

To: Recording Academy Grant Program
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Fr: Project Director
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Pacifica Foundation / Pacifica Radio Archives
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Taxpayer I.D. number: 94-1347046
Year organization founded: 1946

Re: Final Report – Grant Project Summary

Da: August 31, 2004

To Whom It May Concern,

This letter constitutes a Project Summary Report from the Pacifica Foundation / Pacifica Radio Archives regarding a grant from the Recording Academy received during the 2002/2003 grant cycle. That grant of \$16,500.00, covering the period June 1, 2003 – June 1, 2004, during which Pacifica Radio Archives completed work on Phase I of the PRA Preservation & Access Project. We are in the planning stages of Phase II, made possible by another generous grant (\$39,790) from the academy. Phase II covers 7/01/2004 – 7/01/2005.

Our objective in Phase I of the PRA Preservation & Access Project was to undertake an expert, professional preliminary appraisal and assessment of the PRA collection of approximately 47,000 audio recordings (mostly reel-to-reel tapes) documenting the broadcasts of Pacifica Radio Stations from the 1950's through the 1990's. The resulting recommendations for best practices and actionable plans for preservation priorities, conservation strategies and improved documentation, would enable us to take vital steps towards preserving the national heritage treasure in our keeping: original audio documentation of the major social, political, cultural and artistic movements of last half of the twentieth century.

Project funds were used to engage our key project consultants: radio archives specialist Adi Gevins (PRA Preservation & Access Project Coordinator), magnetic sound preservation expert David Seubert (curator, Davidson Special Library Special Collections, University of California, Santa Barbara), and media arts preservation / description expert Mona Jimenez (Moving Image Preservation Specialist, Bobst Library,

New York University). In visits to PRA in July, 2003 our consultants conducted onsite observations, assessed the collection, facilities and practices; and conducted informational interviews with archives staff. The resulting report & recommendations were excerpted in our October, 2003 report to the Recording Academy. The report is available to the Recording Academy, to other recorded sound archives, and the general public on the PRA website.

<http://www.pacificaradioarchives.org/web/archives/preservation.html>

As a result of these, and subsequent discussions with our key consultants, and other archives professionals, particularly Claude Marks, curator of the Freedom Archives in San Francisco, we decided to take a two-pronged approach towards prioritizing preservation & access activities for the collection. Overall, actionable improvements in both preservation procedures and cataloging/description were planned and are underway. These include beginning an "item count", purchasing a dehydrator for the tape preservation process, assessing the capabilities of the existing InMagic catalog database and exploring other options. At the same time, we are taking a "content priority" approach. -- identifying series which are both of exceptional interest, and in particular need of preservation, to be subject to special treatment.

In March and June, 2004, Adi Gevins and David Seubert returned to PRA to evaluate progress and to work with the staff to improve practices and map out future goals & objectives. Seubert found significant improvements in preservation practices including handling and labeling, process logging, and quality control procedures. He is currently finalizing a "Best Practices" manual for onsite tape transfer, digitization and documentation practices at Pacifica Radio Archives. When it is complete, we will make it available to other recorded sound archives as appropriate. Also during the June site visit we created a procedure for identifying the first 100 arts/music/culture tapes to be selected for special preservation & description. We recruited a panel of advisors from a variety of relevant fields (audio engineers, historians, poets, radio producers, ethnomusicologists, musicians, and others) who also represented a spectrum of potential PRA clients (media producers, artists, musicians, authors, educators, scholars). [See: List of Advisors].

PRA Operations Director Mark Torres and Production Coordinator Edgar Toledo examined the preservation conditions and needs of candidate tapes. In the process they created an assessment form and procedure documenting time of recording, description of physical material, statement of condition, existence and details of flat master transfer, digitization and creation of reference CD, and positive identification of archives number, title and description. The immediate work products were: their report and analysis which will contribute to the development of the PRA "best practices" manual, and the development of both the descriptive database and collection catalog; and audio CDs of excerpts of candidate programs which were distributed to the advisory panel to aid in identifying the first 100 tapes.

In line with our consultants' recommendation to outsource initial preservation, and thanks to a Phase II grant from the Recording Academy, the first group of 25 selected master tapes will be transported by PRA Director Brian DeShazor in January, 2005 to Safe Sound Archives in Philadelphia where he will observe and participate in the preservation / digitization process conducted by George Blood. [See: 100 Key Arts & Music Recordings for Prioritized Preservation].

As part of Phase I description & access activities, several of the selected program tapes were scheduled for transcription. The process of creating written transcripts revealed inaccuracies in the existing description and cataloging, and the need for fact-checking and providing contextual information to accompany transcribed text. The completed transcripts will be available on the PRA website. Transcripts currently in progress include interviews with John Coltrane, Odetta, and Paul Robeson; Allen Ginsberg on why Pacifica Radio could not broadcast his poem "Howl", Ferlinghetti reading and introducing his own poems, a 1960's roundtable in which Lorraine Hansberry, James Baldwin, and Langston Hughes discuss the role of the "Negro writer in American culture".

PRA consultants also met and reported on recommendations to PRA at the 2003 and 2004 annual conferences of the Society of American Archivists. David Seubert shared knowledge gained from the PRA project with other sound archivists in sessions both years. PRA Preservation & Access Project coordinator Adi Gevins and PRA production assistant / assistant cataloger Andrea Hull met with advisors George Blood of Safe Sound Archives, Tom Connors, curator of the Public Broadcasting Archives at the University of Maryland, College Park, Mary Ide of WGBH-FM, and Howard Besser, director of the Moving Image Archiving & Preservation program at the Tisch School of the Arts, New York University.

On site visits to the WNYC-FM archives and the Bobst archives at New York University, project coordinator Gevins and Hull observed cataloging and documentation practices, preservation procedures, and codification and implementation of collection, acquisition and assessment strategies. They consulted with radio broadcast / recorded sound archivist Andy Lanset, and project consultant Mona Jimenez.

The Phase I grant monies awarded by the Recording Academy were spent as follows:
Expert Consultants: \$ 10,698.90; Travel: \$ 1,720.00
Other: \$ 3,432.04 [dehydrator \$161.80, assistant administrator to conduct media count \$645.90; shipping, phone, administration; recording supplies]

If you have any further questions, or require any additional information, please feel free to contact either:

Brian DeShazor, Director, Pacifica Radio Archives, or
Adi Gevins, PRA Preservation & Access Coordinator, Phone: (510) 658-4259, email:
adi@well.com

Sincerely,
Brian DeShazor

Attachments: 1) List of Advisors and 100 Key Arts & Music Recordings for Prioritized
Preservation