

The Archive Corps

Participant Workbook

Your companion through four sessions of learning to steward and describe community media on the Internet Archive.

Name: _____

Station / organization: _____

Internet Archive username: _____

How to use this workbook

- Each session has a page for notes and a between-session task. Do the task before the next session — the gaps are where the learning sticks.
- Keep the House Style Guide open beside you whenever you describe or upload an item.
- The Upload Checklist near the back is the one page you'll use over and over once you're a working steward.

Golden rule: every field you fill in is helping someone find this video ten years from now. When unsure, ask: does this tell my video apart from a similar one?

What we'll cover

- Why community media is worth saving — and why “it’s on YouTube” isn’t preservation.
- The whole pipeline: 2,100 channels → ~26,000 videos/month → processing → collections.
- Where your work fits: the human judgment layer, not the scripts.
- What “good enough” looks like at volume.

Notes

Before session 2: find 3 items already in the Community Media Archive — one described well, one poorly, one you’re unsure about. Write one sentence each on what makes the metadata work or fail. Also: create a free Internet Archive account if you haven’t.

My three items

What we'll cover

- The three jobs metadata does: descriptive, administrative, structural.
- The fields that matter most and how to fill them well.
- Why consistency beats cleverness — house style as a findability tool.
- Your first guided upload to the practice (sandbox) collection.

The two rules to never forget: (1) titles must be unique — a repeated title can break the upload itself. (2) Only the first 180 characters of the description are indexed by search — lead with specifics, not boilerplate.

Notes

Before session 3: upload 2 more sample items to the practice collection on your own, using the House Style Guide. Write down anything that confused you — those questions open session 3.

What confused me

What we'll cover

- Items, collections, and identifiers — and why the identifier is a permanent URL.
- What you can edit vs. what only IA admins can change.
- How metadata feeds search and discovery.
- Fixing broken metadata on existing items — editing is as valuable as uploading.

Remember: media type, collection, uploader, and identifier are admin-only — you can't change them after upload, so get them right the first time. Most other descriptive fields you can freely edit. Changes can take ~15 minutes to appear.

Notes

Before session 4: pick a real slice you'd want to steward — a region, a set of stations, or a topic — and write a few sentences on why it appeals to you. This becomes your territory in session 4.

The slice I'd want to steward

What we'll cover

- Claim your slice — resolve overlaps, fill gaps.
- Moving from the sandbox to the live archive: what changes, and do-no-harm rules.
- Supervised live uploads to your slice, with help on the call.
- How to get unstuck on your own, and how cohort 1 helps teach cohort 2.

Notes

You're a steward now: you own a named slice and have made real uploads. Keep the House Style Guide and the checklist handy, use the email list when you're stuck, and flag anything that should not be web-distributed or should be removed.

My slice & my first commitments

Upload & Describe — Working Checklist

Keep this page open every time you add or edit an item. Pair it with the House Style Guide.

The five required fields

- Title** — unique; includes series / episode / date.
- URL / source** — where the video came from.
- Description** — specifics in the first 180 characters, boilerplate after.
- Collection** — correct collection selected.
- Subject** — one or more; place the video in space, time, and topic.

Subjects to capture (as tags)

- State, City, Center name — long name AND short name / call letters.
- Category and Genre.
- Series information.
- Collection-specific fields (e.g., branch library, session #, grant year).

Quality checks

- Acronyms spelled out in full; none reused within this collection.
- Creator / producer credited.
- Language set; ASCII alternate added if accented characters are used.
- Year is correct** — if this was a backlog upload, pull the year from title/description, not the upload date.
- Runtime as HH:MM:SS (e.g., 00:27:49) if available.
- License URL added if applicable.

Before you walk away

- Double-checked the locked fields (collection, identifier) — they can't be changed later.
- Flagged anything that should not be web-distributed or should be removed.
- Gave it ~15 minutes, then confirmed the item looks right on its details page.

Stuck? Check the House Style Guide first, then the Internet Archive help center, then ask the cohort email list — a clear question with the item link gets a fast answer.

Community Media Archive: archive.org/details/community_media