

MPLP and the Audiovisual Archive: An Exploratory Study of Minimal Processing Practices for Sound Recordings

SOFÍA BECERRA-LICHA

Abstract: This exploratory study examines archival processing practices for sound recordings; primarily how and whether the practice of minimal processing termed “More Product Less Process” (“MPLP”) can be applied to audiovisual holdings. Twelve semi-structured interviews were conducted in the summer of 2012 with thirteen professionals representing eleven major audiovisual archives throughout the United States. Participants were asked to share their perceptions of minimal processing, to self-identify where their own processing practice falls along the minimal-maximal spectrum, to explain what factors go into their methodological choices, and to discuss the role or response of their users.

Generally speaking, those interviewed expressed an appreciation for the need to get collections out for use as quickly and efficiently as possible, but expressed concern over whether this was possible within a minimalistic framework. Nearly half of all respondents described their institution’s approach as trending towards the maximalist end of the spectrum, while acknowledging that priorities and descriptive levels were ultimately largely collection and context dependent. Although the small sample size of this study precludes generalizations on a larger scale, it is hoped that this project will stimulate discussion and provide some measure of useful data for examining the context and factors faced by current archival practitioners charged with overseeing significant audiovisual collections in the United States.

About the author:

Sofía Becerra-Licha is project archivist at Berklee College of Music’s Stan Getz Library, a new position charged with formalizing the College’s archives and records management program under the auspices of a start-up grant from the National Historical Publications & Records Commission (NHPRC). Sofia earned her MSLS with a concentration in Archives and Records Management from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in August 2012. She also holds a master’s in music with a concentration in ethnomusicology from Harvard University, as well as B.A. in music and Spanish from Agnes Scott College. Sofia’s professional interests include participatory archives, audiovisual preservation, Latin American studies, and issues of diversity in the archives and library profession. She is currently chronicling her first year on the job as a

contributor to the SAA Student and New Archives Professionals (SNAP) Roundtable
blog series Year in the Life (<http://snaproundtable.wordpress.com/>).