



## *American Archivist Reviews*

Date posted: June 2, 2022

<http://reviews.americanarchivist.org>

### ***The Community Archiving Workshop Handbook***

<https://communityarchiving.org>

*Reviewed by CJ Garcia, Liaison and Communications Librarian, A.T. Still Memorial Library*

The Community Archiving Workshop (CAW) Handbook is an online resource designed to help audiovisual archivists, preservation specialists, and cultural heritage workers plan workshops to leverage their expertise in support of local communities.

The handbook reflects the CAW model, which has its roots in the Activist Archiving workshops organized by Mona Jiminez during the 2010 Association of Moving Image Archivists (AMIA) conference. The workshop organizers originally sought to support the communities where AMIA conferences were held, but they have since grown into a collective of cultural heritage professionals from diverse backgrounds and types of institutions located across the United States and internationally. The collective is supported by a variety of historical societies, public libraries, and media and art organizations. Since 2018, CAW's scope has expanded through the support of IMLS and NEH grants and now includes new, related projects such as the [Training of Trainers Toolkit](#) and the [Tribal Libraries and Archives Collection Care Project](#).

The CAW model is a one-day workshop that pairs trained archivists and cultural heritage professionals with local collection caretakers and community volunteers, bringing the archival professionals' expertise to the communities who need it most, particularly underrepresented groups. The workshops usually focus on collection inventory, and assessment, but can and have covered digitization, file organization, film inspection, and other topics that suit the needs of the community and expertise of the archivists. This makes the model adaptable to local needs and circumstances.

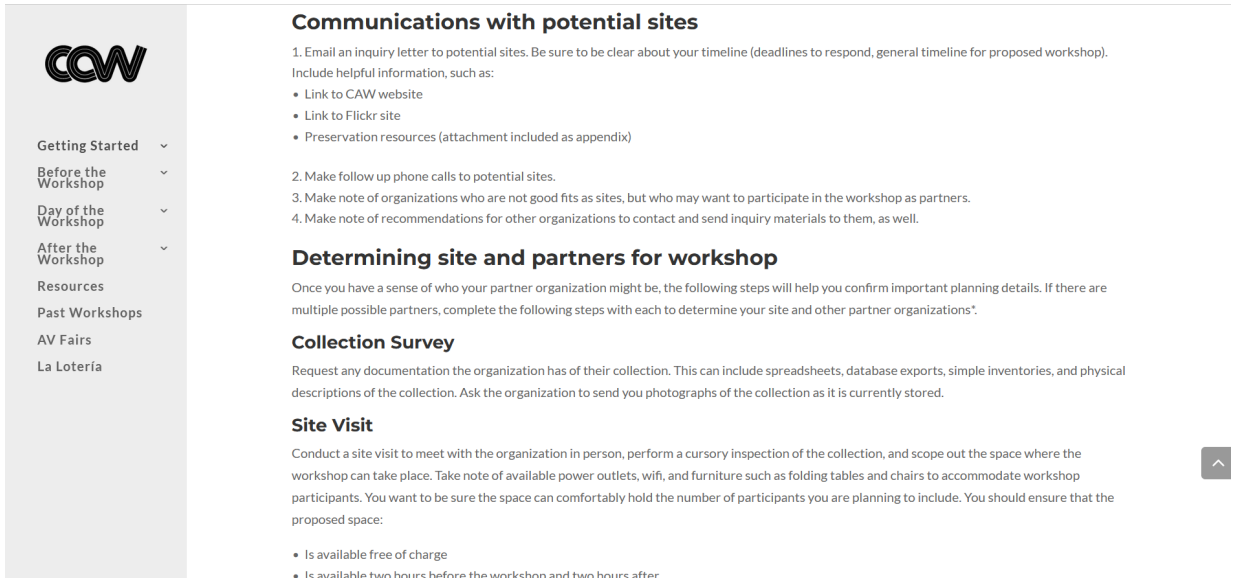


Figure 1. A section of the handbook showing users how to find and work with partner organizations

The CAW Handbook serves as a complimentary resource to the workshops. This website consists of a resource toolkit, training modules, methodologies, and documentation of past workshops. These varied resources are geared toward helping archivists design and execute their own community archiving workshops, even if they do not have experience leading workshops or facilitating community outreach. The bulk of the handbook consists of a series of training modules that provide a step-by-step breakdown of workshop planning and execution, as well as tips to avoid common pitfalls, checklists that break workshop planning into actionable steps, and guidelines for following CAW methodology. The modules are broken into short, digestible, action-oriented sections designed to help archivists hit the ground running. This is achieved particularly well due to the comprehensive nature of the materials, including concrete examples of documentation and handouts, writing templates for communicating with partner organizations and stakeholders, and realistic timelines.

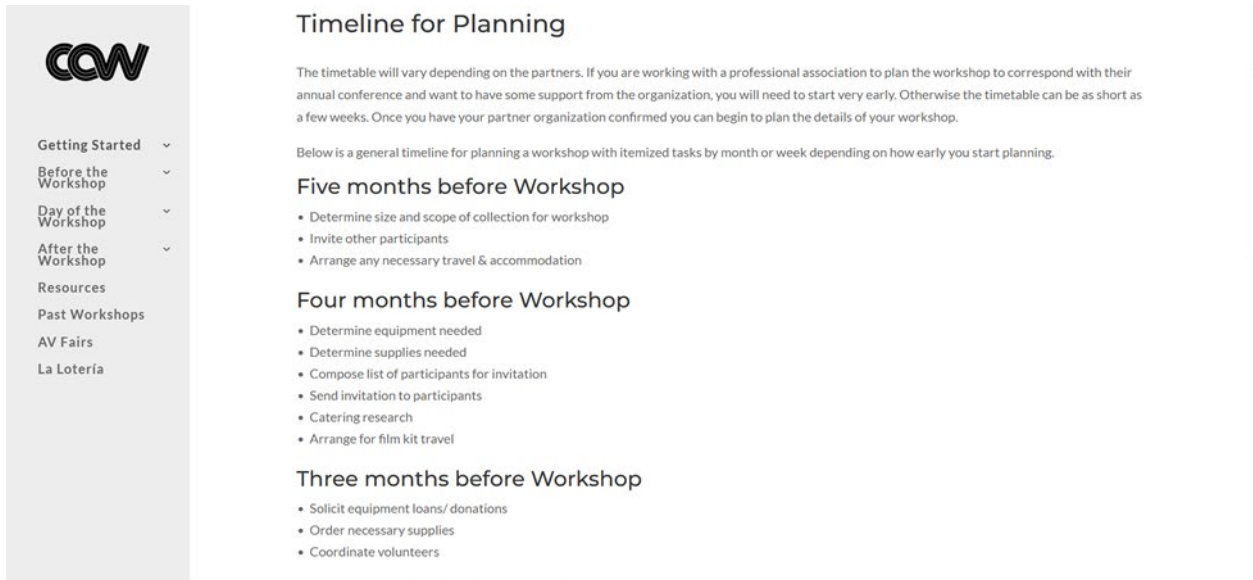


Figure 2. A timeline for workshop planning provided in the CAW Handbook

Handbook materials vary in focus, nature, quality, and completeness. The handbook is at its best when it is breaking down tasks step-by-step and providing structure for novices. A good example of this is a project planning timeline that starts five months before the workshop and itemizes planning tasks month-by-month. This gives workshop organizers a head start on project planning and an idea of how long tasks might take, which can be invaluable for those without much experience planning workshops. The handbook often provides much-needed support for its readers by breaking down steps into small actions, pointing out what might be considered obvious to more experienced workshop planners, and using lists to make information digestible and easily actionable. Because it is informed by the work of prior workshop organizers, the handbook contains their assumptions and can at times be vague; for example, when it advises workshop organizers to “follow up with partners” without clarifying what workshop organizers should follow up about. The handbook also closely follows the CAW model and the topics it has traditionally focused on. Consequently, if an organizer wants to adapt the CAW model to new topics and focus areas, they will likely need to consult outside resources in addition to the CAW Handbook.

The CAW Handbook is still very much a work in progress, which is apparent the further you delve into the materials. The first section, “Before the Workshop,” is fully fleshed out and detailed, but the next two sections have a variety of unfinished and placeholder pages. By the time you arrive at the final section, “After the Workshop,” nearly every page is a placeholder. Overall, this makes the handbook more helpful for planning than execution, although it does contain other resources to help with the actual running of workshops.

The “Resources” page contains sample presentations that can be used during workshops, handouts for attendees, and links to outside resources for both professionals and beginners to learn more about AV preservation. The “Past Workshops” section is also particularly helpful for seeing what a workshop looks like in action. Many of the pages in this section only contain photos, but some include video recordings of entire workshops, and even handouts and other materials that can act as inspiration for designing a workshop. Additionally, the handbook contains a Spanish-language educational game, *La Loteria*, designed to teach essential archival terms in Spanish for Spanish-speaking communities seeking to preserve their materials, which can be used as part of a community archiving workshop or other educational activities.

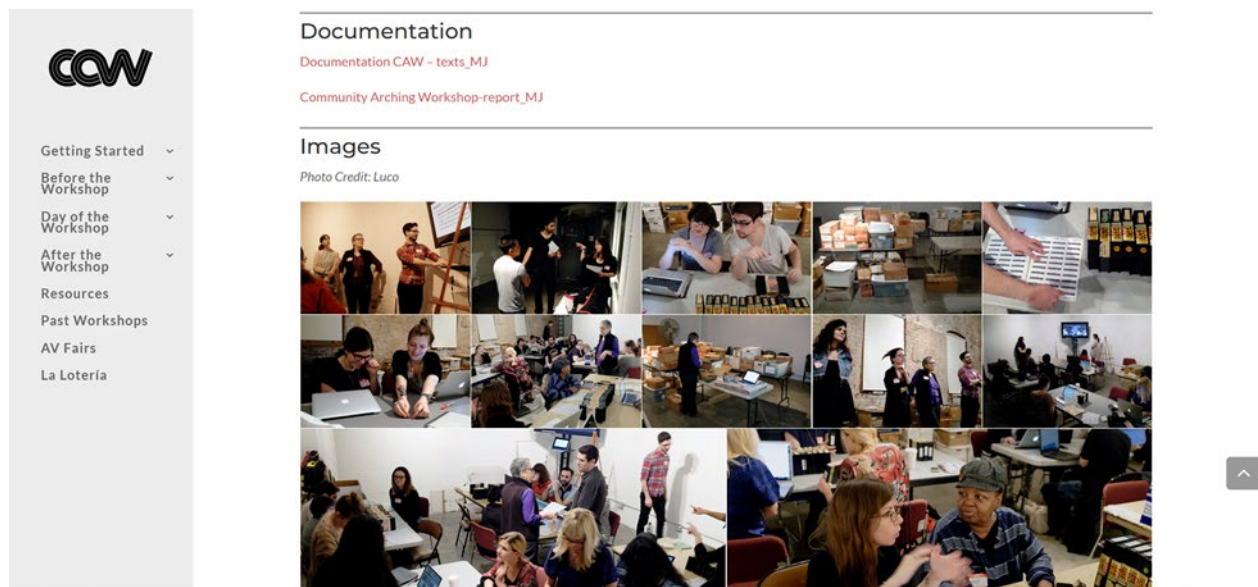


Figure 3. An example of a past workshop with documentation, photographs, and video recordings

The last resource of note in the handbook relates to AV Fairs, an extension of the CAW model focused on problem solving and aimed at a wider audience of media makers, collecting institutions, and community groups. In an AV Fair, preservation professionals set up workstations, each focused on a particular topic, problem, or process. Local community members are invited to the fairs to collaborate with other community members and preservation professionals. The AV Fair resources include a wealth of sample documents and material from past AV Fairs.

Station	Resources and Templates
Welcome and Station Matchmaking	Welcome Packet, Portland 2018 (PDF)   Download Word Template (DOCX)
Analog AV Inventory Techniques	AV Inventory Template (XLSX)   Preview Template (PDF)
Video Digitization	APEX Video Kit Documents on GitHub Starter's Guide to Video Digitization APEX Video Kit Elements APEX Kit Wiring Diagram
Digital Preservation & File Storage Management	Digital Preservation Resources Handout (PDF) Preservation Storage Criteria, Version 2 (PDF) Preservation and Archiving Special Interest Group (PASIG)
Disaster Preparedness & Recovery <i>provided by Kara Van Malssen (weareavp.com)</i>	Disaster Preparedness & Recovery Handout (PDF) Disaster Preparedness & Recovery Posters: Salvage Tips for All Media Types (PDF) Disaster Preparedness & Recovery Supply Kit (PDF)
Feature Collection: Deb Cotton Video Collection (New Orleans)	2017 New Orleans: Deb Cotton Video Collection Manual (PDF)
Feature Collection: KBOO Archive (Portland)	2018 Portland: KBOO Archive Inventory Condition Form (PDF)   Download Word Template (DOCX)
Registration Forms	New Orleans Community Member Registration Form (PDF)

Figure 4. Example documents used in previous AV Fairs

The need for community-engaged and ethically responsible archival practices is becoming more apparent to our field each day. Community archiving models, such as the CAW model, bridge the gap between professional and community expertise while empowering communities to be archival stewards without institutional intervention. Such workshops are an important step in creating a more just world through archival practice. To that end, the CAW Handbook is an essential resource for helping archivists without expertise in instruction or community outreach get involved in this work. While the CAW Handbook is not yet complete, its existing resources are still a great boon to audiovisual archivists who want to start running workshops, and it will only become more useful as it is further improved and completed.