Preserving the Past: A Basic Handbook for Archiving in Rural Alaska

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Additional Resources:

General Websites:

- Google Translate. http://translate.google.com/
- Society of American Archivists. http://www2.archivists.org/
  -For the latest information on archiving, and educational opportunities.
- Library of Congress- Catalog and Finding Aid.
  http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/resource/229_catfindaid.html
- Northeast Document Conservation Center
  http://www.nedcc.org/resources/introduction.php

Funding:

- Rasmuson Foundation. http://www.rasmuson.org
- National Endowment for the Humanities. http://www.neh.gov/grants
- National Science Foundation (in particular the Documenting Endangered languages Program.) http://www.nsf.gov/funding/
- Institute of Museum and Library Services http://www.imls.gov

SECTION 1

What you might have:

- Boxes of photographs
- Analog audio recordings; Cassette tapes, reels, etc.
- Analog video recordings; VHS, Beta, U-Matic, Mini DV, etc.
- Maps, notes, books, other paper based materials
- Carvings, beadwork, masks and other culturally relevant items

What you will need [Non-electronic]:

- Proper storage facilities; A dry, cool, dark space with ample shelving. No floor storage!
- Acid free, archival quality boxes and folders to hold and organize the materials (Such as Banker's Boxes, or Metal Edge Archive boxes) http://www.hollingermetaledge.com/
- #2 pencils (no pens!) and rubber erasers.
- Black fine point marker for writing on CDs and DVDs.
- Plain white paper for separating documents and printing labels.
- Book tape or other acid free tape for repairs and labels.
- At least 2 folding tables or large desks to work and spread out projects and equipment.
- Several pairs of non-lint cotton gloves. These will be useful for handling photographs and paper materials. Human hands (no matter how clean) have a certain amount of oil on them, and can damage fragile materials like photos if held frequently.
- Deed of Gift form, or a form that officially transfers physical custody of the materials to your archive. There are also ways to transfer copyright so that creative ownership is shared. Simply Googling "archival deed of gift" should bring up several examples upon which to create your own deed that matches your needs.

What you will need [electronic]:

- A computer that is less than three years old.
- A basic printer for labels and box lists.

- A computer software program for digitizing audio and video. Free, Open Source software is available online.
- Digital Audio Capture Device to transfer audio to computer (e.g. Roland/Ederol FA-66 or AltoEdge USB 2/2 Line-Level Audio Interface).
- A cassette tape deck and /or reel-to-reel deck to play the audio.
- A VHS/Mini DV player with a video capture device. Sometimes these are built in to the computer or come as an option. An Edirol machine can be swapped to this machine for video digitizing.
- A scanner with the capability to produce at least 600dpi (dots per inch) scans, for high quality preservation
- Scanner software, if it is not included when you purchase the scanner.
- An external hard drive (or 2, or 3) for saving and backing up digitized material. Storing digital material off-site, at someone's home, or even outside of the village or town is always a safe plan. Disasters such as floods or fires can strike at any time, and no digital files are safe from Mother Nature. Contact your local university branch, or contact an archive in Alaska for possible data storage. The Alaska Native Language Archive hosts backups of several smaller institutions' digital files on our server.

SECTION 2

Things to Consider:

- An equipment share program; digitizing equipment is not cheap, but it is generally sturdy, transportable, and much more cost-effective to share. For instance; tape decks, VHS players, even computer speakers.
- How much material do you have? Is it reasonable to expect a few people to be able to work with the material, or is it a 6 person job? Digitization happens in real time, that is, digitizing one hour of audio takes one hour. Some people think everything to do with computers must go faster, but this is not the case with digitizing. If the materials are well preserved and nicely organized, digitization projects will likely move much quicker than if the materials are brittle or in a disarray.

- What condition is the material in? If there are cassette tapes, are they fragile? Are the photos cracked and warped? In some instances, it is best to contact professionals with questions or for assistance with preservation. I will include a list of contacts at the end of the document.
- Funding. Funding is always a major sticking point, but there are many sources for funding for digitizing and preservation projects. See the Rasmuson Foundation's Grants http://www.rasmuson.org/index.php?switch=viewpage&pageid=215 or the National Science Foundation, and many others.
- Outsourcing digitizing. This goes along with funding, but often outsourcing some digitizing work can result in better results, and less fear of damage of materials.
- Attend a digitizing workshop. (See the Society of American Archivists website, or Northwest Archivists Inc. websites for educational opportunities. Also check university archives; often they host digitizing workshops for the public.)
- Establish a digitizing workshop in the local high school or library, and involve the community in the process.

SECTION 3

Where to Start:

Beginning a digitizing project can seem like a daunting task. In an effort to simplify the process, I will suggest several steps to take before you begin any projects.

1. Involve the community. Are there Elders who might be able to identify voices in a recording, or identify faces or places in photos? Make sure the community is aware of the project, and try to maintain a positive rapport throughout the process.
2. Write a statement about what you will collect and why you are collecting it. You may have to make difficult decisions about a donation that does not meet the needs of the community you represent. A well-defined collecting policy can help guide these decisions and clarify your decisions to the public.

3. Conduct a simple inventory of what materials you have. Create a spreadsheet such as excel or take notes on the materials. When possible, try to identify who gave you a specific collection and when the collection was donated. If you have items that are obviously related, take note of this. Try to keep photos and papers in the order that you found them in. Often the provenance or "chronology of the ownership or location of a historical object" can be significant.
4. Re-box or place papers and photos into file folders to protect and organize them as necessary. If the boxes they are presently stored in have any water damage, bugs, dirt, etc. dispose of them immediately. Do not over-fill boxes or folders, this could damage materials, particularly photographs, and make it more difficult to access them throughout the project.
5. Decide on a cataloging scheme. There are many ways in which to approach this. I will elaborate on cataloging schemes in **SECTION 4.** It is very important to maintain a cataloging scheme that can be easily updated, edited and shared. For instance, a Google Spreadsheet.
6. Once the materials are boxed and foldered, organize the materials by type; that is, arrange the audio with the audio, and the books with the books. This will make the digitizing process more organized, and allow you to monitor the progress of the project easier.
7. Create digitizing stations. Depending on the space you are allotted, allow for ample work space. Arranging a computer or laptop with the scanner on one table, and the computer and audio digitizing equipment on another table will be helpful in keeping the project running smoothly.
8. Document your actions. Routine actions, like reboxing and foldering materials, can be stated once in a simple processing or policy manual that you use for training volunteers or those new to your archive. Unique actions, like decisions to return or discard donated materials, should be documented on a collection-by-collection basis and kept on file.

SECTION 4

Cataloging scheme: (how you are organizing and describing your materials)

- Depending on the amount of detail or metadata (Information about your archival materials; i.e. file size, length, pages, author, creation date etc.) you plan to include, it is important to choose or develop a scheme that suits your archives needs. There are multiple levels of description to include; you can catalog things at a collection level, a box level, a folder level, or an item level. Depending on the amount of materials, an item level description can be excessive. You can also mix and match. For example, if you have a large collection of books related to the history of the Tlingit People, some of which are held at your local library, all of which are published, you can simply copy and paste the information from OCLC http://www.oclc.org/en-US/home.html into your catalog. Say you also have mass amounts of papers; notes, ephemera, printings, journal articles etc. They might be cataloged at a box level, and when time permits, the boxes can be cataloged with more detail. In general, it is best to start with general collection descriptions before moving on to more specific box, folder, or item descriptions.

- It is recommended that audio and video recordings are cataloged individually, and any digital derivatives are given the same identifier as the analog recording. Include both the analog and digital recordings in the description. Duplicates can be included in the entry, and noted as such.

- File naming: This is a very important part of cataloging. You must use a file naming system that can be added to, re-arranged, and edited with ease. There are no concrete rules for this process, but sticking with a well-known system, such as the Library of Congress classification, or creating a simple system of your own is recommended.

SECTION 5

Digitizing:

Many forms of media may show up in your archive, you must be prepared to deal appropriately with it! The most common audiovisual items you will likely see are; cassette tapes, reel-to-reels, VHS tapes, and MiniDisk. Paper materials, such as books, photos, notebooks, etc. will be dealt with as well. You may or may not have physical items such as masks, fur coats, skin drums, etc. that will need to be placed in appropriate housing and/or controlled environments (low humidity, low air temperature, no bugs, no roaming animals etc.)

- Audiovisual

I will not go into great detail about *how* to digitize; it is often best to look over manuals, use online help websites, or call someone with experience hooking up the hardware. They are usually quite self-explanatory, and do not involve much technical know-how. What is more important is deciding what formats you will use to save digital files; I recommend using the current standards, provided on the Library of Congress American Memory project site. See "about" then "technical information." Also, see The NINCH Guide to Good Practice in the Digital Representation and Management of Cultural Heritage Materials at http://www.ninch.org/programs/practice/ for more information.

Since much of this can seem overwhelming, I will briefly state the current standards used by the Alaska Native Language Archive:

For audio- digitize at a high sample rate and bit depth- 96k/24 bit if possible. This will give you the highest quality digital version. This can be down sampled to 44k, which is a smaller file size, and easier to manage. The 96k can be used as the archival copy, the 44k can be used as the working copy, or the version you would post on your website, or burn to CD for a patron. Ideally, we like to save the digital audio as WAV. This is an uncompressed format, meaning it has not been "squished" and is full size, with full quality. MP3 is a bad digital choice for preservation, because it loses much of the quality, and is often harder to work with in an audio editor because you cannot un-compress a file once it has been compressed to create an MP3.

For video- We generally use H.264 at the Alaska Native Language Archive, but video archives are still recommending MPEG2. That is also compressed, so don't throw away the originals – particularly MiniDV. It is a fairly large file, and like audio, can be compressed to fit certain purposes. There are video sizes usually available in video digitizing software.

- **Software**

-Audacity: A free open source audio editing software program for PC or Mac. http://audacity.sourceforge.net/

-Peak Pro and Sony Soundforge for audio editing: Not free, but have a good deal more technical capabilities.

-iTunes, VLC Player (both for video or audio). All are free downloads.
http://www.apple.com/itunes/download/
http://www.videolan.org/vlc/index.html

-There are several free, Open Source options for video editing software, including Wax, Blender, Avidemux, VideoLAN and others. http://www.akascope.com/2011/07/15/free-video-editing-software/

There are also, of course, programs you can purchase, such as Final Cut (Mac) or Adobe Premier products (PC). iMovie also generally comes with Macs, or can be purchased for a reasonable price. That is the program that ANLA uses.

- **Hardware**

-Computers: Most newer computers Mac or PC are capable of digitizing audio/video
-Edirol machine (usb): A fairly inexpensive but necessary piece of hardware for digitizing anything with a tape. You do not need one of these for CDs or DVDs. We use a Roland Edirol UA-3 USB, but this has been superseded. http://www.rolandus.com/products/details/500
It is not recommended to digitize straight into a computer, though it is possible. The quality will be poor!

The UA-3 digital audio interface

- Paper

Paper products, such as photos, notebooks, memory books etc. usually show up in archives. They are often the source of some of the most interesting, and fragile materials we collect here at ANLA. Often, paper can be acidic, which basically means if it is exposed to oxygen, or UV (the sun or strong overhead lights) it will deteriorate. This can be curbed, if not prevented with proper care.
REMEMBER: DIGITIZING does not equal PRESERVATION!

- **Hardware**

You will need a good quality scanner. Most modern scanners require a USB connection to the computer, and an external power source. You can purchase excellent scanners for around $500.00. I recommend a scanner that has these qualities;

- Stack loading capabilities (i.e. you can set large quantities of paper onto the loader, and it will auto-feed them for you.)
- Can scan at least 300dpi. This is essential for creating high-quality images.
- Make sure to buy a scanner that is compatible with your computer (or vice versa, if you already have a scanner). Most scanners come with their own scanning software, or you can scan through Adobe Acrobat, which is software that I highly recommend for PCs. Some scanners' built-in software does not agree with certain computers. A little research will go a long way.
- Save digitized copies as TIFF files. Creating a second copy in a compressed format (like JPEG) is also recommended. The second copy can be used, copied, and edited as needed to serve your public. Programs like Photoshop can be set up to automate the conversion from a TIFF to a smaller file format.

Some scanners I recommend: HP Scanjet series (HP Scanjet N9120) which is at the high end of pricing, but an excellent choice if you are looking for a reliable, fast scanner, or have a large amount of scanning work to do. We use this scanner here at ANLA, and it is a great scanner, but make sure you can afford to have it worked on, as parts can fail after thousands of scans. I also recommend the Fujitsu brand scanners, we use a fi-6240Z Sheet-Fed Scanner, which works excellent for smaller jobs, photos, small books etc. (these are not friendly with Mac).

HP Scanjet

Fi-6240Z

SECTION 6: Storage (Digital and physical)
What to do with the tapes when you're done!

- If possible, store in a breathable box, out of direct sunlight, away from heat and moisture. And check on them periodically- make sure there aren't any bugs, animals, mildews forming. Also,

ensure that the area that they are stored in does not have the possibility of flooding. That usually spells disaster for any tape media.

-Make sure they are properly labeled; there is nothing worse than losing track of what you have and have not cataloged or digitized. Save time and effort by numbering each tape based on the cataloging scheme you've selected for your archive.

- If you don't have anywhere safe to put the tapes, or simply want to share the wealth, check with local archives and museums if they are interested in acquiring them.

What to do with the paper materials when you're done!

-Similar to tapes and audiovisual materials, paper materials can be prone to water, light and insect/animal damage. Archive quality boxes, such as storage boxes from Hollinger Metal Edge are recommended, but if you are unable to purchase these, new, unused Bankers Boxes can be purchased for reasonable prices, and folders can be easily arranged within them.

-**SECTION 1** discusses the other items you might need, and I will quickly touch on the necessity for good, acid free folders for document storage. Folders are designed to not only organize paper documents, but they are also used to protect them. So ensure that you are not stuffing too much material into one folder, or over-filling boxes. Make sure the folders are the right length for the document(s) such as letter or legal.

-Make sure to label each box with a collection name, collection number, and a box number. Make sure to label each folder with the cataloging number, the author/creator, and a date. This will help with organization, and associating the digital files with the physical items.

What to do with the digital files when you're done!

- Always back up the digitized materials! An external hard drive will do. An external hard drive can be anywhere from 80GB to 1TB+. Base what you buy for back-up storage on how much digital material you think you might have. If you have a large quantity of movies and audio, you might want to consider buying a much larger storage capacity than you think you might need. It never goes bad, and it is always available (until you fill it!)

-I also recommend offsite storage, for many reasons. First, if there is an accident at the site of your archive and the computer and back-up storage are ruined, you will have your back-up that is offsite to turn to. Second, if you accidentally delete a project, or a digital image, and it has been backed up, you are able to retrieve it. There are back-up systems that can be scheduled for automatic back-up. I recommend this.

-Most external hard drive back-ups are good quality, and you can pick them up for reasonable prices online or in places like Office Max, even the local Fred Meyer. For large capacity, they can be ordered from the manufacturer's website.

Seagate Hard Drive ($)

G Speed Hard Drive ($$$)

SECTION 7: Maintenance and obsolescence

- **Digital**

-Just like cassette tapes and photos, digital audio and digital images must be maintained. As technology advances, it is important to keep on top of some of the changes. Usually these will require you to update software, or, for example ensure that your audio is in a format that is easily accessed by users. Certain software programs can become obsolete, so it is important to upgrade. For a handy upgrade "how to" see: How to Update Software (for Beginners).

- **Analog**

Items such as 3" floppy discs, U-Matic tapes, and other less common media formats can present problems due to lack of available hardware to digitize them. Here at ANLA, we collect old format machines, such as a reel-to-reel player, USB powered floppy disc readers, MiniDV/VHS

machines, cassette tape players, and any other old technology we come across. If you are unable to acquire a certain media player, contact your local library or university/university branch. They might be able to loan you the item you need, or give you the contact of someone who might have it. The Alaska Native Language Archive can always be contacted for digitizing support and other questions, or we can digitize or recommend other digitizing avenues for your projects.

SECTION 8: Sharing and Outreach

There are many avenues to consider here. As I mentioned in **SECTIONS 1** and **2**, you must consider your audience, and how you plan to reach them. Outreach is much more than just posting a few photos online. An excellent article regarding outreach, "Who's That Knocking on our Door?: Archives, Outreach and Community" by Victor Gray is essential to gaining an understanding of *what* outreach is, and how it can benefit your archive. There are many excellent resources to understanding outreach, many books which can be checked out from libraries, or purchased. Kate Theimer's new book, "A Different Kind of Web" is a timely book that is packed full of case studies, reflections on work as an archivist, and outreach methods.

Archives are always changing, always trying new methods of outreach, and testing the waters with presentations, programs, or other educational events and workshops. Do what fits best for your archive. If your primary users are 75+ year old adults, you may want to consider fun workshops, like photo identifications, listening (and re-recording!) to songs, or giving a presentation about relevant information. If your audience is primarily high school and college aged people, it would make the most sense to go the digital route- projects developed around school curriculum, wikis (a wiki is a website which allows its users to add, modify, or delete its content via a web browser usually using a simplified markup language or a rich-text editor. Wikis are powered by wiki software. Most are created collaboratively.) Tumblrs, Facebook pages, and blogs about certain topics, etc.

SECTION 9: Legal Issues

-I will not go into detail about legal issues you may face as you archive your collection. As this handbook is designed for rural communities and villages, you will deal mostly with your Tribal

Councils, traditional Chiefs or Elders in the community to make decisions regarding publishing on the web, making materials available to the public, and choosing materials to keep restricted. The following are guidelines and protocols that may be of use to you as you are processing your collection. You are free to create your own restrictions for your archive's purpose.
-I will only mention to be aware of copyright restrictions; these are often overlooked, but are an important part of ensuring that your collection is indeed not breaking any copyright laws.

Well-intentioned practice for putting digitized collections of unpublished materials online: https://www.oclc.org/content/dam/research/activities/rights/practice.pdf

Protocols for Native American Archival Materials: http://www2.nau.edu/libnap-p/

Code of Ethics for Archivists (SAA) http://www2.archivists.org/statements/saa-core-values-statement-and-code-of-ethics#code_of_ethics

A Guide to Deeds of Gift (SAA) http://www.archivists.org/publications/deed_of_gift.asp

Contacts in Alaska

- The Alaska Native Language Archive at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. https://www.uaf.edu/anla/, anla@alaska.edu. Phone (907) 474-7436 Fax: (907) 474-6586. Stacey Baldridge, Collection Manager, smbaldridge@alaska.edu.
- The Alaska and Polar Regions Collections & Archives at the University of Alaska Fairbanks Rasmuson Library. http://library.uaf.edu/apr, UAF-APR-reference-Service@alaska.edu. Phone: (907) 474-2791 Fax: (907) 474-6365.
- Archives and Special Collections at the University of Alaska Anchorage. http://consortiumlibrary.org/archives/, email by online form. Phone: (907) 786-1849 Fax: (907) 786-1834.
- Sealaska Heritage Institute (Juneau). http://www.sealaskaheritage.org/, Zachary Jones Archivist and Collections Manager zachary.jones@sealaska.com. Phone: (907) 463-4844 Fax: (907) 586-9293.
- Alaska State Library (Juneau). http://library.alaska.gov/, asl.historical@alaska.gov Phone: (907) 465-2925.

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