audiotaped interview can provide material for a compelling description that finds its way into a catalog, brochure or playbill.
- A reflective report that carefully delineates both shortcomings and strengths of a project — and demonstrates concrete knowledge gained through that experience — can convey an organization's ability to creatively approach new work far more compellingly than a one-dimensional effusive and self-serving final report.
- A videotaped narration by a single sculptor seated in an empty room can convey the excitement of her process of discovery and instill new insights into her work more effectively than a slickly produced film homage.

[±]The project was co-directed by Doug DeNatale and Karen Ito, with the ethnographer team of Renee Blake, Tina Bucavalas, Donette Francis, Remko Jansonius, Kathryn Libal, José Macias, and Suzanne Seriff.

Sharpened Organization Philosophy and Definition of Mission: The habit of documentation involves a mind-set of self-examination that can help organizations refine and keep focused on their core mission. Because it requires an application of resources at some scale, it can become a touchstone of an organization's values. The old adage, "If it's worth doing, it's worth doing well," gains visible shape when it comes to documentation. If you don't think it's worth trying to create a record of some project to which you are dedicating time and money, then why are you doing it at all?

Improved Organizational Processes: If an organization can move to a process of documentation that examines the development of work in progress, it gains a powerful tool for adjusting to new realities as they occur. If you view documentation as summative evaluation (as discussed above) then you have gained some ability for making adjustments in relation to future work ("if we had it to do over again"; "next time we'll know better").

But if documentation can become part of your working process, then it will play a formative role and can help improve your work *as it happens*. It can help you adjust to unforeseen situations as they arise. It can help identify contributing factors when partnerships are beginning to go astray — and help address the issues in time to make a difference.

Improved Communication: Documentation can also help you define and articulate your organization's particular approach and communicate it more clearly to others. Obviously, this has practical utility in your dialogue with supporters and funders. But it also has real benefit in your relationships with other organizations and agencies, your community, and your collaborators. If your organization is plowing new ground in your area of work, it can also help you promulgate the practices you have pioneered and help move forward the entire field.

Greater Intellectual Capital: The time and resources you invest in documentation will be amply repaid if you make sure you can access the materials produced and reuse them for multiple purposes in the future. At this point, you may not be able to envision what kinds of uses they might have someday. A brief interview with an artist collaborator might find future use in the panel of an exhibit, a performance program book, a marketing brochure or a report to a funder. Or, it may inspire an entirely new project.

If you're only thinking of doing the work necessary to produce the materials you immediately need to present an artist, mount an exhibit or create an educational workshop, then you will likely have to start from scratch every time. But if you develop a documentation program that includes a plan for storing and maintaining the materials produced, then you will have a growing set of internal resources to draw upon.

More Effective Advocacy: When it comes time to advocate for new resources, defend a program from unwarranted criticism or respond to some new opportunity, organizations are often caught in a scramble to respond to unforeseen circumstances. If you have a body of documented work that provides evidence for the viewpoint you are espousing, you will be in a far stronger position to respond effectively.

Two Scenarios

Let's consider two organizations and how they might approach a documentation strategy.

Organization 1: The Riverview Arts Center is an established mid-sized performing arts organization with an active presenting program. It is the major cultural center in its community, has a loyal subscriber base, and has a staff of 15 under the leadership of a dynamic executive director. Its production staff includes a part-time sound engineer and a two-person graphics design department that handles the production of most of its publicity materials.

In the early 1990s, the center installed a new sound system in its hall, with a state-of-the-art mixing board and digital audiotape recording deck. The center has always had a policy of documenting everything it presents in the hall, recording each performance directly off its sound system. It doesn't videotape its performances. However, a member of its design staff who is a trained photographer produces a set of publicity stills of performers whenever there is enough rehearsal time prior to a performance, and always takes professional-quality 35mm slides during each performance.

To celebrate its 25th anniversary, the center decides to issue a retrospective CD of its great performances with a full-color program book insert. It hires a temporary production manager to handle the project.

When production begins, the graphic design department has no problem finding a set of wonderfully evocative photographs from recent performances. But finding photographs of earlier performances turns out to be an unexpected challenge. The lead designer, who has been at the center for almost 20 years, can vividly recall a number of ideal photos — but they are nowhere to be found. A few show up after the files have been turned upside down -- they were filed with the galleys from earlier program brochures and posters. But there are whole periods for which the only images are a set of culls that don't convey anything of value.

Strangely enough, some of the earlier recordings made on an old TEAC 7½ inch reel-to-reel deck are far more useable than the digital recordings made in the early 1990s. It turns out the digital tapes were stored improperly in a metal file cabinet next to a PC monitor. Quite a few of the tapes have serious signal dropouts, and a few are so bad that no readable signal can be recovered.

By this time, the center is committed to the project. To make up for the photo deficit, it has to contact several artists' managers to obtain publicity stills. While communicating with the managers, the center realizes that the releases it has obtained from the artists at the time of performance provide for educational use of the recordings. These releases, however, do not specify any form of royalty agreement should the recordings be sold for profit, which the center intends to do. Each agreement now has to be renegotiated, and several performances must be dropped because the two parties can't come to terms.

The center finally produces its retrospective recording. It's well received by the community, and sales go well. In the end, the center breaks even financially on the project.

Organization 2: The Grandview Artist Cooperative is a small, mostly volunteer, visual arts gallery in a small college town — and growing retirement community — on the edge of the state's mountain region. The part-time director is paid a token salary raised largely through donations, membership fees, a minimal commission on gallery sales and an annual fundraising dinner.

The coop runs a storefront gallery in a space that has been donated by a local law firm that shares the building with the gallery. The coop serves a three-county region and represents craftspeople, painters and photographers. Its member artists join the coop through a juried process and can either pay an annual membership fee or help staff the gallery four hours a month. Members also attend the semi-annual coop business meetings.

Every month the gallery highlights one of its members' work in its small exhibition space, accompanied by an evening gallery talk. For the past 10 years, one of the coop's photographer members has photographed these events, as well as one or two selected objects from the featured artist's work, in lieu of paying a membership fee or staffing the gallery. The coop's membership agreement includes a release that allows the organization to use these photographs for marketing purposes. The coop's volunteer secretary/treasurer, a former legal assistant, takes notes on her laptop during the gallery talks and at the coop's business meetings.

While reviewing the secretary/treasurer's gallery talk notes from the past 10 years, the executive director is struck by how many of the artists share a common theme in their work. Some of them are urban transplants who have been drawn to the area by its strong sense of place and history. Others are life-long residents trying to maintain a viable living through their art.

Collectively, the artists' work chronicles the changes that have happened in the area over the past 20 years — in some cases brought about by the influx of new people like themselves. Upon further reflection, she realizes that the tensions between a cherished view of historic place and the pros and cons of economic development runs through the coop's business meetings as well, with newcomers and old-timers sometimes lining up on opposing sides of a business issue.

She decides to take a risk and devote a portion of the coop's next business meeting to this topic. A sometimes-heated discussion ensues, in which the members voice — often movingly — their feelings about the area and the changes that have taken place. A long-festering resentment surfaces among the long-term residents that the coop's membership fee structure favors the newcomers. (Many of the newcomers have settled near the historic downtown area and can either afford to pay the membership fee or are not overly burdened by the monthly staffing requirement because they don't have to travel as far.) As the members talk this through, they devise a new membership structure that slightly raises the fee and takes into account travel time in calculating the alternative staffing contribution.

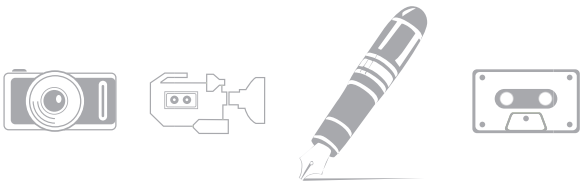
During the discussion, one of the members suggests assembling a booklet that explores how this area is changing through the eyes of artists. The idea generates a fair amount of excitement, though it seems a little ambitious for the small organization.

Nonetheless, the coop director is eager to explore the possibility. As it turns out, she's able to put together a compelling narrative almost entirely from the secretary/treasurer's notes, which capture a fair number of pithy quotes almost verbatim from the gallery talks. The photo documentation from the gallery talks, which the photographer has put into a searchable digital image database, provides an ample body of animated candid shots and exhibit-quality images of the art works.

By the time of the next business meeting, the executive director has put together a manuscript and has a set of reasonable printing bids. The publication is on sale in the gallery within two months. And after a local television station picks up the story, the publication garners a modest profit for the gallery and significantly heightens its visibility in the local community.

Conclusion: As these two scenarios suggest, a reasonable amount of resources, staffing and state-of-the-art equipment do not necessarily guarantee success when it comes to a documentation project. A small, dedicated organization with a degree of forethought and planning can build its own documentation resources with consistent effort and find unexpected rewards in the process.

The sections below take up the various tools of documentation in turn. Depending on your focus and needs, you should consider each of these approaches to identify the most beneficial for your organization. Then you should undertake a planning process to ensure you effectively use these tools. Each section provides a decision tree to help guide you through this process.



Written Documentation

If you do nothing else in the way of documentation, you should invest a little time and effort in thinking about how you can improve the state of your organization's written record. This is the single most important thing you can do to preserve your organization's history in some meaningful form. The value to your organization and to others will be significant.

If you are a formal nonprofit organization, you should go even further and view this as a public obligation. This is an aspect of your work that is not always adequately acknowledged. For example, many small nonprofit organizations are surprised to learn that most of the information on the Form 990 federal tax return they file annually is a matter of public record — and that copies of their original returns are now available to anyone via the Internet.* Nonprofits do not have further public reporting requirements (unless required by individual state laws). However, because they are operating in the public interest, it is reasonable to expect they should want to provide a record of their activities to the public in some form.

This doesn't mean you should throw open your doors to anyone who wants to rummage through your internal records. But you should at least consider that the ways in which you communicate with the public through print form a kind of public record that deserves to be preserved as part of your service to that public. If you can create a system for organizing and saving this material, you will be building a resource for the future that has both public and material benefit to your organization (as discussed below).

If you can go a step further and think about the kinds of internal communications that convey information about your organization's conceptualizing, creative processes and negotiations — and if you then organize this material in a form that can be retrieved in the future — you will have provided even greater value. You can build this material as your own organizational archives and set a responsible policy of whether and how it might become available to the public in the future as a matter of historical record. If you think your organization's records have no historic value, then you are seriously undervaluing their worth and underestimating some future historian's interest!

This doesn't have to be a major undertaking. At a minimum, you can identify the assets you currently have and

* The Internal Revenue Service releases some of this information directly on its website (www.irs.treas.gov), and it provides scanned images of the Form 990 returns to the Urban Institute's National Center for Charitable Statistics, which makes them available to the public through a partnership with GuideStar (www.guidestar.org).

produce on a regular basis and turn these into working intellectual capital for the present and future. With a bit more forethought and planning, you can go even further to put into place a regular practice of consistent and thoughtful documentation that can improve the way your organization regularly does business.

Working With Your Existing Materials

All organizations create a record of their work as a matter of course. Some of these written materials get discarded soon after their creation. Others, however, are viewed as important and are saved in some form.

An organization will sometimes contract with a records storage firm to safeguard their valuable institutional records — usually for a set period of time determined by financial accounting standards — and then they are destroyed. In other cases, an organization may hold on to its records without a set plan. Eventually some of these may find their way to a library or archives, where they may become a resource to historians.

All of the approaches described above are essentially passive ones that do not produce much value for the organization and its work. Here, we suggest an alternative strategy that will help you better decide what parts of your written record have potential value for your organization and others. This strategy may even turn some of your records into a working asset.

Step 1. Inventory Existing Documentary Assets

We'll outline a set of basic steps you can follow to improve your organization's documentary record. The first of these is to identify what you are already documenting on a regular basis that you can build upon.

What are your public documents?

Try to mentally catalog all of the written and paper documentary products that your organization already produces regularly, but that you may not consider to be documentary products.

YOUR ORGANIZATION MIGHT PRODUCE MORE DOCUMENTARY MATERIALS THAN YOU REALIZE.

If you are a performing arts organization with a presentation series, you probably write public announcement copy or place advertisements in the local newspaper on a regular basis. You might distribute posters throughout your community. You probably give your audiences some kind of descriptive handout or even a printed season program.

If you are a museum or small gallery, you may write descriptive copy on an exhibition for newspapers or magazines. You may produce flyers, brochures or catalogs on your exhibits. Maybe one of your staff periodically gives a written presentation on your work to a local Rotary or Kiwanis club.

If your organization is an artists' group, you may create artist statements or promotional brochures. Maybe you perform an annual concert with a different program each year. Or perhaps your dance troupe has a portfolio of

publicity photographs. You might be a community theater group that has developed a script for an original play. Perhaps your set designer regularly produces rough sketches for your productions.

And then there's your website. While few cultural organizations of any size had a website in the early and mid-1990s, that's no longer the case. Your site may be a simple and static summary of your organization's work for the public, or it may be a complex, interactive site providing a wealth of information that is constantly updated and altered.

Finally, what about the written documents that others produce *about* your organization? Do reviews of your shows appear in the local newspaper? Do you receive letters of appreciation or criticism from the general public? Does your organization welcome schoolchildren, who return the favor with drawings of their visit? What happens to these documents? Do you clip newspaper notices and later discard them? Do you hang children's drawings on your office walls for a period, then trash them when the next bunch comes in?

What are your internal documents?

The types of documents listed above fit easily into general notions of written documentation because they are all constructed observations that depict some aspect of your organization's work. They all have a public dimension; they are either documentary products that are produced for a public audience or public reflections upon your work. It is easy to view these as part of a public historic record.

There are also a range of internal written documents that organizations produce as part of daily business and fit within the framework of constructed observation — but which are not intended to form a dialogue with the public. You may view these documents as:

- private and proprietary internal business records
- historic documents you could turn over to an archive for public use after a sufficient period of time
- a vehicle for making some aspect of your internal process open to public dialogue

Whatever your stance, your organization likely could benefit by exploring the documentary value of such documents and considering their potential further use.

Again, a mental inventory of your internal paperwork is a useful starting exercise:

- Does your performing arts organization carry on a written or email correspondence with the artists you present? Do you have formal contracts with your artists?
- Does your museum have weekly or monthly staff meetings with some kind of written agenda? Do you take scribbled notes during those meetings?
- Does the director of your theatrical troupe make rehearsal notes?
- What about those grant applications and final reports you produce for funders? (You might even think about financial documents such as project budgets as part of your documentary record.)

Make a list and test it

After you've mentally catalogued your existing documentary record, jot down the different types of documents using whatever categories make the most sense to you. Estimate how many materials of this sort you are currently holding onto.

After you've done this, try checking your list against the documents you currently have in your offices. Rummage through your desk drawers, filing cabinets and hard drives, and make a running list of what you find. Don't try to be exhaustive; just take a quick reconnaissance. Does the list of what you find match your initial list, or are there any additional types of documents you hadn't thought about?

Where does your documentary record go?

Now take a moment to think about what happens to all of those paper documents, public and internal, that your organization produces on a regular basis. Where are the program notes, posters, brochures, gallery guides or photographs from shows that took place two or three years ago? Do your meeting notes end up tossed on a desk somewhere only to be discarded when the piles get too high?

What about written documents that were created in electronic form? Do you still have your grant narratives and reports on a hard disk somewhere? And if you do, do you know where to find these documents?

What about email correspondence? Does your email program automatically discard your messages after several months? Or does it "archive" them in some mysterious place where you'll never be able to retrieve them?

WOULD YOU BE ABLE TO RETRIEVE A VERSION OF YOUR WEBSITE AS IT APPEARED A YEAR AGO?

What about your website? What happens to your old pages when replaced or updated? Since the Internet is such a fluid medium, combining text, graphics and audiovisual formats, it has completely overturned the notion of a stable published document.

Suppose your organization has had a website for two years. Would you be able to retrieve a version of your site as it appeared a year ago? Recently this has emerged as enough of an issue that several efforts to archive the entire Internet have been devised.

If you can't easily recapture that earlier version of your site, you might try visiting the Internet Archive (www.archive.org) and searching there for your URL. If your site has been in existence for a few years, you may find this is an informative exercise that illuminates how your organization has presented itself in an emerging communications medium.

There's a good reason why scholars of manuscripts refer to some types of written documents as *ephemera*. Within the usual definition, these are printed documents such as flyers or posters that are created for a short-lived purpose and which are just as quickly discarded and lost. It could equally apply to electronic documents and

short-lived written notes.

In most cases, that's exactly the fate many of these artifacts deserve. It's true that many of your written documents probably don't have much intrinsic value beyond their immediate use and may serve a better public purpose in the recycling bin. But in every organization, there are documents among the clutter that register valuable cultural information about the making or presenting of a work, the attitudes or knowledge of the participants, or the mores and social milieu surrounding a creation.

This is easy to recognize in the examples of a late-1960s Fillmore poster or Merce Cunningham's choreographic notes. But it is also true that the meeting notes of a local theater group or the grant narratives written by an artist live-work space coalition may eventually have significant value to those who want to understand the social and cultural interactions of a community during a particular time. Cultural organizations of all kinds and sizes are usually driven by some singular passion and sense of purpose. In every case, something of this angle of vision deserves preservation.

As you catalog your existing documents, you may learn something else about the ways in which your organization works:

- How often do you reinvent the wheel?
- How many times do you or your staff create the same kinds of textual materials?
- How many separate but similar brief histories, vision statements or program descriptions has your organization rewritten for grant narratives, brochures and press releases — particularly if you have more than one person responsible for grant writing or program management?

One good argument for developing a strategic documentation strategy is that you may already be expending time and effort in a casual or disorganized way. You could harness this energy to produce a cycle of dividends for your organization if you devote a little time and forethought to the effort.

Step 2. Assess Your Documentary Assets

We hope your mental survey will convince you there are at least some items worth keeping and organizing. If you're like most small and medium-sized cultural organizations, you'll also realize that putting your hands on any of these items may not be easy unless you have some rudimentary organization scheme.

Review current and potential uses

Now review your inventory of written and printed materials again, sorted by the categories you have devised. Note the current uses of these materials (e.g., program management, publicity, etc.). Try to assess how regularly your organization produces these materials, both in terms of time intervals and whether there is consistent practice in developing these materials. Use this as an opportunity to consider how you might improve current practices.

Then you should take an additional step and think about how else you could use these materials:

- Could the various program descriptions and presenting schedules be easily reworked into a capsule history

of your organization's presenting work? (And could you refer to this capsule when developing grant proposals or when you want to remind yourself when you last presented a particular theater company?)

- Do you have a visual record of your concert posters that you could use to convey your organization's eclectic aesthetic on your website?
- Do these materials provide enough background information that you could work with a writer to create a formal history of your museum — one you could use for board and staff development or funder cultivation?

You should take this as an opportunity to be creative. Think about how the things you are currently doing could immediately serve new purposes (or could be moved in that direction with a little additional work).

Evaluate the relative value of what you are producing

You should also spend a little time assessing how useful your current activities actually are to your organization. Try ranking the materials you have identified from most to least valuable. When you do this, take into account the potential uses you have identified. Develop your list not by the current situation, but by what it could be if you regularized your current practice and perhaps added a little more record-keeping to help you develop the potential extended uses you have identified for materials.

Do this from two perspectives:

1. How do these materials support current and potential uses by your organization?
2. To what degree could they convey the story of your organization to others?

If your organization is large enough, this evaluation process should involve other staff members and/or departments.

Step 3. Develop a Records Management Strategy

This process of evaluation can be the first step in developing an effective records management system and internal documentation strategy. An effective strategy should lessen the amount of time your organization spends with paperwork because your staff will have a better sense of where to expend energy creating and managing written documents.

Decide which materials to keep — and which to discard

Once you have weighed the value of your existing written materials, you can decide what to do with them. Those materials with relatively high value are the ones you should preserve — and reuse. Materials you have evaluated to be low in value should be discarded as soon as their immediate use is done.

USING A RECORDS STORAGE FIRM FOR YOUR NON-FINANCIAL DOCUMENTS WILL NOT NECESSARILY ASSURE THEIR PRESERVATION.

This may seem counter-intuitive from a documentation standpoint. From an historical perspective, shouldn't you want to preserve as much as possible because you might not envision its future value?

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING SCENARIO

Two years ago your organization hosted the first U.S. tour of a puppet troupe from Mexico. Your artistic director carried on a correspondence with the troupe's leader prior to their arrival, and arranged for the artists' travel visas. Your organization developed publicity and educational materials, marketed the tour to other venues, and hired an artist management firm to handle the touring facilitation.

When it comes to archiving the materials from this project, the personal international correspondence, the letter from your U.S. Senator supporting the visa application after it was rejected the first time, the written biographies, photographs, and other documents that describe the troupe and its work are all worth preserving. The contract with the bus company, the expense reimbursements and fast food receipts, the standard contracts signed by the other venues, and the payment receipt forms signed by the artists are probably not – unless they convey a particular story of an unfamiliar cross-cultural interaction.

The truth is, when professionally staffed archives accession collections of personal or business papers, one of the first and most onerous tasks is to weed out unnecessary materials. For this reason, some archives are unwilling to accept records that have not been sorted and winnowed if the historical significance of the organization or individual isn't already evident. Don't fall into the trap of holding onto everything. You will actually improve the overall documentary value of your organization's papers by regularly discarding a portion – provided that you have articulated a clear rationale for this.

You also shouldn't fall into the trap of thinking that you are necessarily preserving your organization records for perpetuity if you are paying a long-term records storage firm to store your organization's documents in a climate-controlled and secure storage facility. Many of these companies primarily serve businesses' fiduciary needs to maintain their financial records for a period of time to meet tax accounting standards.

Many organizations don't realize these companies' services include the shredding and disposal of your papers after a set time has passed. Some companies will provide ongoing storage for a continuing fee, but this requires you actively manage your storage account over time and commit to an ongoing drain on your resources. Use these companies for financial records only, but separate out any other documents.

You should discard your low-value records. If you remain nervous about what to keep and what to discard, keep this question in mind: Does this document tell a story? If not, then you are probably safe in discarding it.

Set up a regular processing schedule and set of tasks

Based on your review, make a checklist of the materials your organization should keep and which it should discard. Establish a schedule for processing the documents created in the lifecycle of your work.

If you do use a records storage company for your financial records, then whenever you place your financial records in the firm's storage boxes is probably a good time to separate the low-value materials from the records you are going to keep. Then, move the high-value records to your organization's working archive (more on that below). You can do this at regular time intervals or at a regular point in the lifecycle of a project (e.g., when a final grant report is submitted).

When you think about setting up a schedule for processing your written documents, you should also set aside a time to preserve the working value of any document you can harness for future purposes. If you regularly produce program descriptions during your presenting season, set aside a regular time in the production cycle to cut and paste any artist descriptions into the separate word processing file for that artist.

Also decide when you will store each of those files in the shared Artist Biography subdirectory on your network file server. Finally, set up a time each year when you will copy the program accomplishments described in each final grant report to an annual summary document.

The more established you can make such tasks — particularly if they involve materials produced by more than one person — the more likely it is these materials will be reused.

Establish an organization-wide electronic filing system

Almost all cultural organizations use a computer to create written documents, even if they do not have the latest equipment. If you have more than one computer in use, you should also establish a basic file-sharing network. With the rise of home networking, a number of user-friendly kits are available at low cost to connect anywhere from one to 20 or more computers.

Once your organization has gotten to this point, it's time to think about developing a consistent approach in storing shared documents on your network. Establish a set of shared directories organized by project or organization function, and then encourage staff members to store all project-related files in this central location (not on their individual computer hard drives).

Based on the experience of cultural organizations that have established such a system, you're likely to encounter resistance among staff who are used to maintaining their work files as if they were their own personal files.

ONE OF THE KEY BENEFITS OF A FILE-SHARING SYSTEM IS THE ABILITY TO MANAGE ELECTRONIC DOCUMENTS IN A CONSISTENT AND ACCESSIBLE DIRECTORY STRUCTURE.

You can win over such resistant staff members as the practical benefits of creating an organization-wide repository of information become more evident. These include an improved ability to manage an organization-wide backup of project files and the positive pressure of managing electronic documents in a consistent and accessible directory structure. Where it's necessary to limit access to some project documents, you can store them in directories with differing levels of access permissions.

With a file-sharing system in place, your organization can benefit from the sort of collated information files described above — an updateable series of artist biographies, an expanding list of organization accomplishments, etc. Wherever you can identify textual information that is recreated needlessly in your communications with funders and the public, you can create a shared knowledge store. If a funding application asks you for a description of your audience or community, you will have a much easier job by accessing a similar description developed in the past.

SAMPLE SHARED COMPUTER FILE DIRECTORY

- **SHARED DOCUMENTS**
  - CURRENT PROJECTS
    - Department 1, 2, 3, etc.
      - Project 1, 2, 3, etc.
        - Administrative Documents
          - Financial Documents
            - Correspondence
            - Contracts
          - Project Management
            - Planning Documents
            - Funding
              - Funder 1, 2, 3, etc.
                - Proposal
                - Reports
          - Production
            - Marketing Materials
            - Educational Materials
            - Presenting Materials
  - KNOWLEDGE BASE
    - History
      - Institutional History
      - Program History
    - Community and Audience Information
      - Community Description
      - Audience Profile
    - Artist Resources
      - Biographical Materials
      - Artist Statements
    - Functional Knowledge
      - Project Management
      - Records Management

Digital technology has made it almost effortlessly simple to create multiple copies of electronic documents. The challenge in the digital age is organization. If you don't have a clear system of organization, the materials may be there somewhere, but you still won't be able to find them.

Some of the same searching techniques developed for the Internet are now being introduced for the personal computer and may alleviate this issue (particularly for those of us creative types who are bureaucratically challenged). There are also a number of free-form text-management software programs that are available for creating searchable text databases with little effort — and which some organizations may find very useful.*

Ultimately, developing an organization-wide directory-based system for sharing files and compiling a set of organized and maintained knowledge resources has the virtue of forcing an organization to review its current practices, assess its resources and fashion a shared approach that will allow it to work more productively.

For more help on developing an effective strategy for building your organization's shared base of knowledge and mining your existing documentary record, consult the resources listed below in the Selected Bibliography under "Records Management."

Building Organization Capacity for Documentary Writing

Everything we've discussed so far in this section pertains to writing you are currently doing as a normal function of business. Whatever documentary value these materials have depends on the degree to which they reflect upon the relationship of your organization to the work it produces and the partners with whom it is engaged. They

* A good example is askSam™, available from askSam Systems (www.asksam.com).

convey the story of your organization as a byproduct of their function.

The next step is to cultivate documentary writing as an essential part of your practice. In this case, we'll talk narrowly of documentary writing as the process of creating a documentary record during or close to an event — not the creation of a piece of documentary expressed through writing (e.g., an autobiography or ethnography).

Writing is the most essential and flexible tool of the documentary craft. This is one area where you can and should build staff capacity with a very reasonable investment of effort. Ultimately, writing will reward you far more than any analogous expense to develop an internal capacity for media documentation.

Note Taking as an Art and Science

Most of us learned to take written notes in high school or college, and most of us do it in a very casual and futile way. How many meetings have you attended where you've sporadically jotted down some points as they've struck you? After the meeting, what have you done with your notes? How often have you gone back to review them? Perhaps you do so occasionally because you want to use something someone said, but you can't quite remember what it was. Except for this type of occasional use, much note taking is just so much wasted effort (unless you consider the usefulness of looking busy in a meeting).

APPROACH NOTE TAKING AS A METHOD FOR RECORDING A CONSISTENT DIMENSION OF WHAT YOU ARE WITNESSING.

A skilled documenter, particularly one with ethnographic training, approaches note taking as a method for recording a consistent dimension of what she is witnessing. As with a tape recording, a good set of notes provides a reference to reality that can be fruitfully revisited to explore and question the meaning of what has been set down.

Unlike a tape recording or even videotape, good observational notes can capture a broad set of emotional and relational nuances with a very wide lens. In addition, these notes can be produced in any environment, even when the necessary tools and materials are unavailable at the time. A disciplined documenter can observe an exchange and record a fairly detailed account shortly after it takes place — something no tape recorder or film camera can do.

There is a degree of science and training needed to master the techniques of note taking as well as an art to the observational skills necessary to create an effective record. Nonetheless, note taking is the most accessible of all documentary tools. If a staff person or persons has cultivated this tool successfully, the possibilities for developing a rich and useful documentary record expand dramatically.

Note taking can also produce other practical benefits — a good note taker relieves others of the necessity of looking busy at meetings — and can actually produce something with a useful life beyond the event.

Types of Note Taking

In general, the two types of note taking most useful to cultural organizations are fieldnotes and process notes.

Fieldnotes record the note-taker's interaction with an observed set of interactions and are usually compiled shortly after the event — the sooner the better. They provide a description of the interactions observed and the author's perception of the context in which the interactions took place. Fieldnotes do not attempt to capture every act and utterance that occurs during the interactions they are describing, but do attempt to record a consistent level of general description.

Fieldnotes are an overtly subjective document, usually used by the person doing the documentation to check his or her perceptions over the course of time. They are an invaluable means for figuring out cultural patterns in social interactions (i.e., when a person first encounters something unfamiliar, it stands out as a puzzling enigma).

FIELDNOTES ARE USUALLY USED BY THE PERSON DOING THE DOCUMENTATION TO CHECK HIS OR HER PERCEPTIONS OVER THE COURSE OF TIME.

By noting that perception at the time it happens, the person can go back and reexamine it after he has a bit more exposure to the context in which it occurs. Over time, a good ethnographer can use this as evidence for understanding the sets of social mores, belief systems and social rituals at play in a particular cultural system.

Within the tradition of anthropological writing, fieldnotes are essentially private working documents in which the writer can freely express tentative conclusions, misperceptions and his or her own biases, knowing these are subject to revision and clarification. However, if a clear social contract* exists between the observer and those being observed, it can be a powerful tool to test the observer's perceptions and move to a deeper understanding on the part of both the observer and observed.

An example of such an arrangement occurred between the organizations participating in the Ford Foundation's *Internationalizing New Works in the Performing Arts* initiative and the team of ethnographers working with them. In this instance, the ethnographers agreed to share all their working fieldnotes with the organizations, and the two parties agreed to develop a mutual set of observations they would share with the larger group.

As a framework of mutual trust developed over time, the relationship was described as having a "third eye." That is, the perceptions of the organizations and artists in working with each other could be tested against another set of perceptions. In many cases, it came to be seen as an essential part of the creative process of developing intercultural artistic work with the support of these organizations.

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* By "social contract," we mean a mutually agreed-upon and stated relationship between the observer and those observed. This contract accepts the relative shortcomings of the observer's beginning knowledge and assures the commitment of the observed to work with the observer toward a common understanding based on good faith.

For cultural organizations, it is possible to work with an outside observer in this fashion. The Ethnographic Approaches section (see below) suggests some approaches for developing such a relationship on a smaller scale.

It is also possible to directly cultivate such a relationship between an organization's staff and the creative workers with whom it is engaged. For example, a staff member and/or artist could play the role of observer, and the shared observations could be a useful alternative channel of communication.

Process notes are taken during the course of an interaction as it is happening. In general, these attempt to capture a consistent slice of the interaction — most often speech — as a recorded stream. As such, they can be analogous to an imperfect audio recording. However, they can also have the benefit of registering some level of the context of the interaction (e.g., who is present but not speaking, what physical movements are made by the speakers).

Process notes can focus on a particular element of interaction. For example:

- They can describe the movements of a dance rehearsal.
- They can examine the ways in which a particular issue is raised and dealt with in a meeting.
- They can describe the steps in a mechanical process involved in producing an art form such as pottery, weaving, sculpture, or multimedia production.

What raises this kind of note taking above the level of basic jotted meeting notes is the discipline a skilled note-taker uses in capturing a consistent level of information. Consider the fact that court stenographers can record a trial proceeding with such fidelity that audio or video recording has not yet supplanted them.

PROCESS NOTES ATTEMPT TO CAPTURE A CONSISTENT SLICE OF AN INTERACTION.

For the needs of cultural organizations, notes taken with paper and pen or typed on a laptop certainly suffice. With practice, a good note-taker can record a surprising amount of consistent detail. A good typist working on a laptop can even produce something approaching a verbatim transcript.

Cultural organizations can best use process notes if these notes are produced within a system of ongoing documentation and knowledge sharing. Within a relatively short time, you can build a body of documentary materials that provide a useable record of your work, one that can prove invaluable when you produce reports, educational materials and other public products.

Note Taking Techniques

Here are some basic techniques that you and your staff can use to improve the quality of note taking in your organization.

Draw a Road Map

One of the difficult things to do while taking process notes — or reconstruct while writing fieldnotes — is the sequence of turn-taking during an interaction involving a number of people. As you jot down who is saying or doing what, it is easy to lose the stream of conversation or action.

You can cut down on the observational interference if you begin by drawing a literal map of the setting. For example, if you are recording notes during a conference meeting in which the participants are seated around a table, draw a rectangle or circle to represent the table and a series of circles at the place of each participant around the table. Number the participant circles relative to your location (1 for the person opposite you, 2 for the person next to that person and so on). Then write down a numbered list with the people's names.

DRAWING A "ROAD MAP" OF A MEETING CAN HELP YOU KEEP TRACK OF WHO SAYS OR DOES WHAT.

When you note something a person says or does, don't take the time to write his or her name. Instead, list the person by the number you've assigned them. This will allow you to focus on the conversation or action as it is happening — or to jog your memory of who said what if you are making fieldnotes after an event.

With some practice, this technique will also work if you are taking notes of an event where the participants are moving about. By freezing a tableau in your mind at the outset, you can more easily follow participants as they move about and reduce your own level of confusion in an unfamiliar setting.

If you are in a position to use a laptop or even a personal digital assistant (PDA) to take notes, this technique has an additional benefit. If you combine each person's number with a symbol (*1, *2, *3, etc.), once you are finished taking notes, you can simply do a search-and-replace to insert each person's name in the proper place.

Focus on a Few Elements

In the course of taking process notes, it's easy to trip up if you feel like you've missed something and then try to go back to set it down right away. By the time you've done this, the conversation or action has moved on to something else, and you'll find yourself struggling to keep up.

The key to taking good process notes is to establish a rhythm you can sustain over the course of your note taking. One way to do this is to develop a mental filter that registers a set of action elements or a level of verbal content, but doesn't try to capture everything.

For example, if you're trying to capture a stream of conversation, you might begin by just focusing on nouns and verbs: "I was concerned about how the timing in the third act went" becomes "concerned timing 3rd act."

If you're taking notes on a series of actions, focus on the physical elements of the activity: "1 faces 2, raises left hand palm out, 2 smiles, shakes head no." You can see that try to record either of these communication streams represents a challenge in itself; it would be nearly impossible to move from talk to physical activity and back.

It's also very effective to forget about capturing the stream of conversation at all, but instead produce a content summary removed from the actual words spoken (e.g., "1: timing issues/act 3 – 4 steps on lines." "Audience reaction to cross-cultural work: need more preparation before performance.").

If you take this route, you should again aim at maintaining your notes as a recorded stream. Don't mentally edit the conversation and only jot down the "main points." Instead, approach this summarization as a constantly maintained filtering process.

Given the challenge of maintaining a constant stream of note taking, you shouldn't try to be a participant in the conversation. It's better, in fact, if you can become a bit detached.

To put yourself in a detached frame of mind, don't look directly at people if the verbal content of a conversation is the focus of your attention. Rather, look off into the middle distance, catching their motions out of the corner of your eye. Concentrate on what is coming into your ears until you become proficient at running the stream of activity through your mental filter and setting it down in a regular rhythm of note taking. Once you're able to do this consistently, you can begin to take note of other elements of the interaction, such as your immediate impression of the speaker's emotional state.

If you miss something, let it go. As discussed below, there will be time to return after the event is over to fill in missing details.

Develop Your Own Shorthand

You don't have to study stenography to take effective notes. Over time, however, you will probably find it useful to develop your own shorthand for recording common phrases and words.

One technique is to drop vowels from words, as long as this doesn't render the result undecipherable. In the example above, "concerned timing 3rd act" could become "cncnd tmng 3rd act."

If you are trying to record emotional content, develop some system for separating your observations from the content of speech, such as describing observed behavior within brackets. For example: "1 to 4 [laughs] — 'why do think that?'" For noting physical actions, you can develop your own shorthand — something akin to a football diagram. If such note taking becomes a key resource and central practice for you and your organization, however, it's important to note that specialized notation systems for movement, such as Laban notation, would ultimately serve you much better.

Whatever method you devise, remember that you should add time for producing a "translated" version. Not only is this necessary if you are sharing your notes with others, but it will also prove invaluable as your immediate memory of the event begins to fade.

Revisit and Reconstruct as Soon as Possible

Whether you are taking process notes or compiling fieldnotes after an event, the most critical thing you can do

is to carve out time as soon as possible to set down your observations or to review and revise your process notes. If you do this consistently, with practice you might be surprised at your ability to reconstruct an event from your short-term memory.

It's not unusual for an experienced ethnographer to sit down immediately after a conversation and be able to reconstruct an almost verbatim account. In many situations, the most effective way to create a record of a conversation is not by tape recording, but by capturing the highlights immediately after the conversation has taken place.

Certainly there is a subjective process at work in this reconstruction. But the sooner this is done after the event, the closer the result is to the lived experience of the observer at the time of the event.

With regard to process notes: By immediately reflecting after the event, you will usually find you can recapture the passages you missed during the heat of the exchange. This is why you shouldn't pause during an event to go back to something you've missed; instead of compounding the problem, you can generally backfill this information soon after. Don't worry if you're not able to do this at first. Again, this is a learned skill that comes with time.

When you are in the process of revisiting an event for note taking, you should also try to identify and clarify where you are injecting your own interpretation based on incomplete knowledge or by drawing on other experience. This is the place to record what you may have been thinking at the time in response to the events that you were witnessing. Use some form of notation (e.g., bracketing) to make this clear. This will prove helpful to yourself and others over the course of time by framing your perceptions as a set of hypotheses to be tested through further interaction — not as a set of concealed biases.

Prepare Your Notes for General Use

Before your notes are useful to others as a form of cultural documentation, you need to take one more step and produce a legible format that can be shared.

If you have a set of handwritten notes, take the time to transcribe them; don't assume others can read your indecipherable scribblings. Whether typed or handwritten, produce a version for distribution that translates your own shorthand so others can read it.

Admittedly, this step adds a bit of a burden to the process, but it is absolutely essential. You should consider it the equivalent of processing and printing a set of photos from a roll of film. Until you've completed this step, you haven't secured the knowledge captured in your notes as a common good — and probably not for your own good either, since you're likely to have problems reading your own notes after a few months have passed.

Using a Computer for Note Taking

The widespread use of laptops and PDAs has made it far easier to produce high-quality notes in many settings. There are many situations, such as formal meetings, when the use of a laptop is perfectly acceptable, enabling

you to cut down significantly on the work of creating, editing and distributing process notes.

If you are a decent typist, you can dramatically increase your effectiveness as a note-taker by using a computer and employing the tips outlined above. With practice, you may be able to produce a transcript of a conversation comparable to a stenographer's output. However, a computer introduces a new element to the social context of an event, and you need to be careful not to become intrusive.

WHEN USING A COMPUTER FOR NOTE TAKING, BE CAREFUL NOT TO BECOME A DISTRACTION.

To avoid becoming a distraction while taking notes on a computer, you need to blend into the background as much as possible. Try to keep an even touch on the keyboard as you type. Restrain from pounding away at the keyboard in your zeal to keep up; after all, it's an electronic keyboard, not a manual typewriter.

If you can maintain a steady stream of typing, you will soon become an element of background noise the other participants will quickly disregard. But if you pause and start in a burst of typing after someone speaks, you'll dramatically impede the natural flow of conversation.

If you have the resources and technical know-how, you may find it particularly useful in some settings to use a PDA with an external folding keyboard attached. Such a setup can be very compact and unobtrusive, can be used without external power for long periods at a time, and is easy to keep ready at hand

Making Documentary Note Taking a Part of Your Organization Process

We hope we have conveyed the degree to which note taking can be cultivated as a skill and the extent to which its effectiveness increases with a reasonable degree of discipline. For these reasons, you should consider incorporating documentary note taking as part of your organization's formal business practice.

In most cultural organizations, note taking is approached as a matter of individual choice or an onerous task that gets rotated among staff members at meetings. We recommend you instead think of this as a specialized role that can add value to your organization and provide an avenue of professional development for your staff. Identify several staff members who are observant and articulate, and encourage them to cultivate this skill as part of their role within the organization.

Instead of rotating note taking for meetings among staff members, make it part of one or more of your staff members' job descriptions. Unless you're a very small organization, distribute this function among several staff members so that you won't lose an important resource in the case of staff turnover. Review your organization's cycle of work and identify the regular activities for which it would be valuable to have a regular documentary record.

Don't just think about routine activities such as weekly staff meetings or annual board meetings. Instead, think in

terms of the core work activities of your organization:

- Is your organization involved in producing new performance work? Then identify the places where the development of new work takes place and think about where it would make sense for one of your staff members to observe and document that activity.
- Do you organize an annual summer workshop for teachers? Then think about whether a formal written record of some of the discussions or activities would provide a useful resource for future workshops or for your organization's general development.

Putting Your Written Documentary Notes to Work

If your organization makes this investment and incorporates the materials produced into an overall organization document management and distribution strategy, it will significantly increase the pool of shared knowledge it can draw upon to:

- create written materials for the public,
- communicate with funders, and
- educate new staff and board members.

Perhaps more importantly, you will have a set of resources that can support a more reflexive approach to doing your work. Remember from our discussion of documentary approaches that reflexivity is the discipline of creating a space in which you can gain a degree of perspective to observe yourself and others interacting in process, and which can help you adjust to unforeseen factors as they arise.

One of the best ways you can build reflexive practice among staff and volunteers through documentation is by encouraging a review process proceeding from your note taking. This will help bring multiple perspectives to the fore if they exist and make them visible to everyone in a constructive way. It can also help guard against errors of fact or interpretation that appear in the written documentation.

You will need to be strategic in how you establish and encourage this practice. Setting up a system for regularly recording written notes will not place an undue burden on most organizations. Asking for feedback and discussion based on those documents raises the ante. You will need to focus this cycle of feedback and discussion on those areas in which your organization has the greatest investment and desire to grow. If your organization is large enough, you don't necessarily need to involve the entire staff. In fact, it will probably be most fruitful to engage those staff members and collaborating outsiders who are the direct practitioners in these areas.

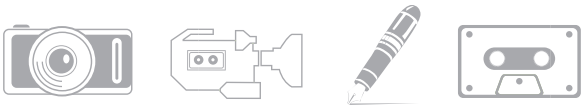
From the most practical standpoint, there are other benefits to developing a documentary habit among your staff. You might look at the present methods of communicating among your staff and consider whether there are ways to substitute strategic note taking and reporting. In many instances, you're likely to find this is a more efficient way of working.

If your organization is large enough that staff members are working on different projects at the same time, you may struggle with the problem of keeping the whole organization informed. A common way of dealing with this is to have a regular staff-wide meeting to review the current status of projects. In practice, many of these meetings turn out to be a waste of staff time or even counter-productive. People not directly involved in the project receive a level of detail they don't need and find boring, and thus end up tuning out.

Instead, if you institute a process of organized note taking during project-focused meetings, you can draw upon this resource to give the rest of the staff access to the information they need. You might ask project managers to draw from these notes to make a weekly or monthly report using a standard form you develop together. This could then be circulated to the staff and maintained in your online knowledge base to provide a ready reference for each project. By using a consistent format, you may also be able to build a basis of comparison for future decision-making about which projects to pursue.

Such an approach also makes a virtue of distinguishing between informal process discussions among a limited number of project-specific staff and a set of more formal communications derived from a body of consistent notes. Now that many organizations use email for internal communication, it's easy to have the illusion that all staff members are in the loop. In practice, the channels of communication established through email can inadvertently — or purposely — cut off a staff member from the flow of communication. Establishing an ongoing documentation process of this sort is often a better way of closing the loop than general meetings buttressed by email.

In the sections that follow, we discuss using media tools for documentation and the issues and possibilities for their use. If you'd like to further explore the tools and techniques of written notes, you'll find useful resources in Appendix B: Suggestions for Further Reading, in the section on Ethnographic Approaches.



Creating a Working Organizational Archive

Before we turn to the use of media formats in documentation, it's useful to know some of the issues involved in maintaining the kinds of materials these methods produce. Because media and technology (specifically digital technology) have changed very rapidly in recent years, it's even more important to know a little bit about preserving media documentation.

Why You Need an Archives — Right Now

By necessity, cultural organizations are often creatures of the moment — future-oriented, driven to do as much as they can do with limited resources, and fueled by a clear sense of mission. It's often difficult for them to think of their work as needing preservation. Without some forethought, it's likely that much of what they do will be lost.

This lesson has come home with the force of experience among some cultural organizations. A notable recent example took place in the world of dance in the United States.

In the 1980s and 1990s, U.S. dance professionals realized the field was in danger of losing its recent historical legacy. Two major causes of this dilemma:

1. Unlike literature or formal musical traditions, this art form does not by itself create a record.
2. It is difficult to capture three-dimensional dance performance in media, and what media documentation existed was seriously in need of physical conservation.

This led to the establishment of the National Initiative to Preserve American Dance (NIPAD) as a concerted field-wide effort to document historical and contemporary dance. As a result, the dance field has been among the most progressive in embracing new technologies and documentation techniques.

Even the most compelling piece of audiovisual documentation is worthless if not preserved. It's been a little over a century since the first moving images appeared on film. But to the dismay of many, a large body of film recorded on nitrite-based materials such as celluloid film has deteriorated so rapidly that it is irretrievably lost. Because film was an emerging technology, the preservation shortcomings of early materials were not fully understood until much later.

Many today worry that the advances digital technology have introduced to media documentation have their own significant preservation issues that we do not yet fully understand. It's worth taking a few moments to think about how you can increase the probability that the precious documentary materials you produce today will be available for use tomorrow.

Things Fall Apart: Environmental Conditions, Time and Common Storage Formats

"Preservation media" has a specific meaning for experts. Every single form of physical media used to record something for posterity has its own rate of deterioration, depending on the conditions in which it is stored. A medium considered to be "archival" in quality has a sufficiently reasonable life expectancy to allow the knowledge it contains to be transferred beyond one or more generations. This does not mean preserving a documentary artifact for all time, but rather preserving it until the knowledge it contains can be transferred with the greatest fidelity to a suitable medium in the future.

Paper

Paper is the undisputed champion for archival storage. As long as it is relatively low in acid content, paper will last for hundreds, even thousands, of years. However, paper with a relatively high acid content deteriorates very quickly (as anyone who has dealt with a stack of old newspapers knows).

Because of changes in paper production during the late 19th century, the issue of de-acidifying paper has become a major headache for archival centers such as the Library of Congress. If you are truly committed to creating a permanent record, then paper is your best means of doing this — as long as the paper you use has a relatively low acid content. Until recently, this meant significant cost. Fortunately, low-acid paper is far more readily available today for a modest premium.

THERE ARE A NUMBER OF STEPS YOU SHOULD TAKE TO SAFELY STORE PHOTOGRAPHIC FILM AND PRINTS.

This also means that if you are creating a documentary record in other media, it is worth creating a paper version to support it and back it up. Many oral historians don't consider the job done until the tape recording is transcribed. While this may reflect an historian's bias toward books and manuscripts, it's good practice from an archival standpoint. If you want to be absolutely sure that some record of your audio and video recordings is likely to be preserved over time, you should at least create written logs of their content — and preferably a full transcript.

Photographic Film

Photographs can have excellent archival storage qualities depending on their format and the conditions in which they are kept. The most stable physical photographic medium is black-and-white silver halide negatives, followed by black-and-white prints.

In the case of color photography, the dyes used today are far more stable than those in early color photographs. However, color prints produced by traditional wet photography methods are generally less stable than black-and-

white prints. For color, slide transparencies and negatives are the most stable traditional media, as long as they are stored in archivally stable containers.

If you use film photography, one of the most important things you should do is discard the negative holders in which the film processor usually packages the film negatives. Then replace these holders with archivally stable polypropylene or polyethylene plastic sleeves available from an archival supplies distributor such as Light Impressions (www.lightimpressionsdirect.com).

Similarly, in the case of slide film, never use enclosed plastic slide holders of the sort sold in stationery stores. Make sure you are using archivally stable plastic slide holders. Otherwise, the gases emitted by less stable plastics will damage the surface of your film, and the unstable plastic may also fuse with your film over time.

Above all, you keep your photographic film in a space that is environmentally stable and not exposed to light. Ideally, it should have stable, low humidity and a temperature that remains at 70 degrees or below.

If you cannot create ideal conditions for storing film, try to find a space that at least will not undergo wide variations in conditions. It's better to store film in a room with a 10-degree variation in temperature and a reasonable range of humidity than in an attic or other unheated space that will fluctuate widely in temperature and humidity. Store your film and prints in a cabinet, a closet or archivally sound paper boxes that will protect them from exposure to light (which will speed up any chemical reactions that degrade film).

Physical film and prints can lose information over time because the chemical composition of their materials can degrade. For digital photography, this is not an issue at all, because the binary bits of data that store their information cannot by themselves shift over time. However, the magnetic and plastic materials used to store this information on computer hard disks, tape drives, CD-ROM and DVD-ROM have their own chemical and magnetic issues that can alter the digital information they contain. (We'll touch on these issues below.)

Assuming the digital information is preserved, you can print out multiple copies that have a high degree of fidelity to the original digital photo, at relatively low expense. But be aware that these paper copies have their own archival issues. In the case of inkjet printers, many of the dyes currently used are fairly transient and will fade quickly.

Recognizing this issue, inkjet printer manufacturers such as Epson have begun to develop separate lines of color inks and papers that have better archival qualities. If you want to preserve your digital photography on paper, you should pay the slight premium for these printing products. Otherwise, you should take care to preserve the original data in the most stable media.

Unless you are working with a documentary filmmaker or have an existing set of 8mm or 16mm films, you probably won't be storing motion picture film. If you happen to have motion picture film that was made before the 1950s, you should contact the media department of your nearest university library. The earliest motion picture film stock produced on nitrite-based plastic is extremely flammable and even potentially explosive.

The acetate film stock that replaced it until the mid-1950s is not dangerous, but it is archivally unstable. Film produced since the mid-1950s on polyester stock is stable. However, it is subject to dye impermanence and should be stored in stainless steel containers or archivally stable plastic containers.

Magnetic Tape

The most common consumer and "prosumer"* products for storing audio and video today employ magnetic tape in a number of formats. For audio, magnetic tape has been in general use since the 1940s — first on reel-to-reel tape and since the 1960s on audiocassette. Since the 1990s, cassette magnetic tape has been used to store consumer digital audio and video as well.

Magnetic tape captures information by magnetizing small metallic particles affixed to a plastic tape backing. Over time, the technologies used for magnetic tape have advanced significantly in terms of:

- the plastic tape stock used
- the granularity, composition and stability of the magnetic medium
- the chemical characteristics of the adhesives used to affix the magnetized particles to the tape backing

The tape stock and adhesives used in good quality tape today are relatively stable in contrast to earlier materials. For example, acetate-based tape using earlier adhesives is subject to a condition preservationists call "sticky shed syndrome," in which whole pieces of the recording clump together and separate from the backing.

THE ONLY MAGNETIC TAPE MEDIUM CONSIDERED TO HAVE PRESERVATION VALUE IS REEL-TO-REEL TAPE.

The serious preservation threat to the magnetic medium used in tape is the tendency of the magnetized particles to lose their charge over time or to transfer it to adjoining particles. An important factor here is the amount of "real estate" a recorded signal occupies on a tape.

Reel-to-reel audiotape and videotape formats (you won't find reel-to-reel consumer video today) provide a greater physical area to store the recorded signal. Standard analog audiocassette tapes are 1/8 inch wide, while the most common reel-to-reel format used in field recording is ¼ inch wide. Tape stock used in a studio setting can be 1 inch wide and more. Another factor is the speed at which the tape moves across the recording head; the faster the speed, the more area available for storing a signal.

Audiocassettes are usually recorded at one-half the normal speed of reel-to-reel tapes: 3¾ inches per second as opposed to 7½ inches per second. A faster recording speed means higher fidelity, because a greater range of audio frequencies can be stored. For this reason, audiocassettes have never been a good medium for high-fidelity music recording — although modern audiocassettes recorded on good analog equipment can produce high-fidelity spoken-word recordings.

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* As digital technologies bring professional-quality recording equipment within the reach of many consumers, "prosumer" products have emerged as a new (and probably fleeting) category of products. Priced for the upper range of the consumer market, prosumer products have a subset of higher-end features found on current professional equipment normally costing much more.

Besides providing higher recorded sound quality, a larger physical storage area works against migration of the magnetic charges. An added factor is the thickness of the tape backing used, since a thicker backing provides more insulation to prevent signal transfer from one layer of tape to another.

Because of all of these factors, the only magnetic tape medium considered to have preservation value is reel-to-reel tape. Professional audio archives will routinely make preservation master copies of audiocassettes on reel-to-reel tapes — something that is probably beyond the capacity of most cultural organizations. This means you will inevitably face a preservation issue in storing any of your magnetic tapes, whether audio or video. The potential issues and the possible solutions are slightly different depending on whether you are storing analog or digital information.

Analog tapes process the audio signal as a series of sound waves and store the signal in wave form on the tape. As an analog magnetic signal deteriorates over time, the quality of the audio or video signal deteriorates but remains recognizable. In addition, the magnetically stored information from one layer of tape can become imprinted on an adjacent level, causing an echo effect.*

In the case of *digital tape*, which stores the recorded information as a series of digital 1 and 0 bits, there is no danger of sound deterioration. However, the potential for signal loss is greater because migration of the magnetic charge can render the recorded signal indecipherable. To make matters worse, digital cassette tape recording heads store the audio or video signal through a helical scanning process that intentionally overlays one signal diagonally on top of another to store more information in a smaller space.

On the plus side, this has meant that digital audio recording on cassette finally achieved sufficient fidelity for use in recording many kinds of musical performances. On the negative side, while analog recording cassettes have relatively poor archival qualities, digital recording cassettes are even worse. Where analog tapes can suffer degradation of their signal, digital tapes can become totally unusable.

So what can you reasonably do to preserve your recordings on magnetic media? If you are storing audiocassettes or videocassettes, the same environmental considerations apply as those for photographic film. A space with stable temperature, humidity and limited light exposure will maximize the life of magnetic recordings. It is also very important to avoid storing magnetic tapes on metal shelfs or in a metal disk drawer or filing cabinet, which can conduct electricity. Instead, store tapes on wooden shelves or in wood cabinets. This is the most that many cultural organizations can reasonably do in the case of analog recordings, and it will help to significantly extend their life.

If you have a body of analog recordings, you should try to find a preservation partner in a university library or other professional archives that has better capacity for storing these materials than you do. If you do this,

* In the case of reel-to-reel tape, it's standard archive practice to store tapes with the end of the tape on the outside of the reel ("tails out"). This doesn't prevent such imprinting but puts the faint audio echo temporally before the main signal during playback, since a pre-echo is far less perceptually evident to us.

however, make sure you develop an explicit agreement specifying which party holds ownership rights and how you and others may use these materials.

If you intend to hold onto analog recordings, you should at least try to transfer older recordings to a new tape medium if they are over 10 years old. Creating a backup of an older analog tape on a modern cassette or reel will assure the recording has prolonged life, but at the cost of an unavoidable degradation of quality. So be sure to hold onto the original as well.

Today you would be well advised to transfer analog recordings to a digital backup format that can be periodically copied without any loss of quality, provided you have the in-house technical know-how and equipment to do this. Otherwise, you may again be able to establish a relationship with a university or other audio archives for this purpose. Or, you can turn to a commercial audio recording studio to copy your tapes.

In the case of digital recording, we are still at a technology crossroads, without a preservation standard storage medium. If you produce your own digital magnetic tapes, whether audio or video, you should plan to develop the capacity for making digital copies in another format. As computer technology evolves, this will become easier and easier to do.

If you're not presently capable of making copies, you should put this on your to-do list in four or five years. Your digital audiotapes and videotapes should still be in good shape provided they are properly stored. Plus, there will almost certainly be a good selection of out-of-the-box solutions for copying digital tape to computer disk, DVD-ROM or some new long-term storage medium yet to be introduced.

YOU WOULD BE WELL ADVISED TO TRANSFER ANALOG RECORDINGS TO A DIGITAL BACKUP FORMAT THAT CAN BE PERIODICALLY COPIED WITHOUT ANY LOSS OF QUALITY.

If you have the resources and are not too techno-phobic, you can begin to tackle this task today. Many new computers come equipped with high-speed USB or FireWire ports that can transfer audio and video data in its original digital format from recording device to computer hard drive.* You can then make multiple digital copies of your original. High-capacity external USB or FireWire hard drives can now be purchased at a reasonable cost and are a good medium for making backup digital copies.

You can also store your audio or video data on CD-ROM or DVD-ROM, provided that your computer has the appropriate hardware and software. From an archival standpoint, if you copy your audio or video to CD or DVD, you should copy your original as a data file — not as an audio or video CD or DVD. Use a straight file-copying utility for this purpose, rather than the DVD-authoring software that comes with some new computers.** These

* It is crucial that you make a digital transfer. Using the audio inputs in your computer involves a conversion of the original digital signal to an analog one, with a corresponding loss of quality. You will need to consult the manual for the digital recording equipment you are using on the best way to make the transfer.

** For example, a popular suite of CD- and DVD-burning utilities in use today is Roxio Easy Media Creator™. Rather than using the DVD Builder™ application it provides, you should use the Creator Classic™ file-copying utility.

will render the digital signal for display on a television using a compression codec. Maintaining the original data format assures that none of the original digital information is lost.

CD-ROM and DVD-ROM

At first glance, CDs and DVDs would seem to be the ideal medium available today for the preservation of audio or video documentation. CDs and DVDs definitely offer real advantages over magnetic recording media from a preservation standpoint. Since they record data by physically altering the composition of an organic dye substrate with a laser, they are not subject to the issues of deterioration and signal migration that affect magnetic media. Nonetheless, there are several ways in which CDs and DVDs can be physically damaged through neglect or natural aging processes.

CD and DVD players read data by reflecting a laser beam against the disk and measuring the scattering of light by the microscopic pits in the recording substrate. If you have children, you probably know how easily the protective surface layer of CDs and DVDs can be scratched. A surface scratch can scatter the laser signal and prevent a player from correctly reading the information stored on the interior recording layer. A little physical surface damage can thus easily render a portion or a whole disk unreadable.

NEITHER CDS NOR DVDS CAN STRICTLY BE CONSIDERED A PRESERVATION MEDIUM — DESPITE THEIR APPARENT ATTRACTIVENESS AS A LONG-TERM STORAGE SOLUTION.

There are other potential ways of inadvertently destroying CDs and DVDs. If you are in the habit of using a permanent marker to label disks, you may be dooming the disk to eventual failure, since the inks used in some permanent makers can penetrate the disk and eventually damage the recording media layer.

There are also claims that the organic dyes used in some recordable CDs and DVDs are subject to decomposition over time, particularly when exposed to light. You can probably guard against this, however, by using disks from established manufacturers such as Maxell, Phillips, Sony, TEAC or Kodak. Rigorous testing by Kodak, for example, has indicated their recordable CDs may last as long as 100 years with proper storage.

Finally, CDs are laminated with several layers of plastic and recording medium, and anything that is laminated with different materials will tend to de-laminate over time.

Given all of these factors, neither CDs nor DVDs can strictly be considered a preservation solution — despite their apparent attractiveness as a long-term storage medium.

The key, yet again, is storage. Maintaining a stable storage environment with steady room temperature and humidity will minimize any potential deterioration of CDs and DVDs. Each CD or DVD should be kept in its protective storage container, either its original plastic jewel case or a separate Tyvek or polypropylene plastic sleeve. Use an adhesive label instead of labeling the disk directly. Finally, since the cost of recordable CDs and DVDs has dropped significantly, you should consider making at least two copies of each disk and perhaps storing these in separate locations.

For more information on basic preservation techniques and materials, a useful starting point is the Library of Congress website (www.loc.gov/preserv/). Another useful resource is the Stanford University Libraries Conservation OnLine website (palimpsest.Stanford.edu).

Creating a Formal Storage Space

Regardless of whether you can follow the most up-to-date guidelines for preserving your documentation materials, the best way to ensure your materials have a prolonged and useful life is to dedicate a separate space for storing them in an organized way.

It doesn't have to be a large space. A cabinet or closet, particularly one that can be locked, can be an ideal location for a smaller organization, provided it meets the essential storage conditions: relatively stable and low humidity and consistent temperature maintained at or below 70 degrees.

But make sure it is a dedicated space. In most cultural organizations where space is at a premium, the boundaries between your documentation collection and other materials in active production use are otherwise likely to blur.

Establish a Basic Organization Scheme

Your archive should have a simple, clear organization scheme that will help ensure materials don't go astray and can be located easily. Good physical organization will also help ensure the preservation of materials by encouraging a consistent approach to storage.

From a preservation standpoint, a basic organizing principle is to group materials by storage format — not by project or subject area. For example, keep all of your photographic negatives together in a sequential file, housed in plastic storage sleeves. Similarly, store your CDs and DVDs together in a series of notebooks with sleeves or housed in jewel cases kept in storage boxes.

Use a consistent labeling scheme that will help you quickly locate disparate materials from the same project or activity. At the most basic end of the spectrum, label each separate physical item with the project, date and subject, and give a sequential number to each item as it is added to a group of similar objects.

A CONSISTENT LABELING SCHEME CAN HELP YOU QUICKLY LOCATE DISPARATE MATERIALS FROM THE SAME PROJECT OR ACTIVITY.

Give a number to every physical item: If you have three audiocassettes from the same concert, number them 1, 2 and 3. Use the date and subject to identify those that belong together. You can also list (1 of 3), (2 of 3), etc., in the case of multiple items documenting the same event.

From a collections standpoint it's far better to use an overall number sequence for each type of material. In this way, if audiocassette number 15 in your collection of 20 cassettes is missing, you be able to spot this easily — and hopefully retrieve it. It's also useful to list the person who created the documentary item as part of its label.

If it is useful to your way of working, you can build on this general approach by developing a more extended cataloguing system. One possibility is creating an ID scheme that ties the physical item together with a document summary. For example, you might create a catalog ID scheme that includes the following:

- a letter code that identifies the project
- a set of initials for the person who created the item
- a letter code for recording format
- the item number

Under such a system, a videocassette might be labeled TDP-JD-VC-21 (Tango Documentation Project — John Dempsey — Videocassette 21). You could then use this code for the paper log that summarizes what is on the cassette and the word processing filename that stores the electronic version of the log.

Clearly, there are advantages and disadvantages for developing such a detailed scheme. The most important aspect of any system you develop is the virtue of consistency. A very basic scheme that is consistently used will have greater benefit than an overly complex one that is soon abandoned.

If you are able to support a cataloguing system that can better assist you in locating and identifying what is in your documentary resources, you will have amplified the practical value and potential future use of your collection.

Establish Access Strategies and Procedures

This raises an additional organizing principle you should try to follow in establishing a documentary collection for your organization. You want your collection to provide ongoing value through active use, but you must also ensure those items are not lost or damaged through that use.

The importance of balancing those competing goals can't be overemphasized. If, for example, you need to send several photographic negatives to a print house for use in a publication, can you be certain they will be returned — and returned to the proper place? If your original materials are lost, then they are gone forever.

DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION HAVE SAFEGUARDS IN PLACE TO PROTECT AGAINST THE LOSS OF ORIGINAL MATERIALS?

To safeguard against this, you should evaluate the items in your collection by whether the original must be used for production purposes or whether a copy of the original can be substituted. Ideally, you should always retain the original item as the master copy and make lending copies of every reproducible item in advance.

In this way, there is little danger of losing materials; if a copy is lost, you can always make a new one. For a small organization with scant resources, however, this is often impossible. In this case, you should try to make an ironclad rule that at the time an item is needed, a copy is made and the original is returned to storage.

Even this will not be possible for some organizations, and in the case of some types of materials (e.g., photographic negatives), you will still need to use the originals. At the very least, a copy-for-use policy needs to

be maintained for digital materials, something that is easily accomplished. Take a few moments to copy those digital photos from the photo CD your photographer gave you, and don't give out the original.

When original materials must be taken out for use, create a system of accountability to help improve the odds they will be returned. One way is to establish a gatekeeper for your collection — an organization archivist who has the key to the storage cabinet and makes sure that people borrowing materials fill out the sign-out sheet. Or, keep a set of place-keeper cards that borrowers sign voluntarily and put in the place of the material borrowed.

As in the case of a cataloging system, you will need to balance the working realities of your organization with the amount of work necessary for establishing and maintaining a tracking system. You should at least make the effort to set up a rudimentary system; the very act of doing this will create some level of accountability. Without it, you can be fairly sure your materials will soon disappear into the well of organizational inertia.

Keep an Eye on Changing Technology

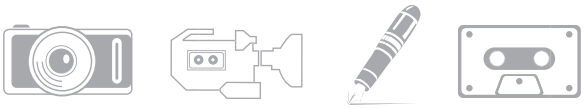
We are in the best and worst of times as far as the technology used in documentation is concerned. Digital technology opens up new possibilities that expand access to professional documentation tools. At the same time, it creates new problems for safeguarding the materials created.

One reason for keeping changes in technology in mind is to safeguard against losing access to information stored in an outmoded format. The best approach is to periodically review the materials in your collection and copy them to current formats.

A further reason is the very real possibility that new storage media will be developed with better preservation characteristics. As these appear, it's likely they will be expensive initially but will eventually decline in price as they are more widely adapted. There's no need to jump at new storage technologies. But as these technologies prove to be reliable and cost-effective, it will certainly be worth migrating your valuable information.

A final reason to watch developments in this area is that new tools for organizing and accessing digital information are emerging, even as the capacity for storing large amounts of data are increasing. If you begin by establishing a collection of documentary resources with a workable organization scheme, then you will be well positioned to increasingly move your collection to digital formats you can easily retrieve and actively use.

In the sections below on photography, audio recording and video documentation, we'll touch on some of the digital access tools that are currently available.



Audiovisual Documentation

We've tried to make the point that written documentation is the essential base upon which you should build any of your organization's efforts to create a useful documentary record. That said, there will be times when audiovisual documentation is the only way to capture and powerfully convey your organization's work.

The first key to building effective audiovisual documentation is to build it upon an existing documentation strategy and set of internal practices. The second is to employ the most effective audiovisual technology and approach, and develop the appropriate partnerships necessary to address your needs.

Planning for Audiovisual Documentation

The first question you should consider: Will your organization be best served by establishing an ongoing program of audiovisual documentation, or are your needs limited to occasional documentation of a single event or activity?

If you have the occasional need for audiovisual documentation — particularly if this is related to the production of a public product — you should plan to hire external professional help. It is simply not worth the time and effort to try to produce a viable audiovisual product with existing internal resources.

It's tempting in this day of increasingly available, highly sophisticated photographic, audio and video technology to think you or someone on your staff can produce a credible audio or video recording. However, there is far more to successful audiovisual production than pointing and shooting. A professional photographer, videographer or sound engineer has the skills to translate a situation through his or her particular medium and deliver a product that will capture the sensory environment and successfully convey a story.

IF YOU HAVE ONLY THE OCCASIONAL NEED FOR AUDIOVISUAL DOCUMENTATION, HIRE A PROFESSIONAL.

The basic costs of employing an outside professional may seem steep for a small or medium-sized organization with limited resources. However, you will be far more likely to waste your organization's resources and time if you try to take on an audiovisual documentation project internally and then find it is beyond your capacity.

At the same time, working with an outside professional may entail excessive and unexpected costs if you do not

have a basic set of knowledge about the following:

- what the particular documentation format can and cannot do
- what your responsibilities are in working with a professional
- whether your documentation goals can be met with the aid of a particular audiovisual technology

In the sections below on photography, audio recording and videography, we will address some of the specific possibilities and issues involved.

For the occasional audiovisual project, the basic message is this: don't try this yourself at home - but do invest the time and effort into knowing enough about the tools and techniques of audiovisual documentation to be able to work as an effective partner with a professional. The results of an effective collaboration can be far more cost-effective than trying to do it all by yourself.

Addressing Ongoing Needs

But what if your organization has an ongoing need for audiovisual documentation? Is there some point at which you should try to develop this capacity internally? Unless there is enough documentation work to justify devoting a full-time professional staff position to this function, then you will have to balance resources, talents and existing internal audiovisual needs before you can answer this question.

Factor 1: If your work already uses some form of audiovisual technology, you should begin by thinking about developing new internal capacity that is directly related to the technology you already use.

For example, suppose you are a presenting organization operating a professionally mixed sound system during performances. In this case, adding the equipment and skills necessary to produce professional audio recordings in a range of situations would be a sensible investment. You also might like to regularly videotape performances, but this requires adding a completely different set of skills and equipment. If audiotaping can serve many or most of your documentation needs, then you would be wise to restrict your investment in this area.

If you do not already have a set of related skills among your existing staff, then you probably should not add a set of audiovisual documentation duties to someone's current job description. However, it is a reasonable investment to support a staff member's professional training when it is related to his or her existing duties and skill set.

For example, if you have a graphic designer on your staff with the ability and desire to build a set of photographic skills — and if these new skills will bring additional value to your organization — this is probably a sensible investment. In such a case, your designer's job duties could expand to include occasional photographic documentation of your organization's activities.

On the other hand, if a staff member has an interest in audiovisual documentation — but this is not related to his or her current job function — then it makes little sense to give that person training for this purpose. In this case, your best choice would be to hire someone with the professional skills you need on a part-time basis — if

you can find such a person. More likely, you could look to develop an ongoing contractual relationship with an outside professional.

Factor 2: Another factor to take into account is the degree to which a single individual can manage a particular audiovisual technology. With photography and audio recording, it is often possible for a single person to produce a high-quality result, but professional video requires a two-person crew at a minimum.

A photographic or audio recording program can be completely staffed with a single part- or full-time position. But if you are planning to staff a video recording program, you should be prepared for another order of magnitude. In the case of video, you may be able to support an ongoing program with a mix of internal and external staffing. A staff member may be able to play the specialized role of video producer or editor, which you could supplement by employing an external crew for production.

Factor 3: A third factor is the cost of equipment. The professional equipment required for digital photography or basic sound recording is within the reach of many small and medium-sized cultural organizations: ranging from $1,000-$25,000 depending on your needs.

In the case of video, while a "prosumer" video camera beginning around $3,000 can approach broadcast-quality output (for image alone), any serious internal video program would require an investment of $50,000 or more depending on video format. As noted above, it may be possible to partially staff a video program that employs an outside crew with its own equipment for shooting.

Determining the Most Cost-Effective Approach

Any decision concerning the type of internal capacity you develop should take all of these factors into account. A sustained internal photographic documentation program is probably the most reasonable and cost-effective approach for most small and mid-sized cultural organizations — particularly with recent advances in digital photography.

This is also one area where it may be feasible to sustain an internal program with volunteer help. For example, a small house museum might find a retired photographer willing to serve as artist-in-residence, with the museum covering the costs of materials. (A potential consideration, of course, is whether the artist would use digital or traditional wet photography.)

IF YOU HAVE ONLY THE OCCASIONAL NEED FOR AUDIOVISUAL DOCUMENTATION, HIRE A PROFESSIONAL.

Building an internal sound recording capacity can also make sense for many mid-sized cultural organizations, particularly in the case of performing arts organizations. As noted above, any presenting organization that uses professional-quality sound reinforcement should regularly record the feed from its mixing board. The organization may also want to expand its recording activities to include field recordings of interviews, meetings, etc.

Other types of cultural organizations can also profitably build an internal audio recording capability using digital field equipment, as we discuss at greater length below.

In the case of video, only the largest cultural organizations will likely want or need to build internal capacity for professional production. You may be tempted to try to systematically videotape events and activities using consumer-grade equipment. This may have marginal value if it's useful for your internal review as a kind of scribbled visual note taking, but it's far more likely to be a waste of effort.

DO YOUR OVERARCHING DOCUMENTATION GOALS REQUIRE AN ONGOING STREAM OF RECORDING? AND CAN YOU PRODUCE RAW MATERIALS OF SUFFICIENT QUALITY TO SUPPORT AN EXTERNAL PRODUCT?

The most useful strategy for most cultural organizations is to approach video as an occasional tool limited to the production of an external product. You should limit your internal capacity development to the knowledge and skills necessary to successfully manage video projects with external professional help.

The bottom line regarding any audiovisual materials directly produced by your organization: Consider whether your overarching documentation goals require an ongoing stream of recording and whether you can produce raw materials of sufficient quality to support an external product.

- If you have an ongoing need and can support the technology suited to your goals, then you should have an internal audiovisual documentation program.
- If you have an ongoing need but can't support the appropriate media technology, you can still build staff capacity to work with outside professionals on a regular basis.
- If you have an occasional need, then choose the appropriate media technology, find an outside professional and take the time to learn how to be an effective partner.

Emergence of Interactive Media

One more factor you should consider in planning for audiovisual documentation is the emergence of interactive media. While we don't discuss the production of interactive media in any detail in this handbook, the basic principles involved in audiovisual production for other purposes remain the same.

As more and more cultural organizations develop interactive websites, and as many take on the production of these sites as an internal function, it's tempting to think a grand digital media convergence is quickly bringing image, sound and video within the reach of organizations of all sizes. It is true that a digital convergence is clearly taking place. And the translation of image, sound and motion into a single presentational context via the web is dramatically expanding the usefulness of and need for audiovisual documentation.

This convergence does strengthen the case for developing internal photographic and audio documentation capacity. However, given the constraints of current technology, it does not lower the current threshold for video production.

Because interactive websites and CD-ROMs currently use compressed video displayed in a reduced format, you

might think the requirements for shooting video for interactive media are lower and can be done with consumer-grade equipment. If anything, the opposite is true: to produce presentable compressed video, it's necessary to start with the highest quality possible. The defects of amateur video will only be emphasized when it is compressed for presentation in an interactive format.

Planning for Use

Regardless of the media technology you use or how you staff the effort, any organization employing audiovisual documentation must take into account a number of overarching considerations. These include the following:

- understanding intellectual property issues
- defining end uses of the materials produced
- defining an appropriate social contract with outside professionals and internal staff

If you do not take these into consideration from the outset, they may well come back to bite you.

Intellectual Property and Copyright

Definitions of intellectual property rights have been shifting in an increasingly global economy and a changing technological context. There has always been an inherent tension between a creator's ability to claim ownership and garner rewards from a creative work, and the benefits to society provided by a free exchange of intellectual ideas.

Western societies established copyrights, patents and trademarks as vehicles for safeguarding ownership and private interest. At the same time, concepts of educational fair use and the recognition that modification of existing intellectual content can constitute new creation developed as legal constructs to accommodate the public interest in open communication and exchange of ideas.

As long as there was a relatively high financial barrier to the mechanical reproduction of existing content, the economic interests of producers and distributors were relatively unthreatened by public use of intellectual property. But each technological development has challenged the balance of this relationship further.

IGNORE QUESTIONS OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS AT YOUR PERIL.

From photocopying machines, to cassette recorders, to VCRs, each new development has brought new concerns about pirated material and new efforts to contain public use. Now that digital technology has almost eliminated the financial barriers to reproducing existing digital content with absolute fidelity, commercial producers are fighting hard to tighten legal restrictions on public use.

It's likely to be some time before a new balance between public use and private ownership is reached in the new global and digital environment. However, the implications for cultural organizations involved in audiovisual production of any kind are clear: you cannot afford to ignore questions of intellectual property rights and to make your best effort to address these responsibly.

Where audiovisual materials are concerned, you need to have a basic understanding of the balance between your organization's rights, the rights of those documented, and the rights of any outside professionals involved in producing these materials. You need to articulate the relationship and responsibilities of the parties involved, as well as the current and potential uses of the materials produced.

Some of the legal and ethical issues involved in the ownership and use of audiovisual are particular to the form of documentation and will be discussed in the corresponding section below. You should be aware of some overarching issues in relationship to ownership and make sure you address these legal questions before you begin any kind of documentation.

You also need to know your ethical obligations in relationship to the use of these materials. If your goal is to operate as a responsible cultural organization that honors the artistry and creativity of the people you work with, you will want to be sure you have planned for using audiovisual documentation in a responsible way.

What about copyright law?

In general, ownership of audiovisual materials within the United States has been construed in relationship to general copyright law. The creator of intellectual property is recognized as having an inherent legal right to his or her creation. A work does not have to be registered with the U.S. Copyright Office at the Library of Congress to establish a legal claim of ownership. The purpose of formal copyright registration is merely to create a public record indicating the time of creation and scope of content. You can do the same thing by marking material with the copyright symbol and a date, provided you can establish when this was done through some other means (e.g., placing it in a sealed, postmarked envelope).

The inherent ownership rights pertaining to intellectual content creation can have a number of distinct layers. In the case of audiovisual documentation, the documentation is considered an artistic work in and of itself. It is a work of interpretive creation, and the creator is recognized to have ownership rights in his or her work.

Those people being recorded through audiovisual means are also recognized to have a right to the content of their expression and personal presence as it is captured in photographs, audio or video. If you videotape an artistic performance, you do not gain ownership of the creative content of that performance. However, you do own the recording of that performance as a separate work of creation.

THE INHERENT OWNERSHIP RIGHTS PERTAINING TO INTELLECTUAL CONTENT CREATION CAN HAVE A NUMBER OF DISTINCT LAYERS.

If this seems confusing, maybe a concrete example will help. The Archives of Folk Culture in the Library of Congress maintains field recordings of songs and stories from individuals throughout the United States and beyond that go back to the late 19th century. In numerous cases, the people recorded did not create those songs and stories, many of which long ago fell into the public domain. Even so, they are considered to hold the copyright of their *performance*.

If the performer's version of the story or song is distinct, the performer also has ownership in that distinct version. Those who recorded a song or story had ownership in the *recording*. But in most cases, they transferred ownership in the recordings to the Library when they deposited those materials.

The field recordings in the Archives of Folk Culture are available for study and even for commercial release. However, anyone wishing to use these materials for commercial use must obtain a release from the individual(s) recorded or their heirs, or provide sufficient evidence that a good-faith effort was made to locate them without success.

While much of the material in the Archives reflects intellectual content that is in the public domain, and while the U.S. public holds the ownership of the recordings, any use of those materials must still address the layers of inherent ownership construed within the overall framework of U.S. copyright law.

Until recently, copyright was limited to a relatively restricted period (25 years in most cases). After this period, the created work was considered to be within the public domain. However, as new forms of media have increased the potential commercial value of existing creative expression, and as it has come under considerable pressure from producers, the U.S. Congress has responded by significantly extending the life of copyright (most recently under the Sonny Bono Copyright Term Extension Act, which added an additional 20 years).

For this reason, you should never assume you can freely use a creative work, its performance or the recording of that performance — unless you hold clear copyright in each layer of creation or you have clearly established the right of use through a formal agreement.

Just because you've recorded a performance, don't think you can distribute copies of that recording, whether for sale or for free, or that you can make it freely available on your website. You need to establish your right to do these things with each of the interested parties.

The rights of those who document

The rights of the person doing the documentation are governed by the degree to which he is operating as a free agent or acting entirely as a paid employee or agent of the organization commissioning the documentation. If one of your staff members produces a sound recording on your organization's behalf, he will not hold any ownership interest in the recording as long as he performed the work as part of his or her employment duties during compensated time.

Similarly, if you hire an outside person to produce a recording, cover all of the expenses involved in producing the recording, and compensate him or her for the time spent in production, then the production is construed to be a piece of work performed by the organization itself. The ownership of the recording is vested in the organization as a "work-for-hire." To avoid any potential ownership conflict in work involving an outside professional, you should be sure to establish a common understanding in this regard.*

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* The most famous example of this is the case of the heirs of Ansel Adams, who sued the U.S. government in an attempt to assert ownership in the photographs Adams took while an employee of the Works Progress Administration. Adams would generally take one photograph for the WPA and then a second one he would keep, considering this additional work done on his own time. In that case, it was found that Adams was operating as an employee of the federal government, and therefore all of the photographs that he took were a work-for-hire, rather than creative material he owned.

The rights of those documented

The rights of the persons documented are not constrained by such a relationship, and you need to address these carefully and ethically. In the case of audio and video, it is standard practice to obtain a release from the person recorded that states the relationship of the parties involved and stipulates the acceptable uses for the recorded materials.* Several examples of release forms are contained in Appendix A, and the use of release forms is discussed more fully below.

A few guidelines must be noted here. First, if the material is being made for a particular purpose, you should be careful to stipulate the intended use of the recording in your release form and establish the agreement of all parties concerning that use.

Second, we strongly urge you to restrict the scope of any release to *use rights*, rather than *ownership rights*. There are numerous examples in which an artist was induced to transfer copyright in a work or performance to an unethical documenter, who later profited from the recording to the exclusion of the artist.

Finally, if you do intend any commercial use of recorded materials, you should acknowledge your obligation to compensate the person recorded. A release form does not need to be a commercial contract that includes all of the terms of compensation. However, if commercial use is intended, a release should stipulate that a separate agreement for this purpose must be established prior to commercial use.

Social Contract and Angle of Vision

In addition to issues of ownership and use, any form of audiovisual documentation involves a social contract between your organization, the person doing the documentation and the person documented.

As we have discussed above, documentation is never an objective exercise. It always involves the interaction of multiple subjective perspectives, and the results can be variously illuminating, revelatory, confrontational, laudatory, bemusing and more. With multiple actors, the potential for multiple, conflicting goals increases.

Effective documentation doesn't necessarily require the reconciliation of conflicting goals and opposing viewpoints. But responsible documentation of any sort means that the actions of all the players are aligned with the framework in which the documentation takes place.

For example, a journalistic interview can involve open confrontation, the holding back of information on the part of the interviewer when a question is asked, and even surreptitious recording. All of this occurs within a social contract that overtly acknowledges the conflicting interests of the documenter and documented.

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* To a lesser degree, this also pertains to some types of photography, which are discussed more fully below.

In contrast, a documentation project that is framed as collaborative involves a social contract that assumes any discrepant angles of vision will be addressed and negotiated before producing a final product.

Any form of documentation involving audiovisual recording heightens the importance for aligning action and documentary frame because it is necessarily on the record. The more you are able to establish an acknowledged social contract between all the players, the more effective, ethical and legible the result will be. If the people involved are operating within different sets of social norms and don't recognize this, the result will be problematic at least and disastrous at worst.

WITH RESPONSIBLE DOCUMENTATION, THE ACTION OF ALL THE PLAYERS SHOULD BE ALIGNED WITH THE FRAMEWORK IN WHICH THE DOCUMENTATION TAKES PLACE.

Here's an example: in the early 1980s a group of graduate students from different disciplines at a southeastern university were participating in an oral history program focusing on retired mill workers.

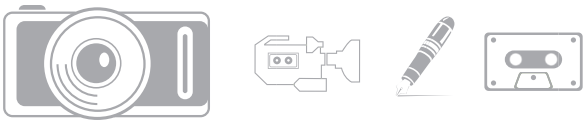
One of the students, trained as a journalist, learned from one worker that another had been a member of the local Ku Klux Klan. She approached that person within the framework of the oral history project and, over the course of several sessions, audiotaped many details about the atrocities the local Klan perpetrated. The man later learned the student had already known of his Klan membership and threatened harm if the tapes were not destroyed (which they eventually were).

In this case, the information the student collected was clearly historical, and the person recorded was willing to have her record that information within the framework of an oral history project. Whatever his own reasons, the man was not concerned with recording an account of his own participation in crimes for deposit in a public oral history archives — presumably with some stipulations concerning availability and use.

But when he learned the student had concealed her previous knowledge from him, the perceived frame of the interviews radically shifted for him, and the social contract was irretrievably broken. While the motives of the student and the moral rights of the interviewee are certainly open to debate, there is no doubt that the outcome destroyed the documentary relationship between the two — with clearly dangerous implications.

The lesson for any kind of audiovisual documentation is this: clarify for yourself and others what the overall intentions and framework for the project will be, and engage all of the players in a dialogue about how this framework will affect their actions and perspective.

If the frame of your documentation is to be consistent, your videographer must be able to bring his or her shooting style in alignment with the project's documentary purpose. The interviewer needs to interact with the interviewees in a way that is consonant with the project's overall purpose. You need to convey your intentions to all parties and ensure your own conduct and established agreements are in alignment.



Photography

Among all the forms of audiovisual documentation, photography is the most versatile and cost-effective means for creating a media-rich record.

Photography should always be your first consideration for audiovisual documentation, as it has a number of unique advantages. There are many settings in which documentary photography can be done with minimal equipment. Some situations, of course, call for special lighting (e.g., images of museum objects for a catalog or a stylized portrait photograph). However, for documentary images of action in un-staged settings, photographers can often work without external lighting.

A skilled photographer can work in a relatively unobtrusive way without significantly altering the context of the activity. Since photography is an old medium with widespread amateur use, most people will quickly ignore a photographer's presence. Because of its fluidity of use and the fact that it imposes the fewest technical requirements on a situation, photography can be used effectively in more settings than any other audiovisual medium.

Photographic documentation is also a superb means of conveying a series of actions, particularly when joined with a written narrative. A set of photographs depicting a series of steps can often convey a sense of process that is almost as vivid as film or video — again without the substantial overhead. Photographic images are extremely versatile in their use and reuse, lending themselves to print publication, posters, multimedia, graphic design elements, and even film and video (think of Ken Burns' use of images, for example).

PHOTOGRAPHY SHOULD ALWAYS BE YOUR FIRST CONSIDERATION FOR AUDIOVISUAL DOCUMENTATION.

This venerable medium has changed dramatically in recent years with the advent of digital technology, and there seems little doubt that digital photography will eventually supplant film photography altogether. Few professional working photographers do not regularly use digital cameras (though the majority have yet to abandon traditional film-based photography entirely).

The dividing line of opinion between the two broad technologies centers around the relative resolution of the images produced by each — the degree to which the human eye perceives the overall photograph as a single, continuous image or a set of discrete elements.

In any photographic medium, an image is stored as a set of discrete elements; the greater the number of

elements within a particular area, the higher the perceived resolution of the image. As a photograph is enlarged, the eye will increasingly perceive the discontinuities between the image elements.

The resolution of traditional film photography is extremely high. It's difficult to speak in physical terms such as "dots-per-inch" because film photography is essentially analog in nature. That is, the chemical changes created when photons of light refracted through a lens strike the film effect accumulated changes in the film that create a continuous transition.

Nonetheless, film images have discontinuities between the physical particles embedded in the film emulsion, giving each type of film its own specific granularity. This granularity becomes more apparent to the average eye when a photographic image is enlarged. Since traditional film photography uses a range of negative sizes (4x6, 5x7, 8x10, etc.), the apparent resolution of a photograph is dramatically increased by changing the ratio between negative and print size.*

THE RESOLUTION OF DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY IS BEGINNING TO APPROACH THAT OF FILM PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE 35MM FORMAT.

Digital photography, in contrast, produces images by measuring the characteristics of refracted light with an electronic sensing device called a charged coupling device (CCD). Those measurements are translated into digital information organized in pixels and stored on some magnetic or other storage media.

Pixels are discrete, discontinuous elements, analogous to the printed dots in a newspaper image. The relative resolution of digital cameras is measured by the number of megapixels (1 million pixels) per CCD. As of this writing, high-end professional digital camera equipment has reached a resolution of as much as 17 megapixels.

Comparisons between digital and film resolution vary, but some experts place the comparable resolution of mid-speed 35mm film at 24 megapixels. As this indicates, the resolution of digital photography is beginning to approach that of film photography in the 35mm format. (Of course, since the estimated resolution of fine-grain, slow-speed 4x5 film has been estimated at 200 megapixels, digital photography is unlikely to supplant large-format film cameras any time soon.)

In contrast, consumer-oriented point-and-shoot digital cameras today more typically use a 2.5-to-3-megapixel CCD. In many cases, a 3-megapixel camera will be adequate, for a range of purposes, provided it is only used in the Fine setting. However, 6-megapixel cameras — once considered professional equipment — are now available for prices comparable to traditional 35mm SLR film cameras. Some of these digital cameras can even take the same lenses as their 35mm counterparts. If your organization wants to implement an internal photographic documentation program without professional photographer staffing (more on this below), these newest "prosumer" digital cameras likely will be your best bet.

Whether you should use film or digital photography depends on a number of factors. If you want to obtain the

* This description is vastly over-simplified because there are any number of factors affecting this, such as the quality of the print medium.

highest-quality original image, film photography is still the best means. In the case of do-it-yourselfers, a 35mm consumer-grade film camera will produce higher-quality original images than will a consumer-grade digital camera.

On the other hand, the way you will use the image may also be a consideration. For most print purposes, a resolution of 600 dots-per-inch is fairly standard. This can be easily achieved for most image sizes by a digital camera with at least a 3-megapixel CCD shot at the highest image-quality setting. If the image is to be displayed on a television or computer screen, this usually requires only a resolution of 72 dots-per-inch, which even consumer-grade digital cameras can easily achieve.

Of course, there is far more to effective documentary photography than the technical specifications of the image produced (even when described as simplistically as they are here). The most sophisticated, technologically advanced camera is no substitute for a skilled photographer's eye and ability to capture a compelling image that can rise to artistry. Good photography is within the reach of most of us, but great photography can be well worth the cost of hiring a professional.

In planning for your organization's use of photography, you should balance your everyday documentation needs with your occasional need to produce public products. You can develop the capacity to address many of your everyday needs in-house. In most cases, however, you will want to work with a professional photographer for specific projects — particularly if they are to result in a public product.

Should You Do It Yourself?

Photography is the universal documentation skill. Most everyone at some point or another has picked up a point-and-shoot camera to capture some aspect of their experience on vacation or in a family gathering.

With the revolution in digital photography and the incredible sophistication of electronics used in digital cameras, most of us are now able to shoot reasonable pictures in a much wider range of settings and lighting conditions. Access to professional-quality digital photography has also come within the financial reach of most of us. Today, it's easy to find digital cameras in the 3-megapixel-plus range for less than $500, and 6-megapixel cameras are available for less than $1000.

DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY IS IDEAL FOR INTERNAL, VISUAL RECORD-KEEPING PURPOSES.

We are all photographers, and most of us are relatively bad photographers. However, almost all of us can produce photographic documentation that has at least some descriptive value. With persistence and a basic level of training, some more of us can occasionally — if not regularly — produce photographs that are adequate for a variety of publication uses.

Sophisticated electronics and digital cameras have lowered the bar by reducing the number of variables (aperture, film speed, focus) and technical considerations (depth of field, light level, contrast) involved in creating

a photographic image. But the aesthetic dimensions of composing a picture, framing an image, controlling for difficult lighting conditions, and conveying a narrative remain very human skills (which also require manipulating the technical aspects of photography more than most of us can do).

Nonetheless, just as we have advocated for building internal capacity for written documentation as part of your organization's ongoing program, we also suggest you establish a regular internal practice of taking photographs in an organized way.

It's a pretty safe bet that you or someone on your staff occasionally photographs some aspect of your programs and activities. It's also probably safe to assume these homemade photographs end up largely unused in drawers and computer files. If you're doing it anyway, why not organize your photographs so they can become a useful resource? Even if they don't rise to publication-quality, they can preserve useful information for future reference. In the section below on processing photographs, we suggest some useful tools for organizing and retrieving images.

As in the case of internal written documentation, there may well be staff members in your organization who can play a useful role by regularly photographing events in an informal way. For a relatively limited investment of human and financial resources, you can add this to the documentary habits of your organization.

EVEN IF YOU STILL USE FILM PHOTOGRAPHY, YOU SHOULD CREATE A DIGITAL COPY OF YOUR FILM IMAGES FOR ARCHIVING PURPOSES.

The more regularly you photograph meetings, work processes and public events, the more likely you will strike occasional gold with an image that can be used in a variety of settings. And if you establish a process and organization scheme for dealing with the images, you'll be able to find an image when you need it. You will also create a visual historical record that can be a useful reference for questions like these:

- Who came to that board meeting?
- What was the relative size of that audience?
- Did we use this object in that exhibit?

Sometimes a quick image can preserve information more effectively than a written record. (There's an old cliché for that, after all.)

For internal, visual record-keeping purposes, we strongly advise employing digital photography. As long as you use a camera with a resolution of 3 megapixels or greater, the results will be almost as good as many amateur film photographs. Plus, you'll be able to create legible photographs in a wider variety of light settings without a flash.

There's one important caveat to observe here: Most digital cameras have a resolution setting for determining how many pixels will be captured for an image — usually "Low," "Normal," and "Fine." This setting determines how many images can be stored on the camera's removable storage (usually a flash memory card).

It's tempting to try to put as many images as possible on a card. However, since flash memory has dramatically come down in price, there is now absolutely no good rationale for using a low setting. You should invest in enough flash memory to take all of your photographs at the "Fine" or highest-quality setting, which will make the widest possible range of uses available in the future.

A second reason to use digital photography for visual record-keeping purposes is that no external processing is needed. The added work and cost involved in processing film almost inevitably results in rolls of unprocessed film that are eventually discarded. The tradeoff with digital photography is that you have to copy the images from the flash memory card to a computer drive, but you will need to do this in any event to create an image archives.

This requires some basic computer literacy. Most digital cameras have a universal serial bus (USB) connection that is used to transfer the data from the flash memory to a computer. Many new computers also come equipped with a range of flash media slots, so you can remove the card from your camera and copy from it to your internal hard disk just as you would copy files from one computer drive to another.

Ideally, your computer should be equipped with a writeable CD-ROM or DVD-ROM drive. Once you have copied a sufficient number of image files to your computer, you should copy these to CD or DVD for backup storage.

If you choose to use film photography, you should still create a digital copy of your film images for archiving purposes. Most film processors today will give you the option of producing a set of scanned digital images and return these on CD-ROM along with your prints or slides. This will be well worth the added expense, since you can copy the digital images from CD to your electronic image archives. But if you begin with digital photography, you can avoid this step and expense as well.

You should think of this level of in-house photography as note taking, which will occasionally pay unexpected dividends.

If you need to take the further step of developing the internal capacity for professional photography, approach this need with the consideration it deserves. You won't quickly or easily turn an amateur photographer on your staff into a professional. As we have noted above, if you have a graphic designer on staff, he or she will begin with a visual orientation and a set of related skills (and often some basic photographic training). However, the two skills are not entirely transferable.

If you can't support a full-time professional position, you may be able to address this need by developing a sustained relationship with a professional photographer on a contract basis. We also know of a number of cases where a small organization has been able to meet its professional photographic needs with the volunteer help of a retired professional. If you are lucky enough to find someone like this, it's likely for the near future that his or her expertise will be in film-based photography.

Working with a Professional Photographer

For any project that involves a public product, whether it be a print publication, an exhibit or a professional website, you should definitely turn to the expertise of a professional photographer. For standalone projects, any cultural organization should be able to find a professional photographer at a reasonable cost. Once you have found a photographer whose expertise and shooting style complements your overall organization needs, you may find it beneficial to negotiate a long-term relationship on a retainer basis.

But before you try to find a photographer, give some thought to the ways you will use the photographs:

- For publicity materials? For a museum catalog? For print or web publication?
- Are you going to be capturing activity that takes place during an event, or do you need to capture still images of objects or people?
- Are you trying to capture steps in a process?
- Do you need to use the photographs in electronic media?
- Can you identify examples of the type of photography you are seeking?

When you sit down with a prospective photographer, make sure you discuss your goals and provide examples of the type of images you are seeking.

What you need to know

You should be aware that as in any media profession, photographers specialize in particular types of photography. Not all photographers will be able to produce the type of photographic materials you need. This is why it is important to clearly identify your goals and what types of images will meet those goals. A mismatch between a photographer's area of expertise and your goals will likely produce poor results.

In general, professional photographers break down into five major types:

Portrait photographers generally work in studio settings to produce static images of people (e.g., headshots of an actor or speaker) or static group portraits (e.g., family portraits or a musical band). Portrait photographers may also work in live settings (e.g., a wedding photographer). But in general, a portrait photographer will create a posed image rather than a candid shot. The majority of photographers listed in your Yellow Pages are portrait photographers.

Commercial photographers produce images of products, scenery and buildings that are used for commercial purposes such as advertisements and brochures. They tend to use cutting-edge techniques to produce more stylized images. They may be a good choice if you are looking to create a striking image to sell an event or product. They're probably not a good choice if you want to photograph a series of activities to create a visual documentary record of a process.

Industrial photographers have expertise in creating images of equipment, products and workers. The primary goal of these images is to convey an idea or communicate a particular purpose. In contrast to portrait and commercial photographers, industrial photographers are used to working in a wider variety

of settings. In a sense, museum photographers can be included in this category. These are photographers with expertise in producing images of objects to document a material cultural collection for use in descriptive catalogs.

Photojournalists create images of people, places and events in the news. Photojournalists are the most adept at working in a wide range of settings, often under adverse conditions, and capturing striking images with a narrative quality. Photographers trained in photojournalism may be a good choice if you are looking to capture a set of striking images from an event in process. They may be less able to produce a straightforward documentary record relating to processes. Documentary photographers, who generally take a more sustained narrative approach in their photography, could be included in this group. In many cases, a documentary photographer is the best choice if you are looking to capture a set of images that convey a process.

Fine arts photographers produce images that are in and of themselves works of art. They manipulate reality to produce an image that may have a narrative sense to it, but stands alone and creates its own sense of context.

Finding a photographer

As is the case with any media professional, you will enhance your chances of finding a photographer who is an appropriate match if you consult with colleagues who have worked on similar projects with outside professionals. Before you take on a photographic project yourself, take the time to peruse images produced by local or regional organizations similar to yours. You may be able to find work that would fit your goals, and the producing organization usually will be willing to put you in touch with the photographer who produced the images.

IT'S CRUCIAL THAT YOU SPEND TIME WITH THE PHOTOGRAPHER TO ENSURE HE OR SHE UNDERSTANDS YOUR GOALS FOR THE PROJECT.

If you're not able to locate one or more potential photographers in this way, the next place to turn is a reputable source. If there's a professional photographic equipment store in your area, they might be able to put you in contact with a number of professional photographers who can meet your needs. If there is a college or university in your area, try contacting their alumni relations office for possible leads. There might well be several professional photographers on their staff or faculty who can work with you.

If referrals don't work, try locating someone in your area through one of the national professional photographer associations. Sources include:

- Professional Photographers of America (www.ppa.com), which has a searchable online database of its members
- National Press Photographers Association (www.nppa.org), a good resource for photojournalists
- American Society of Media Photographers (www.asmp.org)

The most obvious place to begin — the commercial Yellow Pages — is probably the last source to turn to. In this

case, portrait photographers tend to be listed under "Photography Studios," while commercial and industrial photographers are listed under "Photographers Commercial and Industrial." Fine arts photographers are often listed under "Photographic Art.

Defining the project

Regardless of how you identify potential photographers, spend enough time conversing with them to convey project goals and to make sure they can meet your needs. Look for a professional who carefully listens to your ideas and helps you further strategize the best approach.

Don't waste time on someone who immediately dismisses the approach you propose. Similarly, disregard anyone who tries to talk you out of your ideas without exploring how you might be able to reach the same end from a different angle.

Any professional photographer will have an extensive portfolio of his or her work. Sit down and review the portfolio in the photographer's presence. Once you've articulated your overall goals, ask the photographer to point out work that is similar to what you are trying to accomplish and to explain the process that went into making the image. If the photographer is unable to provide any examples, then he or she is probably not used to the type of work you are seeking or, equally bad, does not really understand your goals.

Once you have engaged someone whose style of photography and approach is appropriate — and who is able to engage collaboratively with you and your staff — spend enough time in advance to make sure he or she has all the background information needed to successfully capture the images you are seeking.

If you are photographing an artistic form from an unfamiliar cultural background, make sure the photographer has a basic understanding of the form's meaning and process. Without this, the photographer is more likely to capture visual clichés than cultural meaning. Provide the photographer with as much background material as you can.

Create an opportunity for the photographer to meet and talk with the artists involved. Help the photographer anticipate where he or she should be to capture the kind of images you desire. If the photographs are to have some narrative content to them, make sure you express your sense of the story that's being told to the photographer in advance.

Discuss with the photographer in advance what kind of equipment he or she plans to use and the requirements this places on the physical environment. Before the shoot, visit the space to be photographed with the photographer to determine any lighting requirements.

While photographers are usually flexible about working in a range of situations, the amount of setup required will vary depending on the physical environment and the overall image goals. Be careful to define with the photographer whether he or she will need to alter the physical setting and what the potential impact may be.

For example, if you are staging an event in a low-light situation that requires use of a flash, make sure you take this into account and determine whether this will disrupt the event. In some settings, the sound of the photographic equipment, such as the whirr of a motor drive or the clicking of an SLR shutter, may also be intrusive. In these cases, you can probably work with the photographer to minimize the effect or work in an alternative setting such as a dress rehearsal.

You should also determine in advance the format to be used, whether digital, 35mm or large-format. Your overall needs and the end use of the images will influence this decision.

For example, if you are seeking still images with the highest degree of detail for use in a high-quality enlarged photographic print format, you would probably want to use a large-format film camera to capture the maximum resolution possible. If you have established a working collaboration with the photographer, he or she should be able to help you determine the most cost-effective format.

A second consideration should be the form in which the photographic images will be delivered to you, whether film negatives, prints or digital files.

Developing a contract

Before working with an outside photographer, make sure you develop a formal agreement that clearly stipulates ownership and use rights in the photographs produced.

Traditionally, professional film photographers have held the copyright in the images they produce, while the clients for whom the photographs were produced have held the use rights for the specific purpose that the photos were produced. You should assume this is the case unless you have clearly stipulated otherwise in your contract with the photographer.

TRADITIONALLY, PROFESSIONAL FILM PHOTOGRAPHERS HAVE HELD THE COPYRIGHT IN THE IMAGES THEY PRODUCE.

In this relationship, an ethical photographer would not make photographs produced for you available to other clients for their own use. In turn, you would not have the right to make multiple uses of the photographs without paying a fee to the photographer.

Professional film photographers have traditionally maintained this relationship by controlling their own stock of images and producing prints for the customer on a use-by-use basis. They continue to control the original negatives and charge for each additional print made from the negatives for subsequent use.

This relationship has some value from the client's perspective, because it places the responsibility of preserving the images in the hands of the photographer and minimizes the risk of images being lost over time as they are used in production. On the other hand, if your organization wants to maintain control over the images, you need to arrange this in advance as part of a formal contract.

This traditional relationship has been challenged to a great degree by the advent of digital photography, which

has reduced photographers' ability to restrict access to their original images for the purpose of reproduction. After all, unlike a physical print, a digital file can be used countless times without degradation.

A number of recent court cases have also challenged photographers' assertion of copyright in situations where their work can be construed as a work-for-hire. The result has been that in many cases, professional photographers may be more flexible in their willingness to assign copyright to your organization on a work-for-hire basis and also to provide you with the original negatives in the case of film photography. In return, they also have reasonable cause to charge you a higher rate for their work.

The bottom line is that you will reduce the possibility of surprises and unexpected costs if you clarify these issues with an outside photographer from the beginning. Make sure your written contract stipulates which party owns the copyright in the photographs and what use your organization can make of the photographs without obligation to the photographer. In turn, you would be well-advised to stipulate the uses that the photographer can make of the images.

The development of such a contract should be an opportunity to explore the possibilities for a long-term relationship with the photographer and the most effective means for caring for the images. You might find it useful to develop a set of compromises in the care and use of the images. Perhaps the photographer will retain copyright and hold the original negatives, but grant you unlimited use rights and provide you with a high-quality digital copy of the image. Or you might retain the negatives and copyright and grant a set of use rights to the photographer for the digital copies he retains.

A related issue to copyright and use rights is that of model releases. As discussed below, these may or may not be required for subsequent use of images. For the purposes of defining a contract, you should agree with the photographer on whether model releases will be obtained and who should be responsible for obtaining them.

Your responsibilities

If your organization is the copyright holder of the images, you will likely bear the primary responsibility for determining whether releases need to be obtained from any persons being photographed and for obtaining those releases.

WHEN DOES IT MAKE SENSE TO OBTAIN A RELEASE FROM INDIVIDUALS BEING PHOTOGRAPHED?

The degree to which such a written release, usually called a model release, is necessary is a subject of some debate among professional photographers. In general, photographs taken of people in public settings do not require a model release, particularly if these are used for non-commercial, journalistic or other editorial purposes.

Photographs taken in a private setting or studio situation for commercial purposes do require written permission from the individuals photographed for the use of their image. Most photographers working in a commercial context will err on the side of caution in this regard.

A standard photographic model release will usually grant the photographer the right to use the image in perpetuity for any purpose. (See Appendix A for examples.) Certainly it is to your advantage not to limit use in any way. Of course, there may be times, particularly if you are working with an artist or artistic group, to clarify the range of acceptable use in advance.

In static situations, such as a studio shoot or a rehearsal stage, the work of obtaining releases from a limited number of individuals is not a major issue. However, you will need to factor this into your planning for staff time.

With a live event, it will be considerably more difficult to obtain releases. One common practice among performing arts organizations is to print a short release statement on paper tickets or as part of an online ticketing process that grants the organization a release to take and use photographs of audience members. This may not be necessary to the extent that a performance can be construed as a public event, but it is probably a sensible precaution.

Maintaining and Using Photographs

Whether you work with a professional photographer or create your own photographs, you should establish a system for maintaining your photographs, providing archival storage, and using your photographs for publication in a manner that will not threaten their loss through use.

Creating a photographic library

Some general guidelines on creating a library of documentary materials for your organization are outlined above in the section on creating a working organizational archive. Here, we touch on a few considerations specific to photographic materials.

There are a number of established formats for archival storage of film photography. As we've discussed above, the expenses involved in using an archival storage medium will be far outweighed over the long term by the protection these give to your materials.

When storing your film negatives, you should use chemically stable plastic sleeves. Be aware that the plastic sleeves provided by film processing houses are often not archivally stable, unless they specifically stipulate otherwise. Leaving your negatives in these sleeves over time will likely damage them. Instead, purchase archivally stable negative sleeves from a source such as Light Impressions (www.lightimpressionsdirect.com).

THE PLASTIC SLEEVES PROVIDED BY FILM PROCESSING HOUSES ARE OFTEN NOT ARCHIVALLY STABLE, UNLESS THEY SPECIFICALLY STIPULATE OTHERWISE.

The most important thing you can do for storing your photographs is to keep them in a cool, dry, well-ventilated environment. Don't keep them in an attic, where they'll be exposed to high heat, or in a basement, where they'll be exposed to moisture. Both of these environments will cause serious deterioration of film negatives and prints over time.

Store similar physical materials together. For example, keep negatives in one place, slides in another. It's tempting to store physical images from the same event in one place. However, from an archival standpoint, it is better to separate dissimilar materials and keep track of materials from the same event on paper. This will also make it easier to see whether any materials are missing, particularly if you use a sequential method of identifying your materials.

Whether you are dealing with film or digital images, you should think of your image bank as a library operation. That is, images should be available in the library for consultation, and a process for checking them in and out for use should be established and maintained. Make sure it identifies the specific individual who has taken an image in the case of physical negatives or slides.

If for no other reason, this is a significant argument for maintaining your image collection in digital form. Whether produced originally as digital images or digitized from scanned physical images, the threat of image loss is greatly reduced when you can easily make exact copies.

If you are using film photography, make every effort to produce a high-quality digital copy as soon as possible. Most photographic processors now give you the option of producing a set of scanned digital images on CD at the same time they produce the original negatives. While this adds to the cost of photo processing, it will save you a tremendous amount of time, effort and long-term expense by providing you with digital copies from the outset. Unless you have your own in-house high-quality digital graphics capacity, you're probably better off not trying to scan photographs yourself.

Once they are in digital form, you should develop a file organization scheme for hard disk storage of your images and for making backup copies on CD or DVD-ROM. A number of software products available today, discussed briefly below, can help you organize your image collection.

Because digital photography is relatively new and its use in an expanding variety of electronic media is continually evolving, it's worth noting some practical tips related to the use of digital images in print and on the web.

As we have advocated above, you should always try to capture digital images at the highest resolution possible. In many cases, you will also want to use the digital image at a lower resolution than originally captured, and your organization's plan should allow for this. A higher-resolution image can be bumped down, but a low-resolution image cannot be used for situations that require higher image quality.

Typically, digital images used in print publication are printed at a resolution of 600 dots-per-inch. If you are providing digital images to a newspaper, for example, many will refuse to take digital images at a lower resolution.

On the other hand, images that are used on the web are generally reduced to a resolution of 72 dots-per-inch (the resolution of most computer monitors). Posting a higher-resolution image to the web, as many cultural

organizations mistakenly do, is a serious problem because it dramatically increases the download time for a web page on anything less than a broadband connection.

The answer is to begin with higher-resolution images in your image content system. Then, filter these to a lower resolution using an image-editing software program such as Adobe Photoshop™ or Adobe Fireworks™, which have specific tools for optimizing images for print and web use.

Creating a written record

Do you want to ensure the continued use of your photographic images as an asset? One of the most important things you can do is to create a written description of their content that will allow you and your staff to access these materials more readily when future needs arise.

Traditionally, a written record of photographic images is kept in relation to the format in which they are stored. If you are using film photography by itself, you should create a document for each sheet of negatives or tray of slides, rather than the original roll of film that produced them. For black-and-white film, it's common practice to store the slides in an archivally stable plastic page that stores several strips of negatives and then produce a contact sheet print of the page. Most professional photographers and reputable film developers can provide you with the developed film in this form. Similarly, you should store slides in archival slide pages that will allow you to easily view what is on each slide.

Develop a numbering system that will allow you to file your original sleeves of negatives or trays of slides, and use this numbering system to identify the documents that contain a list of their contents. By creating word processing documents stored in a file-naming system with the name of the file corresponding to the identifier on the slides, you'll be able to search your physical photographic collection relatively easily and locate the physical photograph.

You should create a content listing for every individual image on a roll of film, set of slides or directory of digital images. This can be less daunting than it sounds, since in many cases you will have multiple images of the same subject. In this case, you can list something such as "10-14 James Johnson performing with guitar." For black-and-white negatives, use the frame numbers on the negatives. For slides, number each slide sequentially on a slide page in pencil, and use those numbers as identifiers.

In the case of digital images, you can take advantage of a number of photo album software programs that will help you store your images in an organized file system and retrieve a set of images based on content descriptions or keywords you enter.

Many digital cameras and new computers come bundled with an image album program. We strongly advise against using one of these limited and often idiosyncratic programs. Instead, invest in a well-designed image-management software program that has a solid base of current users and some prospect of long-term availability. A few of the most popular currently available are noted below.

Before settling on any software program, give some thought to a set of basic requirements. First, the program should allow you to retrieve the image in its original digitized format — not in a processed format produced by the program.

Second, the software should allow you to establish your own organization system. Some programs will place images within their own internal file directory structure instead of allowing you to create a set of directories organized by whatever scheme makes the most sense to you. Since digital cameras usually create filenames automatically in sequence you can end up with different images that have the same file name. Unless you are willing to go through the labor of manually renaming each individual image file, you're more likely to avoid overwriting one image with another if you keep images in separate directories organized with directory names that indicate the subject of the images contained and the date taken.

You will also need to determine whether you can meet your storage needs by storing images on a single machine or whether your organization needs to access your image collection over a network. Currently there are two tiers of image-management software programs:

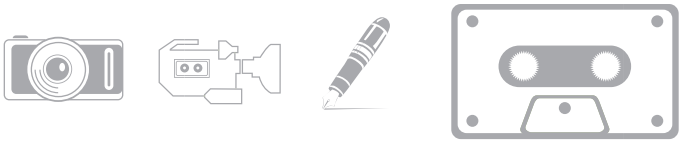
Tier 1: A set of well-designed standalone photo album packages ranging in price from $30 to $80 will allow you to store your images for use on a single computer and may also provide you with a set of image editing and filtering tools. Current contenders in this category include:

- Apple iPhoto™ (www.apple.com/ilife/iphoto/)
- Jasc PhotoAlbum™ (www.jasc.com/products/photoalbum/)
- Adobe Photoshop Album™ (www.adobe.com/products/photoshopalbum/main.html)
- Ulead PhotoImpact™ (www.ulead.com/pi/)
- Picasa 2™ (now available as a free download from Google (www.picasa.com)

Tier 2: A group of image mangement systems that are available in either standalone or network-based systems. The standalone versions of these programs tend to be priced at around $100. The network versions, which allow a store of images to be maintained on a network server and accessed by other computers on the network range in price from $800 to $3500. If you think you may eventually need a network-based system, these programs might be a good choice, allowing you to establish a standalone system and upgrade it when necessary. Current options include:

- Canto Cumulus Photo Suite™ (www.canto.com)
- Extensis Portfolio™ (www.extensis.com)
- FotoWare FotoStation™ (www.fotostation.com)

Because this is an emerging area of technology, you would be well-advised to begin with these leads. But also check for newer products as they arise. For current product reviews, consult professional photography magazines such as Digital Photographer (www.digiphotomag.com) and online technology resources such as CNET (www.cnet.com).



Audio Recording

There are many situations in which audio documentation is the ideal tool for creating a documentary record of an event or performance, particularly if the event is largely aural in content and relatively static in terms of visual activity.

Activities such as musical performances, one-on-one interviews, group discussions and some types of theatrical performance are all good subjects for sound documentation alone. As discussed below under video documentation, if there is a circumstance with an important sound dimension to capture, you will want to achieve the best-quality audio recording possible. All of the factors discussed in this section pertain to video and film documentation as well.

The digital revolution has transformed sound recording as much as it has photography and video. Prior to the late 1980s, sound recording equipment was sharply divided between professional equipment capable of producing high-fidelity audio and severely limited consumer-grade tape recorders. Professional recording equipment featured:

- reel-to-reel tape with sufficient width to record multiple tracks, and
- specialized external microphones and audio-mixing equipment to isolate particular sound sources and reformulate the result to recreate the aural environment for use in a range of broadcast and recording media.

Professional field recording equipment generally utilized 1/4-inch-wide tape capable of recording two channels, while studio equipment used multiple-track tape of 1 inch widths and greater. Among consumers, 1/4 inch reel-to-reel decks were limited to audiophiles. Most consumer-grade recording equipment was limited to 1/8 inch cassette recorders, often with a totally inadequate built-in microphone.

PROFESSIONAL AUDIO RECORDING HAS CONVERTED ALMOST ENTIRELY TO THE DIGITAL FORMAT.

For professional purposes, audio recording has converted almost entirely to the digital format. As with photography, digital audio equipment for field recording that is capable of producing broadcast-quality audio has come within the economic reach of the general consumer.

While audiocassette recorders were once the predominant consumer devices, they are now largely obsolete. In fact, you may find it difficult to find one. Digital solid-state voice recorders or micro cassette recorders have

supplanted these low-end recorders, and these newcomers remain as completely unsuited to documentary recording as their analog predecessors. However, consumer-grade digital audiocassette (DAT) and MiniDisc recorders can produce high-quality spoken-word recordings and, in the case of DAT, even capture basic musical performances with a high degree of fidelity.

Even so, some of the same dividing equations of the analog recording era persist today. The quality of a recording will depend as much on the type, quality and placement of microphones — and the skill of the person monitoring and mixing the audio input — as it will on the quality and nature of the recording equipment. There is still a considerable divide between:

- digital equipment capable of recording one or two channels on tape, and
- professional-grade equipment capable of storing multiple channels on a magnetic medium such as a specialized hard drive.

The approach you take to sound recording will depend on the nature of the material you are trying to capture. For any type of spoken-word recording, you can rely on consumer-grade digital equipment, and you may be able to develop internal capacity for producing audio recordings that can support a range of production uses. Or, you may want to work with an outside expert who has an appropriate mix of interviewing and recording skills.

For more complex audio recording situations, such as musical performances with multiple musicians, the ability of a cultural organization to produce usable recordings will depend on the sophistication of its existing resources. If you don't yet have sufficient resources, you will almost certainly want to work with a professional audio engineer.

Should You Do It Yourself?

The decision to develop internal capacity for adding audio recording to your internal documentation program is a bit more complicated than in the case of photography. However, there are still some clear cases in which it is worthwhile to do so.

As in the case of photography, there are sets of regular activities found among most cultural organizations for which regular audio documentation can be an asset. For regular staff or board meetings, audio recording is an unobtrusive and inexpensive way to capture the content of conversations.

WHEN IT COMES TO DOCUMENTING MEETINGS, YOU'RE PROBABLY BETTER OFF TAKING DETAILED NOTES THAN MAKING AN AUDIO RECORDING.

However, if you balance the utility of establishing a disciplined program of note taking against that of relying on a set of tape recordings, you may well prefer creating a written record from the beginning. Any audio recordings that you produce will have little practical utility until they are transcribed or logged.

In addition, while an audio recording may claim to be a more accurate record of what was actually said, in reality it is not easy to make a consistently audible recording in a large room with multiple talkers. You may well find

it impossible to hear a particular person speaking on the resulting recording. Unless you have a sophisticated, multiple-microphone recording system that is designed for recording meetings, you should use audio recording (if at all) as a supplement to your primary written record created while the meeting is taking place.

Limit your decision to make audio recordings to situations in which you might make use of the recordings for production purposes, such as:

- regularly recording one-person interviews as part of an organization debriefing process
- developing content for an exhibition or performance program
- developing audio content used in a multimedia presentation

If your organization regularly conducts oral history interviews as part of your activities, you should build internal capacity for producing professional-quality spoken-word audio. If you are a performance venue that uses sound reinforcement and has full- or part-time staff for this purpose, it makes sense to record the feed from your mixing board — although not necessarily with the expectation you will be producing your own audio recordings for sale. Beyond this, you will want to turn to professional help.

The requirements for quality audio documentation change dramatically depending on whether you are recording something from a focused sound source or one that involves multiple individuals and/or instruments.

It is possible, as in the case of photography, for a thoughtful amateur in a restricted number of settings to produce good quality audio, provided he or she has a decent set of equipment and some knowledge about basic recording techniques. Beyond this, as in the case of any other media, you will need the skills of a professional to produce a recording that recreates the original aural environment in a compelling way.

If you are doing your own audio recording, it's worth mentioning one very basic rule you should follow religiously: While you are in the middle of recording an interview or activity, be sure to label the tape or other storage medium as soon as possible, not only on the outside storage container but also on the cassette itself. It is far too easy to lose track of the identity of a recording done in the field.

DAT RECORDERS REMAIN THE MOST COST-EFFECTIVE WAY FOR PRODUCING PROFESSIONAL-QUALITY DIGITAL RECORDINGS IN THE FIELD.

In the case of interviews, a common practice is to briefly say the name of the interviewer and interviewee(s), as well as the date, at the beginning of every new tape: "This is [interviewer name], and I am speaking with [interviewee 1] and [interviewee 2] on [date]." This will safeguard against this information being lost if a tape is unlabeled.

For those wishing more information on audio production, Appendix B provides a list of bibliographic resources.

Equipment: The low-grade audiocassette tape recorders with internal microphones that were in widespread use until recently were anathema to anyone serious about sound quality.

Any sound recording process introduces a degree of background interference generated by electrical currents, ambient noise and the sound of the equipment itself. The goal of high-quality audio recording is to reduce the level of interference in relation to the sound source that is the focus of the recording (usually known as the "signal-to-noise" ratio).

A basic precondition for this is the need to separate the microphone from the recording equipment itself. Any built-in microphone does an excellent job of capturing the whirr of the motor and tape drive. Professional-quality analog audiocassette recorders with sound-reduction circuitry, VU meters for monitoring audio levels and the appropriate inputs for high-quality external microphones are still available.

These analog recorders can produce spoken-word recordings that approach broadcast-quality. They are also rugged, reliable, and still used by many newspaper reporters, for example. For the most part, however, these have been supplanted by digital recorders.

Digital field recorders first became available with a cassette format similar to analog audiocassettes. Digital audiotape (DAT) recorders remain the most cost-effective way for producing professional-quality digital recordings in the field.

Machines that use other recording media have also begun to proliferate. MiniDisc recorders were the first of these, introduced in 1992. Today, you can find portable digital audio recorders that use flash memory cards, writeable CD and DVD-ROM, as well as removable PCMIA hard drives. These range widely in price from a low of around $250 for MiniDisc recorders, to as much as $10,000 for a hard drive-based digital recorder.

DAT recorders currently range in price from about $600 to $4000 from manufacturers such as Sony, Fostex and Tascam. For basic recording purposes, particularly spoken-word recordings, DAT recorders at the low end of this range or a CD-R recorder are good choices. Portable DAT recorders in the $1000-to-$1500 range have the most versatility for a range of field settings.

The other essential element of recording equipment is having one or more good quality external microphones. For most field recordings, you should use a condenser microphone (i.e., one that uses a battery to create an electrical charge between the microphone's diaphragm and a back plate). Make sure to use a condenser microphone that requires a battery or takes an electrical charge directly from the tape recorder. Avoid "electret" condenser microphones that lose their built-in charge over time.

Microphones come with different patterns in the way they pick up sound. *Omnidirectional microphones* are sensitive to sound coming from any direction at a wide range of frequencies.

Directional microphones are more responsive to sound coming from the front of the diaphragm, but they do pick up sound from other directions. A common directional microphone pattern is the cardioid (or heart-shaped) pattern, which picks up sound in front of the diaphragm with a reduction in sensitivity to the sides. The cardioid pattern reduces but does not eliminate sound from the rear. A cardioid-pattern condenser microphone is the

most useful for basic recording situations.

In most cases, you will want to record in two channels. Using two separate microphones will provide the most versatility, but it's also possible to use a stereo microphone that has two separate diaphragm capsules in a single case. In this case, try to find a stereo microphone that allows you to change the angle of the two capsules in relationship to each other. You can also find microphones that have interchangeable diaphragm capsules with different directional patterns.

Other specialized microphones are used in different settings. A *lavaliere microphone* pinned to the clothing of the person being recorded is often a good choice for spoken-word interviews as long as the person is sitting and not likely to move or touch the mike. *Boundary microphones* placed or mounted on a flat surface are a good choice when people are seated around a conference table.

Whatever the type, you should plan on investing a minimum of $150 per microphone if you want to get good sound quality. The most expensive tape recorder is only as good as the quality of the microphones used.

Audio Environment: If you are trying to produce a good quality recording by yourself, your goal is to reproduce the sound environment as you experience it. This is not a matter of physically capturing the sounds that enter your ears.

The human ear and brain have the ability to filter out distracting sounds to an amazing degree and to focus on the source of sound to which they want to pay attention. The microphone and the tape recorder don't have this innate ability. So to create a sound recording that captures the aural world in a way that will feel real upon listening, you need to take into account your experience of sound.

Try this as an experiment while sitting in a quiet room. Close your eyes and just listen for a minute or so. You'll likely be surprised by how many unnoticed sounds surround you (e.g., the hum of a refrigerator or the drone of traffic in the distance). When someone speaks, these background noises immediately recede in our consciousness. To create a recording that approaches our perceptual experience, you need to control for the overall sound environment through the placement and type of the microphones you use.

THERE ARE A NUMBER OF FACTORS TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT WHEN TRYING TO PRODUCE A QUALITY AUDIO RECORDING.

The first thing you can do is try to physically reduce external noise by turning off electronic equipment, unplugging fans, closing drapes, etc. Then consider the best placement of the sound source you are trying to record. Turn slowly around until you find the quietest corner of the room. Don't place the person to be recorded immediately in front of a window (which acts as a giant diaphragm) if you are using a directional microphone. On the other hand, if you are using a lavaliere (pin-on) mike, have the person sit with his or her back to the window so the person's body acts as a shield to the exterior noise.

Whenever using an external microphone, you should use a microphone stand that isolates the body of the

microphone from external vibrations. Unless you use a microphone especially designed for this purpose, don't hold it in your hands; otherwise, vibrations from your hand will be transmitted through the casing. You should also pay attention to the location of the microphone cord, since an interviewee idly playing with the cord will transmit vibrations to the microphone.

Focus the microphones on the subject of your recording if you're using directional microphones. It's generally a bad idea to put one microphone on the interviewee and the second on the interviewer. As long as the setting is relatively quiet, the microphones will pick up the interviewer's questions without problem.

When recording in two channels, a useful technique is to place the tips of two cardioid microphones close to each other at roughly a 45-degree angle. This "coincident tip" technique mimics our stereo perception of a single sound source better than two widely separated microphones.

If you can, try to position the microphone slightly above or below and six-to-12 inches away from the mouth of the person being recorded. While this may seem intrusive at first, you'll find that most people quickly adjust to this proximity, particularly if the microphones are out of the direct line of sight between the interviewer and interviewee.

It's always a good idea to use a pair of headphones to check the quality of the sound recording while it's in process. A good tape recorder will allow you to monitor the sound in a VU meter as it's coming directly from the microphones and with a slight delay through the playback head as it's recorded on the tape itself. The rule of thumb for analog tape recorders is to record at a level that occasionally "peaks" into the red zone of the VU meter. In the case of digital recording, however, you should record at a lower level and try not to let the needle of the VU meter go into the red.

As you can see from this brief listing of basic tips, there are a number of factors to take into account when trying to produce a quality audio recording. These can be mastered through trial-and-error for basic recording purposes, particularly in the case of spoken-word recordings. If you are recording any situation more complex than an interview or small group discussion, or a musical performance by a group with more than two or three audio sources, you should turn to the services of a professional audio engineer to assist you in your project.

Working with a Professional Audio Engineer

We need to distinguish between two levels of professionals when it comes to audio recording:

1. professionals who specialize in the technical aspects of sound recording, properly identified as audio engineers
2. professionals with expertise related to cultural content who also can produce broadcast-quality recordings

The type of professional you should seek to engage will depend on the nature of the specific project. Unlike with a professional photographer, you are unlikely to develop a long-term relationship for the purpose of regularly producing audio documentation — unless you envision an ongoing series of public audio products.

When choosing the type of professional you need, the main question is this: Are members of your organization providing the content expertise and/or interviewing skills yourselves, or do you need to depend on an outside professional for these abilities?

What you need to know

If you lack content expertise and also need to produce broadcast-quality audio for a public product, you may be lucky enough to find an individual who combines both skills. You are more likely to find this combination in a specialist whose area of study involves some form of cultural performance. An ethnomusicologist or folklorist with established experience in producing recordings for public distribution is a better bet in this regard than an oral historian, for example — unless the oral historian has experience in producing interview recordings for radio broadcast.

But don't assume that a trained fieldworker can necessarily produce professional audio. While there are many content experts who can, there are just as many who cannot. Take the time to carefully interview any prospective candidates for a documentation project that will have a public audio product, and ask for audio samples of the materials they have directly recorded by themselves.

In cases where a content expert does not have the ability to produce broadcast-quality recordings on her own, you will need this additional expertise if the goal is to create a public audio product. In this case, either you or the content expert will need to act in a producer role, steering the creation of the audio product to completion.

If your content expert is to play this role, again make sure he or she has the appropriate experience. If the content expert has worked with a professional audio engineer on one or more projects, it will probably be most useful to work with that existing team. Again, evaluate their abilities based on existing samples of their work together.

If the goal is to produce an audio product from the work of your organization, and there is no need for additional content expertise, then you should seek the services of an outside audio engineer and/or producer. As noted above, an audio producer should be able to manage all aspects of bringing an audio project to completion.

Audio producers will have expertise in the following:

- directly recording or managing the recording of content
- handling the production work of mastering and producing a recording on CD or other format
- handling the packaging of the audio product
- perhaps assisting you in marketing and distribution

An audio engineer, in contrast, is a professional technician who has expertise in recording and mastering audio but will not assist you in the production of the product itself.

Finding an audio engineer or producer

It's relatively easy to find an audio recording studio. Almost any town of reasonable size will have at least one

studio standing ready to help a garage band or rap group turn out a self-produced recording.

What is more difficult to find is a recording studio with the appropriate expertise for the type of sound recording you are trying to produce, or a sound engineer who can work with you in your own setting to produce a high-quality sound recording. There are several avenues you might pursue to find someone who is able to work with you collaboratively to reach your audio production goals.

RECORDING STUDIOS ARE RELATIVELY EASY TO FIND; THE TRICK IS FINDING AN AUDIO ENGINEER OR PRODUCER WITH THE APPROPRIATE EXPERTISE FOR YOUR PROJECT.

As in the case of photographers, audio engineers and producers will have expertise in relation to particular styles and settings. Some will be used to working only in a controlled studio environment, while others can work in a variety of live settings. Some will specialize in producing spoken audio for radio broadcast or video, while others normally produce musical recordings for CD.

Audio engineers and producers who work with musical recording tend to work within a specific range of musical styles. Because the sound requirements of different types of performance vary greatly, you'll need to find an engineer or producer experienced in working with the type of performance you want to record.

As always, your best bet is to consult with colleagues in your field with experience working on audio projects, and see if they can recommend an engineer or producer suited to your needs. If there are large organizations in your area that have released audio recordings, try contacting them to see if they can make recommendations. Most audio products will list the engineer and/or producer involved, providing you with enough information to contact them directly.

A local university or college is another potential source of information and contacts, particularly if they have their own media department or broadcasting school. You might also try contacting your local public radio station to see if they can recommend any freelance audio producers or engineers with whom they work.

Another option is to try and find a trained and certified audio engineer in your area through a professional society. The most established of these is the Audio Engineering Society, which maintains a website at www.aes.org with a list of local member organizations throughout the United States.

You can also do an Internet search for an appropriate recording studio or engineer in your area through a professional services listing site, such as www.audioengineer.com or www.proaudiosearch.com. Sites like these will list the projects and products their clients have produced, the equipment they can provide, and their going rates.

You should base your selection on two factors:

1. the quality of the producer's or engineer's portfolio of projects
2. your personal interaction with the candidate

Make sure the candidate understands your goals and connects with the subject matter. If you are hiring an audio producer, assure yourself that he or she will work with you as a true collaborator, and that they will respect your content knowledge and will let themselves be guided by it.. When hiring an engineer, be clear about the range of the services he or she can provide you and make sure you are able to take his or her recorded materials in the format he provides to the next stage of production.

Defining the project

An audio producer or engineer should be willing to spend time with you discussing your goals for the project and helping you think about the best way to achieve these. Options include:

- recording the project in a studio or live setting
- using special techniques to reinforce different aspects of the sound environment
- using a setup that will enable the producer or engineer to capture audio while a person is moving freely in a setting and involved in some process

Be sure the producer or engineer has a basic awareness of any cultural processes or performance forms you are trying to capture. And make sure she is able to work with you so it is your concept that guides the overall process. If a content specialist is to play the role of interviewer, make sure the two interact with each other in advance of the recording session so they are each familiar with the other's interviewing approach and recording style.

DOES THE POTENTIAL PRODUCER OR ENGINEER HAVE A BASIC AWARENESS OF THE CULTURAL PROCESSES OR PERFORMANCE FORMS YOU ARE TRYING TO CAPTURE?

If the recording is to take place outside a studio, make sure you visit the location with the audio producer or engineer. Discuss the various setup options and the pros and cons for different microphone configurations. In either setting, review the range of end products likely to result from the session — whether exhibit audio, multimedia project, CD or radio broadcast. These may influence the engineer's decision of how to design the sound environment.

Ask about the kinds of equipment the producer or engineer intends to use and how this is likely to affect the context of the performance, process or interview being recorded. In general, people adjust very quickly to a wide variety of recording setups, so this is less likely to have an impact than visual media such as photography or video.

There may be some approaches that are more or less obtrusive, depending on the people and activities involved. For example, people being recorded can be equipped with a radio-transmitted lavaliere microphone that allows them to move freely. In many cases this may be an ideal approach. However, some people might find this uncomfortable or inhibiting, in which case an external microphone on a boom might be preferable. A thoughtful professional should be willing to work with you to find the best approach.

An audio product will necessarily involve an editing process, and the role of editing in shaping the end result cannot be underestimated. You should determine how and whether the professional you hire will handle the

editing process. Also, you should discuss his or her overall approach and philosophy about how the audio will be handled in editing, and how you will participate in the process.

Non-linear digital editing has transformed a slow, manual process into an easily managed one that can be endlessly manipulated. Skilled editors can dramatically increase the informational value and evocative sense of an audio recording while remaining true to its original content, or they can distort it in ways that falsify it beyond recognition. You should plan to play an active role in preparing the recording, and you and the professionals you hire should feel comfortable about your mutual roles.

Developing a contract

Audio engineers and producers generally work in situations in which their participation is considered a work-for-hire, producing materials on behalf of the client, who holds the copyright and use rights in the recording. Nonetheless, it is worthwhile to stipulate these points in a written contract.

Much like professional photographers, content specialists who directly produce an audio recording may have some authorship interest. In this case, make sure this is clarified from the beginning and that you are in mutual agreement about the ownership and use of the materials produced.

If the professional is connected with a separate agency (e.g., a college, university or public agency) and providing services to you in whole or part as a function of the job, you will also need to define the relationship between your organization and that agency and what the implications are for the ownership and use of any materials produced. This may involve an agreement with the individual along with a separate one with his or her employer.

You should also be sure that you will hold material possession of the raw master recordings and the master of any edited version. Many studios and engineers will reuse tape once a project has been completed. So be sure to stipulate that the original tapes or an exact digital copy will be delivered to you as part of the project and define any costs involved.

WHEN DEVELOPING A CONTRACT WITH AN AUDIO SPECIALIST, MAKE SURE YOU WILL HOLD MATERIAL POSSESSION OF THE RAW MASTER RECORDINGS AND THE MASTER OF ANY EDITED VERSION.

Most audio engineers or producers work on an hourly or day rate. You should expect this to be the case for content specialists, although they may also be willing to work on the basis of a project fee. Be sure you discuss the scope of the project in its entirety, including the original recording to be done and time involved in editing and producing the final product.

Work with the professional to develop a well-considered estimate of the time involved. Also, establish the terms of payment in your written contract. For longer-term projects you should stipulate intervals at which you will be given a report of time spent and tasks accomplished to help you gauge if the project is on track. If the project has some ambiguity (i.e., the nature of the recording session and the end product are not clear from the start), you should discuss the possible ramifications of this and agree how the parties involved will deal with unexpected developments.

If you are working with a content specialist or audio producer, you will also need to determine your respective roles in relation to obtaining any necessary participant releases and copyright permissions. An audio producer is more likely to help you with copyright releases than a content specialist, while either should be willing to take the responsibility for obtaining participant releases. You should not expect an audio engineer to play this role.

Your responsibilities

As the likely copyright holder, you will hold primary responsibility for obtaining any necessary releases from participants for use of the recordings and for clearing any necessary copyright permission. However, as noted above, a producer or content specialist may take the primary role in obtaining these.

In any event, you should be careful that the form of release will respect the talents and contributions of those recorded, while providing you with the permission to make educational and/or commercial use of the recordings according to your intended use. Any release should make it clear to the participants what the intended use of the materials will be. In the case of commercial uses, it should also acknowledge the authorship/performance interests of the persons recorded.

As noted in the above discussion about intellectual property and copyright, a release form is distinct from an artist contract that establishes terms of compensation from a product derived from the artist's performance. In cases where the person recorded as a creative interest and commercial use is intended, however, an ethical release should stipulate that compensation must be made and a separate agreement established before any commercial use.

A RELEASE CAN STIPULATE THE WAYS IN WHICH A RECORDING MAY BE USED, AND IT MAY SET CERTAIN LIMITS ON PUBLIC ACCESS.

Even if the materials produced are to be sold for charitable purposes (e.g., as part of a campaign to support the work of the nonprofit organization), this will still constitute commercial activity, and the artists' own commercial interests will need to be acknowledged. (Remember, the value of the goods exchanged for a charitable contribution is not tax-exempt.)

Performers may be willing to contribute their services for this purpose. Nonetheless, any release in this regard should maintain that use will not violate their right to compensation, and their contribution should be formally acknowledged separately as a donation to the organization.

In many cases, a cultural organization produces audio recordings for educational use in a public archives, free exhibit, school program, etc. For such non-commercial use, you will still need to obtain a release from the persons recorded that grants your organization permission to use these materials and make them available to the public.

A release can stipulate the ways in which a recording may be used, and it may set certain limits on public access. One example would be setting a time limit on the materials before the public can access them. In general, however, you should try to set as few limits on educational use as possible. You should make the option of

setting restrictions available but discourage its use.

This may seem counterintuitive given the concerns expressed above. But if a recording is meant from the beginning to be educational in nature, it should be considered a matter of public record. Also, you should clearly communicate this to participants from the beginning.

Your organization may find it difficult or impossible to reasonably set limitations on public access, particularly if you are connected with a public institution. However, public access should not be confused with public use outside of educational fair-use.

As we have noted in the above discussion on intellectual property, the persons recorded should still hold copyright in their expression, and your release form should protect them against the use of these materials by others for commercial purposes. Appendix A has an example of a general audiovisual release form for educational use than can be used for audio recording situations.

For any commercial audio product you produce, you also have the responsibility to clear any copyright permissions required. In the case of performances derived from copyrighted written material, the Copyright Clearance Center (www.copyright.com) serves as a clearinghouse for print publishers. Recording rights for musical performances are not covered by ASCAP and BMI, but by the National Music Publishers Association through the Harry Fox agency (www.nmpa.org/hfa.html) and by SESAC (www.sesac.com).

A number of universities maintain useful websites on copyright issues with guides on determining when copyright permission is required and how to obtain it. A good example is the IUPUI Copyright Management Center (www.copyright.iupui.edu).

Maintaining and Using Audio Recordings

Audio recordings can be subject to the same issues of loss through use that affect photographs. If you are going to make the effort of creating a body of audio recordings, you need to make sure you have a system for processing new recordings, maintaining access, and storing the recordings in good archival conditions.

Creating an audio library

Some general guidelines on creating a library of documentary materials for your organization are outlined above in the section on creating a working organizational archive. Here, we touch on a few considerations specific to audio recordings.

As noted above, it is important to make sure your organization receives and properly maintains original copies of any audio recordings made on your behalf. Make sure that you will receive the original recording, even if the engineer or producer will be producing an edited version. You should receive it on the original recording medium or as an exact, uncompressed digital copy. A professional engineer should deliver the original materials in a format consistent with the recommendations of the Audio Engineering Society (www.aes.org/technical/documents/).

If you are unable to read the original format with the computer or audio equipment your organization currently owns, you will also want to make sure you receive a copy of the material in a format you can use (e.g., CD or magnetic digital media). A variety of digital audio file formats are in widespread use, and most can be read with commonly available computer software such as Apple QuickTime, Windows Media or RealAudio.

Some of these programs employ a compression algorithm to reduce file size, including the MP3, QuickTime, Windows Media and RealAudio file formats. Uncompressed formats generally use the pulse code modulation (PCM) format. This is the format used by audio CDs and DAT, and it can also be delivered as WAV (Windows) or AIFF (Macintosh) files.

Uncompressed files may be considerably larger, but will be most useful if future products are to be developed from these materials. It's likely that the engineer or producer you work with can deliver the recording to you in both a compressed and uncompressed format on media you can access.

Establish a system for organizing recordings stored both physically on tape and in digital format. In general, you should store physical tapes with similar ones; keep reel-to-reel tapes with other reel-to-reel tapes, audiocassettes with other audiocassettes. Use a sequential numbering system to identify materials that will make it easy to spot if something is missing, and maintain a paper record that identifies what is on each tape (more below).

IN GENERAL, STORE PHYSICAL TAPES WITH SIMILAR ONES; KEEP REEL-TO-REEL TAPES WITH OTHER REEL-TO-REEL TAPES, AUDIOCASSETTES WITH OTHER AUDIOCASSETTES.

Digital audio files will not have the same physical storage considerations. In this case, you should create a file directory structure that is organized by project, event or interviewee, and date.

For audio recorded on tape, you should refer to the general guidelines on storing magnetic media in the above section on archival storage. For digital audio media, you should try to make copies to both magnetic media (computer hard drive) and CD or DVD-ROM.

Creating a written record

Among oral historians, the work of creating an audio interview is not considered done until the discussion on the tape is transcribed on paper. A full transcription is probably not necessary. However, creating a documentary record of the contents of an audio recording is a fundamental principle that will pay considerable dividends in the future when you need to find a particular song or story.

You can create a written record at several levels of detail and choose the level that is most appropriate for you:

Content listing: A content listing is just that — a simple list of the main topics or performance items, similar to a table of contents. For example, a content summary of a musical performance would simply list the titles of pieces in the order they were performed. A content summary of a storyteller's performance would list the

titles (or subject matter) of the stories told. A content summary of an oral history interview would list the major topics discussed (e.g., Early Childhood, First Days of School, First Job at Web Design Firm).

A content summary should be keyed to a location on a physical tape or digital file. In the case of analog audiocassette tape recorders, the usual practice has been to use the footage number given by the little odometer found on most quality analog cassette recorders. This has limited value, since these odometers are wildly inaccurate and have little correspondence from one recorder to the next. But at least it provides a general location.

Digital audio files have a built-in-time code, which makes them more precise about the location of a particular item. This is usually listed in an Hour:Minute format. For example, 1:22 indicates that the location is one hour and twenty-two minutes into the recording.

Content log: A content log provides greater detail than a content listing. It is divided into paragraph blocks that correspond to the items that would appear in a content list. Each paragraph block contains a brief synopsis of the item. In the case of a musical performance, this might describe what a song is about. For a storyteller's performance, this would be a plot summary of a story. For an oral history interview, this would be a summary of what the person is talking about; for example:

1:15 First Days of School: She thought teacher treated her differently from the other kids because she wore hand-me-down clothes. Later she realized that it was because her parents worked in the mill.

Creating a content log obviously takes longer than a simple listing. However, a content log will prove far more useful when you or somebody else later wants to retrieve something from an audio recording, because it will provide enough detail to indicate whether it will be useful or not. With a little practice, most people can produce a content log in about the time it takes to listen to the recording, especially if you use some of the note taking suggestions described elsewhere in this handbook.

Transcription: A full transcription is a word-by-word rendering of any spoken language on a recording. If a print product is likely to result from an audio recording, then it may be worth the time it takes to produce a full transcription. Traditionally, full transcriptions have been the end goal of oral history projects. Among historians, they have sometimes been considered more important than the tape itself as a permanent record of the interview.

The general rule-of-thumb is that it can take anywhere from four to six hours of transcription time for every one hour of recorded audio, depending on the skills of the transcriber. When you take this into consideration, you have to decide whether you need this level of written detail. Some experienced interviewers can produce something between a log and a transcription while listening to a recording in real time.

If you are working with outside content specialists, whether they are responsible for the recording itself or not, it is reasonable to have them produce a written record of the recordings for their project. The time required for this

should be factored into their cost.

An audio producer might also be expected to produce a log of recordings (most likely if she is involved in the editing process for an end product). However, you'll need to negotiate this in advance.

In cases where an outside person creates the written document, make sure you get a copy in the form of a word processing file. You can then search for specific content in these files using your computer's file management software. This is another place to keep your eye on emerging technology, since Microsoft and other vendors are beginning to introduce more sophisticated document management and file retrieval systems. You can also import the word processing file into a text-based database system like askSam™.

IN GENERAL, WHEN CREATING A WRITTEN RECORD OF AUDIO RECORDINGS, WE RECOMMEND CREATING CONTENT LOGS RATHER THAN FULL TRANSCRIPTIONS.

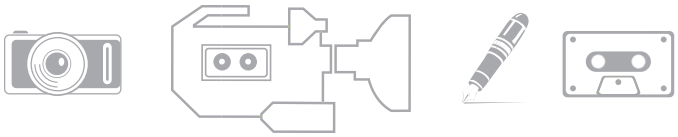
In general, we'd advise that you seek the middle ground in creating a written record of audio recordings and try to create content logs rather than full transcriptions. Except for specialized situations, you're not likely to need a full transcription, and it is simply not cost-effective to produce one otherwise. In most cases, content listings or summary logs are the most effective means for finding information quickly.

With advances in technology, we may one day be able to run a digital audio file through a speech recognition program and a full transcription will result. It's a nice thought, but nothing like this is yet available.

Consumer speech-recognition software is getting much better, but is still only effective for a single speaker and requires training the software to that particular person's speech patterns. Until the day when consumer software can distinguish individual patterns and regional dialects and factor in audio variables resulting from particular recording situations, we're left to the work of creating a written record by hand.

In terms of managing the content of your digital audio files, there is not a wide choice of entry-level audio library software systems. There are a number of high-end digital audio-management systems currently available, but all of these require a degree of technical knowledge that will be beyond many cultural organizations.

A mid-level product is InterClipper™ (www.interclipper.com/audio_site/index.html) — around $500 at the time of this writing. This software allows you to import digital audio files and create a keyword index, content listing, summary or transcript keyed to specific locations in the files. Then, you can retrieve the audio content keyed to the text.



Video Documentation

Elsewhere in this handbook, we have described the lure of video among cultural organizations, and we have cautioned against jumping to the conclusion that video will necessarily be the most effective means of documenting cultural activity.

As a rule of thumb, we suggest you limit the use of video to situations in which you are planning to develop a video product or a multimedia product in which video is an essential element. Any video that you shoot yourself should be limited to purposes in which the audio and picture quality do not matter greatly and for which no production of a product is planned. It's simply not cost-effective for most cultural organizations to try to create production-level video internally.

It's fine to use non-broadcast-quality video recorded on a consumer-grade video camera for short-term reference purposes if the visual elements are essential. By short-term reference purposes, we mean something that will be consulted as part of a business or creative process in the way that written notes might be used as a stimulus for group discussion. However, you should view these materials essentially as throwaway material once their immediate purpose is over. Consumer-grade video has little production value, unless you want something that looks like the video broadcast on one of those "amazing home video" programs.

Higher-end "prosumer" video cameras can produce video that approaches, but doesn't entirely reach, broadcast quality. However, you must also consider other factors required to produce quality video (which are described below). Prosumer video cameras also tend to use smaller tape formats, such as MiniDV, which have some of the same archival issues as DAT.

Do you want to create a lasting record that has some prospect of use in a public product? Then you have to ask yourself how essential the visual element is and whether there are ways to convey the visual without using video. For example, a series of still photographs combined with a stream of audio can provide a powerful sense of an event or process at a fraction of the cost of producing video.

If and when you have exhausted alternative approaches for use in a public product, then you should by all means turn to video. Our discussion here is therefore limited to the knowledge a cultural organization needs to have to produce broadcast-quality video that can be used for a range of products. *

* I'm extremely grateful for the assistance of video producer Beck Sullivan of the University of South Carolina for her help with this section.

Should You Do It Yourself?

The brief answer is: No.

However, if your organization's size and activity warrants it, you may have good cause to establish a professional internal video program. For a medium- to large-scale performing arts organization with an active, professional-level presenting program that regularly produces public products and can support a two- or three-person video crew on a full-time basis, the cost equation may begin to shift. If there is a commitment to serious documentation and a specific need for video, there may be another reason to take on the cost of a professional video program. Jacobs Pillow Dance Festival is one example of a cultural organization that established an internal professional video program to address such needs.

ASIDE FROM PERSONNEL, THE COSTS OF BUILDING AND MAINTAINING A PROFESSIONAL VIDEO PROGRAM ARE SIGNIFICANTLY HIGHER THAN OTHER MEDIA FORMS.

Aside from personnel, the costs of building and maintaining a professional video program are significantly higher than other media forms. The current state of video equipment requires an investment of at least $30,000-$50,000 to achieve a professional level for the necessary camera, lighting and audio equipment. It is possible, and not unusual, to run a video program with equipment that is rented for specific shoots, but this will still require a significant commitment of resources.

If you have a serious need for professional-level video at regular intervals — but you don't have the level of activity or resources that would support two or more staff members for this purpose — an alternative is to hire an internal video producer who can assemble external crews for regular projects. This approach will allow you to maintain an ongoing professional program without requiring the higher level of production needed to justify an ongoing program of video filming or the necessity of purchasing the professional equipment required.

Working with a Professional Videographer

We hope the message is clear by now: the most effective course for the vast majority of cultural organizations will be to work with an outside professional for any video above a strictly amateur level. But to be a good partner in this relationship, you'll still need to have a basic understanding of what it takes to produce broadcast-quality video and how you can help your organization get the best, most cost-effective result.

What you need to know

In the above section on audio recording, we noted that producing good audio means recreating our subjective experience of the audio environment. With video, that state of affairs becomes even more complex.

A microphone captures some degree of the entire audio environment that surrounds it. For this reason, it must be focused through a variety of means to heighten the sources of sound that interest us and filter out noise we subjectively ignore in our normal experience.

A video camera has the opposite problem: The camera lens captures an absolutely delimited slice of the visual

environment and misses anything outside of its field of view. Our eyes also capture only a portion of the visual field, but they are constantly moving and changing focus in response to visual stimuli. Our brain filters that information to give us the sensation of a seamless experience of sight. A video camera simply can't do this.

Inexperienced videographers won't think about these limitations and the resulting need to compensate. They might set up a camera on a tripod to capture a wide field of vision, getting the gross activity but missing the significant details of action. Or they might zoom in on a single person in a group and then need to shift the camera quickly when something happens outside of its field of vision.

A professional, in contrast, has to develop a disciplined shooting plan to anticipate and capture the range of activity needed to understand what's going on and to experience the result as meaningful.

This is particularly obvious when using a single camera to capture what's happening. For example, a music or dance performance with a large number of performers may require moving quickly from a wide shot to capture a coherent sense of the whole to a tight shot to capture the detail of movements. For activities such as this, a minimum of two cameras may be need to effectively tell the story and capture the multi-layered nature of the performance as it happens. But this requires a disciplined shooting plan no less than a single-camera shoot because each videographer must coordinate with the other so they are focused on the appropriate details.

The question of whether two or more video cameras are necessary is something that you will have to carefully consider, discuss with the professional you choose to work with, and potentially factor into the cost of video production. If an activity involves multiple people and is not focused in one physical location, it may not be possible to do an adequate job with a single camera.

One solution might be to film the same activity twice and edit the two together. But if there is some continuous process or a critical dimension of sound, this may not be a good solution. It may be far simpler to synchronize the time codes of two separate cameras and pull footage from each. This would enable you to create a seamless flow of video that moves from different angles and from wide to tight shots. It may actually cost you less to hire two cameras and shoot in tandem that it is to try to create this effect in editing.

INEXPERIENCED VIDEOGRAPHERS WON'T THINK ABOUT THE LIMITATIONS OF VIDEO AND THE RESULTING NEED TO COMPENSATE.

All of these considerations pertain to the visual dimension of video, but video is as much an aural medium as it is visual. A video team must simultaneously contend with the dynamic action of the shot, the lighting conditions, and the audio environment. The decisions about how to handle these physical aspects of shooting must be influenced by two important dimensions:

1. the nature of the activity you are trying to capture
2. the story you are trying to tell

The approach you take requires weighing all of these factors together. When you consider these together, video is at least five times more complex than working with audio alone.

The nature of the activity should be a primary influence on the composition of the shot. Earlier we pointed to a dance performance as an example of an activity with an overall shape that only a wide-angle shot can capture, but which also requires tight shots to convey the dynamic sense of movement.

Suppose now that you are filming a craft process. The nature of that process should inform the shooting plan. Consider these different craft scenarios:

- a process that requires fine motor skills and takes place in a limited physical location, such as jewelry-making
- an activity that takes place in a fixed location but has a broader range of motion, such as handweaving
- an activity that takes place over a wider range of physical locations and involves a variety of processes, such as pottery-making

Each of these processes would have its own blend of lighting conditions and audio environment that a well-thought out shooting plan should take into account.

Then consider the story you want to tell. The filming of a dance performance may convey one story if it moves from wide to medium shots that provide an overall context and follow a set of particular dance movements. It may communicate a different story altogether if it focuses on individual hands and feet in motion as well as the costume details.

WHAT IS THE STORY YOU WANT TO USE VIDEO TO TELL?

Suppose you are using one camera to film a group discussion — for example, a community discussion in which the sequence of speakers is unknown. Do you want to tell the story of the large group dynamic with a steady wide-angle shoot and forego tighter shots that will end up chasing the conversation? Or is it a relatively controlled panel discussion between a small group of experts, in which you want to risk visible camera movement for the sake of tighter shots that will capture individual nuances of expression?

The nature of what you are shooting and what you are trying to tell will also affect the decisions regarding the kind of a video crew and the kind of equipment to use. Is it a public or private setting? What can it physically accommodate? If you plan to record a person within their own home, there may be a limit on what can be done about setting up lights. If you are recording a 98-year-old woman telling her life story, a lavaliere microphone might be more appropriate than an external boom mike because it will be less distracting — even though the boom would provide more natural sound.

Shooting styles

You will need to discuss the overall considerations described above with your videographer. If you've established a collaborative working relationship, a videographer should be able to work with you to develop an effective consensus on these issues.

But you should also be aware that videographers, like photographers, have their own general shooting styles that

may affect their ability to help you achieve your goals for video. You should take this into account when you look for a videographer for a particular purpose. Here are some general shooting styles:

Shooting for news: Videographers who regularly shoot for the news tend to use three kinds of shots: wide establishing, medium and close-up. They may start with a close-up and move out, or start with a wide and move in. In general, news angles tend to be straightforward; extremely high or low angles are not used, except occasionally in feature, magazine-style news stories. Videographers shooting for the news tend to shoot to edit; in other words, they assume their video will be edited in short segments. When they change focus, they zoom in quickly, rack up and adjust the focus, assuming that the transitional footage will be cut out. If you are shooting a continuous sequence of activity, a videographer used to shooting for news may find it difficult to shift her thinking to capture a sustained range of activity with changing focus and scope.

Shooting for live television: Videographers who regularly shoot for live television are used to zooming in and out on details in a way that is not visually disruptive, using paced transitions and maintaining a focused picture throughout the transition. These videographers will also be used to working in situations where there are multiple cameras and where they are not responsible for capturing all of the visual information. For these reasons, while this shooting style is well-suited for many cultural activities, you may need to talk over your goals carefully with the videographer if it is a one-camera shoot.

Shooting for commercials: Videographers who shoot for commercials tend to be more stylized in their shooting style. They are used to sequences that are held for a very short time. They may shoot for jump cuts of the same person; for instance, a sequence of a person talking may jump without pause to another point in the conversation. This unnatural transition, acceptable in a highly stylized context, is jarring to our sense of reality conveyed in video and would not be acceptable for the news or live television. A commercially oriented videographer may also move the camera quickly across the field of vision, anticipating these movements would be slowed down in post-production. A videographer with this shooting style might work well if you intend to produce a visually striking sequence that is clearly not intended to communicate a natural flow of activity. Otherwise, he or she may produce footage that won't work well for a documentary.

Shooting for film: We are limiting our discussion to video because few small or medium-sized cultural organizations are likely to work in film. However, it is worth mentioning a crucial distinction here due to the possibility of an organization working with a documentary filmmaker: In contrast to videography, shooting for film tends to be very compartmentalized. It's unusual, for example, that a cameraman on a film crew also would be used to working with lights. For this reason, someone with a track record of shooting film may not be as good at shooting video.

You should take these various approaches into account when thinking about working with a professional videographer. For example, if you want to shoot a potter with a single camera, get a variety of wide to tight shots, and edit the footage, then a videographer used to shooting news might work well. He or she would get matching shots from the wide-to-tight angle that could be effectively edited together because the sequence of activity could be visually disrupted without destroying the sense of process.

On the other hand, if you are filming an activity that requires a continuous shot, such as a musical performance, then someone who is used to shooting for live television would be a better choice.

Video documentation roles

It should be clear that videography requires a number of distinct roles, each calling for more than one person. Depending on the nature of the project, however, one individual can successfully perform several functions. It is helpful to have a sense of these functional roles so you can be a good partner in working with a videographer. The degree to which you or your staff can assist in some of these functions is a real factor in how cost-effective an approach you can develop.

Producer: The producer, who coordinates the overall production process, is not directly involved in running the equipment involved in a video shoot. There needs to be someone who can communicate with all of the participants involved and troubleshoot when the unanticipated inevitably arises.

It is the producer's responsibility to act as a bridge between the people being videotaped (the "talent") and the video crew. He or she needs to know all of the players in the shooting environment: the crew, performers, management and anyone else somehow connected with the activity. The producer needs to know the schedule — not only the schedule of the activity being filmed, but also the schedule of the shooting plan. He or she needs to have a solid understanding of the content of what is being videotaped and what the crew needs to do in relation to that activity. For example, are there particular cultural constraints the crew must respect? The producer monitors everything and manages the situation to keep things on track.

This is a role that someone from your organization can play, but it requires certain skills and personality traits. A producer must be organized to keep track of the myriad details on a shoot. He or she needs to be assertive without being overbearing in order to keep a rein on crew, performers and the general environment. The producer needs to look out for problems as they arise and before they get out of hand. If a fuse blows, is there a plan for fixing it? Does he or she have the next person to be interviewed prepped and ready?

If someone from your organization is to play this role, he or she needs to work with the videographer in advance to be sure the videographer understands the technical process, just as the videographer needs a basic understanding of the cultural process.

Camera person: The camera person, or shooter, manages the video camera. In a small-scale, one-camera shoot, the camera person would be the person we are calling the videographer. Otherwise, it would be the producer.

Typically, in a one-camera shoot that is relatively static in nature, the camera person will set up a video monitor so others can view what is going into the camera. The producer will usually perch by the monitor, take notes and cue the videographer for a change in camera angle. In a multiple-camera shoot, the camera feeds will usually go to the location of the producer, who cues the camera people by radio headset.

Gaffer: The gaffer handles the lighting of a shoot if the scale or complexity of the shoot warrants a separate person in this role. Sometimes the gaffer takes directions directly from the camera person. In other cases, the gaffer will light the scene in advance and then tweak it together with the camera person.

It is very common for a camera person to want to work with a particular gaffer. This tends to be a fairly tight relationship that requires each person having a clear sense of each other's working style. When this relationship clicks, it reduces the complexities of the job considerably.

If the scale of a shoot doesn't warrant a separate gaffer, but lighting is still required, the camera person may handle this on her own. It's also possible that the sound engineer will assist in this role if the camera person and sound engineer regularly work together as a team.

Sound engineer: If the audio element of an activity is at all important, then a separate individual should manage the function of sound recording. Most full-time sound engineers who work in videography will have a set of microphones for various recording situations and perhaps a portable sound mixer. They will mix the live sound and send it directly into the camera.

The sound engineer is responsible for setting and monitoring the audio levels, relieving the camera person of the responsibility of thinking about audio and allowing him or her to focus exclusively on the visual elements of the scene.

Grip: The grip is responsible for managing the equipment on a shoot, helping to move equipment in and out of the location, and assisting in the setup of equipment and any other physical modifications made to a location.

A separate individual or individuals manage this function only on large-scale shoots. In the type of shoot typically involving a cultural organization, the camera person, sound engineer and perhaps gaffer will do this work. Here again is a place where someone from your organization can play an assisting role and perhaps help keep down costs.

Editor: Video is usually shot to be edited for a finished product. Don't assume the person playing this role will be the camera person. If he or she is playing the role of producer and camera person, the videographer you work with may also play the role of editor for you. However, you need to determine this from the outset.

Most of the video shoots that a small- or mid-size cultural organization undertake will have a crew that typically conists of a single camera person and a sound engineer. You should plan for this configuration at a minimum if you intend to produce video that has reasonable production value.

Video formats

As with all media, videography has been deeply touched by the digital revolution and is in an ongoing state of transition. While the FCC is trying to move the industry to the new digital, high-definition standard, it will still be

some time before this transition has taken place and been fully adopted by consumers. For the time being, there are a variety of video formats in play, both analog and digital, with different cost and filming implications.

Analog video is still in wide use for broadcast purposes, most commonly in the format of Betacam SP. There are still excellent reasons for using this format. For instance, it can be digitized and edited using nonlinear systems. If it is imported in an uncompressed format, which a number of editing systems can do, it can technically yield more video data than Digital Betacam, widely considered to be at the upper end of digital formats.

DV and MiniDV are consumer-grade digital formats that can produce good quality video for broadcast purposes. However, these formats require a good deal of expertise to produce results that would be considered professional.

MANY PROFESSIONALS USE THE DVCAM AND DVCPRO DIGITAL FORMATS, WHICH REPRESENT COMPETING STANDARDS.

DVCAM and DVCPRO are digital formats used by many professionals. They are roughly comparable in quality but represent competing standards — DVCAM by Sony and DVCPRO by JVC and Panasonic. While these produce excellent results, they are not compatible with editing systems that work with their competitors' products, so it's important to shoot using the format to be edited.

Digital Betacam is currently the highest-quality digital format in widespread use, but it is also the most expensive. Since this format is compatible with Betacam SP, there might be tradeoffs that would make Betacam SP a suitable choice where expense is an issue. It's possible for a videographer to make Betacam SP video look very good — or to make Digital Betacam look terrible.

Since the advent of high-definition television (HDTV), another consideration is the aspect ratio (or rectangular format) of the video image. Professional-grade digital video equipment may provide the option of shooting either in the 4:5 aspect ratio used by standard television screens or in the 16:9 widescreen ratio used by HDTV that is similar to movie screens. This will affect how the videographer composes a scene. It may also restrict the use of widescreen video to that format unless it is purposely shot to allow cropping for use in the 4:5 ratio.

You do not need to be intimately familiar with the esoteric details of various video formats. However, you should discuss with videographers the different formats in which they work and which may be best-suited to your needs and resources.

For more information on video production, Appendix B provides a list of bibliographic resources.

Finding a videographer

Locating a videographer who will suit your needs follows much the same course as finding a photographer or audio engineer. You should begin by consulting with colleagues, referring to trusted clearinghouses of information, and examining comparable products.

Try to identify other cultural organizations in your area that have done video projects. Talk with staff members about their experiences and with whom they have worked. If you can find a video product produced in your area that is similar to the type of work you are trying to do, find out who was involved.

If there is a public television station in your area, see if there are videographers on their staff who freelance or if they can put you in touch with outside videographers. Many states have film offices that provide listings of production companies and crews. Film offices tend to list camera people as cinematographers, but in many cases you will be able to find videographers among the mix.

Production companies may be willing to refer you to freelancers. But they are also likely to want you to work directly with them, which may add cost and overhead. Of course, this may also be a one-stop solution depending on your needs and budget.

In most cases, you will not be acting as a producer putting together a crew, but starting with a videographer/camera person who will work with you to do this. You should probably trust the videographer to put the crew together based on your input and the shooting requirements. Focus your attention on finding a videographer with an appropriate shooting style who can work with you collaboratively to set the overall parameters. Then, let the videographer pull his or her own crew together.

As we've pointed out in previous sections, the crucial elements in finding a videographer are:

- whether the videographer can work with you as a true collaborator.
- whether his or her shooting style matches your need, and
- whether he or she is attentive to and respectful of your ideas and goals — and sensitive to the cultural activities you are documenting.

When evaluating potential videographers, base your initial assessment on the quality of the work with which they have been involved. Then engage them in an extended conversation to gauge their approach to your project and whether they are responding to your ideas or imposing their own.

Make sure you are convinced that they will work with you to design an approach that is feasible within your budget. You should also allow sufficient lead time to find the person who will work best with you. This is dependent upon the media market where your organization is located. Each market has its own cycles when videographers are in high demand. You should allow a minimum of a month in advance of the activity you are hoping to film.

Defining the project

We have mentioned a number of key considerations that should go into the collaborative process of defining a video project with a professional videographer. Start by thinking about what this project is going to look like when it appears on a screen at the end of the process:

- What story will be told?
- What cultural information will be conveyed?

- What emotional sense will be evoked?

These considerations should drive the technical approach taken. The most common mistake is not having a serious conversation about these matters in advance. Because many people think of video as a transparent medium in our media-illiterate society, they don't realize this conversation needs to occur at all. Consider:

- What will it take in technical terms to convey the information and tell the story? You should be able to talk through the strategy for this with the videographer.
- What needs to be captured in order to provide enough context for the activity to be understood?
- Will this be done through in-camera editing, such as setting an establishing shot and then zooming in for a closer view, or will this be accomplished in editing?
- How will the lighting and audio play into this approach?
- What do you mean by a wide shot or a tight shot — how tight is tight? Make sure you and the videographer are even speaking the same language.

Both you and the videographer will bring separate strengths to the equation that can make the result far more powerful. The videographer will know a great deal about composition and pacing, while your organization will know more about content and the elements that must be captured to tell the full story.

There is often a balance to be struck between the elements of visually exciting video and culturally appropriate documentation. It will take an ongoing dialogue through the entire process of acquiring and editing video to ensure this balance is met.

Have confidence in your content knowledge, but also be responsive to the videographer's professional expertise and judgment concerning the technical requirements of the project. If you are going to spend the time, money and effort of filming something intended for a public product, then it makes no sense to scrimp on needed resources.

What if this is a one-time event, and this is your only shot? When budgets are tight, it's common to hire one person and ask him or her to do everything from monitoring the composition and lighting to the audio. This almost certainly assures that person will accomplish one of these tasks less than adequately. If a shoot requires two cameras, you won't get what you need by doing it on the cheap. You would be far better off looking for an alternative form of media to reach your documentation goals if you absolutely cannot put together the resources to shoot it properly.

If there will be separate people involved in shooting and editing the video, then the editor should also be a party to this discussion early on. The videographer and editor need to be in synch about the technical specifications of the project.

In addition, an editor may be able to set parameters around issues to be resolved in the editing process — issues that will give the camera person a degree of latitude not otherwise available. This might allow the camera person to compensate for conditions that would otherwise require additional equipment, personnel and expense. And all

parties will need to strategize together over the issues of meaning and content that will guide development of the final product.

Developing a contract

Most videographers work on a day-rate basis, which will vary considerably depending on the media market where you are located. There are also a number of variations in the way in which this is calculated, so you will need to clarify with videographers what their day rate entails.

Some videographers quote their day rate based on their time alone, while others factor in the cost of equipment. If the videographer regularly works with a sound person and/or a gaffer, the day rate may be a package that includes the services of the team as a whole.

A further complication is the cost of equipment. A camera person and/or sound person may be using or renting their own equipment. Even if the equipment is their own, they may legitimately give a day rate for their time and then separately charge for the camera or audio package as it is configured for the particular job.

BE CAREFUL TO CLARIFY WITH VIDEOGRAPHERS WHAT THEIR DAY RATE ENTAILS.

The bottom line: be careful to clarify the basis on which a particular videographer works, so you can budget accordingly and also have an accurate basis for comparison when considering more than one videographer for a project.

In many cases, media professionals are familiar with and sensitive to the resource constraints within which many cultural organizations operate. They also may be willing to charge a day rate that is below their going rate for commercial work. It is perfectly acceptable to lay out your budget constraints to prospective videographers and see if they can work with you to plan an approach that will work within your budget.

Many videographers work on very short jobs that involve no more than a day or two of shooting. If your project will involve a longer period, they may be willing to factor this into their day rate. You may also find that the nature of the activity you are documenting will itself provide incentive to videographers if it captures their interest.

Negotiating a reasonable rate, however, doesn't mean you should pressure the videographer unreasonably based on a plea of poverty. You need to equally respect the skills and scope of the videographer's job. If you are working with a minimal crew and asking the videographer to do multiple jobs, you should also expect to pay the videographer at a higher rate than if he or she were acting solely as a camera person.

This is a place where you can explore reasonable alternatives. If the shoot involves more than a minimalist equipment setup, someone from your staff might be able to serve as a grip to lug equipment and provide transportation as a way of reducing costs. If you have a professional audio person on your staff, he can potentially serve this role on a video shoot.

For example, it may be possible to pull the audio from your house system and send it to the camera. But whenever you propose to provide staff to a project, the videographer must give his or her approval. A professional videographer will want to test this idea thoroughly beforehand. Even if an acceptable audio line feed can be established, for example, the camera person will still need to do two jobs if your audio person doesn't maintain an appropriate audio level.

The bottom line remains that videographers have the right to set a reasonable price for their time and skills, and to set parameters about the type of equipment and crew to be used for a project. If there is no willingness to collaborate on these matters, you probably don't want to work with the individual. On the other hand, if you don't have sufficient knowledge of and respect for the value that the videographer brings to the equation, he or she probably won't want to work with you.

VIDEOGRAPHERS HAVE THE RIGHT TO SET A REASONABLE PRICE FOR THEIR TIME AND SKILLS, AND TO SET PARAMETERS ABOUT THE TYPE OF EQUIPMENT AND CREW TO BE USED FOR A PROJECT.

If you are hiring a videographer, the assumption should be that this is a work-for-hire in which you own the copyright and use rights. The only exception to this might be when the videographer is pursuing a related creative project and negotiates an exchange of services so he or she can use the footage in their own project. As always, you should carefully stipulate in any contract where the ownership of the copyright and use rights reside.

There are a few other considerations to keep in mind when developing a contract with a videographer. In addition to the rates set for the videographer's time and for equipment, you should establish the following:

- the dates of service
- the length of the working day (often 10 hours)
- overtime rates
- insurance coverage in case of accidents
- the timing and duration of breaks

In many areas, professional videographers may belong to a union with a set of standard requirements regarding the above points. Videography involves a greater range of unpredictable situations, not to mention heavy equipment. As a result, you should take care to determine where the responsibility for insurance coverage lies and ensure there is adequate coverage.

You should also clearly define the deliverables on either side: What will the videographer provide you with at the end of the project, and what format will it be in? As in the case of audio recording, you should stipulate you will receive the original masters of all tapes. Otherwise, as in the case of audio, it's possible that the videographer will reuse the tapes when the project is over. If you are to provide services or staff to the project, the contract should clearly stipulate the parameters to avoid any potential misunderstandings during or after the project.

Your responsibilities

As the copyright holder, you are responsible for obtaining releases and acting ethically to ensure the rights of the

people videotaped are respected. All of the considerations raised above in relation to audio recording remain the same here.

A general audiovisual release form for educational purposes that will cover video can be found in Appendix A, as well as an agreement for release of rights for a video project. You should note the discussion concerning intellectual property rights at the beginning of the section on audiovisual documentation, as well as the discussion on the relationship between release forms and artist contracts in the section on audio recording.

A further legal consideration is whether you will need location releases if the video is shot somewhere outside of your organization's facility. Location releases from a property owner usually:

- grant the use of the property for video production,
- relinquish any ownership rights in the image of the location used in the video,
- warrant permission for the crew to place and remove equipment without obstruction, and
- may indemnify against damage, death and injury.

Unless you are working with a production company, you should not expect the videographer to handle release forms for you. A production company will likely use release forms, but these will be releases to the production company unless they are modified for your purposes. A sample location release can be found in Appendix A.

Aside from your legal and ethical responsibilities, your role in a video project will be to work as an effective partner with the videographer, as discussed above in relation to defining the project. You will need to provide as much content information to the videographer as she needs to do an effective job of capturing the activity on video for the uses you intend.

In the case of a performance of any kind, you should make every effort to expose the videographer to the nature and meaning of the performance beforehand. If possible, create a focused and undisrupted opportunity for the videographer to meet and converse with the artists about the nature of their work.

UNLESS YOU ARE WORKING WITH A PRODUCTION COMPANY, DON'T EXPECT THE VIDEOGRAPHER TO HANDLE RELEASE FORMS FOR YOU.

Try to get the videographer to see a dress rehearsal so he or she can develop the shooting plan based on the actual sequence of the work. If this is not possible, here is an opportunity for you to use your amateur video skills and equipment to tape a rehearsal. You can then review the tape with the videographer to point out the details of the performance that you want captured.

At a minimum, you should visit the location with the videographer in advance so he or she can assess the situation and troubleshoot any limitations of the space. A videographer will notice things that are not at all obvious to you. For example:

- anything that may cause an issue with lighting, such as backlighting or problematic shadows.
- possible limitations of the onsite electrical outlets.
- potential sound issues, even if these are not a problem at the moment: Is there a railroad track, an airport

or a construction site nearby? Will there be a different level of activity in the area at the time you are shooting?
- any issues involved in composing a shot that are not obvious to you; that gorgeous scenic backdrop may look very different through the camera lens.

Videographers use the expression "running gun" for shooting in a location without any advance knowledge. It's a situation to avoid.

You should also be aware that videographers are subject to competing demands on their time. Because they often work on short-term, transient projects, they often have to juggle their schedule.

Once they have committed to a firm shooting date, ethical videographers will not take another job for that date, even if it is more lucrative. However, don't assume that just because you are floating several dates among all of the participants, that a videographer would be able to put aside those dates and wait until you have made all the necessary confirmations. You should try to work out these details in advance, present the videographer with a set of workable dates, and be prepared to make a firm commitment for the shooting schedule.

Similarly, once you have agreed to a shooting schedule, you should do everything possible on your end to adhere to that schedule. Otherwise, you may be robbing the videographer of the opportunity to take another job.

Maintaining and Using Video Recordings

In the sections above, we discussed a number of considerations involved in processing, storing and using audiovisual materials. Most of these considerations also apply to video. Video stored on magnetic tape should be archived in proper storage conditions, organized with similar materials, and managed as a library of materials with a system for accessioning, numbering and maintaining a record of use.

Creating a library

In contrast to current formats for storing audio, most video continues to be stored on magnetic tape. Most of the recording formats that professional videographers use will not be readable on consumer video playback equipment. Nonetheless, you should always make every effort to obtain the original tapes, variously termed "field," "source" and "raw" tapes by videographers.

The assumption of most videographers, particularly if they are directly involved in the editing process, will be that they are not going to be giving you original tapes after they have completed a master tape of the edited product. They may be factoring this into the rate they are charging you, assuming they will be able to recycle the field tapes. This will be the case whether you are working with a freelance videographer or a partner such as an educational television station.

For this reason, you should stipulate from the beginning that you want to receive the original field tapes and the master tape of any edited material, even if you do not have the equipment to use it. Given the propensity of

videographers to reuse tapes, it's also worthwhile to stipulate that all recording take place on fresh tape stock to ensure you will obtain the highest video quality.

Even if you cannot read these tapes yourself, you can usually find a video duplication service in the commercial Yellow Pages that can copy them onto a format you can use, such as VHS or DVD. The videographer with whom you are working also may be able to provide you with dubbed copies or at least point you to a duplication service.

You should use these dubbed copies as the basis for your internal reference library and maintain the originals in secure storage. For some production uses, such as placing video on a website, video stored on DVD can suffice. You should be aware, however, that digital video is usually run through a compression algorithm (most commonly MPEG) when it is put on DVD or in computer files. You will want to use the original tapes for use in any future video projects.

At this stage of technology, storing video on DVD for use probably makes more sense than creating a library of digital video computer files. Why? Simply because the storage requirements for digital video files exceeds the capabilities of the computer hard disks that most cultural organizations are likely to own.

For this reason, we advise you maintain a written record of the content of videotapes in log format stored in electronic document files. Also, have these logs refer to the VHS or DVD copies where the video can be found. Of course, as computer technology develops, this situation may change sooner rather than later, making it feasible to store your video collection online, where it can be directly accessed by computer.

Creating a written record

As noted above, the most useful written record for video materials will take the form of a content log keyed to the physical medium in which a use copy of the video is stored. The process of creating a log file is described above in the section on audio recordings.

Depending on the size of the video project, it may be possible to construct rough logs of video content in the field as it is being filmed. Some production companies and individual producers will do this as a matter of course to speed up the editing process.

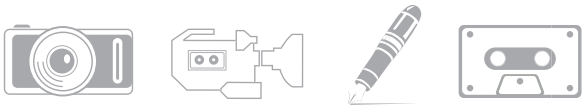
In your pre-production discussions with videographers, you should see if this is a practice they follow. If so, learn whether you can obtain a copy of their field log that can be used as the basis for your own written record. However, this is not a normal practice on the scale of production in which most cultural organizations will be involved.

As with audio logs, the segments on a content log for video are most usefully identified by time code. (Any professional video format will embed a time code on the original tape.)

When you have duplicates made for your use, you will have the option of displaying the time code on the video

image. In this case, the copy is called a "window dub." It will be well worth your while to have two copies made of the original professional video:

1. a clean copy that can potentially be used for simple, limited production purposes
2. a window dub used for compiling written documentation and as the copy used by your staff and the public for reviewing the video materials in your library



Ethnographic Approaches

In our discussion on written documentation, we described a range of ways that your organization can improve its internal record-keeping for documentation purposes and develop a more systematic capacity for creating a reflective record of your activities.

In this section, we explore this further to look at some of the professional approaches to creating a written record from an examination of social activity and to discuss the value of these approaches for analysis and the creation of a range of public products. These approaches are broadly identified as the "ethnographic method," or simply "ethnography."

There are a variety of professional disciplines that employ ethnography to different ends, as well as a range of tools that ethnographers employ. This section briefly describes the major tools of the ethnographic method and the different approaches to ethnography that various disciplines take.

In keeping with the general approach of this handbook, this section is not intended to be a how-to manual on conducting ethnographic research. Instead, we want to provide you with enough background information to aid you in deciding when a particular approach will be useful to your organization. We will also cover how to find and work with a professional ethnographer to achieve your goals.

What Is Ethnography?

Ethnography literally means "writing culture." It is rooted in the anthropological approach to the study of culture and has evolved over the past century as a means for conducting disciplined qualitative research on human interaction.

The term ethnography was coined in the mid-19th century. Cultural anthropologists in the early 20th century adopted the phrase to describe an exhaustive written analysis of the lifeways, belief systems, kinship structures and social system of an entire foreign culture.

An ethnography was intended to be a scientific, summary analysis that would allow accurate comparisons of human societies around the world. The field of cultural anthropology attempted to construct structured schemas of the relationships between different types of societies. (Similarly, physical anthropology was reconstructing the relationships between historical civilizations through the specialized sub-field of archeology, and linguistic

anthropology was tracing the relationships between groups of languages throughout the world.)

To construct the ethnography of another culture, a cultural anthropologist was expected to spend a long period of time residing within that culture, becoming immersed in an alien environment and puzzling through the patterns of that way of life by maintaining and revisiting a disciplined set of written observations.

Once he or she had returned home, the anthropologist's task was to organize a mass of field observations into a final cogent analysis. This approach was behind the work of celebrated American anthropologists such as Margaret Mead, Gregory Bateson, Franz Boas and Ruth Benedict.

Over time, the discipline of anthropology modified its view of the early goal of scientifically cataloging the structure of every human society. As we touched upon in our discussion of documentary voice, anthropology and the other social sciences moved to a more nuanced understanding of cultural description as a qualitative process involving the interaction of subjective frames.

Because the subjective position of anthropologists crept into their analysis, early descriptions of foreign cultures couldn't escape a tinge of exoticism. This later led to criticism of these works as a 20th-century vestige of colonialism. Some came under radical revision at the hands of people from the very cultures described in those ethnographies. Anthropology led the way in rethinking the nature of the ethnographic method and the implications of accepting its subjective nature.*

THE ETHNOGRAPHIC APPROACH UNDERLIES MOST METHODS OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH TODAY.

As a result, the ethnographic process has come to mean a more complex dialogue between cultural insider and outside observer. Rather than a term to describe the end product of summary, scientific description, ethnography has come to mean a process of systematic observation and dialogue involving one or more of a set of common methods.

Instead of attempting to create an objective description of entire foreign cultures, ethnography is commonly used today in a more restricted way as a search for patterns of meaning within a range of human interactions. Ethnography continues to be used for the focused examination of cultures outside of the researcher's own society. However, it is just as commonly used to look at activity within the researcher's own culture and has been applied to a wide range of human endeavors at every level of society. The ethnographic approach underlies most methods of qualitative research today.

Within this more realistic frame, ethnography is a powerful tool for describing and examining cultural activity, and can be used in many settings for an astonishing range of purposes. During the 20th century, a broad range of academic disciplines embraced the ethnographic method and applied it to their various areas of study.

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* The classic text that signaled the full development of this new awareness is Edmund R. Leach, Rethinking Anthropology. London: University of London, Athlone Press, 1961.

Many professions beyond anthropology can now rightly lay claim to the ethnographic approach. As a result, it's impossible to use "ethnography" or "ethnographer" as a straightforward occupational category. It would be a bit naïve to look for a professional ethnographer in the same way you might a professional videographer or photographer. Even so, we'll use the term ethnographer here as a shortcut for referring to the range of professionals who employ some aspect of the ethnographic method.

Taking an ethnographic approach

Cultural organizations have significant common cause with the ethnographic approach — in all of its disciplinary varieties. Professionals trained in the ethnographic method can play a range of roles among cultural organizations of all types and sizes.

A state arts agency might employ a folklorist to identify and work with artists trained in culturally specific traditions. A library might work with an oral historian to compile a published history of a local community or a distinctive occupation. An art museum might employ a symbolic anthropologist to curate a series of exhibits on the impact of visual arts in our society.

Cultural organizations can also work with professionals employing the ethnographic method to:

- help the organization better understand their role in their community or their internal working methods, or
- assist the organization in supporting a process of artistic collaboration within or across artistic forms and cultural traditions.

Two other examples: A museum might work with a sociologist to understand the dynamics of its local audiences and improve its educational outreach. Or, a performing arts organization might work with a cultural anthropologist or folklorist to document a creative work in process that bridges artistic traditions.

The methods of ethnography can support the range of public products that the cultural organizations are already engaged in producing: catalogs, recordings, program brochures, narrative histories, multimedia presentations, etc. When a cultural organization finds an appropriate partner in a professional researcher trained in ethnography, the result can be insightful, compelling and stimulating. Such collaborations have resulted in path-breaking museum exhibitions, Grammy-winning albums and Academy Award-winning documentaries.

YOU SHOULD BE FAMILIAR WITH THE BASIC METHODS THAT UNDERLIE THE ETHNOGRAPHIC APPROACH AND HOW VARIOUS PRACTITIONERS ARE LIKELY TO APPLY THESE IN DIFFERENT SETTINGS.

But in all cases, a cultural organization can strengthen its work through a thoughtful use of ethnographic methods. The ethnographic approach can challenge easy assumptions, deepen creative collaborations and give public voice to past history and present artistic process.

If your cultural organization is to effectively engage with the ethnographic approach, you need to avoid a range of potential missteps that can result if your aims and the ethnographer's training or orientation do not align. You should be familiar with the basic methods that underlie the ethnographic approach and how various practitioners are likely to apply these in different settings.

Depending on whether you are working with an oral historian, folklorist, cultural anthropologist or sociologist, the set of skills, the working approach and the set of expectations concerning his or her relationship with you will vary. You will be better prepared to find a suitable professional and to mutually define a set of goals if you can take this into account.

The aim of this section is to help you begin to assess what ethnographic approaches and practitioners will be most useful to your organization and to provide you with some guidelines that will help you work as an effective collaborator.

First, we'll describe some basic methods that the ethnographic approach uses. Then, we'll point to some of the types of practitioners who make use of these methods and explain the various ways they can potentially benefit your organization. Finally, we'll suggest some guidelines for finding and working with an appropriate professional.

Ethnographic Methods

There are many specialized disciplinary methods that have developed in response to specific intellectual issues and areas of inquiry. For the most part, these are rooted in a set of broad working methods. To varying degrees, practitioners whose training is rooted in the ethnographic method are likely to make use of the following tools.

Participant Observation

When they studied other cultures, it was impossible for early anthropologists to step outside of their normal experience without becoming actors in the situation they were observing. The notion of the researcher as a participant in the very activity he or she is seeking to understand is a bit paradoxical, but it is at the heart of the ethnographic approach.

Participant observation does not mean becoming a member of another culture — though the occasional ethnographer identified so much with the culture being studied that he or she eventually "went native." The pairing of the word "participant" with "observer" was meant to capture a sense of liminality: The ethnographer stands between his or her own cultural background and the current situation.

In general, the ethnographer tries to be more of an observer than a participant. But the very fact of his or her difference from the primary actors becomes a tool for puzzling out the nature of the situation. The ethnographer interacts with the situation and examines his or her own sense of dislocation.

After reflection, the ethnographer seeks out answers: Why is such-and-such a thing done this way? What is the relation between this person and that person? Through an ongoing process of participation, reflection and dialogue, the ethnographer begins to describe the social processes he or she is observing.

The main tool for this is the compilation of a set of fieldnotes. A professional ethnographer brings a discipline of descriptive writing to any situation he or she studies. In fieldnotes, an ethnographer initially aims for a consistent

level of description that shies away from interpretation — though, of course, what the ethnographer perceives is necessarily subjective and tinged by his or her own social and cultural background.

Over time, a professional ethnographer visits and revisits his or her notes to question and revise initial perceptions. There's an element of detective work to the process: an initial, seemingly extraneous detail noted in passing becomes significant later after the ethnographer has gained enough information and engaged in further dialogue with the actors.

Fieldnotes are traditionally an ongoing work-in-progress and are viewed as a private matter for the ethnographer's personal use alone. This orientation, quite frankly, is rooted in the history of ethnography, which saw the ethnographer in the role of an authority cataloging a foreign culture.

On the face of it, there's a lack of immediate purpose to participant observation that may not sit well with a cultural organization hard-pressed for resources and time. Without a concrete end product in view, participant observation can seem pointless to some. But as a disciplined process of interaction and reflection, participant observation can yield insights that would be difficult for both the observer and the persons observed to gain otherwise.

PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION CAN YIELD INSIGHTS THAT WOULD BE DIFFICULT FOR BOTH THE OBSERVER AND THE PERSONS OBSERVED TO GAIN OTHERWISE.

If they are engaged in a true dialogue, the parties will work together to build an adequate, mutually satisfying description of what is going on. Often, the parties will also bring aspects of essential practice to the surface that are otherwise so ingrained that they are difficult to acknowledge.

This has implications not only for any materials that are developed from the interaction, but for the quality of the work itself. In an interaction with a single actor, a participant observer can hold up a mirror to practice that can help provide new insights. In a process involving two or more parties, an ethnographer can serve as a kind of "third eye" to help the others triangulate their actions and negotiate matters of practice that would otherwise become obstacles.

Participant observation is rarely practiced as the sole method of cultural documentation. Professionals trained in the ethnographic method may use a number of allied methods as part of the process of interaction. While these are rooted to various degrees in the history of the anthropological method, they are also used independently of participant observation for various ends.

Structured Interviewing

An interview sets aside a bounded space in which a formal dialogue between the ethnographer and one or more individuals is recorded in writing or some form of audiovisual media. Interviews fall into two main approaches: structured and open-ended.

For *structured interviews*, the researcher constructs a set of questions or prompts designed to examine a set

of particular issues he or she has deemed significant. In a sense, the structured interview is the opposite of the participant observation method. Where the first method takes in experience for future analysis, structured interviewing brings forward a set of analytic propositions to be tested.

The most common form of structured interviewing is the survey. Depending on the social science discipline and its goals, survey methodology can be intricately calibrated according to a set of well-defined principles developed over time. Then, the methodology is applied to a carefully selected sample of a larger population to gauge attitudes, conditions, knowledge, mores or practices within that group.

In general, surveys are used as a standard instrument of measurement in relation to multiple individuals. As such, they have proved a powerful tool for revealing patterns of behavior or conditions in a larger group, provided that:

- their design adequately reflects social reality;
- the interaction between the interviewer and interviewee, as well as the structure of the survey, does not steer responses in a way that distorts the results; and
- the composition of the population sample adequately stands for the whole.

Surveys are by no means the only type of structured interviewing method. Interviews with a single individual that are not meant to be comparative can also be structured in various ways.

FOR STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS, THE RESEARCHER CONSTRUCTS A SET OF QUESTIONS OR PROMPTS DESIGNED TO EXAMINE A SET OF PARTICULAR ISSUES HE HAS DEEMED SIGNIFICANT.

For example, an ethnographer can construct a schedule of questions that are derived from previous observations and intended to probe further into the meaning or the processes of a cultural activity. In this type of interview, structured questions can be used as a prompt. Depending on the inclinations and talents of the interviewer, a structured interview can chart a very specific course, or it can be used as a catalyst for opening up new avenues for discussion.

Structured interviewing can also be used as a method for giving shape to a process of inquiry that has a specific aim. For example, an oral history project may develop an interview guide with a set of specific thematic topics to be explored. Such an interview guide can be a prompt to ensure that potential knowledge held by an interviewee is not missed. An interviewer may also develop a set of follow-up questions based on an initial round of interviews.

Open-Ended Interviewing

An *open-ended interview* is a recorded, exploratory dialogue where the interviewer and person(s) interviewed review an area of activity or experience. An open-ended interview proceeds with its own logic, depending on the social interaction between the parties.

In the hands of a skilled interviewer, an open-ended interview can feel like a conversation. But in reality, it is a guided exchange of information in which the interviewer steers the discussion to specific areas of discussion and

adjusts his or her questions depending on the interviewee's response.

Effective open-ended interviews depend on *active listening* on the part of the interviewer. This is a skill developed over time. It requires that the interviewer create an internal space in which he or she continuously and carefully attends to the other person's stream of speech. At the same time, another part of his or her brain is noting any unexpected or previously overlooked details, indications of potentially sensitive areas, or purposely omitted subjects. All the while, the interviewer is registering promising leads for further exploration and formulating the next question to ask.

Good interviewers make judicious use of several techniques depending on the circumstances. One of these is the use of closed and open questions as a strategy in eliciting a response.

- *Closed questions* are questions that steer a person toward a limited set of responses; for example, "Are you planning to work with so-and-so again?"
- *Open questions* set parameters on the information being sought and invite the other person to respond in the direction he thinks best; for example, "What do you look for in a collaborator?"

There is nothing inherently good or bad about either type of question. However, unless the interviewer knows what she is doing, using one type of question without understanding its potential effect can disrupt or distort the direction of an interview.

EFFECTIVE OPEN-ENDED INTERVIEWS DEPEND ON ACTIVE LISTENING ON THE PART OF THE INTERVIEWER, A SKILL DEVELOPED OVER TIME.

A closed question can be used to move an interview in a particular direction or to refine an unclear answer. It can also pressure a person to conform to an interviewer's perspective. Meanwhile, an open question can set the stage for reflection, invite an interviewee to expand and stimulate a reexamination of a position. It can also be vague, confusing or too broad for a meaningful response. A skilled interviewer will use both techniques judiciously.

One sign of an experienced interviewer is the ability to tolerate and use silence as a means for pacing a discussion and prompting response. The sign of a poor or inexperienced interviewer is often the compulsion to fill up the empty spaces of an interview with talk.

Individuals have their own styles of speaking, and the interaction of two or more speakers in an interview has its own rhythm and pace. An attentive interviewer will give the interviewee quiet space to formulate a response and will not step on his or her train of speech with a premature question. In turn, an interviewer's silence is often the impetus needed for the person interviewed to dig deeper and expand on an overly circumscribed thought.

We have discussed some of the mechanical aspects of recorded and written open-ended interviews elsewhere in this handbook. Experienced ethnographic interviewers should also have the ability to manage these aspects on their own or to work with media professionals to produce a high-quality result.

Life History

The development of a *life history* is an extension of the interviewing process in which an interviewer works with an individual to formulate a biographical or autobiographical account of her life. This usually involves a series of interviews and interactions in which the subject of the life history has an opportunity to review and modify the composed history based on her experiences.

Life histories can be composed as first-person statements collated and edited from a series of recorded interviews. They can also be a descriptive review written in a third-person voice, which draws on a set of secondary written materials and first-person testimony.

The development of the life history as a mode of ethnographic writing has long been part of the anthropological repertoire. (Examples of this genre that will be familiar to many are *Ishi* by Robert Heizer and Theodora Kroeber, and *Nisa* by Marjorie Shostak.*) Life histories place individuals within the larger social context of their lived experience and draw the reader imaginatively into their personal perspective on the larger society in which they live.

As a method of constructing and recording social reality, the life history approach engages the outside observer and the person interviewed into a reflexive process in which the interviewee gains an authorial voice in considering the experiences that have shaped her. The result has significant rhetorical power within our own culture.

The life history approach has been criticized within the field of anthropology as a constructed text in which the contributions of the interviewer and interviewee cannot be disentangled. However, it has also been defended as an important method for making meaning of cultural experience that is consistent with the intersubjective nature of anthropological research.

Whether the life history is regarded as a tool for analysis or a constructed interpretation, it is widely used across a range of disciplines. In a real sense, the life history approach is the foundation for oral history research. Oral historians have also used the formal approach of the life history to construct interview-based autobiographies.**

Social Network Analysis

Social network analysis is a broad term to describe the disciplined study of the various types of social linkages that structure relationships within a particular cultural context. Whether this applies to formal structures of kinship or informal groupings that affect how information flows in an organization, anthropologists and sociologists have long focused attention on how sets of relationships affect the ways people behave and interact.

As with structured survey techniques, social network analysis can be a highly technical affair where concepts

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* Robert F. Heizer and Theodora Kroeber. *Ishi: The Last Yahi.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979. Marjorie Shostak. *Nisa: The Life and Words of a !Kung Woman.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981.

** A notable example is Theodore Rosengarten's autobiography of Alabama sharecropper and early civil rights activist Ned Cobb, published as *All God's Dangers: The Life of Nate Shaw.* New York: Vintage Books, 1974; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000

such as nodes, degrees, clusters, hubs and boundary spanners are used to describe observed relationships. For the present purpose, we are using it more loosely to point to the common practice in ethnographic research of mapping out the sets of relationships among the actors in the activity being studied.

Practitioners with expertise in network analysis could potentially assist cultural organizations in understanding the sets of relationships at work among their staffs or constituencies. Even where social network analysis is not pursued as a technical method, any cultural documentation project should take this dimension of social interaction into account. For example, an ethnographer working with a performing artist should certainly try to trace the influence of colleagues, social background and points of connection between the artist, the institution and their audiences.

Sociolinguistics and Discourse Analysis

Linguistics grew as a sub-field of social anthropology that originally traced relationships between language families. As the study of languages developed in the 20th century, the discipline of linguistics emerged as its own field of study with a number of specializations, including language and cognition, pragmatics and semantics, and neurolinguistics. Most directly relevant to the work of cultural organizations are the related specializations of *sociolinguistics* and *discourse analysis*.

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS CAN BE A POWERFUL TOOL FOR UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS.

Sociolinguistics is the study of the social patterning of language that is dependent on context. It includes the examination of large-scale issues such as attitudes toward language variants and the use of language in social context involving processes such as code switching from one mode of speaking to another.

Discourse analysis is a form of sociolinguistics that examines the use of language in specific situations and considers factors such as:

- the social frame in which speaking occurs
- patterns in turn-taking
- ways in which passages of speech are structured through parasyntactic markers (e.g., the use of "um," "well," and "and" in American English)
- the culturally specific operation of particular speech acts

Discourse analysis can be a powerful tool for understanding social relationships. In recent years, for example, the work of linguist Deborah Tannen on the relationship of gender, speech and social roles has garnered significant popular interest.* Linguistic analysis is directly relevant to many of the creative forms with which cultural organizations work and to the many social contexts in which creative work takes place.

For example, discourse analysis could be applied to a situation in which collaborators are attempting to work across artistic disciplines, each with its own traditions, tools and techniques, to help uncover disjunctures in

* See Deborah Tannen. *That's Not What I Meant! How Conversational Style Makes or Breaks Your Relations With Others.* New York: Morrow, 1986; Tannen. *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation.* New York: Morrow, 1990. Tannen. *The Argument Culture: Moving from Debate to Dialogue.* New York: Ballantine, 1999.

communication. Because sociolinguistic analysis tends to be technical and highly focused, a cultural organization would need to examine carefully whether and when it might be employed in their work — or if it could be incorporated into the analysis of a long-term or team-based documentation project.

These are by no means the only methods that are employed by the range of disciplines rooted in the ethnographic method. Other established, experimentally based methods include:

- ethnomethodology
- specific approaches to qualitative data collection and analysis (e.g., free listing, pile sorting and triad tests)
- wholesale strategic procedures for applying ethnographic methods, such as "rapid ethnography" used in time- constrained applied settings

However, the approaches described above are the most likely methods to be relevant to the issues and interests of cultural organizations. Cultural organizations that work with ethnographers should engage with them in a discussion of the methods that they use and their relevance to the organization's documentation goals.

Disciplinary Approaches to Ethnography

In many ways, it is more important for a cultural organization to carefully consider what kind of ethnographic practitioner they should work with than to decide in advance the specific ethnographic methods to be employed on their behalf. This section briefly summarizes the most relevant disciplinary approaches that employ ethnography and the types of insights and skills they might bring to a cultural documentation project.

It's worth noting from the outset that academic disciplines have different perspectives on work in non-academic settings on behalf of public or private institutions. In a number of disciplines, professional practice of this type is defined as *applied* disciplinary work.

Cultural organizations often will be most comfortable working with someone who identifies himself as an applied practitioner who treats the organization as a client and provides services in this context. This is by no means a prerequisite, for professional ethnographers both inside and outside the academy have a long history of working successfully with cultural organizations. Nonetheless, as we discuss below, arriving at a mutual definition about the nature of the relationship between ethnographer and organization is an important element in developing a successful collaboration.

Cultural Anthropologists

As noted above, anthropologists have traditionally sought to understand the range of social relationships and cultural practices found among the wide variety of human societies.

Cultural anthropology is one of four traditional branches of the discipline, which also includes physical anthropology, linguistic anthropology and archaeology. Cultural anthropologists study human interactions in socio-cultural context.

In keeping with their broad intellectual tradition, cultural anthropologists often produce summary analyses that describe patterns of normative behavior within particular groups, rather than interpretive products aimed at general audiences. And in all of their varieties, cultural anthropologists generally employ participant observation as the core component of their methodology.

Today, cultural anthropologists work in a great variety of settings within their home cultures. Applied cultural anthropologists:

- are employed in industry to analyze consumer behavior and improve production processes;
- are employed in health to assist in understanding alternative models of disease and healing, and mediate in cross-cultural interactions;
- work with government agencies to examine the impact of cultural practices on the environment and sustainable development; and
- work with cultural organizations to develop exhibits, stage performances and catalogs.

Not surprisingly, this set of activities is broader than any individual cultural anthropologist is likely to do well. Within cultural anthropology are a number of specializations that have direct relevance to the areas in which cultural organizations might work.

Symbolic anthropologists

Symbolic anthropologists examine the use of symbolic expression and related processes of ritual and the arts through which people make sense of their lives and their relationships with others. They also examine the symbolic aspect of social systems of formal codes of behavior in societies.

While centered in the realms where cultural organizations operate, symbolic anthropology has been a largely theoretical approach spearheaded by anthropologists such as Clifford Geertz, Victor Turner and their students. Anthropologists trained in this tradition have thought deeply about issues of cultural representation and display, and can be stimulating partners in the development of performance and museum projects. For example, Turner himself was involved in the curation of a notable Smithsonian exhibit on forms of celebration.

Visual anthropologists

Visual anthropologists deal with visual aspects of cultural perception and representation. This specialization was in part an outgrowth of cultural anthropologists' use of film, and visual anthropology remains more closely tied to media than other specializations.

Visual anthropologists may study cultural patterning in visual dimensions of life such as architecture, clothing and art. They may also examine how cultures use various visual media as a means for communication. In applied settings, visual anthropologists work with cultural institutions such as museums, theaters and media organizations. Visual anthropologists and ethnomusicologists are more likely than their other disciplinary colleagues to be comfortable working with audiovisual media and may possibly have technical expertise in this regard.

Medical anthropologists

Medical anthropologists study the ways in which social groups deal with issues of health, illness and healing. In applied settings, medical anthropologists often work with medical practitioners and institutions, but they may also work with cultural institutions on projects involving related themes.

Ethnomusicologists

Ethnomusicologists study the creation, performance and role of musical expression within particular cultural systems. Ethnomusicology arose in part in reaction to the Eurocentric field of musicology.

Ethnomusicologists often work in a variety of applied settings, from museums, to festivals, to performing arts organizations. They will often have focused content expertise on a specific cultural musical tradition. As with visual anthropologists, ethnomusicologists are often involved in the production of media products themselves and will often have expertise in audio recording techniques.

Linguists

As noted above, linguistics evolved as a branch of anthropology and emerged as a distinct field of study. Linguistics moved from a descriptive attempt to categorize the variety of human languages to a range of theoretical constructs examining the constituent elements and cognitive production of language.

Applied forms of linguistics deal with the use of language in social interaction, often in educational and social service settings. Several specializations within linguistics apply directly to the work of cultural organizations, primarily as a tool of analysis.

Sociolinguists

Sociolinguistics is described above as an ethnographic method, a specialized form of speech analysis based on the ethnographic approach. Sociolinguists study speech as an aspect of cultural interaction, often focusing on structures of verbal discourse that are shared and operate at various levels of awareness within a particular group.

Through discourse analysis, sociolinguists analyze these speech acts and verbal genres as an essential element of shared cultural communication. The work of Dell Hymes has been influential in this area and especially relevant to the analysis of cultural expression. Hymes has described a continuum of everyday discourse within social groups that can move in and out of a heightened and shared frame of commonly recognized cultural performance.*

Semioticians

Semiotics is the study of symbolic processes as a fundamental element of human interaction. Within this framework, all forms of human activity function as signs within a systemic relationship. All behavior and all

* See Dell Hymes, *Foundations of Sociolinguistics: An Ethnographic Approach.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1974. Hymes, *'In Vain I Tried To Tell You': Essays in Native American Ethnopoetics.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004.

forms of expression operate in a metaphorical sense as language itself.

Semioticians develop interpretations of semiotic processes operating in specific social contexts. Literary criticism has been greatly influenced by semiotics — for example, in the work of Roland Barthes and the writings of Umberto Eco. Semioticians have also contributed to theories of artificial intelligence in computing.

Sociologists

Sociology arose contemporaneously to anthropology in the late 19th century as a study of the social processes that bind individuals together as groups, institutions and societies. Sociologists look for the workings of both formal and implicit social rules and social norms as a shaping influence in human societies.

Sociologists employ ethnographic tools such as interviews, surveys and network analysis to gather qualitative information used to inform analyses of social networks, stratification within social groups and embedded cultural rules. Many of the frameworks for qualitative evaluation in use today derive from the application of sociological thought to particular social settings and groups. There are numerous examples of sociologists working in applied settings relevant to the interests of cultural organizations, particularly in the area of qualitative evaluation.

Some specializations within the broad umbrella of sociology do not employ the ethnographic method to any significant degree, but have a direct connection with the interests of cultural organizations. This includes the work of *social demographers,* who employ statistical analysis to study long-term trends in the composition of societies and the influence of factors such as education, social origins, religious composition and ethnicity on the condition of geographically delineated communities.

MANY OF THE FRAMEWORKS FOR QUALITATIVE EVALUATION IN USE TODAY DERIVE FROM THE APPLICATION OF SOCIOLOGICAL THOUGHT TO PARTICULAR SOCIAL SETTINGS AND GROUPS.

Economists, whose work is rooted in the sociological tradition, also use statistical analysis to study business trends and the economic status of various groups in society.

The tradition of *industrial sociology* has been built on the study of the interaction of people in workplace situations. This specialization examines the effects of power relationships as well as the interaction of formal business organization with informal systems of expression and control on the job, often working in applied settings.

Organizational behaviorists work more broadly in a range of applied organization settings and draw from psychological theory.

Human ecologists study the interaction of human societies and the natural environment, placing the environmental conditions of specific places among the shaping influences affecting the structure of human societies. Human ecology developed in the 1950s and has been an important influence on the development of the broader field of ecology.

Sociologists also work in the arena of *public policy* and have made major contributions to the development of thought concerning cultural policy in the United States. Cultural organizations would be most likely to work with professionals in the sociological tradition to examine social relationships and working processes — both within their own organizations and among their constituents and working partners.

Folklorists

Folklorists trace their origins to the early 19th century interest in "popular antiquities," the oral traditions and material artifacts of Western European culture. Folklore developed as a formal field of study beginning in the early 20th century as an interdisciplinary blend of anthropology and literary studies.

Folklore achieved limited status as an academic discipline in the 1960s when a number of masters and doctoral programs were established at several prominent U.S. universities. In recent years, it has experienced a retrenchment under pressure from a number of new interdisciplinary approaches such as cultural studies and the lingering misperception that it is most concerned with largely irrelevant traditions of cultural expression.

As an academic discipline, folklore might be best understood as the study of expressive culture within a largely anthropological frame. Academic folklorists themselves defined their area of study in the 1970s as the examination of "artistic communication in small groups,"* and found common cause with symbolic anthropologists and sociolinguists in an examination of the ways that artistic expression operates within societies. Folklorists trained within this intellectual tradition have studied a surprising range of expressive forms and processes, both material and verbal, in a wide variety of social settings.

The expansion of folklore as a discipline in the 1970s coincided with an expansion in public funding for the arts and greater receptivity to a wider range of cultural expression among public arts agencies. This led many academically trained folklorists to find careers in these applied settings. The same held true for colleagues in related fields such as ethnomusicology and practitioners with various degrees of experience in documenting and presenting performance traditions to the public.

In part because folklore failed to gain a solid disciplinary footing within the university over a sustained period of time, folklorists working in public settings may vary a great deal in their areas of expertise and practical abilities.

Folklorists can often work with great skill to engage cultural practitioners in a reflexive examination of their expressive forms, creative processes and social interactions. Folklorists may have deep content knowledge of a particular form of expression. They may have the ability to produce a range of media products aimed at a popular audience. They may be able to curate exhibitions and author catalogs, and effectively organize cross-disciplinary, team-based documentation projects.

However, it's unlikely that any individual folklorist will be able to do a majority of these things with a consistent level of ability. Cultural organizations can find considerable value if they take these factors into consideration and

* The phrase was coined by Dan Ben-Amos. "Toward A Definition of Folklore in Context." *Journal of American Folklore* 84 (1971): 3-15.

make the effort to find an appropriate fit between their needs and the individual folklorist's skills and orientation.

Oral Historians

Oral history developed as an approach beginning in the 1950s, when academically trained historians began to use oral accounts as a supplement to existing written documents in their search for historical fact. Historians initially employed this interviewing method to compile first-person testimony from notable individuals concerning the historical events in which they had been actors.

Oral history was originally conceived as a method for recovering written evidence after the fact, and then employing this evidence to fill gaps within the historical record. The goal of oral history was to determine historical fact using the traditional methods for weighing written evidence in use by narrative historians.

A long debate ensued among historians about the value of oral evidence for their profession. The subjective coloring of recollection weakened the value of oral evidence for many historians, as did the realization that the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee influenced the content of the interview.

Oral history as a practice developed the method of creating a literal transcript of the interview, which the interviewee then reviewed and revised. Many traditional historians rejected oral history outright and pointed to this process as a degradation of the record that allowed interviewees to reinterpret the past. Others countered that many of the written records traditionally used by historians were subject to the same processes.

ORAL HISTORIANS CAN EFFECTIVELY PARTNER WITH CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS FOR A RANGE OF PROJECTS THAT INVOLVE CREATING A NARRATIVE AROUND A CULTURAL TOPIC, SOCIAL GROUP OR PROCESS.

Eventually, many historians were influenced by the anthropological discourse on intersubjectivity and came to accept oral history as an acceptable mode for developing historical discourse. Within the discipline of history, social history emerged as a method for drawing on a wider body of evidence to reconstruct the social life of undocumented communities and social movements.

The main focus of attention for oral historians eventually shifted from testimonies collected from notable figures to its use for developing the histories of communities and individuals who would not otherwise leave an extensive written record. Oral history became an essential tool for the study of social and labor history, and oral historians began to employ methods such as the life history as a way of illuminating social relationships not otherwise visible in the written record.

Oral history began to reach popular audiences through the work of Studs Terkel, Alex Haley and others. During the 1970s, spurred by the U.S. bicentennial, the development of community oral histories through amateur efforts became almost a social movement of its own.

Academically trained oral historians today continue to explore social and historical issues within a social-historical frame. Professional oral history work is often organized in long-term interviewing projects focused

on a theme, collecting testimony from multiple interviewees to take into account differing perspectives and the interplay of memory. In this regard, the work of many oral historians has moved closer to the ethnographic approaches practiced by cultural anthropology, folklore and linguistics.

Trained oral historians work in a range of applied settings to compile institutional histories and develop interpretive uses of oral history materials in museum exhibitions, publications and film. Depending on their training and experience, oral historians will vary in their ability to develop production-quality recordings. For many, the end goal remains the production of a written document. Oral historians can effectively partner with cultural organizations for a range of projects that involve creating a narrative around a cultural topic, social group or process.

This summary of professions that employ the ethnographic method leaves out many specialties that are not engaged with subjects directly related to forms of cultural expression. In general, if you are engaging a professional to work with your organization on an ethnographically based project, you will want to match your needs with someone who has both professional training and an appropriate disciplinary background. The cursory descriptions offered here are meant to be a starting point.

Uses of Ethnography by Cultural Organizations

Cultural organizations have many opportunities for working with practitioners versed in ethnography to develop a range of practical products along with new approaches to working processes and new understandings of the roles cultural expression plays in society. These aims require varying levels of commitment in time and resources.

Ethnographic methods can be employed for discrete projects with a specific end product in mind. Ethnography can become an essential tool for examining the nature of your work over time and suggesting new directions and points of connection with your constituencies. Professional ethnographers can support your collaborative work with outside agencies and creative partners. Here, we'll briefly suggest a few examples.

For Public Products and Presentations

The tools of ethnography can directly support the development of a range of products, from museum exhibitions and catalogs, to the production of media projects, to the presentation of performing arts in innovative settings.

- A performing arts organization might employ a folklorist or ethnomusicologist to develop a presenting program focused on a particular ethnic or occupational tradition.
- An art museum might work with a visual anthropologist to develop an exhibition that places a particular school of painting within a larger social context.
- A theater might work with an oral historian to develop an account of a playwright's personal and artistic development.
- A cultural anthropologist might develop an educational workshop on the social life of a particular community in conjunction with an ethnic arts festival.

A key requirement for success in endeavors of this type is to be sure the professional ethnographer has the

practical skills necessary to work with your organization's production needs. You may engage with a particular practitioner based on his or her content knowledge. However, you should also be sure he or she is able to produce audiovisual content of sufficient quality for your needs.

If the ethnographer is to be involved in a public presentational role, make sure he or she has the communication skills and personal presence to work effectively on stage. It the product is to be a publication for a general audience, make sure he or she can communicate in accessible, non-technical prose.

For Exploring Cultural Forms and Traditions

If your organization wishes to work in-depth over time in a particular area of cultural expression, an ethnographic approach can provide you with a great wealth of interpretive material and audiovisual documentation upon which to build programs, presentations and products. Some cultural institutions, such as museums, have established entire programs of ethnographic research to support the development of exhibitions and programs in specific areas such as textile arts, occupational cultures and ethnic communities.

State and local arts agencies and performing arts organizations have devoted staff positions to canvass geographic areas to identify artists who represent specific non-formal cultural traditions. Libraries have established ongoing oral history programs to document the recent past of their communities.

If you plan to work in this way, you need to be sure your organization can support a sustained commitment to the effort. This does not necessarily require a permanently staffed program, though it will usually mean supporting an ongoing project for a period of months, a year or longer.

The ethnographic approach bears fruit over time through the establishment of relationships and the accumulation of local knowledge. You will also need to be sure the professionals you engage have a compatible orientation with your institution's goals, philosophy and working culture.

For Understanding Internal Organizational Processes

The application of the ethnographic approach to your organization's internal business processes and working culture can help you understand your own unstated assumptions about the nature of your work and the fit between your goals and your methods of working.

Qualitative approaches to internal program evaluation are becoming more widespread among cultural institutions. For such work you would be likely to work with a professional consulting firm with a background in applied anthropology, sociology or allied discipline. You might also invite an individual anthropologist, sociologist or other ethnographically oriented practitioner to work with you in residence as a participant observer to produce an analysis of your organizational culture and work processes.

If you choose to work in this way, be careful to confirm the credentials of the professionals you engage and their knowledge of ethnographic-based methods. It is likely to make a significant difference in their approach depending on whether they are truly grounded in ethnographic research as opposed to approaching the issue

from a management-systems perspective and incorporating ethnographic techniques.

It is also essential to develop a social contract surrounding your relationship with the firm or individual you engage. Below, we discuss the notion of a social contract further. But it is worth noting at this point that many cultural organizations are overly hesitant to define the mutual responsibilities of the observed and observer when such a relationship is focused on their own practice. You should clarify the degree to which such an examination will proceed as a true collaboration.

IS THE PROFESSIONAL YOU ENGAGE TRULY GROUNDED IN ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH?

For Supporting Collaborative Work

Many cultural organizations support the development of new creative work through residencies, commissions, workshops and partnerships with other cultural institutions. Ethnography can add a significant new dimension to this work in two key ways:

1. documenting the process to support artistic reflection and public knowledge
2. providing an alternative mode of communication and mediation in a complex creative undertaking

Suppose a theater is commissioning a new experimental drama involving a playwright, choreographer and set designer. The theater might engage an ethnographer during the course of production to document their process of collaborative development through observation and periodic interviews with the artists.

Here's another example: a dance company developing a new work in collaboration with a group of community participants might engage an ethnographer to collect local source narratives to form the basis of the composition or to document the process of involvement as experienced by the local community.

During the development of new work, ethnographic methods can also support the process of formative evaluation by using formal methods such as standardized response surveys and process methods such as participant observation. Because formative evaluation is by definition an iterative process involving the analysis of interaction with creative work, it can be extremely beneficial to bring an ethnographer into the process.

Organizations that manage this process themselves sometimes fail to recognize the potentially conflicted nature of their role, and the process can degenerate into a mechanical exercise. By standing to the side of the relationship between the institution and its audience, an ethnographer can often enhance the creative dialogue, leading to a more powerful result.

The liminal nature of the ethnographic process can often open up new channels of communication during collaboration — particularly when, despite the best intentions of all parties, an imbalance of power or resources affect the ability of the parties to work in partnership.

Earlier, we referred to the effect of participant observation in providing a "third eye" to process. Ethnographers engaged in a collaborative process are sometimes called upon to mediate when conflicts or miscommunications

arise. Depending on their skills, ethnographers can play an invaluable role in pointing out these process issues before they become critical and engaging the parties in a dialogue to troubleshoot and find workable alternatives.

If a cultural organization wants to employ ethnographic methods as a means for supporting collaborative process, it needs to be open to introducing another level of interaction to its accustomed working methods. Here again, the notion of a social contract between ethnographer, organization and other collaborators is essential to prevent the relationship from becoming yet one more complicating factor.

ETHNOGRAPHERS CAN HELP PREVENT POTENTIAL CONFLICTS THAT ARE PART OF A COLLABORATIVE PROCESS.

Be careful that the ethnographer has the ability and openness to work in process with you and your collaborators — and that he or she won't construct artificial barriers between observer and subject on the claim of objectivity or theoretical rigor. This will more likely be the case if you work with a trained professional with considerable applied experience.

Finally, take the time for all parties to engage with the ethnographer in advance or at the beginning of the collaboration, and make sure they have the ability to play an active role in defining the nature of the process of observation and reflection.

For Examining Your Organization's Role in Social Context

Cultural organizations are often intensely mission-driven on the basis of a focused creative vision. Sometimes that vision is driven by a desire to effect positive change in a community or creative discipline. Sometimes it is driven by the desire to deliver a form of cultural expression as a public resource.

Cultural organizations might thrive under the direction of energetic leadership and falter if it cannot be sustained. A cultural organization may be aligned with the predominant values of its local community or stand in opposition to them in support of a minority position.

It is worth considering the potential of ethnography as a means for documenting the nature of your organization's core values and mission, and their alignment with your organization's social context. Traditionally, cultural organizations assess this relationship through attendance, audience surveys and their success in garnering local resources. While these can be useful measures of relative standing, organizations can also use the ethnographic approach to gain new insight into the social processes and sets of relationships that can potentially impede or spur their future development.

CONSIDER ETHNOGRAPHY AS A MEANS FOR DOCUMENTING THE NATURE OF YOUR ORGANIZATION'S CORE VALUES AND MISSION, AND THEIR ALIGNMENT WITH YOUR ORGANIZATION'S SOCIAL CONTEXT.

For this purpose, a museum might work with an ethnographer to explore the meanings ascribed to a particular exhibition within a local community of interest. A theater troupe might ask a sociologically based researcher to identify what local alternative performance venues might serve as a more effective gateway to the

communities of interest it is trying to reach. A performing arts presenting organization might ask a sociolinguist to analyze its forms of public discourse and the way these are received in the local community.

For the most part, cultural organizations are not presently working in these ways to any significant degree. Cultural organizations interested in developing such approaches need to have an intellectual engagement with the varieties of inquiry pursued through ethnographic methods and the determination to seek out professionals who will co-design an effective approach to the issue at hand.

Working With a Professional Ethnographer

We've suggested some ways your cultural organization might engage a professional ethnographer in the development of a project or refinement of a process. Once you have established a working relationship, many of the key elements of a successful collaboration do not differ greatly from those involved in building a working relationship with a media professional. However, these elements do require a more considered process of discerning the best fit between your needs and a particular disciplinary approach.

Finding an Ethnographer

Before you actively seek to work with a professional trained in an ethnographically based discipline, you will need to spend time thinking about the nature of the project and the forms of knowledge you hope to realize. Look at a range of approaches and don't be mechanical in considering one disciplinary approach to the exclusion of all others.

Given the interdisciplinary nature of many academic programs that draw upon ethnographic methods, you may well find that a degree of cross-fertilization (e.g., an ethnomusicologist documenting a dance process, an oral historian authoring a artistic biography, a folklorist interviewing a chamber group) is beneficial. In many cases, cross-disciplinary teams of ethnographers from varying disciplinary backgrounds have produced significant results.

Expertise in a particular cultural form of expression may be a factor if you are looking to produce a public product with the aid of a content specialist. But you should also consider the skill set required for the particular product you have in mind.

Here are some warning signs about the ability of an ethnographer to work with your organization:

- He or she seems territorial in relation to his or her subject area.
- He or she is unwilling to engage with you as an intellectual collaborator.
- He or she is skeptical about the goals and methods of your organization.

As always, consult with colleagues for leads concerning individuals or firms they have worked with. In addition, engage in a dialogue with the relevant departments in the local university or college.

You might also try contacting professional associations in those applied fields that employ ethnographic

methods. These include:

- Society for Applied Anthropology (www.sfaa.net)
- Society for Applied Sociology (www.appliedsoc.org)
- American Association for Applied Linguistics (www.aaal.org)
- Society for Ethnomusicology (www.indiana.edu/~ethmusic)
- Oral History Association (www.dickinson.edu/organizations/oha/)

The American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress (www.loc.gov/folklife), the Smithsonian Institution's Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage (www.folklife.si.edu), or the NEA's Folk & Traditional Arts Program (www.arts.gov) may also be able to help steer you to professional folklorists in your area.

Defining a Project

Working in collaboration with an ethnographer should be an iterative process in which your organization is a full partner. Once you have found a professional ethnographer who has appropriate expertise and whom you feel comfortable with, you should be prepared to invest concentrated energy in discussing the range of potential approaches, the issues that concern you and the outcomes you anticipate.

Don't sit back and expect the ethnographer to return from the field with a finished product or analysis. Ask him or her to propose an approach and a set of methods to be used. Discuss these thoroughly to be sure you understand any potential social impact and implications for use. You should revisit these matters throughout the course of the project to troubleshoot together. Ethnographic projects are necessarily exploratory in nature, and there should be a degree of flexibility within a larger set of defined goals.

In a responsible partnership, you shouldn't let your organization's goals and sensitivities entirely dominate the process, nor should the ethnographer allow his or her own interests to detour the work. Both parties should let themselves be challenged and reserve judgment on the preliminary conclusions they draw.

On a practical level, you should work together to establish a framework for managing the work. As in any outside documentary partnership, you should be careful to establish the materials that will be delivered to your organization as a result of the project — both raw materials and finished product. The ethnographer should work with you to design whatever formats are used for reporting, such as fieldnotes and logs, particularly if this will be a team-based project with multiple individuals engaged in documentation work.

There should be space in the course of the project for you and your organization staff to revisit the progress of the project with the ethnographer or team. This should be an opportunity for dialogue and intellectual exchange.

As a project progresses, you should also revisit the forms of dissemination that will be used (e.g., public presentations, publications, audiovisual materials) and involve all parties in this discussion. Often this will be an opportunity for setting new creative directions in a documentary collaboration and increasing the value of the project.

Developing a Contract

You will need to devise a formal contract with a professional ethnographer no less than you would with any outside contractor. Even in cases where you might be working with an academic partner or outside agency through a cooperative arrangement, the terms of the relationship should be set down in a formal written agreement.

There should be two dimensions to a contract:

1. a practical agreement that covers details of production and intellectual property
2. a social contract that sets responsible guidelines for mutual behavior

Practical considerations

Depending on the degree to which an ethnographer is used to working in applied situations, he or she may not consider a project to be a work-for-hire. Instead, the ethnographer might consider it an intellectual project in which he or she has a significant authorship interest.

This will often be the case if your are working with an academically based ethnographer. As in any creative relationship, you can establish levels of copyright ownership and use. But if you neglect to do so, you may run into serious conflicts of interest down the road. This consideration can't be overemphasized.

FAILING TO ESTABLISH LEVELS OF COPYRIGHT OWNERSHIP AND USE COULD LEAD TO SERIOUS CONFLICTS OF INTEREST BETWEEN YOUR ORGANIZATION AND THE ETHNOGRAPHER.

Where there are generally established standards of ownership and use concerning audiovisual media, the situation is more muddied in relation to ethnographic work. You need to establish this on an individual and project basis. You should also make sure that any terms of intellectual property ownership conform with the nature of your organization and its legal obligations, particularly if it is a public institution.

Depending on their disciplinary background and local conditions, the terms under which professional ethnographers will work vary a great deal as well. In general, most will be willing to work on a day-rate basis. It is also common to set general terms of payment on a project basis. In this case, make sure your contractual agreement outlines a clear set of deliverables.

You should also outline a reporting relationship between an outside professional and your internal staff to ensure there is a clear point of connection between your organization as a client and the ethnographer as a provider of services. There are pros and cons about the degree to which an ethnographer should work as your instrumental agent. Sometimes there are compelling reasons why an ethnographer should stand in relation to your organization as the agent of a third party. Whatever the relationship, you'll still need to formally address lines of responsibility.

If the project involves a team approach, you should also establish how this will be managed. Will each member of the team act as an individual agent or work under the direction of a lead ethnographer? If you are working

at this scale, you will need to devise an appropriate structure in the planning stage and clearly delineate this in writing to help avoid any potential conflict.

Setting responsible boundaries

We've referred several times to the need for a social contract in ethnographic projects. In part, this is a responsibility that rests with the organization in relation to the people and activities that comprise the area of ethnographic focus.

Within the social sciences, universities have developed ethical policies for dealing with human research. In most cases, there is no legal requirement for cultural organizations to develop formal policies regarding human subject research, unless they are located within larger public institutions where such requirements apply.

Nonetheless, cultural organizations should always aim to work within an ethical framework. If you have formal ethical policies in place, you should examine these to see whether they apply to ethnographic documentation projects or if they should be expanded to do so.

The work of setting responsible boundaries also applies to the relationship between one or more outside professional ethnographers, your cultural organization and the individuals involved in your project. Unless this is mutually defined, you are likely to run into unnecessary conflict and unexpected roadblocks.

At times, ethnographers themselves can contribute to this issue. Earlier we referred to the anthropological tradition of developing working fieldnotes as an internal process and maintaining these as the ethnographer's personal property. This orientation remains prevalent among many practitioners, particularly if they work primarily in academic settings.

UNLESS THE SETTING OF RESPONSIBLE BOUNDARIES IS MUTUALLY DEFINED, YOU ARE LIKELY TO RUN INTO UNNECESSARY CONFLICT AND UNEXPECTED ROADBLOCKS.

Depending on circumstances, there may be very good reasons for maintaining this framework and degree of distance. In other cases, it may structure the relationship between ethnographer, organization and participants in unnecessarily obstructive ways. This is an area in which you, the ethnographer and project participants will need to negotiate structures and realistically evaluate alternatives to define a workable structure for developing and sharing information in process.

Here is an example of one such structure: Over a period of six years, the New England Foundation for the Arts managed a team-based ethnographic documentation project for the Ford Foundation's major initiative, "Internationalizing New Work in the Performing Arts," on transnational, intercultural artistic collaboration. This initiative involved seven cultural organizations of different types and in different social contexts around the nation along with a team of one or more ethnographers assigned to document initiative activities at these organizations.

It soon became clear that the presence of the ethnographers was perceived as something akin to colonial-era anthropologists studying exotic cultures. The organizations were concerned that the ethnographers' evaluative

analyses would be a factor in their continued initiative funding.

To manage this situation, we developed a set of agreements between the participating cultural organizations, the ethnographic team, NEFA and Ford. Within this framework, the ethnographers assigned to each organization would serve as collaborative documentation partners to the organization. The ethnographers agreed to share all of their process notes directly with the organizations. In addition, each organization and ethnographer agreed to review these together and mutually decide what materials they would share with the other initiative participants and Ford.

While all parties — especially the ethnographers — were still uneasy about the arrangement, they agreed to give it a try. For the ethnographers, the idea of sharing process notes raised issues about filtering perceptions a bit reminiscent of early disciplinary objections to oral history.

Over the course of the initiative, the early misgivings gradually eased as the ethnographers and organizations became engaged in an ongoing dialogue about the nature of intercultural work and the challenges of supporting and managing such projects within their specific organizational context. The parties became less guarded in sharing issues of process and cases of failure with their colleagues at the other initiative sites and with the Ford Foundation. The ethnographers also began to serve unanticipated new roles in their relationship with the organizations, at times assisting them in maintaining institutional memory, at others serving as honest brokers when issues of internal process arose.*

Few organizations or joint initiatives can operate at this scale over an extended period of time. However, any ethnographically based cultural documentation project should make a serious effort to formally articulate and revise the social contract between the involved parties as their relationship evolves.

Your Responsibilities

We've alluded to a number of ethical and partnership responsibilities that cultural organizations engaging in ethnographic based research should be prepared to assume. The responsibilities you hold in relation to audiovisual documentation will often be a factor in ethnographic research as well. Here, we'll mention a few practical details beyond what has already been discussed.

Obtaining releases

If you are working with a professional ethnographer, he or she usually should bear primary responsibility for obtaining any releases relating to the educational use of documentation. You should, however, confirm this at the outset of a project. If there is any commercial activity associated with a documentation project, this should remain the primary responsibility of the organization.

Creating space for reflection and interaction

It runs counter to the normal impulses of many cultural organizations consumed in the daily demands of

* See Douglas DeNatale and Karen L. Ito, International Collaboration in the Arts: A Report on the Ford Foundation Inititiative, "Internationalizaing New Work in the Peforming Arts", Phase I: 1995-1998. New York: Arts International, 1999.

production to clear away space for quiet reflection and focused interaction. This is something that no outside professional can provide for you. It is your responsibility to create space for this if you want to benefit from the process of discovery at the heart of the ethnographic process.

Social consequences

Ultimately, the buck stops with your organization. You need to monitor your comfort level as any documentation project proceeds and observe its effects on your community and the people you work with. In the vast majority of cases, this will not be an issue in any way, particularly if the work is truly collaborative and well-intentioned. If a real problem arises, however, you need to "break frame" immediately and examine the consequences with the parties involved.

Using Ethnography

Early in this handbook, we discussed the value of developing a basic documentary habit among your organization staff and volunteers through a consistent program to create and manage written materials. We then extended this to using appropriate forms of audiovisual documentation.

Beyond the practical utility of cultural documentation, we want to close by urging you to consider its further application in your work. The more you engage with an ethnographic process as a framework for the documentation and interpretation of cultural processes, the better equipped your organization will become to creatively adapt to new situations and changing environments.

Within this framework, you can begin to use the materials that emerge from your everyday documentary practice to help you understand the essential relationships within which you work. It has become fashionable to talk about "learning organizations" that are able to constantly adapt to new situations. At its core, this requires a framework for group observation, information sharing, reflection and ongoing analysis — hallmarks of the ethnographic process.

Consider the following scenario as an example of how all levels of an organization might cultivate an ethnographic frame of thinking: suppose you make the effort to hold a post-mortem meeting at some point after an exhibition opening, a performance or an event. If you even do this, more than likely it will focus on operational details: How was the event managed? What went wrong with the sound system? How many tickets did we sell?

Now suppose your organization staff had come to such a meeting equipped with a variety of process notes, photographs and summaries of audience discussions, which they have individually considered before the meeting. With materials like these to triangulate and serve as a stimulus for testing and perhaps challenging staff perceptions, you might begin together to ask more specific questions about matters such as:

- how the artists engaged with the audience,
- the demographic profile of those who came, and
- the patterns of communication that lifted or mired the interaction.

You might begin to pose questions about alternative scenarios and presentation techniques. You might be stimulated to develop follow-up questions and seek out audience members and artists to refine your understanding of what happened. You might develop new strategies for engaging community members as participants in your internal process of development and evaluation. You might be inspired to connect prospective projects and partners in ways that never occurred to you before.

None of these is a requirement or a necessary outcome of this work, of course. The key consideration we have tried to raise through this handbook is the practical value of developing some form of systematic description at a consistent level and creating space for reflection and interaction that draws upon that documentation.

Conclusion

We hope this handbook has provided you with a measure of useful information that will encourage you to experiment with new approaches to cultural documentation as a valuable resource for your organization.

Documentation is not an add-on to your existing activities – it is a logical extension of your core mission as a cultural organization. We've tried to promote the notion that documentation can usefully take place whatever your level of resources and that it can take a variety of forms from elaborate institutionalized programs to thoughtfully designed occasional projects. With a little careful planning, your organization can dramatically extend the reach of its work through documentation. We hope that we have given you some useful places to begin.

If you would like to pursue further investigation of the topics raised in this handbook, you'll find a variety of accessible resources in Appendix B.

We look forward to your feedback concerning valuable techniques, tools and approaches we have overlooked, as well as examples from your own practice.

Appendix A: Sample Release Forms

Please note: These forms are provided solely as examples for educational purposes. We make no warrant in any form of their applicability to a particular situation or of their validity under the laws of any state. If you choose to use any of these as a model, please be aware that you do so at your own risk. We advise you to review any release forms that are used by your organization with a legal advisor as a matter of professional responsibility.

Sample Adult Photographic Model Release

I hereby give to [your organization] unrestricted right and permission to copyright and use, re-use, publish, and republish my photographic image without restriction regarding changes or transformations in conjunction with my own name, made through any and all media now or hereafter known for illustration, art, promotion, advertising, trade, or any other purpose whatsoever.

I also permit the use of any printed material in connection therewith.

I hereby relinquish any right that I may have to examine or approve the completed product or products or the advertising copy or printed matter that may be used in conjunction therewith or the use to which it may be applied.

I hereby release, discharge and agree to save harmless [your organization], its legal representatives, licensees and assigns, from any liability that may occur or be produced in the taking of said picture or in any subsequent processing thereof, as well as any publication thereof, including without limitation any claims for libel or invasion of privacy.

I affirm that I am over the age of majority and have the right to contract in my own name. I have read the above authorization, release and agreement, prior to its execution; I fully understand the contents thereof. This agreement shall be binding upon me and my heirs, legal representatives and assigns.

Dated: _____

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Address: _____

_____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Witness: _____

Sample Minor Photographic Model Release

I hereby confer on [your organization] the absolute and irrevocable right and permission with respect to the photographs taken of my minor child in which he/she may be included with others for the following purposes:

To copyright the same in [your organization]'s name.

To use, re-use, publish and re-publish the same in whole or in part, separately or in conjunction with other photographs, in any medium now or hereafter known, and for any purpose whatsoever, including (but not limited to) illustration, promotion, advertising and trade.

To use my name or my child's name in connection therewith if [your organization] so decides.

I hereby release and discharge [your organization] from all and any claims and demands ensuing from or in connection with the use of the photographs, including any and all claims for libel and invasion of privacy.

This authorization and release shall inure to the benefit of [your organization], its legal representatives, licensees and assigns.
I have read the foregoing and fully understand the contents hereof. I represent that I am the [parent/guardian] of the above named model. I hereby consent to the foregoing on his/her behalf.

Dated: _____

Minor's Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Address: _____

_____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Witness Signature: _____

Sample General Audiovisual Recording Release for Educational Use

I,_____, am a participant in the [name of project] project, (hereinafter "project"). I understand that the purpose of the project is to collect audiotapes and videotapes and selected related documentary materials (such as photographs and manuscripts) that may be deposited in the permanent collections of [your organization]. The deposited documentary materials may be used for scholarly, educational, and other purposes. I understand that [your organization's name] plans to retain the product of my participation as part of its permanent collection and that the materials may be used for exhibition, publication, presentation on the World Wide Web and successor technologies, and for promotion of the institution and its activities in any medium.

I hereby grant to [your organization] ownership of the physical property delivered to the institution and the right to use the property that is the product of my participation (for example, my interview, performance, photographs, and written materials) as stated above. By giving permission, I understand that I do not give up any copyright or performance rights that I may hold.

I also grant to [your organization] my absolute and irrevocable consent for any photograph(s) provided by me or taken of me in the course of my participation in the project to be used, published, and copied by [your organization] and its assignees in any medium.

I agree that [your organization] may use my name, video or photographic image or likeness, statements, performance, and voice reproduction, or other sound effects without further approval on my part:

ACCEPTED AND AGREED

Date: _____

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Address: _____

_____

City/State/Zip: _____

Telephone: _____

(Adapted from Peter Bartis, Folklife and Fieldwork: A Layman's Introduction to Field Techniques. Washington, DC: American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, p. 36.)

Sample Agreement for Audiovisual Production

I understand [your organization] is requesting permission to use my name, voice, and/or likeness in their television program titled: _____.

I grant [your organization] and anyone authorized by [your organization] permission to use my name, voice, and/or likeness in the Program and in any derivative work of the Program, including any promotional materials in connection with the Program in any media (now known or hereafter developed) throughout the world. In return for the terms of compensation outlined below, I understand that [your organization] owns the copyright in the Program and has the exclusive right to use the Program in whatever way it wishes.

Terms of compensation: [ ].

I waive any rights of privacy and/or publicity that I might otherwise have with regard to the Program and any derivative work of the Program, including any promotional materials in connection with the Program. No use of my name, voice, and/or likeness shall be the basis of any future claim of any kind against [your organization], its parent, subsidiary and affiliated companies, the officers, directors, agents or employees of these, or their successors or assigns, nor shall this release be made the basis of such a claim.

I represent that I am at least eighteen (18) years old, that I have read and fully understand the terms of this Agreement, and that I have the right to enter this Agreement.

Date: _____

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

To be signed by a parent or legal guardian:
I represent that I am the parent or legal guardian of the person identified above, that I have read and fully understand the term of this Agreement, and that I consent to the terms of this Agreement on behalf of the person identified above.

Date: _____

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Sample Video Location Release

The undersigned as owner/agent hereby grants to [your organization] as lessee, use of the premises heretofore selected by the lessees and located at: _____ together with access to and from said premises, for the of photographing said premises, sets and structures and/or recording sound for such scenes as lessee may desire.

The undersigned warrants that he/she is the owner or the agent of said premises; that he/she is fully authorized to enter into this agreement and has the right to grant lessee the use of said premises and each and all of the rights herein granted.

Lessee may utilize said premises on or about_____ subject to change in case of changes in production schedule or weather conditions, an alternate date would be mutually agreed upon), and may use the premises until all scenes requiring the location have been completed, including all retakes, added scenes, changes, process shots, etc.

In full consideration of all the rights granted to lessee under this license, owner will be paid _____ _ on or before filming.

Lessee shall leave said premises in substantially as good condition as when received by it, reasonable wear and tear from the use of said premises for the purposes herein permitted, excepted; and lessee shall have the right to remove all of its sets, structures and other material and equipment from said premises.

Lessee hereby agrees to indemnify and hold us as owner/agent harmless from any and all loss or damage to the property and liability incurred by us or imposed upon us directly resulting from injury to or death of any person appearing on or about the above mentioned premises directly resulting from any negligence in connection with the use of said property and project.

Lessee shall own all rights of every kind in and to all photographs and recordings made by it on or about said premises and shall have the right to use such photographs and or recordings in any manner it may desired without limitation or restriction of any kind.

ACCEPTED & AGREED:

Owner or Agent: _____

Title: _____

Owner or Agent's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix B: Suggestions for Further Reading

Archival Practices

Joke Brouwer, Arien Mulder, Susan Charlton. Information Is Alive: Art And Theory On Archiving And Retrieving Data. New York: Distributed Art Publishers, 2003.

Michael J. Fox, Suzanne R. Warren, and Peter L. Wilkerson. Introduction to Archival Organization and Description. Los Angeles, CA: Getty Information Institute, 1998.

Gregory S. Hunter. Developing and Maintaining Practical Archives: A How-To-Do-It Manual. 2nd Ed. New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers, 2003.

Laurence E. Keefe, Jr. and Dennis Inch. The Life of a Photograph: Archival Processing, Matting, Framing, and Storage. Boston: Focal Press, 1990.

Preserving Digital Information: Report of the Task Force on Archiving of Digital Information. Washington, DC: Commission on Preservation and Access, 1996.

Records Management

Dorothy Lehmkuhl and Dolores Cotter Lamping. Organizing for the Creative Person. New York: Crown, 1993.

Abigail J. Sellen and Richard H. R. Harper. The Myth of the Paperless Office. Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2002.

Mary F. Robek, Gerald F. Brown, David O Stephens. Information and Records Management: Document-Based Information Systems. 4th ed. New York: Glencoe/McGraw-Hill, 1995.

Photography

Dane M. Howard. Sharing Digital Photos: The Future of Memories. Redmond, WA: Microsoft Press, 2004.

Bert F. Krages. Legal Handbook for Photographers: The Rights and Liabilities of Making Images. Buffalo, NY: Amherst Media, 2002.

Ken Milburn. Digital Photography Expert Techniques (O'Reilly Digital Studio). Sebastopol, CA: O'Reilly, 2004.

Audio Recording

Bruce Bartlett and Jenny Bartlett. Practical Recording Techniques. 3rd ed. Boston, MA : Focal Press, 2002..

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