

ACM NE Archive Panel Presentation Notes
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1. Introduction

- Kayla Creamer, Director of Programming at Amherst Media
- Amherst Media – 39 years in the community
 - i. House programs going back for at least 25 of those years – part of the community’s history and important to preserve. We had been trying to figure out the best way to go about this for some time.

2. How did the project get started?

- Began in Fall of 2012 – Our Executive Director, Jim Lescault, attended the MassAccess conference on Archiving at the National Archives in Waltham, MA where it was suggested that we apply for an archiving grant through our community preservation committee. The message at this conference was that access centers are at the forefront of gathering community history. We first applied for the grant to bring in the roving archivist, Rachel Onuf.
- We scheduled a visit with Rachel Onuf, roving archivist from Mount Holyoke College – she helped us assess our situation and determine the best method to go about the archiving process. She wrote a detailed report that we submitted to Amherst’s Community Preservation Committee in hopes of obtaining a \$50,000 historical preservation grant to help us begin the process of digitizing our tapes.
- The CPC went before town meeting in the spring of 2013 and town meeting voted to approve our \$50k grant. We then began the process of purchasing equipment.

3. Equipment

- We opted to start with our VHS tapes first, as our archive contains more of them than any other format
 - i. 2-21” iMac’s running Black Magic Media Express
 - ii. 2 Black Magic Intensity Shuttles to convert from composite out to Thunderbolt
 - iii. 2 pairs of speakers for monitoring capture audio
 - iv. 2 VHS decks
 - v. 2 bare drive docks – swap drives out as they fill up
 - vi. A capture monitor
 - vii. LTO deck
- Track metadata with a Google spreadsheet – live updates on both machines and can be easily accessed by staff from other computers inside or outside of the building. It’s also a good way to ensure that your spreadsheets are backed up somewhere offsite.

4. Process

- Interns capture tapes in real time using Black Magic Media Encoder
- Files are captured to the external bare drive as ProRes 422 LT files
- Tapes are labeled with the corresponding file number and boxed up for storage
- Once a drive is full, files are trimmed converted to H.264’s using Adobe Media Encoder

- Converted files are uploaded to archive.org using John's batch upload tool -> More about that from John
- Files are kept on another external drive
- Files will eventually be captured to LTO as another backup source

5. Master Spreadsheet

- Definitely things I would do differently now that I'm more familiar with the process – We have to create separate spreadsheets for upload to Archive.org – more on that shortly – this spreadsheet gives us additional info for in house use, so it's not a total loss
- *Go over the different columns*

6. Archive.org Spreadsheet

- Batch upload using John's batch upload tool which uses terminal (Mac)
- Archive.org has very specific requirements as far as how the spreadsheet needs to be setup in order to batch upload without issues. Our master spreadsheet does not meet these requirements. Each time a bare drive gets filled, I take it, trim and convert the files, then put together the upload spreadsheet for that drive.
- *Go over the different columns*
- Major differences between archive.org spreadsheet and our master spreadsheet
 - i. Identifiers cannot have spaces or special characters, I usually use the file name from the master spreadsheet and do a find and replace to get rid of any spaces
 - ii. Descriptions cannot have line breaks. I usually go through and do a find and replace to replace any line breaks with a
 tag
 - iii. Keywords have to be one keyword per cell. Initially, we had been putting all keywords into one cell for each file and separating with commas.

7. Tips

- Now that we're well into the process, there are a number of things I would do differently in order to streamline the process.
 - i. I likely would have setup our master spreadsheet the same way we do our batch upload spreadsheets. This would have removed one giant step from the process.
 - ii. If you're working with volunteers or interns, keep a close eye on their entry of metadata. This is where I often run into the biggest problems. Simple issues such as interns not copying and pasting file names out of Black Magic and into the spreadsheet cause problems when it comes time to do the batch upload. I've had a couple of interns who have named the files something completely different from what they put in the spreadsheet. The use of special characters in file names is also an area where I've had issues. Seemingly minor things, such as leaving spaces after a keyword in the spreadsheet can also cause problems. These issues may not seem like much, but when it comes time to do a batch upload, issues like this often tack on anywhere from 60-90 additional minutes of my time before I can start the upload.
 - iii. Another issue I ran into with our interns was that they were not using the speakers to monitor the audio during the capture process and hadn't noticed that nothing was registering on the audio meter in Black Magic Media Express.

We once had a week where several of the interns captured tapes without audio on one of the decks because the audio cable had been unplugged from the Black Magic Shuttle. I was lucky that one of our more observant interns noticed and brought the issue to my attention. There's nothing worse than having to recapture 12 hours worth of tapes because they were captured without audio the first time around. Be sure to check in with your interns/volunteers regularly and check the files they've been capturing to ensure that they're being captured properly.

- iv. If you're using ME to capture to external drives, check in every now and then to make sure that the write path hasn't changed in the ME preferences. This is another area where we've had issues. We had one situation where an intern came to me and told me that he was getting a low disk space error on the iMac. It turned out that at some point, the bare drive had disconnected from the iMac and ME started writing the files to the iMac hard drive. This not only causes issues with the computer, but we're talking a large amount of files that have to be copied over to the external drive, which takes some time.
- v. I now have a checklist on both sides of the capture rack. This checklist is a reminder for the interns to do things such as check to make sure that the files are capturing to the bare drive, make sure the capture format hasn't changed to something other than ProRes 422 LT, etc. This has really helped to reduce some of the previously mentioned issues.
- vi. Basically what it boils down to is checking in with your volunteers/interns regularly and checking the capture settings and spreadsheets often so you can prevent issues early on.
- vii. If you're capturing a lot of a particular format, for example VHS, have several extra working decks on hand. Amazingly, I've only had to do two or three swaps in the last two years, but it's good to have extras on hand just in case.
- viii. More recently, I've learned that it's a good idea to check in on planned archive.org downtime. You don't want to start an upload and then have it fail halfway through because of downtime.

8. Questions?