Building an Online Media Library for the Archives of Iowa Broadcasting

Amy M. Moorman, MA, CA, DAS
College Archivist
Wartburg Archives and Archives of Iowa Broadcasting

Landing page: https://www.wartburg.edu/archives/
AIB website: http://knightguides.wartburg.edu/aib
Catalog home: http://searcharchives.wartburg.edu/homeA.aspx?dir=BROADCAST
Wartburg Archives contains the College archives (records pertaining to history and operations of the institution), and the Archives of Iowa Broadcasting (a collection related to the development of radio and television broadcasting across the state of Iowa).
• Grant Price founded AIB in 1994. He was a broadcasting pioneer (40 year career in Iowa radio and television), then joined Journalism faculty at Wartburg.

• Local broadcast history is ephemeral. Only a portion of original broadcasts were ever saved. Degrading/obsolete analog carriers further put these resources in danger of being lost.

• Iowa was an early adopter of radio (due to its largely rural population). Strong connection to agricultural news, weather, sports, politics, and cultural programming.

• Staffing initially by Journalism faculty, then to Library in 2011 (cataloger, who had ½ time responsibility already for College Archives – same storage/research space since 1999 library renovation)

• Archivist initiative – fundraising campaign for 3-year archivist position (with hope to turn into permanent position). Position commenced Fall 2016
RADIO/TELEVISION – largest collections are WHO Radio (Des Moines), KWWL TV (Waterloo), WQAD TV (Quad Cities), and KGAN TV and WMT Radio (Cedar Rapids).

ORAL HISTORY – root of collection (where Grant began, collecting interviews of first person experiences in industry). More than 110 interviews, all digitized (most available on YouTube)

ADDITIONAL – Individual broadcasters & significant figures (e.g. Grant Price), corporations, industry publications.

Total of 43 collections, including more than 28,000 media items (film, video, audio analog formats)
Understanding needs/expectations of existing stakeholders helped with setting priorities for collection
https://www.weareavp.com/

Recommendations:
• AIB had no existing catalog, item-level index, or finding aids
• A focus on digital reformatting would help with preservation and access (would require long-range financial planning, IT infrastructure development, & a staffing plan)
Indexing project collected very basic metadata.

Digitization revamp included new file format standards (based on AVP report recommendations)
We needed a grant to provide the necessary resources – scope of work and due to limited time frame (end date for Archivist position)
The Grant
Program Overview

“Thousands of libraries, archives, museums, and historical organizations across the country maintain important collections of books and manuscripts, photographs, sound recordings and moving images, archaeological and ethnographic artifacts, art and material culture, and digital objects.

Funding from this program strengthens efforts to extend the life of such materials and make their intellectual content widely accessible, often through the use of digital technology. Awards are also made to create various reference resources that facilitate use of cultural materials…”

https://www.neh.gov/grants/preservation/humanities-collections-and-reference-resources
We chose to apply for an implementation project: up to 3 years, $350,000 in funds (with a 25% match)
The narrative section is the meat of any application package. For this grant, the narrative was limited to 15 single-spaced pages, and there were several sub-sections, including:

- Significance of the project to humanities research and education
- History and scope of project and how it fit into any larger initiatives
- Preservation and access - which in our case focused on details about cataloging and digitizing the chosen collections
- Digital technology to be used, formats produced and other specs, metadata schemas, etc.
- Sustainability of project outcomes – or, our digital preservation plan

Deliverables – In this section, I had to break down the specific counts of what we planned to produce related to the project.

- Number of collection-level descriptions & individual catalog records
- Number & type of items to be cataloged
- Number & type of items to be digitized

The Budget form was divided by year of project, and then category of expense (such as salary/wages, travel, supplies, services). Then you had to allocate each expense as NEH funds or cost share, so that the cost share was at least 25% of the total project budget. I kept track by color-coding the different expenses.

The bulk of our costs were in salary and wages (mine as project director was cost share funds of course, but the student positions were put in as grant funded), the digital storage (divided between grant and cost share funds), and digitization (using grant funds).

Appendices – which are the supplemental materials to go along with the application. In our case, we needed to include:

- Donor agreements
- Vendor bids – for our project, I had to provide competing bids for several different components of the project: digitization services, digital storage, and collection management software options
- Letters of support – here we needed both the standard external letters touting the importance of the collection and project to scholarship, and letters from internal partners (in our case the head of my division, the Dean of Faculty, and the Director of IT and his VP) to demonstrate their commitment to supporting the project for the long term
Follow directions – I created a spreadsheet of the application instructions to keep track of each task in each section, also made sure to check instructions about fonts, spacing, margins, file formats, etc. for submission.

Be organized – key for me, because I was writing 2 grants at the same time

Give others time – to complete any assigned tasks
The Project

DELIVERABLES

DELIVERABLES EVERYWHERE
The Project
Phase 1: Catalog

GOALS

• Implement archival CMS
• Create AIB catalog records
  • 12 collections
  • Estimated 28,826 media items
• Metadata based on DublinCore and PBCore elements
• Catalog records shared with Vogel Library ILS (Alma Primo) and WorldCat
The Project
Phase 2: Digitization

GOALS

• Digitization of 2,230 videotapes from KWWL-TV Collection
  • Produce 2 files for each tape (a preservation and access copy)
• Access files of videotapes to be broken down to clip level
  • Estimated 40,586 clip level files
• Item level catalog records created for each clip
• Digital clip file attached to catalog record & made web accessible
Implementation

*What Do You Mean Duct Tape Won’t Work?*
Hiring – Fall 2018 hired 4 student “Archives Assistant – Catalogers” (currently working 40 hours/week between them). Job is to barcode media items, and create catalog records.

CMS – Chose Proficio Elements (https://rediscoverysoftware.com/)
• Archives, Library, Museum, Archeology cataloging modules
• Local install or cloud hosting
• We chose because of: price point (for ongoing maintenance), Windows-based (supported by our ITS department), user-friendly (most of cataloging work will be done by undergraduate students)
• Installation on our SQL server with workstations on all Archives computers (web catalog is hosted by re:discovery)

Start at DIRECTORY level (we have two – College Archives, AIB)
• Followed by 4-level hierarchy in Archives module (Collection, Series, FileUnit, Item)
• Our FileUnit records are either FOLDER level, or MEDIA ITEM
Using combination of Dublin Core and PBCore (developed to describe sound and moving images) for our descriptive metadata.
Our metadata template is based on the Proficio workstation interface (this is the FileUnit level):

Required fields are:
- Collection Nbr/name, FileUnit Nbr (which, for media items, is the barcode), Title, Category, and Type-Format

Other descriptive fields we use:
- Series Nbr, Dates, Creator (3 fields - Name Type, Creator, Creator Role), Summary note/description, Language, Physical Characteristics (includes condition, condition note, running time, & specific info based on particular record format)
- User-defined fields under Extended Information tab are: Local Subject, Transcript
Recently revised workflow to incorporate more fully processing collections (students were completing work at faster pace than expected).

I provided list of all AIB collections containing all/most audiovisual content (30 out of 43 collections). Students select a collection, then follow above workflow. There are instructions and templates for each step to insure consistent results and ease training of any new hires.
Implementation
Phase 2: Digitization

- SceneSavers Media Archival Solutions (Covington, Kentucky)
- Digitization specs
  - **Preservation Master**: 10-bit lossless ffv1 version 3 AVI, uncompressed PCM, 48kHz
  - **Access copy**: H.264 MPEG4 @ 5Mbps; compressed AAC, 48kHz, 256kbps
- Video editors
- Proficio web module


Digitization specs based on AVPreserve report recommendations, and our storage capabilities

Video editors to be hired in 2nd year of grant – they will break down digital files of videotapes into clip level files for item records in web catalog.

- Highlighted collections
- Finding aids tab for browsing
- Advanced search tab for searching by level of hierarchy
- On record level page, “related media” link takes you to attached multimedia file
Reflections
Reflections
Successes

- First 6 months of project (May-October), we have:
  - Processed 14 AIB collections (1,056 media items)
  - Created 14,895 FileUnit catalog records in Proficio
    - This includes importing information from existing index
  - Digitization
    - 2,387 U-matic and MII videotapes picked up by SceneSavers on 11/1

Videos to be digitized: 275 U-matic and 2,112 MII
Archives module revamp

The first delay was due to the software company updating the archives module interface, which delayed the launch of our web catalog by several months.

Errors

Once we finally did go live, we discovered a lot of errors. Some of these were due to standard bugs, since ours was the first real launch with the new web interface. For example, attached multimedia files were not displaying on the record level page (which kind of defeated the entire purpose of why we had selected that particular CMS). On the finding aid list, at least on my web browser, the entire list of collections did not display (so if someone wanted to browse our holdings, they would have no idea they weren’t seeing all collections listed). So far, the developers have been very responsive to fixing issues as they have come up.

We also discovered many formatting errors with how our metadata was structured. Specifically in our “Nbr” fields. Punctuation marks in collection/series names or file unit numbers were causing display issues. On the main collection page, for example, it would show something like this “No records found,” but if you searched from the search page, the file records would show up.

We had to go through all of our existing Proficio records (over 12,000 at the time), and take out every punctuation mark in the collection nbr, series nbr, fileunit nbr, and item nbr fields at all four levels of the hierarchy.
Search by fileunit number in Proficio revealed that barcodes we’d been using since February were duplicates of those already in-use in collection (due to an ordering error). Using barcodes as unique ID numbers, but as they were in different collections, the software didn’t recognize the duplication.
Workload – one of 3 concurrent grants I am administering for the AIB, in addition to the everyday work of managing the Archives. If I could go back, I probably would have written into this project another professional staff member to act as Project Archivist, although there is no way I could have known at the time that we would have been successful with 2 of our other applications.
Collaborative work has been essential to project so far:

Campus personnel
- Grants administrator – help with organizing submission and other administrative tasks
- ITS Department – building digital preservation and storage infrastructure (this grant dovetails with larger initiative to build up campus-wide storage capabilities, so I hope this project will help solve that long-overdue need)
- Marketing department – promotion and outreach for the grant

KWWL staff/administrators – have been a great partner (it is their collection we are digitizing!); recently did a story on the project and the vendor picking up the tapes to be digitized; staff appreciates historical value of collection; their GM is on our advisory board; my hope is the partnership extends well beyond the grant project

My professional network – a great help in many steps along the way so far (writing grant – especially the digital preservation plan, which I had to build from scratch, and with recommendations for vendors, products, etc.)
THANK YOU!

Amy M. Moorman

amy.moorman@wartburg.edu
@breathehistory