



A Century of Broadcasting: Preservation and Renewal

Conference Dates: Oct 22-24, 2020
Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Proposal Deadline: Dec. 15, 2019

Call for Papers * Deadline Extended

The [Radio Preservation Task Force](#) (RPTF) of the Library of Congress invites applications for papers, panels, moderated discussions and workshops for a conference marking the centenary of broadcasting in the United States.

We seek presentations by archivists, radio and television historians, artists, information scientists, journalists, sound studies scholars, broadcasters and others highlighting how preservation can help us complicate and rethink our understandings of the history of mass media at community, local, national and international levels. We particularly welcome participants who put archival resources to work today to enrich radio, television, podcasting, music, literature, journalism, public history, installation art and other creative practices.

The conference will take place Oct. 22nd to 24th, 2020, at the Library of Congress on Capitol Hill, in Washington D.C. Registration is free for all presenters, moderators and respondents.

Celebrating One Hundred Years of Broadcasting

In the United States, the radio industry began primarily as a form of wireless telegraphy used for point-to-point communication. After World War I, government licensing began for stations that were changing the medium by airing point-to-mass broadcast transmissions of music and voice. From the celebrated Election Day broadcasts of Westinghouse station KDKA on November 2, 1920 to similar services offered by hundreds of other stations from coast to coast, the industry paradigm shifted. The broadcasting model endures to the present, characterizing media systems from large commercial networks to public broadcasting, satellite radio and online streaming services, and RSS-based podcasting.

This conference marks the centenary of that paradigm shift and investigates radio's century of constant renewal and rebirth over the course of the intervening century, during which various radio and radio-like practices have been invented and reinvented, forgotten and remembered, in settings across the United States. We want to highlight a century dotted with "new" sound practices in this restless medium, from the first non-English programs to the first broadcasts aimed at communities of color, from the first international shortwave transmissions to the first true crime podcasts, the first educational shows to the first radio-based art. Our conference underscores the role of preservation in documenting (and even driving) the process of renewing radio from generation to generation and from community to community.

Renewing Radio Heritage

This meeting also takes place at a moment in which media history is itself changing, thanks to a renaissance in radio and television preservation, which has created an archive that is more diverse and richer than ever before, conveying a sharper sense of how broadcast media helped Americans articulate understanding of nation, region, class, gender, race, sexuality and ability. That is thanks in part to the work of the Radio Preservation Task Force, which for five years has been pursuing projects and partnerships to change the very archive itself in a way that necessitates fresh thinking about many firsts—and seconds, and thirds—in conventional national and international narratives of radio history.

Created in 2014 in fulfillment of a radio preservation mandate in the Library of Congress's [National Recording Preservation Plan](#), the RPTF is charged with fostering collaborations between researchers and archivists to facilitate work on radio preservation, developing an online inventory of extant collections, promoting preservation of endangered radio collections, encouraging use of radio and sound archives in educational settings, and cultivating academic study of archival radio materials. It currently boasts a network of hundreds of scholars and archivists who share materials, fundraising, and best practices. The RPTF has also constructed a national database aggregating information on over 2,500 radio collections from coast to coast, and has encouraged and overseen several special issues and anthologies on radio history and preservation. It is currently developing pedagogical guides for classroom use and resources to assist with preservation of endangered radio materials. To advance its goals, the RPTF partners with over 40 local, national, and international academic, archiving, and media organizations. A full list of partner institutions is available on [our conference site](#).

Suggested Themes

This conference will focus on preservation's historic and ongoing role in documenting and shaping new research from policy studies to sound studies, and new media practices from journalism to art. To that end, we seek panels, presentations and workshops whose ambit could include, but is not limited to:

- Highlighting a specific archive based on historic recordings that challenge assumptions about mass media history, the invention or reinvention of formats, or show outreach to new audiences.
- Offering best practices based on experience in preservation, from digitization and metadata to fair reuse, either on air or in arts settings.
- Exploring techniques for researching, processing or reusing the changing radio archive, such as how to use specialized methods from machine learning to deep listening.
- Examining communities whose stories have been lost but can now come to light as a result of the RPTF's various initiatives and caucuses, especially communities of color, native communities, women's radio history, LGBTQ histories, as well as among differently abled communities.
- Examining how preservation can highlight radio's historic and ongoing role in activism, especially at the regional, local and community level.
- Looking at international histories of radio, and at preservation practices outside the United States, particularly in Latin America and Europe, from which U.S. archivists might learn.
- Focusing on long-arc narratives of radio history—the history of crime reporting, for instance, or civil rights radio—that stretch across the entirety of the “broadcast century” and whose history isn't limited to one “tier” of radio, but rather can be studied in contexts from large networks to local radio and podcasts, and everywhere in between.
- Studying how preservation methods might be adapted for emerging forms of radio beyond traditional broadcasting platforms, particularly podcasting, as well as the study of broadcast platform elements themselves, from radio tower systems to RSS.
- Focusing on preserving recordings from arts and freeform stations, as well as exploring how the materials that RPTF projects have uncovered can be reused in contemporary art, journalism and research in the new golden era of podcasting and sound art more broadly.
- Providing practical advice for independent archivists, particularly when it comes to public history outreach, identifying possible funding and grant writing.

To Participate

Proposal options include papers, pre-constituted panels, moderated discussions, and workshops. To submit a proposal, email abstracts and other materials specified below in a single document to radiotaskforce@gmail.com by **December 15, 2019**. For questions, please contact neil.verma@northwestern.edu.

Papers. Individual archivists, scholars or artists are invited to submit an abstract for a paper of about 20 to 30 minutes in length on our conference themes. Successful applications will be organized into panels by the steering committee. Applications should include: A brief biography; contact information for the applicant including any institutional affiliation; a 400-word abstract with a title; and five keywords.

Pre-constituted Panels. Pre-constituted panels should have 3-4 participants, plus a moderator and/or respondent. These panels will be based on the presentation of papers, with each speaker given 20 to 30 minutes to speak. Applications should include: A brief biography for each applicant; contact information for each applicant including any institutional affiliations; a 400-word abstract with a title for each paper; five keywords for each paper; a 400-word abstract explaining the goal and ambit of the panel.

Moderated Discussions. These events will differ from pre-constituted panels in that they do not require formal prepared remarks and will instead focus on discussion and exchange. Groups of 4-6 participants may apply, with each participant expected to speak for 5-10 minutes about a current project, archival recording, or issue. Applications should include: A brief biography for each applicant; contact information for each applicant including any institutional affiliations; a 400-word abstract explaining the goal and ambit of the panel; five keywords for the panel as a whole.

Workshops. For workshops on specific issues (e.g., digitization, grant writing, analysis tools, recording workshops), a single presenter or team leads discussion and has an open forum to field questions. Applications should include: A brief biography for the workshop leader(s); contact information including any institutional affiliations; a 400-word abstract explaining the goal and ambit of the workshop including any technical equipment that would be needed.

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