

## Using digital media

### *Media for recording*

Record to a medium that allows easy transfer to a computer data storage device.

- ◆ Consider the volume of sound data the medium will hold. Each 1GB of space on a memory card holds 3 hours, 13 minutes of uncompressed monaural PCM WAV files at 16-bit, 44.1kHz quality. Available memory card capacities are increasing rapidly. Some oral historians are taking advantage of higher capacities and lower prices of media by choosing to record at higher quality—in stereo, or at 24-bit, 96 kHz.
- ◆ To keep audio file sizes manageable and to facilitate transfer of files to other media formats for storage and access, consider using the auto-track feature available on many recorder models; this feature automatically breaks the audio recording into tracks of specifiable size—one hour or less is best.

### *Media for preserving*

Protecting and preserving your interview calls for storing audio files in several secure places in diverse media formats. Oral historians recommend saving the files in at least *four separate places*.

- ◆ First, transfer the unedited, original audio recordings from the memory card to a computer hard drive as soon as possible. Confirm that the computer's hard drive has sufficient capacity for the sound files, which consume a lot of space, and that the hard drive will be backed up regularly.
- ◆ Other recommended places to save your sound files include:
  - Remote hard drives. Save your files to other computer hard drives which also have sufficient capacity and frequent backup but are located in different physical places. Oral historians may save sound files to servers in other rooms, other buildings, other cities, or even other continents.
  - An external hard drive. Solid-state external hard drives are a good choice for long-term digital storage; they have no mechanical parts requiring monitoring or maintenance and are available in very high capacity at relatively low price.
  - Cloud services. Online sources that accept and provide access to sound files are becoming increasingly available and affordable. Investigate carefully all the ramifications of using online services to preserve your recordings. *OHDA* offers advice at <http://ohda.matrix.msu.edu/>.
  - Archival CD-ROM. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) has not issued a standard for original digital audio recordings but does consider CD-ROM acceptable for the transfer and storage of electronic files. The CD-ROM is unstable, however, and should be used only in addition to secure hard drives. The consumer quality CD or DVD is unacceptable for preservation but can be used for transcribing or public access.
- ◆ Once the audio files are secure in at least four other places, you may reformat the memory card and reuse it for recording.



### LOCKSS: Lots of Copies Keep Stuff Safe

Learn more about preserving digital oral history  
from *Oral History in the Digital Age* at  
<http://www.ohda.matrix.msu.edu/>