

Protecting & preserving recordings

The first step in preserving your interview recording is to download the digital files to a secure hard drive as soon as possible. (see “Using Digital Media.”). These additional steps will help you protect and preserve your recordings for long-term future access.

◆ *Create consistent file names.*

- When saving your digital recordings on a hard drive, create consistent file and folder names so that they can be easily recognized and retrieved.
- Use the same file names for all the backup digital files.
- Make notes of the file names and locations on all print materials related to the interview.

◆ *Work with your repository.*

- Make every effort to see that the sound recordings of your oral history project are placed in a suitable library or archives where they will receive professional care and be made accessible to researchers. This may mean donating them to a local library, large metropolitan public library, nearby university library, museum, or state library and archives.
- Work with your repository from the beginning so that you record your interview in a format that can be readily preserved by the archivist and eventually transferred to future new formats as they become available.
- Most archives have tools at their disposal to document and preserve oral history recordings beyond that of the individual researcher. An archivist may embed metadata files with the sound files to describe, catalog, or document the provenance of the oral history interview. In order to do so, the archivist may require information only you can provide. For more information, begin with the essays on “Curating” in the *Oral History in the Digital Age* online resource at <http://ohda.matrix.msu.edu/>.
- Make sure all the necessary forms and significant contextual materials accompany the recording when it leaves your hands. This information will help archivists prepare finding aids for your oral histories and will help researchers understand the context in which your interviews took place.
 - Signed release form or donor contract
 - An information sheet containing the names, addresses, and contact information of both the narrator and interviewer, the date and place of the interview, the project title and/or sponsoring institution, the type of recording media used, the length of the recording in hours and minutes, the numbered sequence of digital files, and a statement of the purpose of the interview
 - A list of correctly spelled names and terms mentioned in the interview (useful information for future abstracting and/or transcribing of the interview)
 - An explanation of any significant background sounds, equipment problems, or other issues affecting the recording or interview content
 - Research notes, interview outlines, and correspondence with the narrator
 - Related materials collected during the project, including photographs documenting the project or digital files of scanned photos donated by the narrator
 - Abstracts, audio or video logs, indexes, or transcripts derived from the recordings

◆ *Publicize the project.*

- Announce the availability of the oral history interviews to local historical societies, other local libraries, and the news media.
- When your project accumulates a number of interviews, consider publishing a catalog of your collection and finding aids to inform other organizations and individuals of its existence and scope.