All of us have experienced compelling, even jolting, intellectual awakenings when confronting primary audio and visual resources that document the lives of people and societies. Art Silverman shared with us the narrative of Marine Corporal Michael Baronowski recounting experience in the Vietnam War recorded on cassette tape in Vietnam in 1966 and sent to the soldier’s family in the United States (National Public Radio 2000). Silverman told us of the compelling recording made by William Rathvone recounting his memory of listening to Abraham Lincoln’s address at Gettysburg and reciting the speech as Rathvone remembered hearing it (National Public Radio 1999).

An international conference held in Europe brought to my attention another example that has personal meaning. Norwegian Radio preserved the recording of the Nazi officer announcing the takeover of Norway during World War II, assuring citizens that resistance was futile. As an American of Norwegian descent whose great-aunt worked in the resistance, this audio recording gave immediacy and chilling reality to a history that I already knew rather well. Last week, I took a phone call from a former student who had taken a seminar at Harvard in 1978. As part of a research paper, he had made a recording of his Texan grandmother singing cowboy songs. His college-age daughter now wants it for a project. It is at once a part of family history (more valued now than it was when it was originally made by a teenage college student), a record of cowboy songs not widely documented in the literature, and a source of American vernacular music history. More than the straightforward communications and simple entertainments that some of these materials started out as being, the songs and tales, speeches, performances, and events recorded by participants and observers have become treasures of collective memory and heritage. In our universities, faculty, students, and researchers increasingly want to use these materials in teaching to bring home the impact of people and events from the past and in scholarly production as primary sources. Audio and visual materials are both by us and about us in important ways. Families and local communities demand access to materials that they often, with
justification, consider their own. Radio stations and museum exhibit curators want to use them. All sorts of people want access to recordings and the materials that accompany them—programs, program notes, field notes, and other documentation—in a convenient way.

Access to these collections, particularly unique archival collections, has rarely been easy. Our fragile audio materials must be reformatted for any kind of use. As John Suter pointed out in his response to this paper, these special collections present difficulties in cataloging and housing and are sometimes regarded by administrators as highly specialized or ephemeral. As such, they have not been given priority for funding or for work. Access usually costs money: for cataloging, for access to online systems, for reformatting. "Most archives," Suter writes, "operate on very small budgets relative to their needs" (Suter 2000:1).

Audio archivists have been plagued by the view that we have no established standards for preservation and therefore should not proceed with projects. This hurts the potential user, who must find out somehow what is in a collection, place a request for the desired items well in advance so that labor-intensive reformatting can take place, then travel to the library during business hours to confront a plain-looking audio cassette and photocopied list of its contents or accompanying materials. Although some institutions will mail copies of materials to users, others cannot. The cassette and photocopies often must be left in or returned to the institution.

Our users' current expectations contrast dramatically with this practice. Many expect fast delivery of MP3 files with scanned images of whatever accompanying documentation there may be. They expect access to contents of collections through free and well-maintained Web sites. Sitting in an institution to listen to materials, not to mention waiting for them to be prepared, never enters their minds as a reasonable option. As a faculty member, researcher, and librarian, I know that, in our hearts, all of us want this immediate access, even those of us who still prefer to read from paper, take notes with pens, and buy books.

To state all of this, especially to a group such as that gathered for this program, is to state the obvious, for all of you live and work with these materials and demands every day. The question is, how do we meet these needs? How do we overcome the multitude of enormous problems that seem to attend every single effort we make at reasonable access? Why is access so hard and what, if anything, can be done to improve it? Of course, myriad technical and legal problems attend online access, which I will leave to my colleagues to discuss. Access to collections and information about them presents its own challenges, some of which I will outline here.

My favorite library patrons will gesture wildly toward a part of our collection and say,
"of course, all this will be digitized eventually." As someone working in a large collection, I find this view variously hilarious, pitiable, or depressing. As a nation we have not managed to catalog our collective holdings. We have not managed to complete online conversion of the catalogs that exist. Retrospective conversion and even cataloging are generally less labor intensive than digitizing collections. Our chances for extensive, let alone comprehensive, digitization of primary materials are not good.

A useful starting point for discussion of paths of access may be to acknowledge that everything in our collections does not require the same system of access. Limited access to highly specialized materials may be fine. In-library-only access to sensitive or restricted materials may be the best practice. We probably want to offer wide access to information about the contents of collections through cataloging and inventories. We probably want to offer international, networked access to some parts of our collections. The first step toward establishing what is possible in access to audio collections is recognizing that not everything needs to be treated in exactly the same way. Starting from this point and pursuing, in particular, the issues surrounding networked digital access, what are the principal roadblocks?

To order our thinking, Suter suggests five milestones on "the road toward archival accessibility":

1. creating or acquiring and accessioning important collections
2. processing the collections for complete accessibility in house
3. describing collections online
4. producing detailed finding aids on the Web
5. making archival collections themselves available on the Web

He hastens to add that, although these may appear to be a logical order of work, "in the practical world of an archives, work may be happening on all steps at the same time and sometimes out of order" (Suter 2000:1-2). Suter offers a useful starting point for a discussion of the problems we face.

An immediate issue in any access project for archival collections is that nearly every step of the work requires specialized skill. Simply unpacking and sorting the Laura Boulton Collection of Byzantine and Eastern Orthodox Chant required that we identify which typed notebooks belonged to which recordings, which notes were lecture notes derived from field notes, and then which tapes had been copied from earlier ones and where the other accompanying documents belonged. Ethnic collections often require highly specialized subject and language skills to prepare even the most rudimentary inventory. If the collection is to be cataloged in a standard library catalog, then a skilled cataloger familiar with national utilities such as OCLC and Research Libraries Information Network is needed. Preparing electronic documents requires some
command of mark-up language. Preparing and storing digital images requires another set of equipment and skills. Working with digital audio is a bona fide specialization. For networked resources to persist and remain viable, systems of metadata need to be developed and used. A computer programmer is often necessary for using such tools as digital collection management programs. Our sources of inexpensive labor—students, interns, volunteers, and the like—may be but are not predictably suited to this work, especially with large collections that take many months to process.

Labor is always the most expensive component of any initiative, certainly in the long run. Moreover, pleas for more staff members generally require extensive justification and may not be met by budget-conscious administrators who may be under the impression that most work can now be automated and that little human intervention is actually necessary. The expense of audio reformatting is phenomenal. Getting the "last, best play" from a fragile recording may require four hours of skilled labor for one hour of sound.

A common solution to the problem of labor cost is to get a grant. After one has invested weeks or months preparing a compelling argument for a necessarily trendy or attractive part of a collection and assembled the requisite budget, a granting agency may provide the needed help. The problem is that, at the end of the grant, project staff members must depart, taking their skills with them, and the process must begin again in another part of the collection. The maintenance of digital products created by grant-funded projects may itself be a problem.

One might justly argue that some of the necessary skills are quickly becoming common. Many of us can scan a document, burn a CD, and put together a Web site that is fine for rudimentary purposes and may offer decent access to our collections. What if you want your access tools to persist, to be durable and refreshable? One homemade CD probably will not meet this need nor will it offer networked access. Hard links on Web sites eventually lead to nonexistent servers. CD-Rs made just a few years ago may or may not play on every CD player.

Given the cost of labor and the value of our collections, our products must last as long as possible. We cannot afford to make and remake them even if we are able to do so. We need durable audio products. We have seen the failings of cassettes, open-reel tape, CD-Rs, and digital audiotapes. Our cataloging and other electronic documents must be stored in a secure and widely accessible environment, preferably one that can be searched internationally without charge.

There is an important, qualitative difference between building a Web site such as a course page (or even an institutional Web site) and building an electronic resource such as a finding aid. At our university, for example, our finding aid for the Laura Boulton
Collection differs from the course page for Professor Thomas Kelly's well-known music course, First Nights. Kelly describes his course page as a pile of rocks, that is, ideas that he and his assistants have tried out, moved around, added, or eliminated (thus changing the shape of the rock pile) in different versions of the site. Mutability is critical to his use of his course site as a dynamic aid to teaching. The Laura Boulton site, on the other hand, is characterized by the goal of near immutability. Unlike teaching tools, library resources need to remain relatively stable over time. We must construct a series of permanent resources. We must finish one and move to another, and so the revising and innovating that is appropriate to the First Nights page would be inefficient for our purposes. We want to select durable technologies and document our choices and procedures well so that the processes of migration, refreshing, and so on can be conducted mechanically if possible. Whereas we welcome the flexibility of electronic formats for adding new data or correcting errors, we do not really want to constantly change our pile of rocks.

Well-organized and accessible housing and storage of physical materials can be expensive; digital storage is a major technological and financial challenge. For the long run, digital objects and metadata about them must be stored securely, preferably in a place where migration and refreshing can be managed automatically. We can learn from radio and national archives in Norway, Switzerland, and Germany that have developed and are using such systems.

Metadata become critically important and we need all sorts of it. We need descriptive metadata: What is it that is stored? We need structural metadata: How do I find this virtual object and what is its virtual format? We need administrative metadata: Who reformatted this object and what equipment was used? Without the metadata, we may as well not bother to create the digital object. Without the metadata, we probably cannot find it, let alone use it or move it.

Cataloging, of course, is a familiar form of metadata in which we record information about the physical and intellectual characteristics of our collections. I suspect that most of our archives produce fairly good catalogs, when there is a staff to do so, and have done so for some time. Our challenges in providing intellectual access are in enabling searches across archives. In the first place, we need databases and library catalogs that present users with familiar formats and familiar mechanisms for finding out what exists. Even though we can now potentially access and use each other's databases if they are online, I have never felt that inventing an idiosyncratic, stand-alone database is a good idea. We need catalogs and databases that are more or less standard, that look or feel similar to each other. The Archives for Traditional Music at Indiana University was the first such collection to enter its cataloging on OCLC. Adjustments of standard library formats—particularly MARC—were necessary, of course, but the result was widespread access to information about the Archives that reached from the university into public
libraries and school systems. Nonspecialists could find information about the archives' collection by using a standard library tool. This is surely a good thing. Making use of existing practices, adapting them if necessary, is an effective approach to access. The Association for Recorded Sound Collections (1995) published handy compendia of standard cataloging rules for audio materials. The International Association of Sound Archives (1999) recently released a more broadly conceived international set of rules that presents a "best practice" without reference to a particular machine-readable format or to practices of a single country or language.

Unfortunately, adapting established practice does not always work. Existing classification systems and such common tools as the Library of Congress Subject Headings, designed as they were for a limited repertory of European arts, fail our highly differentiated multicultural collections. Developing new tools, such as thesauri, is complicated by the different ways in which musicians, folklorists, anthropologists, and local communities think about, name, and classify performances. Creating thesauri on which any part of our community can agree turns out to be very time consuming and becomes work that moves too slowly because few of us can devote the necessary time. Hence, we lack consensus on genre terms and categories for such common concepts as devotional music. What do we do about Arab-American Muslim communities that refer to their Sufi rituals as \textit{dhikr} whereas their Turkish-American co-religionists call the same phenomenon \textit{zikr}? In the Indian communities, we find Sanskrit-derived names that are also written in Tamil script and have English versions. Systematic transliterations of the Sanskrit and Tamil names produce two different Romanizations, and the English version may be different still. We can decide to use Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules (AACR2) to establish the name; however, who is going to verify that the multiple variants represent the same person? Representing our various local communities accurately is hard and searching is harder.

Electronic finding aids constructed to the standards of encoded archival descriptors (EAD) are a good alternative. EAD offers a looser, more narrative, and adaptable format for inventorying collections than does standard cataloging. However, producing the proper diacritical marks for the names and terms of a Vietnamese or Hmong community in EAD finding aids is nearly impossible at present. Does this matter to us? Designations from the Human Relations Area Files have been useful for organizing access to ethnic collections; however, these are old and sometimes incomplete. The terms can be too puristic to suit multicultural communities. As archivists, we may easily feel stuck, that everything we do has something wrong with it. We make very little progress in our collections without running into an insurmountable wall that seems to preclude access to a collection.

Partly in response to such issues, Suter draws attention to the need for our access tools to feature blunt pointers to general groups of records likely to include what the researcher is seeking. "A too-sharp pointer, one that takes a researcher to the precise
item she or he is seeking, is very expensive and difficult to create, and more important, it means the researcher doesn't need to look through all the other interesting materials in neighboring boxes or folders" (Suter 2000: 5). As an inveterate browser of index screens in online catalogs, I find Suter's point compelling.

Attempting to step out of the morass myself, I would like to describe an initiative that our library launched in 1999. Called "Music from the Archives," it attempts preservation of and access to some of our unique collections. I offer this not as a prescription but as an experience and as a set of decisions that might start our discussion. Music from the Archives engages digital technology to offer a model for access. It was not conceived as a comprehensive program through which everything we have will be digitized; rather, it tries to advance ways to offer wide access, intellectually and virtually, to selected items from our collections. Our selections proceed from the strengths of our collection, which in turn proceed from the priorities of our primary constituency: the faculty and students of the Harvard music department and the related larger research community.

The contents of a collection will be presented in an electronic document that follows the format of the electronic finding aid. It draws on national standards and practices for the creation of EAD documents and serves them from Harvard's Online Archival Search Information System (OASIS), which includes Harvard's other finding aids for archival collections across the university. Audio files of selected performances and image files of field notes and other documentation will be available through links from the finding aid. Ultimately, we want to create a thoroughly integrated multimedia finding aid—one that may use the technology emerging in the Making of America projects sponsored by the Digital Library Federation—in which the digital resource itself will be conceived as having multiple manifestations. Whereas now we can move from one set of digital objects to another, our plan is to produce a more flexible tool that will allow us to show relationships among parts of our collection that may not be readily apparent to the user—for example, among a festival program book, a photograph, a concert program, and a recording. We will thus be able to bring parts of our collections to the attention of users quickly and graphically. Digital standards and systems for metadata for our images have been developed in consultation with the Harvard University Library Digital Imaging Group. At the music library, we did not try to develop or invent these procedures. We did, however, develop our own audio preservation studio because we considered ourselves and our colleagues to be more reliable resources than any existing at Harvard. Our studio is centered around a Sonic Solutions high-density audio workstation that allows us to sample at 88.2 kHz and to digitize audio at 24 bits, which enables us to capture sound at a high rate in superb detail. The engineer typically reformats recordings onto two CDs (for users) and two computer data tapes (for storage). This form of tape is much more robust than any other we have. Real Audio streaming sound files are produced for networked use. Metadata are captured about all processing performed on the file so that it will be possible to recreate the labor-intensive

decisions made by the audio engineer.

One result of our project will be the production of research-intensive tools. Our documents will have several important features: They will offer entire musical sources rather than short samples. Researchers will actually be able to conduct research, not simply browse collections or sample holdings. Although not every item from every collection will be networked, every item will be inventoried and we will be able to add audio files on request.

Another result is that our digital products will be durable. With very modest investment of time and money, we can make two copies of the CD using products from two different manufacturers and two copies of the exabyte tape using two different lots of tape. Although no particular claims for longevity can be made for CD-Rs or computer data tape (let alone Real Audio files), we feel some confidence that one of the four exemplars we produce will persist until a viable remote, robotic repository is available. Certainly these formats are most convenient and accessible, and possibly harder, than the open-reel tape of our originals.

We seek solutions to the problems of digitizing, storing, refreshing, reformatting, and migrating digital objects over the years. Beyond creating access to resources, we seek to regularize the processes of work that are necessary to create the digital products, using our existing permanent staff wherever possible. Creating a new flow of work and bringing together regular library staff members in the production are goals as important as the resources themselves. For these productions we do not want to rely on temporary project staff members whose skill and training departs with them when the project is over; a permanent staff can contribute to this new kind of work over the long run. To summarize our goals, we seek to use digital technology to develop a new model of access to rare audio collections, produce useful electronic resources, and institutionalize the process of work that emerges. Durability is an important result. To achieve it, attention to the choice of digital audio formats is critical. Once formats are chosen, a durable system of identifying, characterizing, and locating them—that is, systems of metadata—must be constructed that will function for as long as we can manage. I have sought ways to develop this project for the better part of 10 years. Only recent circumstances and priorities in my institution have rendered it finally possible. Our work is inextricably linked to the time and place and the character of the institution in which we work. What is possible one place does not work in another, and our project at Harvard may not make sense in other contexts. What broad ideas from Music from the Archives might help us move beyond local constraints?

To make effective progress with our collections, it may help to make selections based on our collections and constituencies. Each of us working selectively from strength may produce a good corporate result for access to our collections. Storage of archival collections often predicates access, and labor (to alter storage systems by reformatting)
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is expensive. These two factors suggest that access and preservation or storage decisions and actions should be made simultaneously if possible.

We should work together and rely on each other, as no one institution is likely to have all the necessary expertise or facilities to provide all of its own paths to access. For the short term, creating multiple digital formats may answer our needs for access and persistence if we are careful about the equipment and processes that we use. Most physical formats have become inexpensive to use. For long-term digital access we need storage facilities. Might we work collectively to persuade public and private agencies to build digital repositories that we could all use?

To make long-term use of such facilities, we need to master systems of metadata. For these expensive enterprises, we need to have an ideal in mind from which we retreat as necessary when costs are prohibitive or processes inappropriate to the desired long-term result. The simplest, cheapest alternative may be the one we have to take. (Even well-endowed institutions have budget constraints.) However, simplest and cheapest is not a fertile place to begin a thoughtful planning process. We need to consider the possible best alternatives in concert with what we can do immediately and practically to lead our institutions forward effectively.

Certainly, we need to retool ourselves a bit for these tasks. We also need to find ways to acquire or share the services of specialists such as audio engineers, computer programmers, and subject specialists. We as individuals cannot become all of these people. We need to bring specialists into our environments by hiring them or, more practically, by establishing regional centers of service and consultation to which the smallest archive might have affordable access. We need to fashion workable collaborations that produce results rather than years of committee meetings that yield nothing we can actually use.

Footnotes

1. Communications about these programs have appeared with some frequency in the IASA Journal (formerly The Photographic Bulletin) and the Information Bulletin of the International Association for Sound Archives.

REFERENCES

Virginia Danielson began the summary of her paper with the acknowledgment that as she wrote the paper, she thought of entitling it "Failing Laura Boulton." Part of the Laura Boulton Collection is housed at the Archive of World Music at Harvard University, and the Archive's first major digitization project was designed to get a significant portion of this collection online. As is common with digitization projects, there was a steep learning curve. Many of the lessons about access that she imparts in her paper were learned the hard way and, to some extent, at the expense of Laura Boulton and her heritage. The Archive digitized everything in the collection, and the process took three full-time employees 18 months to complete. When she assessed the progress made and the price paid, Ms. Danielson had to conclude that, despite their best efforts, they had failed Laura Boulton by not providing effective access. By May 2001 that will be rectified: a multimedia finding aid will be mounted to enable ready access to the collection.
Ms. Danielson underscored the key themes of her paper:

- Preservation must begin now because we cannot afford to wait until a better technology comes along.
- Digital access must be selective for ethical, legal, technical, and financial reasons; comprehensiveness should not be a goal.
- Digital storage costs may go down but labor costs will not; we must strive for cost-effective approaches to digital access.
- Identifying technical skills needed—from programmers and engineers to cataloging staff—must come early in project planning; outsourcing will be inevitable.
- Digital access is an added value and fees for service should be considered to offset the costs.

She advocated for libraries to be clear about what is necessary to do as opposed to what is only desirable. The former should not be sacrificed for the latter. She called for common archival repositories for digital storage available to all types of collecting institutions and communities.

She made several additional observations that need to be addressed in considering how to widen access to folk heritage collections. Among the technical concerns that both folklorists and librarians mention is that although EAD (encoded archival descriptors) may be a fine thing for collections of text-based materials, it does not work for folklore. The field needs to develop a new document-type definition for sound recordings. Another community concern is that the field has not developed a controlled vocabulary that permits ready subject access. This must be attended to quickly. As cataloging departments are downsized in libraries and networked search and retrieval protocols gain ascendance, catalogers become "content people," subject experts who are essential intellectual peers. Ms. Danielson urged her colleagues to become involved in developing and using descriptions of collections that are acceptable to the communities they represent and are also readily understandable by users.

Responses

Art Silverman, National Public Radio
John Suter, New York State Archives

Art Silverman, the senior producer of "Lost & Found Sound," spoke of the access needs of users—from radio producers like himself to the many listeners and researchers who depend on the work of Ms. Danielson and her colleagues across the country. After admitting that he risked stating the obvious, he discussed lessons he and his colleagues
have been learning while seeking access to archival audio collections for his radio show on our aural environment and its past. Dependent as radio producers are on private and public collectors, they are even more dependent on deadlines and their ability to find suitable materials under pressure. The promise of digital technology to capture faithfully and preserve without distortion over time is almost magical, as is its promise to enable the quick retrieval and easy sharing of sound files.

Speaking from the point of view of a consumer, he urged an expansive view of what to collect and preserve. There is no way to know what will be important in the future, and the opportunity for regret is enormous. At the same time he cautioned that preservation must also be selective, because rich archives that are inaccessible—not cataloged, searchable, or readily retrievable—might as well not exist. So, how do we find a happy medium?

"Lost & Found Sound" can serve as an example. In a sense, the call by the producers for listeners to submit their precious audio collections created a collection. The producers empowered millions of individuals to act as curators of their own folk collections. When National Public Radio accessioned the materials, they suddenly faced the same difficulties as other collecting groups. They have a bewildering variety of media, from wax cylinders to 78-rpm recordings to Dictaphone belts. They came to see that the art of good collecting is knowing what to discard. Trying to create natural triage and intellectually sound ways to narrow the choices in audio is hard because we have been dealing with audio for only a few generations. There is as yet no audio trail comparable with a paper trail. Hence the promise of digital storage that Ms. Danielson touts may put off for decades the painful choices of what to preserve.

In the meantime, it will be important to save some examples of the original analog artifacts of sound, such as cylinders, discs, and 8-track tapes—artifacts that might be called the audio equivalent of first editions—together with original playback equipment that can recreate the original acoustic experience. The voices we hear from the 1890s are distorted because of the frailties of analog equipment; it will be important to consider what our present-day digital fidelity will mean to sound in the future. Radio producers can help raise current awareness about the importance of our audio heritage and so raise support for funding the work involved in collecting and preserving.

Mr. Silverman claimed that the most useful tool he could imagine now would be a simple online reference guide to audio collections. This guide would be a one-stop catalog for collections and would use an understandable controlled vocabulary, or common language, that would open up the world of sound to all.

John Suter, former director of the New York Folklore Society and now of the New York State Heritage Documentation Project, focused his remarks on what the professional
librarians, archivists, and folklorists could do to make concrete advances in access to folk heritage collections. The underlying theme of his remarks was that access is about audience and sustainability. The general health of folk heritage collections is jeopardized by their low status within academia, reflected in the fact that the academic departments, such as ethnomusicology, that rely on these collections are often relegated, literally, to the basements of music departments. As borne out by the survey conducted for the conference, funding for collections and staff is also at or near the ground-floor level.

Mr. Suter proposed five milestones of accessibility for collections:

1. creating or acquiring and accessioning important collections into archives
2. processing the collections for complete accessibility in-house
3. describing collections online with collection-level records in MARC or other standard formats
4. mounting detailed finding aids on the Web
5. making archival collections themselves available on the Web

All institutions, regardless of size and wealth, face the fundamental challenges of identifying collections, bringing them into the archives, putting them into some sort of intellectual and physical order, and making finding aids. Perhaps only well-funded organizations can get to stages 4 and 5, but they will find stages 1, 2, and 3 every bit as difficult as will their smaller peers. Mr. Suter underscored how important it is in the fields of folklore and ethnomusicology that solutions to technical problems, such as cataloging and description, be scalable to small as well as large collecting institutions. Citing the evidence gathered in the survey before the conference (see Appendix II), he pointed out that the folk heritage collections that are in crisis reside in myriad small institutions. These collections can reach the milestones of accessibility only if all members of the communities represented at the conference actively pursue collaboration and open communication.

Turning to steps essential to achieving accessibility, Mr. Suter called for a thorough grounding of folklorists in the basics of archival practice and terminology. He pointed to the work done in New York State and available in print, *Working with Folk Materials in New York State* (Suter 1994) and *Folklore in Archives: A Guide to Describing Folklore and Folklife Materials* (Corsaro and Taussig-Lux 1998), as good starting points for folklorists. It is important to develop and sustain partnerships with professional archivists. He advocated publicizing the value of folklore materials not only to folklorists and ethnomusicologists but also to historians, linguists, genealogists, musicians, and crafts people, among others. Increased demand for these materials will inevitably lead to more resources being devoted to making them accessible. Such access cannot be provided without developing a thesaurus or controlled language in which to describe the materials. He echoed Ms. Danielson's call to use terminology that is
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transparent—a blunt pointer, he said—because the universe of folk materials is very large and sparsely populated. A thesaurus must make items used by ethnic groups with different traditions of transliteration readily accessible to nonspecialists. The thesaurus project, while widely supported in the professional community, has run into some resistance by those who wish to make the vocabulary refined and perfectible. Mr. Suter urged that we not let such concerns keep us from beginning the hard work of creating the thesaurus.

Speaking of the promise of digital technology to make folk heritage collections more accessible and thus build awareness of them, Mr. Suter recommended that institutions that could afford to put collections online strike a balance between attempting to do whole collections—which, as Ms. Danielson pointed out, can slow the effort and be extremely resource intensive—and doing what is in effect an anthology. Making selected and annotated collections accessible can make intrinsically valuable materials readily available to a new audience while being an effective marketing tool for the entire collection, the repository, and folklore in general. The opportunity to inform casual Web users about the provenance of the materials and the effort behind the images and sounds, from documenting and collecting to preserving and describing, should always be a focus of such Web publications. The ultimate goal of increased access is to make the stuff of folklore a universally valued part of our common cultural heritage. Ultimately, that is the only way to secure its preservation and accessibility.

Discussion

The issues of greatest moment to the participants were those of identifying what collections exist, creating efficient means for accessing them, creating a thesaurus, and using the Web for access.

Identification, Selection, and Inventories

Participants were sobered by how small a portion of the folklore universe was captured in the survey conducted—all of it unpublished—and how inaccessible even those collections appear to be. Some called for doing a general inventory of collections that would include published materials, especially all the ethnic materials recorded before the Second World War. Given the instability of the commercial market, how frequently companies were bought and sold, and how spotty the record is about what happened to the inventory, this seems a daunting task, although private collectors, many of whom are well-known, may have a lot of information about commercial recordings. The Association for Recorded Sound Collections has agreed to seek funds for compiling a national discography of 78s.

Another aspect of that problem concerns selection: scholars, and, to some extent,
collectors have their fashions and changing interests and may not even collect some of the materials that will turn out to be of special value. Are we about to lose the history of white jazz because we accord black jazz greater status these days? Compiling information about whatever it is that is held in public and private hands as well as information about what was commercially recorded, whether or not it exists in a collection, is essential to defining the parameters of ethnic music.

**Bibliographical versus Sound Access**

Some participants argued for making collections accessible by putting them online and providing direct access through sound whereas others argued that this is a self-defeating and financially unrealistic approach. A fundamental cleft exists between those who wanted to solve the problem of access by dumping things online and those who hold that bibliographic access, while not exciting, is still the only way to build a sustainable network of access for all. Both camps agree, however, that there is a need for greater commitment of institutional resources to mounting sound collections online to build awareness, constituencies, and so forth. Perhaps if regional collections would federate to mount holdings online, they could achieve economies of scale and solve the preservation as well as the access issue by pooling resources. The online environment, while very enticing, is fraught with many uncertainties. Certainly, the ongoing legislative battle over Napster and other file-swapping technologies challenges the notion that increased online access will lead to increased funding. On the contrary, some participants pointed out, the public will continue to assume that music, spoken word, and other audio should be available for free.

**Descriptive Practices**

Those who argued for a concerted effort to increase bibliographic access pointed out that EAD needs considerable refinement to make it work at the item level for audio recordings and that there are promising new forms of description that may be more flexible for sound. Among those mentioned were the Dublin Core, guidelines published by the Association for Recorded Sound Collections, and international rules proposed by the International Association of Sound Archives. It was noted that there is a need to harmonize or merge descriptive practices with standards used by the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers and Audio Engineering Society, and with other metadata standards.

**Thesaurus**

Agreement was widespread that creating a thesaurus is a critical first step in widening access to folk heritage, and participants moved to lower barriers to working on this important tool. There was consensus that an ethnographic thesaurus would be a
terminology list for folklorists and ethnomusicologists that would be flexible to allow deviations for local adaptation. It would allow nonspecialists to access finding aids and collection descriptions. Although some debate occurred about how expansive or narrow and how technical or secular the terminology should be, all participants recognized that other disciplines had faced similar challenges of scope when creating their controlled vocabularies and that this group needed to consult with groups experienced in other fields.

**Portal**

One of the most promising ways to solve several problems facing folklorists would be to create a portal. This would enable one-stop shopping—also described as the Yellow Pages for folklore—for information about collections and would provide a place for small institutions that cannot create a significant Web presence to find a place in the larger universe of collections and expertise. The portal would include information about what repositories hold and would provide guidelines for collectors and donors about how to document and prepare their collections, sample release forms for subjects, and so forth.

On several occasions one participant expressed the need for some tool to be created or information to be gathered and another participant said that such a tool already existed or some publication had appeared with just that information. One example was a call for information about the key elements of audio folklore documentation; the American Folklife Center published such information in *Folklife and Fieldwork* (Bartis 1990). The portal would allow for free flow of expert information among specialists in different areas. Knowledge transfer between scholars and preservationists, folklorists, and archivists appears to be a chronic problem and a major barrier to moving ahead with solutions. The portal would bridge this gap and also provide knowledge transfer to small and midsized organizations that cannot afford specialized staff.

Problems always have to be solved in bringing such an idea as a portal to life—who will do the work, where the portal will be located, where funding for long-term maintenance will come from. These problems are solvable.

**Scalability**

Because the scope of folklore is so great (one participant pointed out that it should include industrial as well as so-called community lore), the only way to deal with access issues is to break the problem down into regional collection and description responsibilities. It will be easier to build support for access among those who have the closest connections with the materials, and we need to empower local communities to grapple with access and not abandon attempts because they fall outside the purview of
various professional folklore networks. This again argues for scalable solutions to access issues.

REFERENCES

