

Interviewing for Research - Archiving and Preserving Recordings

At the beginning of your project you should make sure that you are able to keep your paperwork and recordings in a safe place (inside a filing cabinet is safer than on a shelf). Decide if you are going to use a paper or digital database of some sort. If you have used a recording format which you suspect may become obsolete, consider making copies of the recordings so you can listen to them in future. If you want to deposit your material in an archive or library of some sort, make sure you get the correct permission from your interviewees.

- Keeping records
- Preservation

Keeping records of your material

Although you may only start with a few recordings of interviews, it is useful to keep a few simple records. Notes on who you have been interviewing and what they have been talking about helps tapes to be easily identified. Important documentation such as the interviewee's permission also needs to be kept and linked to the correct recording. Identification markings on the recorded media and their housing is essential for you to know what is on a cassette, mini disk or CD. There are many different ways to keep these records, none of which are right or wrong, so it is important to create a system that is right for you and suits your needs. Here are a few suggestions that may be useful to incorporate in your system.

Use a label to mark tapes and discs, preferably using a permanent ink pen, not biro. CDs can also be marked with a special type of pen.

It may be useful to give each recording or interview a number to identify it. By numbering items you do not have to keep writing the same information.

In a book, keep a numbered record of all the details of each recording that you think may be useful: name, address and other details of the interviewee, subject areas or topics discussed, date and place of the interview, length of the recording and what equipment you recorded the interview on. These may all be useful to see at a glance.

Use the same number to link the recording itself to any other information such as copyright permission, photographs or other ephemera connected to the interview.

Make sure you keep documentation giving the interviewee's permission to use the material or transferring the copyright. It may not be possible to obtain it again at a future date when you might need it, or they may have made some restriction that you cannot remember.

Preservation

After you have recorded your interview onto your chosen medium, there are a number of things you can do to ensure the preservation and care of the recording and enhance its lifespan.

Remember to push out the “lugs” (small squares found at the top corners of cassette tapes) after recordings have been made. This safeguards the interview material on the cassette by preventing the tape from being recorded over. Likewise, minidisks have record protect sliders on their edges. If you are using a solid state recorder, back up to a computer as soon as possible after the interview.

When handling tapes and discs, always make sure your hands are clean and free from oil, grease and sweat. Keep the area you are working in free from dust.

Keep recordings in their protective cases until the last minute they are required. Do not touch the playing surfaces of a disc or tape. Handle by the reel flange or centre hub on reels, outer casing on cassettes and outer edge and hole of compact discs.

If possible, make a copy of the master recording. This can be done on the same medium, e.g. cassette to cassette, mini disk to mini disk, or if you have the facilities, on to CD. This preserves the original recording, while the copy takes the wear and tear of being played.

- Place cassette and reel to reel tapes in their boxes or plastic containers in an upright position when ever possible.
- Store away from direct sunlight and unguarded fluorescent light.
- Try to keep in a cool, dry and dust free place.
- Avoid moisture and damp.

Tapes are affected by electric fields and magnets. Avoid placing tapes near magnets to stop material being lost. Magnets, which can be found in the home, are found in headphones and loud speakers, as well as more obvious objects, like fridge magnets. CD's are not affected by electric or magnetic fields.

If you would like more information on the preservation of audio material here are two websites that offer more in depth information on the upkeep of all audio media and the new developments in preservation.

The National Screen and Sound Archive in Australia:

<http://www.screenound.gov.au/Screenound/Screenso.nsf/HeadingPagesDisplay/Preservation?OpenDocument>

The Library of Congress Cylinder, Disc and Tape Care Guide:

<http://www.loc.gov/preserv/care/record.html>