

HERE ARE THE MATERIALS--WHERE ARE THE SCHOLARS?

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Nothing could be more apparent, as I go along, than that I am not a collector, by hobby nor by profession. However boundless my respect for the collector, I think you should be put at ease about my identity. Nor is the storehouse of recordings of which I am a curator a collection in the classic sense--of a gathering-together of artifacts deliberately searched for and brought together on the basis of the rarity of the items it contains.

The Phonoarchive at the University of Washington School of Communications came about as a result of stumbling. Stumbling into a hiding place that had been all but forgotten. It emerged whole and almost entire from that hiding place. In more recent years, I must admit, I have become something of a collector as well as curator, but largely out of contact with better collectors--and out of my embarrassment in their presence. People from other parts of the world have offered us copies of their materials in exchange for copies of ours, and ultimately in responding to their requests I have had to make a number of value judgments. This in turn forced me to develop a perhaps primitive value system, which I understand is one of the attributes of a successful collector. I find myself now and then thinking in these latter days of the great sport of having, for example, a complete book of "One Man's Family," or of searching out the first broadcast of the Cliquot Club Eskimos. But the fact is that I am too old, too tired and too frustrated to pursue the elusive; and I am afraid I am willing to sit among the ruins of a career and contemplate what fate has placed in my hands--and wonder what it means and what it doesn't mean.

In 1963, through the University of Washington Press, I brought out a book called History in Sound, some 642 pages, including front matter, setting forth in brief descriptive form, item by item, the content of the Phonoarchive. If I had any vanity left I might yield to the temptation of assuming that everyone here has by now, through this book and through other statements I have made, become thoroughly familiar with the Phonoarchive. But what vanity I have had about it has been squeezed out of me by the repeated experience of encountering among those who should be expected to know of the Phonoarchive a majority who either couldn't know less or who knew only vaguely. The microscopic minority who do know, I cherish. They are the salt of my land.

So when I tell of it again, it is with the assurance that I am being only mildly repetitious.

The Phonoarchive at the University of Washington contains principally recordings of much of what the Columbia Broadcasting System put on radio in the form of news and information concerning and during World War II. In addition, through the process of exchange and through miscellaneous acquisitions, the Phonoarchive has expanded since publication of the catalogue to include other forms of programs from radio's Golden Age, plus broadcasts of significant contemporary historical importance--the Kennedy assassinations, the space probes, the Johnson withdrawal speech, to mention only the more obvious ones.

The World War II portion exists in two forms--electrical transcription discs and tapes made from them. All but a few of the C.B.S. programs have been put onto tape, the exceptions being a few entertainment shows, such as "Suspense" and "The Whistler." These entertainment programs are taped only when we receive a request for their use. The discs, obviously, receive deliberately reluctant playing and then only for taping.

For those who want such data, the majority of the discs were two-side recordings; and all the tapes are on 600-foot reels, recorded at 7½ ips. We chose these standards for purely practical reasons.

Since most news programs at the time were of the 14:30 format, the 600-foot reel was adequate. In looking forward to the problem of storage, space being at a premium, we found we could get more efficient use of cabinet space through uniform reel size. Where a program may have run beyond 14:30, we merely gave it two or more tapes, and two or more catalogue numbers, one tape for each disc. We chose the 7½ speed standard simply because it became immediately apparent that broadcasts might be built out of the tapes--documentaries, for example--and for the purpose we could more quickly make dub copies with what equipment we had available to us. As things have turned out, this was a worthwhile decision.

The contents of the C.B.S. portion of the Phonoarchive are virtually unduplicated, even within C.B.S., and the network has consistently called upon us for recordings out of which to produce documentary programs for both radio and television. Inquiries for their past programs have consistently been referred to us.

How does it happen that we have these recordings in Seattle? Well, as I mentioned earlier, we stumbled onto them. They had been recorded off the network lines by the C.B.S. affiliate in Seattle, KIRO. In these days when recording is a way of life among broadcasters, that fact may raise neither hackles nor goose bumps. But to record from the network in 1938, or even up to 1946 or 1947, took some audacity. There was a firm stipulation in the affiliation contract between the networks and the stations that everything had to be moved live. Even in the cases where a network program had to be rebroadcast for reasons of time zone differentials, the program was repeated live, not repeated from a recording.

As the war approached, the management of KIRO reasoned that an important part of what would be flowing through the system would be the stuff of a grim history, and it ought to be kept. On the practical side, management realized that this material, particularly the news reports, would come through at a time when the majority of the audience it should reach--the adult population--would not be at their receiving sets. The reason, of course, was the time differential, something we've had to learn to live with as a disadvantage on the Pacific Coast, in a culture oriented to the Eastern Time Zone. A newscast originating in New York at 6 p.m. would

reach us in Seattle at 3, hardly a suitable time to reach a news-involved audience. The obvious answer was a recorded delay, something ruled out in the affiliate agreement. Apparently management felt that if it were to ask for waiver of the rules, the petition would have to be denied. On the theory that if you don't ask for a ruling none is likely to be made, they went ahead without asking.

By this time, remember, most such recording discs on the market were being made of glass, aluminum and its alloys having gone to war, along with Lucky Strike Green.

Well, now, the war being well under way and the word of it filling the air, here KIRO was with a fast-growing pile of transcriptions. Though for the most part they were recorded on both sides, still the stacks grew. I went to work for KIRO in the fall of 1948 as a writer. On my first day at the station I noticed some of the announcing staff were busy boxing a lot of records and rather carefully hauling them out of the building. I thought little of the activity at the moment. It seemed a perfectly sensible thing for them to be doing.

Now the scene changes, and there's a long time-lapse dissolve to the early winter of 1956. By now I have returned to the faculty of the University of Washington, and, with a colleague, begin undertaking production of an educational television series dealing with the channels of propaganda via the spoken word. For this, we needed some examples of the wartime oratory of Churchill and Roosevelt. After long, disappointing search, my built-in computer system remembered for me, and a phone call went to the manager's office at KIRO. By now the station had gone through one of those management-turnover spasms so characteristic of broadcasting. The man now in the chair knew nothing of those discs I'd seen being hauled out some eight years before. But the man who'd been there at the time remembered, and so we called the engineer at the station's transmitter building. This is located on Vashon Island, in Puget Sound, about midway by water between Seattle and Tacoma. Yes, there were some boxes of something down there in the basement, and, yes, it would be all right for me to come out and look. I set on February 22 for the trip to the island, Washington's Birthday being a state-wide holiday with us. On the 21st, there was a call from KIRO suggesting that if there were any of the records I wanted, to take them. So our producer and I took a University truck and brought back the entire lot--52 packing cases of them. The ferry listed a little to starboard under the load, but we got the treasure safely to campus and went to work on it. Incidentally, we had rich-man's choice of Roosevelt and Churchill propaganda.

This was the beginning of the Phonoarchive.

In 1957, the C.B.S. Foundation gave us a grant of \$10,000 to enable us to transfer the contents to tape, set up a suitable center for their use, and prepare a catalogue. The bulk of the money went into taping, as you may well understand. This phase of the job was finished in the summer of 1959, and the catalogue published in 1963.

The Foundation had two objectives in underwriting this project. Their chief interest has always been in the field of education relating to broadcasting, and the persons there shared our feeling that what we had on hand would become a unique and valuable tool for study, teaching and research. Second, the tapes would be valuable to the network as a resource in programming.

The latter objective has been a fruitful one. The network has called on us many times for documentary materials. At least three LP albums have appeared on the market, built in part out of our materials. One of these, Columbia's "Edward R. Murrow--A Reporter Remembers," grew very largely from the Phonoarchive, though the jacket annotations make only slight reference to the fact, choosing instead, for some reason I've never understood, to commend B.B.C. for its wisdom in preserving so many of Murrow's reports.

The hope that the Phonoarchive would become a resource for study and research has met with disappointment, and it is to this that I intend to direct my remarks.

First, it may be useful to know what uses, other than those mentioned, have been made of the Phonoarchive.

Exchange is one. We have worked with several of you present here today, and with several others, in this undertaking. Through exchanges we have been able to acquire a number of valuable additions to our collection, and perhaps to enrich other collections we've dealt with. There's a question we wrestle with respecting exchanges--and that is, should we be selective or should we exchange with anyone who comes along? So far we have based our decision on what the person seeking exchange can offer us; but there are occasional requests we're dubious about filling. In no case are we interested in selling programs--indeed, we do not have control of rights and have no intention of seeking this control, or of entering into the sales field. This provision has so far helped us fend off the inevitable requests for tapes for party entertainment and from persons who do not appear to be serious collectors.

Tapes for teaching is another use. From perhaps a double-dozen colleges where the arts of broadcasting are being taught, and from some who teach history, have come requests for tapes to use in the classroom. It has been a pleasure to comply with these requests, though our limited resources, particularly in manpower, have caused us to be glad no individual has ever asked us to duplicate more than a fractional percentage of our total holdings.

What has surprised us is the activity, or scarcity of it, in the areas of research. We're surprised, because we had assumed the scholars would be beating a path to our door. As it is, the trail is scarcely blazed.

There have been some fairly timid approaches, but if I were to make an evaluation I would say that use of the Phonoarchive for research has been considerably less than phenomenal, less than sensational or, even, less than good. Even on our own campus, where research and the publish-or-perish principle of personnel management has, until the coming of the S.D.S., been the prime harassment for many of the teaching staff. Even here, use of the Phonoarchive has not been remarkable.

It may be that we have not worked hard enough at promoting such study, but I suspect other causes.

A strange event occurred shortly after the materials were first made available. A senior student majoring in political science, who had learned about the collection, came to the office. He had been assigned to do a paper relating to mid-war international conferences dealing with campaigns and post-war plans. What materials did we have? After checking, he decided to focus upon the Moscow Conference of late 1943. It happened that this conference was not only well covered but that we also had Secretary Cordell Hull's rather thorough report to Congress at the conclusion of the meetings.

It seemed to the student a valuable source for at least part of his paper. He reasoned that he could at least report at first hand what Hull had told the American people about the Conference. He received an E, a failing grade, for the paper. The professor had appended a note by way of explanation, that the student had, in using the tape, undertaken an invalid research procedure. A tape, the note read, is not a valid research tool.

Was this attitude typical of the academic community, and if so, how far-reaching an attitude was it?

One fairly credible historian, Dr. Allen Nevins, in his book, Gateway to History, had already made some observations on the subject, 'way back in 1938. He said there are no fixed rules by which historians can discriminate offhand between good and poor evidence. Rather, much depends upon the historian's judgment, ingenuity and honesty, he said. He drew an analogy between historical research and courtroom procedure. Historians, he said, had to distinguish between original evidence and hearsay. In the case of the historian, Nevins said, it is sufficient that he establish probability, whereas the court must establish certainty. The tests of evidence, in history as in courts, are principally ad hoc tests and must vary, he said, with the witness and the circumstances.

He listed six broad groups of historical sources--such as physical remains, orally-transmitted material (legends, sagas, ballads), representative material such as coins, woven tapestries, vases; handwritten materials; printed books and papers and motion-picture film and possibly phonograph records and personal observation. He didn't mention recorded radio reports, but remember, this was in 1938, before this kind of resource was generally known. He urged that all types of historical evidence should come under the historian's scrutiny, critically and searchingly. All the available witnesses must be summoned, he said. An historian should hunt in every nook and cranny for corroboration, he said, or what is equally valuable, for contradiction.

Dr. Nevins' statement seems to place a certain value on recorded materials in historical study, but especially on those recorded materials, such as a speech by Winston Churchill, or Cordell Hull, which though broadcast over radio or television, are nevertheless first-hand materials. But, subject to the same qualifications he places on written materials, printed materials or other forms of record, it would seem that a first-hand report of an event by someone who as there when the event occurred, is admissible evidence. And thus, in addition to the talks programs, it would seem that such actuality programs as, for example, Howard K. Smith's in-depth report of the Junction of the American and Russian Armies in 1945 are admissible in research.

You remember that he said all available witnesses must be summoned. It appears, then, that a study of the Battle of the Bulge, to be a thorough study, would require evidence from radio reports as readily as from the printed page, from post-facto eye-witness accounts by on-the-spot observers, from memoirs of participants or from other sources.

In this connection, it is interesting to me to know that a doctoral dissertation now in the writing at a mid-western University has drawn upon the Phonoarchive for this additional dimension of sources. It is a study into an aspect of foreign-policy formation and the creation of supportive public opinion. For a World War II section this dissertation has drawn upon our rather enormous volume of broadcasts by Edward R. Murrow and Elmer Davis.

The dissertation is still in the writing. We will have to wait for its academic evaluation before we can know to what extent the candidate's use of recorded matter will be accepted.

Another historian, Louis Gottschalk, some twenty years after Nevin's book, in 1958, wrote a book entitled Understanding History. He took up the question of sources and documentation, observing that the historian deals chiefly with testimony contained in written documents but adding that this is due largely to the greater accessibility of printed material. Of our immediate interest is that among primary sources for the historian he includes the testimony of an eye-witness, or of a witness by any other of the senses, or of a mechanical device like the dictaphone-- that is, of one who or that which was present or used at the scene of events. Thus, a primary source must have been produced by a contemporary of the events it reveals. To a considerable degree, therefore, an on-the-spot report by a radio or television reporter could be rated a primary source. As a matter of fact, Gottschalk would rate such a reporter high in his value scale. He set forth a few guidelines for giving one group of documents or evidence preference over another. "The closer the time of making a document to the event it records," he wrote, "the better it is likely to be for historical purposes." The very nature of the news business, where immediacy is prime, thus puts high value on the kind of materials we work with in the Phonoarchive. I recall, in this connection, by contrast, a wonderful eye-witness recording in the possession of B.B.C. in London, and, I assume, in the British Institute of Recorded Sound, and perhaps even in the National Voice Library built by Robert Vincent. It is an eye-witness description of the funeral of Wellington. It is a valued historical document, but since it was made several decades after the event, by an old man who had been a boy when the Iron Duke was buried, it would seem, under Gottschalk's scale, to be of lesser value than Arthur Godfrey's description of the funeral of Franklin D. Roosevelt will be in another 50 years--except, of course, that its rarity makes it priceless.

You may have caught a note suggesting some reservations about eye-witness reports as a dependable primary source, however close to the time of the event the report may have been made. The reservation is that of Gottschalk, and I think it is a valid one. It has to do with the reliability of the witness. I would think that a person with no experience or training in spur-of-the-moment description would be outranked in value by one who is highly trained, notable for a volume of experience and responsible to a knowledgeable and responsible overseer. Such as were the men whom William Paley, of C.B.S. and his news director at the time, Paul White, pulled into their organization, creating the finest news team in the history of broadcasting. I guess what I'm saying is that an eye-witness account by Howard K. Smith is a more valuable primary source for historical study than one by Johnny Klutz, a truck driver who just happened to be nearby when the event occurred.

At our University we wondered what might be the climate of acceptance for recorded materials among history scholars in the 1960's, the experience of the unfortunate undergraduate notwithstanding. A colleague conducting a seminar in historiography thought it a worthy project for his group and so took it on. They agreed to conduct their project in three dimensions. One, they would query established and reputable historians for their opinions and attitudes toward tape recordings. Second,

they would each undertake a specific topical study utilizing Phonoarchive materials. And third, they would report in detail on their experiences in pursuing these topical studies and their success in getting acceptance for them in scholarly publications.

Among the historians there was generally a willingness and an interest in using tape sources, they discovered. There were reservations comparable to those stated by Nevins and Gottschalk. One respondent, a scholar at the University of California, in Berkeley, had an interesting and worthy reservation. He felt that tapes would be of much higher value than otherwise, if there were disc recordings to back them up. Tapes, he observed, can be doctored and altered, whereas a disc is less likely to have been tampered with. Fortunately for us, for all the World War II material, there is a disc behind every inch of tape.

By way of summarizing, there were no negative attitudes towards recorded materials for historical study, though some of those contacted admitted a lack of experience in using these sources.

The topical studies were of considerable interest. For instance, one student decided to check out the evidence, if any, to support often-repeated charges that the late H. V. Kaltenborn was pro-Nazi. We were able to supply so many examples of Kaltenborn's work that the student had to approach his study by a sampling procedure. Another applied the sampling procedure to get through the more than 640 broadcasts of Edward R. Murrow to study the qualities that Murrow brought to his job as head of the European News Service. Still another, with access to our holdings of the work of Elmer Davis, both as news analyst and later as head of the O.W.I., undertook a content study of the O.W.I. portion to discover what qualities of statement he brought with him into his governmental work and what qualities he had to put aside. All three of these studies were deliberately contrived to depend in largest part upon the tapes. Another paper, with equal deliberateness, undertook a study that would depend fairly equally upon printed sources and upon tapes. This was an inquiry into the nature of the Atlantic Charter: Was it a pact between the United States and Britain, or was it a mere piece of public relations? This particular study, incidentally, was published in the Journalism Quarterly.

But the point is here, that these studies were undertaken primarily to test the utility and propriety of the Phonoarchive as a research tool. No claim is made that the findings were conclusive or earth-shaking; but the results were satisfactory and stimulating.

The third phase of the experiment was the one I took particular interest in--the experience report. In general the scholars reported that the feeling that they were to a certain extent involved in a pioneering effort spurred their enthusiasm. All commented on the physical difficulty of using tape recordings, as compared with the ease of handling printed media. One wonders what McLuhan would have to say about that.

Personally, I think it is the nub of the whole matter, and it suggests to me that if recorded materials are to come into wider use in research, some method for using them is going to have to be worked out--using them in their own terms, that is. The obvious one is that used so long and so very well by the Oral History Project at Columbia University --transcribing words from sound to paper. I am certain that if we were to take, for example, the entire body of Murrow reports, transcribe them and publish them, the scholars would dance with ecstasy, if you can imagine such a thing.

Research materials in printed form happen also to fit nicely into a system that up to now has put the outcome of almost the entire body of scholarly publication onto paper. One doesn't need McLuhan to learn that our culture is still in the age of Gutenberg and whoever it was who invented the typewriter, plus the mimeograph and the Xerox. I am not presumptuous enough to think that there is anything in the Phonoarchive, or anywhere else in the collections represented in this room, that will provide a tool for research reporting that will circumvent the printing press. But there is in my mind a lurking suspicion that there is something of value, and something that will give deeper value to man as communicator, that awaits study not only in the words the C.B.S. reporters used to relate the story of the war; but in the sounds of those words, in the phonic overtones, the inflections, the emotion-tones, that add what one can't help feeling is a highly significant area of meaning. Unhappily I admit that I am not trained in that area of scholarship that would permit me to set up or to direct an investigation into this phenomenon. I am equally sad to report that my attempts to secure the interest of those who are have not been fruitful. Some have from time to time responded prettily, but not to the extent of interrupting on-going research to pioneer into this field.

We are eager to have this research tool, if it really is one, become more widely used. Perhaps our small success up to now is small only because no one has asked the right questions. I have tried and failed, and recognizing this, not long ago I asked a number of campus colleagues to meet with me at a brown-bag luncheon. They were a professor of speech, one of anthropology, a sociologist, a public opinion researcher, a linguist, a historian and a political scientist.

As we lunched, I ran several tapes, having deliberately chosen those I thought particularly stirring or particularly revealing. Their response, as listeners, matched the response of my students to whom I have presented these same tapes. They were stirred. They agreed, without my prompting, that it was as though the event had just occurred, and that the sense of immediacy and involvement was emotionally strong, if not disturbing. I thought the time was ripe for the only question I could think of: How can this quality be studied and reported upon? Only one man responded, after more reminiscing. He suggested an experimental procedure. Put selected groups of undergraduates in a lecture room. Place pieces of litmus substance as filters across the ventilating exhaust ducts. Run selected portions of the tapes and measure on the filters the increased output of dampness in the atmosphere caused by physical response to increased emotional reaction caused by the listening experience.

His suggestion dropped on the table and there sprawled prone. To this day I don't know if he was kidding. It may, however, have been the kind of answer my question deserved.

Perhaps for research there is nothing but the word. Or perhaps there is no way of approaching the question except through such procedures as measuring sweat gland excretions or administering the twitch test sometimes used in program evaluation, or similar devices. I don't know.

In my active life I am concerned with the creation and the output of sound, which is another way of saying I'm involved in the arts of broadcasting, including the word arts. After many years--and how puny a word

is "many"--of writing and speaking for and into the microphone, I realize that, like most of my compatriots, I have little to call upon but intuition and experience, plus a few little principles of oral rhetoric that it is my pleasure to violate with impunity. A lot of subjectiveness. I wonder often if in those Murrow tapes are any principles of sound that could respond to analysis, be incorporated into a body of knowledge, and passed along to others who would improve their powers of communication. I mean objective principles. And then, I subside, and recall a most devastating four lines written by E.E. Cummings in the Twenties--in another era of mass insanity. I quote:

As long as you and I have lips and voices which
Are for kissing and to sing with,
Who cares if some one-eyed son of a bitch
Invents an instrument to measure spring with.

That may just possibly be the proper response to my question.