



Recording performance advice sheet: Protecting and preserving your recordings

Introduction

When you start filming performance your main focus will probably be on making recordings and developing your expertise. However, once you have begun to develop a collection it is important to think how you can protect your material to ensure its long term preservation.

Digital technology has only been around for a couple of decades and little is known about its long term stability and other preservation concerns. Many plastics are also unstable and there are already serious concerns about the best ways to preserve tape recordings etc. This is a complex area but the following guidelines provide a start:

- 1. Take advice:** Read and follow the advice from the manufacturers, e.g. do not leave DVDs in strong sunlight or near strong magnetic sources.
- 2. Protect:** Store your material securely where children and misguided friends cannot accidentally damage material.
- 3. Maintain accurate records:** Document each recording as you make it. Preferably keep typed information and use an identification system that means it is simple to connect your recordings to the background information. Ideally edit information about the recording onto the start. Otherwise use some form of etched/indelible numbering – labels will eventually drop off.
- 4. Copy your masters:** Duplicate your recordings and deposit the copy in a separate building, perhaps with a relative or friend. Ensure they know the importance of what you are giving them.
- 5. Public Deposit:** Consider depositing a copy with a public archive such as a county record office.
- 6. Control:** Do not lend your recordings without a clear record of the process and means of getting them returned.
- 7. Network:** Talk to other recorders and collectors. What do they do?
- 8. Internet:** Scan the web for new information on digital technology and its preservation.

Public deposit

Several public resources such as the National Sound Archive at the British Library, the British Film Institute (BFI) and the National Archives are already developing technology and resources to handle the records of the 'digital era'. However, many public record offices and museums are still coming to terms with the shift from paper and photographs to new materials. Therefore do not be surprised if they are initially concerned about your material - as standards are still being developed in this area and they will want to be sure that they have the necessary expertise and equipment to look after it properly.

If you want to deposit your recordings, most public resources will want to see evidence that you have legal title to the recordings and have gained the necessary permissions from copyright holders etc.

Useful contacts:

National Sound Archive
British Film Institute

<http://www.bl.uk/collections/sound-archive/nsaabout.html>
<http://www.bfi.org.uk/nftva/>

National Archives

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>

V&A Theatre Collections

http://www.vam.ac.uk/tco/video_project/index.html

Useful Publications:

The US Library of Congress has excellent guidelines on its website for looking after digital material - <http://www.digitalpreservation.gov/you/digitalmemories.html>