



Pacifica Radio Archives *A Living History*

KPFA-94.1 FM/KPFB-89.3 FM, Berkeley, CA
KPFK-90.7 FM, Los Angeles, CA
KPFT-90.1 FM, Houston, TX
WBAI-99.5 FM, New York, NY
WPFW-89.3 FM, Washington, DC

To: Rob Bamberger, Consultant, National Recording Preservation Board, Library of Congress
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Fr: Brian DeShazor, Director, Pacifica Radio Archives.
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Re: Preliminary Summary of Remarks to Public Hearing (Los Angeles, November 29, 2006)

Da: November 8/17, 2006

Cc: Steve Leggett, Library of Congress, M/B/RS Division. sleg@loc.gov

PRELIMINARY SUMMARY OF REMARKS TO PUBLIC HEARINGS, STUDY on the CURRENT STATE of RECORDED SOUND PRESERVATION. LIBRARY of CONGRESS, THE NATIONAL RECORDING PRESERVATION BOARD.
Los Angeles, November 29, 2006.

Brian DeShazor is the Director of the Pacifica Radio Archives in North Hollywood, California.

The Pacifica Radio Archives (PRA), located in North Hollywood, California is the repository for programs produced for, and broadcast by the Pacifica Radio Network and member stations (KPFA-FM in Berkeley, CA; KPFK in Los Angeles; WBAI - NYC; KPFT, Houston, Texas; and WPFW, Washington, D.C.)

The collection of approximately 50,000 (mostly) unique, reel-to-reel master tapes, recordings of radio programs of exceptional cultural and historic value, broadcast from the founding of the network in 1949, to the present day. The bulk of the collection dates from 1960-1990. It constitutes a unique audio record of primary sources documenting the twentieth century history of American progressive politics, avant-garde and popular arts and culture, and social justice movements. The collection includes recordings of discussions, interviews, rallies and demonstrations, conversations, poetry, radio drama, documentaries, live music performances, and experiments in the art of radio. Almost all of these recordings have been published, in that they were broadcast one or more times on Pacifica Radio stations, and in many cases on up to 100 affiliated community and

educational radio stations. Many titles are available through public, university, and college libraries, and dozens are registered with the Library of Congress. PRA also makes recordings available to listeners (upon request). Over the years these tapes have been used by many students, media producers, scholars, educators, artists, musicians and broadcasters, around the world.

Many of these fragile tapes, housed in climate and humidity controlled secure conditions at PRA facilities in North Hollywood, are in dire need of repair. The tapes constitute a conservation nightmare including “rainbow reels”, multiple splices, “sticky shed”, inaccurate description, and copyright and ownership issues. Storage space is inadequate, and new acquisitions demand appropriate treatment.

In 2002 PRA embarked on an ambitious Preservation & Access Project. With modest grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the GRAMMY Foundation, and the Ford Foundation; and generous contributions from Pacifica radio station listeners, and PRA supporters, PRA has saved (preserved, repaired, digitized and made available) over 290 recordings which constitute treasures of American cultural history. In addition, many dozens of tapes of key moments of the Free Speech Movement, the Black Panther Party history, and the Anti-Vietnam War movement were digitized by, and are available as streamed audio, on the University of California, Berkeley Libraries, Media Resource Center catalog website.

Continuing the PRA Preservation & Access Project will require several years of secured funding, professional positions within the archives, additional storage space, and assistance with strategy and knowledge-sharing.

The PRA Preservation & Access Project is dedicated to helping to create and participate in a community of like and related institutions which will work together to discover the best standards for preservation, conservation and restoration; as well as to create standards for cataloging, metadata, and access. PRA hopes to obtain professional staff to participate in the PBCORE metadata effort, to continue to participate in discussions of the best storage media, and to find ways to make historic materials available to the widest possible public.

From the beginning, Pacifica Radio served as its own scribe, having a profound sense of the historical importance of its broadcasts. Pre-dating National Public Radio, Pacifica was formed by a small band of WWII Conscientious Objectors, avant-garde artists, and radio professionals, in order to create a new kind of radio, supported by listeners, owing nothing to sponsors, providing an outlet for creative expression, a forum for unpopular viewpoints, and a safe haven for artistic expression. The PRA Preservation & Access Project has solicited and received advice from many experts regarding tape transfer, storage, cataloging, access, and other aspects of this endeavor. As soon as it is available, information and analysis are made available to the sound archives community on the PRA website. PRA staff also make efforts to present results and ongoing projects to conferences in the Archives, Library, Community Radio and Public Radio communities.

Needs: Funding for a community of interest to work out common solutions to problems of — long term preservation media standards; cataloging and description (including appropriate subject terms and metadata); multiple/appropriate storage for masters; copyright/use issues.

PRA has the particular problem of working with a constituency of independent producers, and station producers, who are reaching (or have exceeded) the age of retirement. Many valuable contributions to the scope of the PRA collection are in danger of physical disintegration, or distribution to institutions which will not necessarily describe the Pacifica connection. Funds are urgently needed to undertake an assertive acquisition project.

PRA suggests that the Board consider the enormous contributions, and incipient collections, of independent radio producers who have worked with PRA, and with other radio broadcast entities. The Association of Independents in Radio (AIR) is a key contact for obtaining information on this wealth of historic sound recordings. The National Public Broadcasting Archives at the University of Maryland, College Park, is the repository for archived recordings of the National Federation of Community Broadcasters (NFCB). Other Minds Archive, and Freedom Archives in San Francisco both hold significant Pacifica Radio recordings. Original Pacifica Radio sound recordings are also held by Mills College in Oakland, CA, the Museum of Radio and Television (NYC and LA), and other locations.

Outside of the historic PRA collection, Pacifica Radio is a vibrant, living entity which is constantly creating programming for broadcast — through five Sister Stations, one hundred Affiliated Community Broadcast Stations, ongoing National Programming (including PRA productions), and current and past programs various streamed on station and national websites. Many current programs are also available on “podcasts”. PRA is interested in exploring the possibility of facilitating a collection and preservation policy for “born digital” programming from Pacifica stations and producers.