

TRANSFORMATION AND THE ABSENCE OF COMPLACENCY

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Helen Harrison in her opening editorial in issue number 2¹ of the IASA Journal notes, “...on no account should we be complacent about the Journal or other IASA publications, ideas for change are always welcome and material for inclusion even more so.” She was contemplating the state of the Journal on the heels of its transformation from the Phonographic Bulletin (1971–1993) to the IASA Journal (1993–present). The name had changed, but Harrison took the role of editor with ideas for additional improvements to the structure, content, operation, and aesthetics of the Journal; and she found herself also faced with the task of developing a new reputation for the newly minted IASA Journal. That was 26 years ago, and the IASA Journal has now been the IASA Journal longer than it was the Phonographic Bulletin. The transformation, we can say, was a success. Today, in 2018, as editor, I face a similar challenge: whether to transform the IASA Journal to an e-Journal, and whether to push for an open access model for content in the IASA Journal. These are two slightly independent changes that I am proposing for the Journal, and both have a variety of options associated with them.

The IASA Journal as an e-Journal

When we think about the IASA Journal as an electronic journal, we can consider it with or without a printed version. At one extreme, we can imagine an online platform that serves as the only access point to IASA Journal publications. Such a platform can provide a variety of discovery and access options for IASA Journal content, including text-based search, author indexes, online reading via PDF or HTML, syndication for subscribers, and API access for data aggregators, among others. We can also imagine these online access options with additional options for printed issues, either “on-demand” or in small batches. At the opposite extreme, we could imagine the same full print scenario we have today with the addition of an online access point with the options I mention above (although, this option, of course, requires the greatest cost to the organization). These are the types of options we are considering as we develop a strategy for moving the IASA Journal to an online home.

The IASA Journal as an Open Access Journal

A related question, once the Journal has an e-Journal access point, is whether the content of the IASA Journal should remain closed to the World, open only to IASA members and subscribers, for five years after its publication. This has been, and still is, the policy of the IASA Journal. But, *should* it be? Does such a policy support the central mission of IASA, as stated in its constitution, “to promote, encourage, and support the development of best professional standards and practice in all countries through communication, cooperation, advocacy, promulgation, dissemination, training and/or education, amongst public or private archives or libraries, institutions, businesses, organisations and associations which share these purposes?” Could we, as an organization, do better to disseminate the writings in the Journal to the global audiovisual archives community? Could we, instead of using the content as bait for membership, rather use the content as a shared resource that enriches IASA’s network and entices new members to the organization? Launching an e-Journal does not require IASA to provide Open Access to the content; it merely offers the opportunity, and because of that, I think it valuable to have the conversation. So, these are the types of access questions that we are also considering as we develop a strategy for the IASA Journal online platform.

¹ This was Harrison’s first issue as editor of the Journal, and thus her first editorial.

If you, as a IASA member or subscriber, have thoughts on these topics, please feel free to reach out to me at editor@iasa-web.org. I am eager to hear from you.

The Issue at Hand

This issue, our third peer-reviewed issue, features a wide variety of topics important to the audiovisual archives communities today, including digital preservation, born-digital video, contemporary memories, diversification of the archive(s), repatriation of colonial and radio collections, and building stronger connections between archives and users of archival collections.

The issue commences with three profiles highlighting the human labor that underlies all archives and archival collections. In Ghana, Judith Opoku-Boateng interviews J. H. Kwabena Nketia about his work recording the songs and interviews that would become the cross-cultural foundation for the J. H. Kwabena Nketia Archives of the Institute for African Studies at the University of Ghana. In Australia, Melinda Barrie talks with sound scholar Robyn Holmes about her lifelong passion to dissemination and document Australian music. And, in Italy, Ettore Pacetti and Daniela Floris discuss the pioneering fieldwork of the Italian ethnomusicologist, Diego Carpitella, and how his efforts laid the seeds for the current project of the Audiovisual Archives at RAI Teche to bring Italian cultural heritage to a worldwide audience.

Paul Conway and Kelly Askew, both of the University of Michigan, provide a glimpse into efforts to organize, describe, and “re-broadcast” content from Voice of America’s radio program *Music Time in Africa* to new audiences. Conway and Askew contextualize the issues associated with providing access to cultural heritage resources, and conclude with a proposal for a proactive strategy for online dissemination. Approaching the topic of repatriation of cultural heritage from another angle, Diane Thram, from the International Library of African Music in South Africa, articulates the effort that she and her colleagues undertook to hand-deliver (or, digitally return) recorded copies of performances to musicians across the African continent. Beginning with Uganda, and then Kenya, Thram and colleagues located performers and descendants from recordings made by Hugh Tracey and coordinated visits to return and re-study the music and performances that had been recorded more than 50 years ago with musicians in these locales. Together, these two articles offer a thorough glimpse into the theory and practice of post-colonial archival practice.

Reformulating a talk that was delivered at this year’s IASA conference in Berlin, Gisa Jähnichen of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music in China, along with colleagues Ahmad Faudzi Musib (Malaysia), Thongbang Homsombat (Laos), Chinthaka Prageeth Meddegoda (Sri Lanka), and Xiao Mei (China), take a close look at the successes and failures they see in the small-scale audiovisual archives where they work in China, Malaysia, Laos, and Sri Lanka. The work of these authors lays a foundation for conversations about how to ensure that audiovisual archives maintain living networks and continue to develop capacity within and outside of the archives themselves. If smaller archives in Asia are to sustain themselves in the digital present, what are the key issues that must be addressed? And, what can archives in other regions of the world learn from this study?

The remaining articles in this issue move from questions of the management of archives, to technical questions about the digital infrastructures and digital formats that we are facing in audiovisual archives today. Silvester Stöger, from NOA in Austria, looks at the needs of broadcast archives with regard to production and preservation workflows, describing the values of an archive asset management system that can integrate with other business sys-

tems in a broadcast environment. Iain Richardson, from Vcodex, Ltd. in the UK, illustrates the lossy process of data reduction as a compression technique in digital video, offering insight into quantitative and qualitative methods to compare quality in digital video objects. From the Alexander Turnbull Library, National Library of New Zealand, Valerie Love describes the changes that the acquisition of born-digital content, specifically oral history content, has brought to the archive's standard operating procedures. Wrapping up this issue, Ariane Gervásio, from the Brazilian Association of Audiovisual Archives, challenges readers to re-imagine the concept of personal memories in today's transmedia world, where traditional concepts of content and media—e.g., a song exists as a single recording in a single place—must be understood as a multifarious entity, perhaps existing initially as a video posted to one web platform, yet then interacted with by users in another web platform, leaving a complex trail of engagement that ultimately constitutes the object that will be collected by an archive. Are we, as audiovisual archivists, ready to conceive of contemporary born-digital content in this way? Do we have a choice?

I look forward to hearing your thoughts on the contents of this Issue, as well as on the future of the IASA Journal.

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