

Donating soundscape recordings

CONTENTS

1. CONTRIBUTIONS	1
2. SELECTION CRITERIA	1
2.1 Quality	2
2.2 Documentation	2
2.3 Content / research value	2
2.4 Copyright	2
3. APPENDICES	3
3.1 Appendix A: recording guides	3
3.2 Appendix B: documentation	3
3.3 Appendix C: further reading	5
FURTHER INFORMATION	5

1. CONTRIBUTIONS

The British Library welcomes recordings from amateur and professional sound recordists.

The following list of types of recordings which are accepted for addition to the soundscape collections is meant as a guide:

- rural sounds
 - urban sounds
 - maritime sounds
 - industry; transport
 - leisure & recreation
 - education
 - health
 - law & order
 - military
 - domestic sounds
 - architectural acoustics
 - public / religious buildings
 - festivals & other events
 - atmosphere
 - water
 - weather
 - plant sounds
 - natural acoustic phenomena
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2. SELECTION CRITERIA

Recordings offered to the BL should be of good quality and have demonstrable research value (see 2.3 below); ideally they should be documented in electronic form and there must be clarity about any copyrights in the recordings.

2.1 Quality

Recordings should be of high technical quality but nearly any recording can be useful if supported with sufficient documentation. Advice on recording techniques / equipment, etc. can be supplied. Further links to websites which host discussion lists with interests in recording techniques and up-to date information on the latest equipment can be found in **Appendix A**.

2.2 Documentation

The format of supporting documentation, (metadata, images, links to web pages) should be discussed with the British Library curator. Note that if the recordings are not already made, it will be advisable to discuss documentation with the curator during the early stages of project planning.)

Essential information: recordist's name; tape / recording number; title; location; date recorded; equipment; short description of sound. Examples of additional data can be seen in **Appendix B**.

2.3 Content / research value

Examples of what is meant by 'research value' (and which justify the associated costs of preserving it) are:

- Recordings of national importance (reflecting particular aspects of British culture / regional studies)
- Representative / historical examples of the development of the field of soundscape study (worldwide – representing different cultural approaches)
- Collections which support research and / or where the purpose or intent of the recordist is to document an aspect of cultural sound.
- Recordings of unique and / or 'disappearing sounds' of the environment

Further reading related to the field of soundscape research can be found in **Appendix C**.

2.4 Copyright

Copyright and permitted uses of the recordings are covered by a standard Acquisition Form which:

- Lists the property to be donated
- identifies the owner of the property to be acquired
- transfers legal ownership of the recordings to the British Library
- fulfils the Library's legal obligations in respect of Cultural Property
- establishes any special provisions for the use of and access to the property
- specifies ownership of copyright and analogous rights
- indicates what should happen to unwanted materials included in the acquisition.

3. APPENDICES

3.1 Appendix A: recording guides

Phonography

equipment guide <http://www.phonography.org/gear.htm>

Vermont Folklife Centre

recording guide http://www.vermontfolklifecenter.org/archive/res_audioequip.htm

Wildlife

guide to recording sound (includes further reading and links)

<http://www.bl.uk/reshelp/findhelprestype/sound/wildsounds/making/wildlifemaking.pdf>

3.2 Appendix B: documentation

3.2.1 Essential information

Tag	Definition	Example
Item number	Definition: number given to individual track in sequence	Track 1
Item title	Definition: the title which is given to a single track or sequence of tracks	Sand walk 1
Sound description	Definition: a brief descriptive summary of the sounds heard in sequence Form: semi-narrative free text	E.g. Fish pier. Gulls. Trawlers preparing to leave. Some chatter. Diesel engine ticking over.
Recording date	Definition: date(s) on which original recording was made Form: stylised statement(s) YYYY.MM.DD	1988.08.16
Item duration	Minutes and seconds	16'39"
Recordist	Definition: in a field recording, the name of the person responsible for creating the recording. Form: inverted form of name(s) as indicated in documentation connected with the recording.	Bergonzi, Benet
Recording equipment	Definition: a list of the main equipment used in the creation of an original field recording	Sennheiser ME66 microphone, Sony MZR-35 MiniDisc recorder
Location [All]	Definition: name of location at which a recording was made. Form: English form where one is in common current use, otherwise vernacular form	Singing sand beach, Eigg, Inner Hebrides, Scotland

3.2.3 Additional information

Tag	Definition	Example
Collection inventory	Definition: basic list of contents of a collection	10 reels; 2 cassettes; 12 mini-disc; 45 wav's
Product title	Recordists' own title for a carrier, e.g. mini-disc or cassette title	Eigg sand reel 1a
Recording notes	Definition: free-form descriptive notes pertaining to any aspect of a recorded performance.	Cable noise at start of recording
Recordist's perspective	Definition: in a field recording, the relative position of the microphone to the sound source Form: standardised descriptors (distance in metres from microphone to subject, or film conventions, e.g. CU, MCU)	Close up (CU), Mid-Close up (MCU), or 2 metres from sound source
Signal processing	Definition: any process (e.g. noise reduction, filtering) designed to attenuate or otherwise modify the sound at the time of recording, or playback	Dolby B
Carrier description	Definition: description of the physical entity in terms of format, extent, size, speed, chrominance, playback mode, etc.	mini-disc, stereo
Documentation	Definition: any material (textual or illustrative) or object pertaining to the recording, e.g. scholarly sleeve notes, listings and catalogues (e.g. lists of broadcast material compiled by radio stations), photographs, museum specimens, oral history transcript, etc.	Hand written notes; transcripts of interviews.
Item copyright	Definition: statement of copyright ownership in the recording.	Benet Begonzi and British Library
Original or copy	Definition: status (i.e. provenance and value) of the copy in hand as incoming to SA	original
Country	Definition: the state (or, in some instances, the region) to which the performers or the sounds as performed belong (as opposed to the place where the product was manufactured or recorded)	Scotland
Region	Definition: name of highest level of sub-unit of country in which recording was made Form: English form where one is in common current use, otherwise vernacular form	Inner Hebrides
District	Definition: name of community level sub-unit of country in which recording was made Form: city/town/village name. English form where one is in current common use, otherwise vernacular form	Eigg
Locality	Definition: For field recordings away from habitation, the name of the locality or geographical coordinates including, in the case of wildlife recordings, the altitude. Form: English form where one is in common current use, otherwise vernacular form or	Singing sand beach

	standardised descriptors for coordinates and altitudes (in metres).	
Culture	Definition: name for a specific group of people from within a given country/region	E.g. Inuit
Music category / genre	Definition: a heading that represents a particular musical performance style that is often associated with a particular activity by a particular cultural group	Lullabies / Burial music / Hocketing / Bhangra / etc.
Habitat type	Definition: surroundings of the animal at time of recording	Sea-Coast - Sand-dunes Urban – Park Urban - Rubbish tip
Local time	Definition: The local time in the country where and when a wildlife recording was made. Form: 24-hour clock plus time standard, GMT, BST	12:00 GMT, BST
Ambient temp.	Definition: ambient temperature (air and/or water if applicable) during recording. Form: In-putter will be prompted to specify whether air or water temperature.	18 degrees C
Dialect / accent	Definition: a variety or form of language peculiar to a geographical region or class, generally non-literary	Accents and dialects – Gaelic language, Scottish
Author	Definition: broad description of the author's responsibility for a given work (i.e. composer, joint composer, author, arranger, etc.)	Schafer, R. Murraylc(composer)

3.3 Appendix C: further reading

World Forum for Acoustic Ecology – Library

<http://interact.uoregon.edu/mediaLit/wfae/library/index.html>

Leonardo Online

Acoustic ecology and the Soundscape bibliography

<http://www.leonardo.info/isast/spec.projects/acousticecologybib.html>

FURTHER INFORMATION

Sound Archive Information Service

The British Library

96 Euston Road, London

NW1 2DB

Tel: +44 (0)20 7412 7831

Fax: +44 (0)20 7412 7691

Email: [Ask the Reference Team](#)