

The AAA Project; a report by Garrett Bowles

It has been estimated that approximately 250,000 classical music and spoken word pre-"LP" sound recordings were commercially issued during the first half of the twentieth century. Preserved by sound archives, they constitute a unique cultural heritage in sound, particularly of the United States and of Western civilization. They possess scholarly value comparable to incunabula and early editions of books and as primary and secondary materials for scholarly research. These recordings offer unique insight into nineteenth century musical and dramatic performance styles and document the development of these styles in the twentieth century. Indeed, they document the general diffusion of culture through radio and recordings. They also embrace such historical events as the two world wars, the last great waves of immigration to North America, and the great depression.

There is a serious need among scholars in many disciplines to have access in depth and breadth to historical sound recordings of spoken and musical performances. Scholars in music use historical recordings to document the composer's interpretation of a work through performances by either the composer or performers associated with him. For example, the existence of recordings by two singers, Francesco Tamagno and Victor Maurel, both of whom were admired by the composer Giuseppe Verdi, and both of whom created roles in his operas, are historical documents of inestimable value not only in understanding the later operatic works of Verdi, but also the style of vocal interpretation approved by the composer. In addition, recordings provide an understanding of no-longer used performance styles and the traditions of performance style. For example, recordings by pianists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries of certain compositions by Chopin, the subject of a study by a doctoral student at Stanford University, exhibit the range and individual characteristics of interpretations by performers of the period.

Historians use recordings to reveal nuances of speech and its meanings. The impact of public addresses by politicians of the twentieth century, such as Theodore Roosevelt or Franklin Roosevelt, can be realized fully only in sound. On paper the same statements are generally less meaningful or even quite different. Anthropologists and sociologists use historical recordings to develop an understanding of a particular culture. Rituals of all types, from tribal rites to contemporary church services and wedding ceremonies, achieve in sound an immediacy not present in literary descriptions. Dramatists use historical recordings to study the style of early actors, and to determine a playwright's intentions, as revealed in performances under his direction. Since the art of the theatre is so dependent on the human voice, only a sound recording can recreate the role interpretation and diction of such famous actors as Sarah Bernhardt and E.H. Sothern.

While sound recordings have been in existence for about one hundred years, most American libraries have only recently included them among their scholarly resources. Catalog access to currently produced sound recordings has been provided only since about 1950, and has focused on classical music and spoken word recordings. The demand for access to current "LP"'s, and the attendant cost in providing such access, has financially precluded retrospective cataloging of historical sound recordings. This unfortunate situation exists despite the historical and scholarly importance of pre-"LP" recordings.

Both the establishment of the six participating archives between 1958 and 1964 and the rapid growth of demands for access to the collections of each archive demonstrate an increasing need for catalog access to historical sound recordings. Of the three archives which have maintained such statistics, the use of their collections over the last decade has shown rapid increases.

The special difficulties inherent in archival cataloging and the expense involved in individual cataloging efforts have prevented archives from providing adequate bibliographic access to their collections. Approximately 30 percent of Yale's pre-"LP" collection has been cataloged. No other archive has been able to provide significant catalog access to its collection. Instead, an inefficient stop-gap consisted of shelving recordings by label name and issue number. Composer, title, and performer access is provided by a multiplicity of discographies and manufacturers' catalogs. Such a system was adequate when demands were small, but with current demands, the system fails to provide efficient and effective access. Current demand and projected increased future demand indicate that the time has arrived when these valuable documents must be adequately cataloged.

The initial impetus for the formation of the AAA project developed as a result of almost simultaneous inquiries early in 1974 by David C. Weber, Director of Stanford University Libraries, and David Hall, Head of Rodgers and Hammerstein Archives, concerning the feasibility of duplicating the card catalog in the Yale Collection of Historical Sound Recordings.

A meeting of the representatives of the three archives, along with a representative of the Library of Congress who had expressed strong interest in the project, was held at the New York Public Library in July 1974. It became apparent during that meeting that the Yale collection was only about twenty-five or thirty percent cataloged, and that Yale needed assistance in finishing the cataloging.

It was agreed during that meeting that a cooperative cataloging project was desperately needed, but before it could begin, information about the several collections and their cataloging practices was needed. It was generally agreed that the four collections had collections with substantial overlap in classical music and spoken word subject areas. In addition, there appeared to be extensive collections of periodical

and manufacturer's catalog holdings at each collection. However, there was no simple means of assessing the extent of any collection's holdings in terms of the others, only very general information about each collection existed.

The first meeting resulted in the agreement to meet during the next Music Library Association meeting. It was also agreed that the initial cataloging project should be limited to classical music and spoken word pre-"LP" sound recordings because those were the areas with the most cataloging experience. Vernacular musics were temporarily omitted because of problems with access points; none associated with a vernacular archive seemed happy with the entries assigned under the existing cataloging rules.

Other than experience with cataloging currently issued sound recordings using the Anglo-American Cataloging Rules, and Yale's experience in adapting those rules for their catalog of historical sound recordings, it was apparent that the cataloging of pre-"LP" sound recordings was unexplored territory. There was agreement that an assessment of the extent of overlap between the collections was necessary before any cataloging project could begin. In addition, union listings of periodicals and manufacturer's catalogs were also considered necessary as research tools for the cataloging project.

It was also decided that other collections which were compatible with the original four should be included. A survey of the field indicated that the Audio Archives at Syracuse University and the Recordings Collection at the University of Toronto seemed to be most compatible with the original group. With their addition, the six archives constituted the six largest sound archives in North America with collective holdings of classical music and spoken word sound recordings approximating 450,000 items. The participating archives and their representatives are the Archive of Recorded Sound in Stanford University, founded in 1958, holding approximately 75,000 classical music and spoken word sound recordings, and represented by Garrett Bowles; Historical Sound Recordings at Yale University, founded in 1961, holding approximately 47,000 recordings, and represented by Richard Warren, Jr.; the Recordings Archive at the University of Toronto, founded in 1962, holding about 47,000 recordings, and represented by James Creighton; the Rodgers and Hammerstein Archives of Recorded Sound in the New York Public Library, founded 1963, holding about 100,000 recordings, and represented by David Hall; the Audio Archives at Syracuse University, also founded in 1963, holding about 60,000 recordings, and represented by Donald Seibert; and finally, the Recorded Sound Section of the Library of Congress, founded in 1964, holding about 150,000 classical music and spoken word sound recordings, and represented by Gerald Gibson.

It soon became apparent that none of the three projects could be accomplished, nor could the planning of the cataloging project itself be organized, without several intensive meetings. Therefore after four brief but intense meetings, a proposal for funding, entitled "A Union

Catalog of Commercially Issued Pre-'LP' Classical Music and Spoken Word Sound Recordings; a Planning Study", was undertaken with the sponsorship of the Association for Recorded Sound Collections. After a thorough review by each participating institution and the ARSC Executive Board, the proposal was submitted to the National Endowment for the Humanities. The request was favorably received, and funding was approved for a \$25,000 planning study of 18 months' duration. The planning study began on October 1, 1976.

Since October 1976 there have been seven meetings of the principal investigators. The results of those meetings are discussed below in conjunction with the goals quoted from the original grant proposal.

When the planning project began, three related projects (a collection survey, union list of serials related to pre-"LP" sound recordings, and a union list of manufacturer's catalogs) were in progress. The completion of each was viewed as having substantial impact upon the eventual cataloging project.

Collection Survey

The first steps of a general survey have been taken to determine the holdings of classical music and spoken word sound recordings. No archive knows in full detail the extent of its holdings of relevant materials for this project. Thus, this survey is essential to the success of the proposed cataloging project.

A survey was designed at Yale University Historical Sound Recordings consisting of a list of pre-"LP" sound recording label and issue number groups. In general, only label series containing predominately classical music and spoken word sound recordings were included. Each participating archive was expected to report the shelf measurement of its holdings within the designated groupings.

Unhappily, the basic premise of the survey, that each archive shelved its recordings in label name and issue number order, was not completely valid. While each archive did maintain a label name and issue number sequence, except for the University of Toronto and a portion of the Rodgers and Hammerstein Collection which were shelved according to an accession sequence and maintained by a label name and issue number file, the specific implementation varied so widely that the survey could not be completed. For example, some archives shelved together recordings with different label names because they were subsidiaries or later manifestations of a specific label while other archives shelved them separately. There was also a variation in the manner of shelving duplicates (some archives inter-filed them in the primary shelving sequence while others shelved them separately) and the treatment of issue number prefixes and suffixes (some archives ignored them while others considered them in

shelving). Therefore, another means of determining the holdings of classical music and spoken word recordings and the extent of collection overlap was necessary.

In the process of developing the initial collection survey, a random sample of 6,500 discs was carefully examined at the Yale Historical Sound Recordings Collection to determine the number of catalogable items on each disc. The examination found that there was an average of 1.14 catalogable items on classical music and spoken word pre-"LP" sound recording discs.

Another survey was designed at Stanford University to determine the extent of collection overlap by means of a statistical sampling of each collection. Eleven discographies known to contain predominately classical music and spoken word pre-"LP" sound recordings were chosen. The discographies used were The new catalogue of historical records, 1898-1908/09, by Robert Bauer; Vertical-cut cylinders and discs, by Victor Girard and Harold M. Barnes; Collector's guide to American recordings, 1895-1925, by Julian Moses; The world's encyclopaedia of recorded music, by Francis F. Clough and G. J. Cuming; and volumes 1-3, 5, 7-9 of The voices of the past, edited by John R. Bennett. They contained entries for approximately 147,800 discrete sound recordings.

A random sample of 500 entries from the discographies produced a list of 715 sound recordings; indicating, by the way, an average re-issue rate of 43 percent. Nadine Mark, a student in Library Science at San Jose State University Library School, assisted during the data selection and collection process as work towards her final paper. Lists in composer, label name, and discography order were prepared and sent to each archive. The collections in each archive were checked with the lists and each recording found in a collection was entered on a master list. After each archive had thoroughly checked its holdings, the master list was returned to Stanford University for compilation and analysis.

Margaret E. Wilkinson, an actuarial consultant, was hired to analyze the data collected from the archives. Her analysis demonstrated that the probability of a recording held in any single archive also existing in the collection of one of the other archives ranged from a low of 68.2 percent to a high of 93 percent. An additional result of this study was the verification of an "educated guess" made early in the planning study concerning the number of classical music and spoken word sound recordings issued before the advent of the "LP". The estimate of 250,000 recordings was verified within ten percent.

Union List of Periodicals

A union list of relevant periodicals held by the participating archives is currently being compiled. This union list is of major importance because periodical literature contains essential information for cataloging

and research work unobtainable elsewhere.

A preliminary list of one hundred periodicals primarily concerned with historical recordings or issued before 1950 was compiled by Gary Gisondi at the Rodgers and Hammerstein Archives. The list was circulated to each of the participating archives, and their holdings were entered into it. In addition, a few periodicals missing from the original list were added. The lists were returned to Gary Gisondi, and the resulting union catalog will be published in the Journal of the Association for Recorded Sound Collections during 1978.

Union List of Manufacturer's Catalogs

A union list of sound recording manufacturers' catalogs held by the participating archives is currently being compiled. These catalogs provide unique identification of compositions and performers. Since sound recordings, unlike books, do not carry publication dates, these catalogs are essential for their determination.

The lists of sound recording manufacturers' catalogs have been compiled at the Library of Congress. A listing of RCA Victor catalogs consisting of almost one thousand entries was circulated to the participating archives. Shorter listings of the annual and numerical catalogs of the Columbia, Edison, Gramophone, and Pathé companies complete a survey of the largest American and European sound recording companies. The survey disclosed that there are many catalogs issued by these companies which are superficially similar but whose contents vary substantially. Such changes in content are important in tracing the issue and deletion dates of early sound recordings. The five lists have been checked against the collections of the participating archives and the results, along with additions, have been returned to the Library of Congress. While the lists are valuable documents as they now stand, they cannot be considered complete until a more extensive effort is undertaken.

The original grant proposal defined five results which were expected from this planning study.

Review of Computer Systems

A computer system will be chosen. The major library computer systems, Ohio College Library Center (OCLC), Bibliographic Automation of Large Library Operations using a Time-sharing System (BALLOTS), and the Library of Congress (LC), are expected to implement the MARC format for music and sound recordings during the near future. Each system interested in hosting the final project will be reviewed in terms of the above

mentioned requirements by an outside consultant having knowledge of MARC formats, library automation systems, and music. The system which can best meet those requirements in an economical manner will be chosen for the project.

Substantial information and assistance in developing the guidelines for a computer-aided union catalog were received from Lenore Maruyama, Network Office at the Library of Congress, Kay Guiles, MARC Development Office at the Library of Congress, Richard Anable, CONSER Project, and Hank Epstein, BALLOTS. Each interrupted their busy schedule to spend several hours discussing the operation and organization of library automation networks both with individual principal investigators and all principal investigators together.

A consultant familiar with library automation systems, Brett Butler of Butler Associates, and later Information Access Corporation, was hired early in the planning study to survey the major library and vendor systems. He was charged with determining the interest of a system in hosting the union cataloging project, the cost and extent of development, and the operating cost of each system. After many delays, he submitted for review an interesting report on the use of automated authority files which had little relevance to the project. He did, however, suggest a pilot project to test the procedures and cataloging conventions which result from this planning study. Repeated requests for the required data have not been met, and the necessary data is being collected by the principal investigators.

Level of Cataloging

The level of cataloging detail will be determined. While the Anglo-American Cataloging Rules will generally be followed, interpretation of those rules and the addition of rules specifically to accommodate the problems of archival cataloging of sound recordings, regardless of subject limitations, will be developed. In addition, decisions will be made regarding the necessity of auditioning recordings to distinguish between different "takes" and to verify the listing of the citation. The extent of the search for cataloging information beyond that contained on the physical recording will also be determined.

The completed standards and rules will be submitted to the appropriate national and international organizations for consideration and possible adoption as their standards. Because of the expertise of the co-principal investigators and their involvement in the creation and development of cataloging rules and standards, it seems highly probable that their recommendations would be seriously considered by the appropriate agencies.

The great majority of the time spent during the meetings by the principal investigators has been spent on this goal; there has never before been a careful and thorough examination into archival cataloging of sound recordings. The principal investigators brought diverse expertise to the project ranging from private collector and record producer to librarian cataloger. Such diverse viewpoints have enhanced the usability of the cataloging rules.

Virtually every aspect of the documentation of historical sound recordings was reviewed; it was realized, however, that the final rules for the archival descriptive cataloging of sound recordings had to conform as closely as possible to the new Anglo-American Cataloging Rules in order for them to be acceptable to the participant's institutions and to the sound archive and library community in general. In addition, they had to be compatible with existing library automation formats and systems. Consequently, the rules have been circulated to a wide variety of readers in both North America and Europe, and their comments have been carefully considered.

Perhaps the most important early decision, which has been continually reviewed and endorsed, was that auditioning a recording was not possible because of the time which was required for the process. It is realized that only through aural comparison of two recordings is it possible to determine whether or not they are identical. A union cataloging project, in which collections scattered throughout the country participate, also makes it very difficult to comparison audition. Instead, every effort is to be made to describe the physical manifestation of the recordings in sufficient detail so that variant recordings which appear quite similar will be distinguished. By recording such information as, for example, the radius of the playing area, it is hoped to distinguish variant takes. When a recording contains clues which indicate that the data collected through visual means may be incorrect, a verification procedure will be used to ascertain and record the correct information.

Another important decision concerning the descriptive cataloging of sound recordings specified that each composition or work be the basis of the catalog entry. The intellectual unit, or work, is necessary as the basis of the catalog record to provide direct access to the recordings. Archival collections are not available for browsing. Therefore, as many valid access points as possible must be provided and tied to the intellectual unit.

Ascertaining the publication date of early sound recordings is a very difficult task because there is rarely a date on the recording, and associated materials, for example record sleeves, are no longer associated with the recording. As a means of providing an indication of the issue date of a recording, identification of the style of the recording's label is to be entered into the data base. A catalog, similar to a postage stamp catalog, will be constructed containing all label styles, each assigned a specific identification number. Initially, only pictures with brief descriptions of labels will be included in the catalog. Later

research will, it is hoped, pinpoint a precise chronological period for each label type.

The rules for access points, or main and added entries, have also been thoroughly reviewed. Both traditional access points and those which are available through the MARC format for music were examined and ranked in order of importance. The most important are the label name-issue indicator and the creator name-matrix indicator; the access points to the issue and to the performance respectively. Other access points are also important, such as composer and title, but label name-issue and creator name-matrix indicators are unique to sound recordings and are generally not available in existing computer-aided catalogs.

The other traditional access points of persons, corporate bodies, subjects and titles are also included. An important addition is the inclusion of a relator statement to entries for people. Relators have generally been used for editors and translators in traditional printed materials cataloging. The inclusion of the relator for performer and other functions is an important means to clarify a catalog file. The problem of separating the works produced by a person as a performer from those produced by the same person as composer, for example, will be eliminated.

Cost Estimates

Procedures will be developed to produce the data base efficiently. Decisions will be made regarding the division of cataloging responsibilities, the procedures for establishing and authenticating entries (e.g., the possibility of assigning a cataloger to check the Library of Congress's authority file), and the means of resolving cataloging conflicts.

Many of the decisions concerning the production of the data base have not been made because they hinge upon the consultant's report concerning the choice of a computer system. Nonetheless, it has been determined that the Library of Congress's authority file will be used and permission for an employee of the project to work in the Official Catalog is being sought.

Initially, a pilot project to create a data base of cataloging information for approximately 20,000 pre-"LP" classical music and spoken word sound recordings has been established. The pilot project will explore the most efficient means of capturing cataloging data, entering that data into a computer, and providing access to the cataloging data. As of this writing, plans for this pilot project were being developed. With the knowledge gained from the study conducted under the first ARSC grant we believe that much additional "real world" experience can be expected from the pilot project, thus putting us well on the road towards fulfillment of our plans for the long-sought-for

Union Catalog.