

## Documentary Photography and Audio Recording Supplies & Folklife Archiving Resources

Since earlier days of folklife documentation, when film cameras and analog or other forms of audio and video recording prevailed, the world has moved on largely to digital media. There are a number of good resources available for learning about working with digital media. Whether you are working independently or in an institutional context, archiving folklife documentation materials is essential to their preservation and continued access. Information about archiving and digitization is thus included here. If you are working with an archivist or partner organization to care for your documentation materials, some of the resources below may be helpful in illuminating the special needs and concerns germane to archiving folklife materials.

The technology entailed in folklife documentation is an ever-changing landscape. Most of the following resources are maintained and updated as new technologies and strategies emerge. The following is not an exhaustive list! The resources included here contain links for further exploration and learning. Additional information about folklife documentation and oral historical research is included in the related document, **Technical Assistance Resource List of Folklife & Documentation Materials**. Some of the resources listed on that page include technical and archiving information.

At the end of this list is information for those who prefer to use audio tapes and film cameras.

American Folklore Society. National Folklore Archives Initiative (NFAI).

Over a period of years, the NFAI is documenting and providing access to information about folklore archival collections held by folklore programs at academic institutions, community-based cultural and ethnic organizations, non-profit organizations, and state government-based arts and cultural agencies in the United States. Folklore archival collections—unpublished multi-format collections of materials created in the field that document traditional cultural expressions and knowledge—comprise one of our nation’s most valuable cultural resources. But scholars, public humanists, teachers, students, and community members cannot easily access these materials. The purpose of the NFAI is to make the intellectual content of folklore archival collections widely accessible. Learn more at the NFAI page on the American Folklore Society website.

[www.afsnet.org/?page=NFAI](http://www.afsnet.org/?page=NFAI)

Ask Doug, Oral History in the Digital Age (OHDA). Digital expert Doug Boyd presents a series of questions to help you make the best possible choices for your particular equipment needs. He supplies up-to-date information about the latest recorders, gives his thoughts on the subject, and picks some of his favorites. If you are new to digital recorders, you may want to see the OHDA’s videos on digital recorders or read the essay, *What You Should Know about Digital Recorders*. The website includes a handy index of technical terms broken down into plain English.

<http://ohda.matrix.msu.edu/doug/>

Baylor University Institute of Oral History, Digital Oral History Workshop.

For today's oral historians, digital technology has eliminated the distinction between the creation or collection of oral history and the management of it. Digital expertise is required at every stage of the oral history process. It is needed for recording interviews, for designing and creating intermediate and end products, and for managing preservation and access. This website contains guides to selecting and using digital equipment and software for recording, preserving, and disseminating oral history. Online guides include: Digital Audio Recording, Digital Video Recording, Digitization and Oral History, Archiving Digital Oral History, Funding Digital Oral History, links to online digital oral history projects, centers, and resources, and a glossary for digital oral history.

[www.baylor.edu/oralhistory/index.php?id=61236](http://www.baylor.edu/oralhistory/index.php?id=61236)

Collier, John, Jr., and Malcolm Collier. 1986. *Visual Anthropology; Photography as a Research Method*, Revised and Expanded Edition. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press. Long considered a classic, this volume presents photography as a rich source of both quantitative data and qualitative information about human interaction. *Visual Anthropology* provides research methods from the systematic gathering of data through analysis of photographic records to the transfer of insights to ethnographic records. Although some aspects of the book's technical information are understandably outdated, the emphasis is more on developing skills of thorough observation rather than on a technical skill. This volume remains invaluable for those using photography or video as documentary research tools.

Conservation OnLine (CoOL): Resources for Conservation Professionals. *CoOL*, an online resource operated by the Foundation of the American Institute for Conservation, is a comprehensive library of conservation information, covering a wide spectrum of topics of interest to those involved with the conservation of library, archives and museum materials. It is a growing online resource for conservators, collection care specialists, and other conservation professionals.

<http://cool.conservation-us.org>

Corsaro, James, and Karen Taussig-Lux. 1998. *Folklore in Archives: A Guide to Describing Folklore and Folklife Materials*. New York Folklore Society.

An essential tool for the archivist who must arrange and describe folklore collections. It is the companion piece and sequel to *Working with Folk Materials in New York State: A Manual for Folklorists and Archivists*. It is designed for not only for archivists, but also librarians, curators, or collections managers—for anyone responsible for arranging, describing, or caring for folklore collections or other collections that contain folklore materials. It is an essential tool also for folklorists or other cultural specialists or a community members who have folklore materials and want to work with archivists to ensure the preservation and accessibility of the collections.

<http://www.nyfolklore.org/pubs/books.html>

Council for the Preservation of Anthropological Records.

The Council for the Preservation of Anthropological Records is dedicated to helping anthropologists, librarians, archivists, information specialists and others preserve and provide

access to the record of human diversity and the history of the discipline. The Council for the Preservation of Anthropological Records sponsors programs that foster awareness of the importance of preserving anthropological records; provides consulting and technical support to archival repositories; provides information on records location and access; and fosters collaboration between archivists responsible for anthropological collections and tribal archivists. The website contains links to several online publications, including a series of bulletins addressing topics relevant to folklore archives.

<http://copar.org>

Digital Photography School. An online community of photographers of all experience levels who come together to learn, share and grow in our understanding of photography. New articles are posted daily in three categories, including: Photography Tips & Tutorials, Cameras and Equipment, and Post Production. The website maintains an archive of articles that is searchable by topic. An excellent resource!

<http://digital-photography-school.com>

Fargion, Janet Topp, ed. 2001, 2nd edition. *A Manual for Documentation, Fieldwork, and Preservation for Ethnomusicologists*. Society for Ethnomusicology (SEM) Special Series. This handy pocket-sized guide is a handy reference work for anyone doing ethnographic fieldwork that involves audio or video recordings of any kind. The *Manual* begins with an introduction to basic documentation procedures including ethical and legal considerations. It also contains an extensive section on recording and photographic equipment. Because this guide was prepared by archivists, it also contains a section on storing and preserving your materials. To the point, accessibly written, and packed with useful information, the *Manual* is excellent for courses that involve fieldwork, and ethnographic fieldworkers at all levels of experience. Ordering information is on the SEM website.

[http://www.ethnomusicology.org/?Pub\\_SpecialSeries](http://www.ethnomusicology.org/?Pub_SpecialSeries)

Fells, Nick, Pauline Donachy, Catherine Owen, Kate Iles. 2002. *Creating Digital Audio Resources: A Guide to Good Practices*. Oxford, UK: Oxbow Books, on behalf of the Arts and Humanities Data Service.

This guide is intended as a basic “how to” for those wishing to use audio materials in the creation of digital resources. It deals with such issues as copyright, choosing equipment, playing audio media, delivery of audio to users, and data management and preservation.

*Guidelines on the Production and Preservation of Digital Audio Objects*. 2004. International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives (IASA).

This publication is intended to provide guidance to audiovisual archivists on a professional approach to the production and preservation of digital audio objects. These guidelines address the production of digital copies from analogue or originals for the purposes of preservation, the transfer of digital originals to storage systems, as well as the recording of original material in digital form intended for long-term archival storage. These guidelines are considered by many to represent best practices for audio visual archives.

Images and Information, Larry J. Clark.

This site contains detailed information about digital audio and field recording and digital photography. A conceptual site focused on travel documentation, it also features thematic sections with photographs, essays, and technical exercises.

[www.ljclark.com/index.html](http://www.ljclark.com/index.html)

Luminous Landscape.

Luminous Landscape is a comprehensive site devoted to the art of landscape, nature and documentary photography using digital as well as traditional image processing techniques. You will find on this site instructive feature articles, product reviews, travel and technical discussions, inspiring portfolios, and a Discussion Forum. This site currently has many pages containing articles, tutorials, product reviews and photographs.

[www.luminous-landscape.com/index.shtml](http://www.luminous-landscape.com/index.shtml)

Oral History in the Digital Age.

This resource is a product of an Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) National Leadership project and a collaboration among the Michigan State University Digital Humanities Center, Matrix; the American Folklife Center, the Library of Congress; the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage; the American Folklore Society; the Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, University of Kentucky Libraries; and the Oral History Association.

This extensive site connects you to the latest information on digital technologies pertaining to all phases of the oral history process. The primary site provides access to essays written by leading experts about recording, archiving and disseminating oral history projects and video interviews with many of these leading experts. The OHDA WIKI links you to current best practices from around the web and includes many exemplary web sites offering numerous examples for diverse and exciting ways to present oral history online.

<http://ohda.matrix.msu.edu>

Silverman, Sydel, and Nancy J. Parezo. 1995. *Preserving the Anthropological Record*, Second Edition. New York, New York: Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, Inc.

This edited volume addresses a range of considerations in the multifaceted world of ethnographic records, including institutional resources, the preservation and use of cultural materials, preservation issues in the fields of anthropology, and guidelines and strategies. Online edition available as download.

<http://copar.org/par/index.htm>

Suter, John W. ed. 1994. *Working with Folk Materials in New York State: A Manual for Folklorists and Archivists*. Ithaca, New York: The New York Folklore Society, Inc.

The fundamentals of folklore and archives, a list of resource organizations for folklorists, and a list of supplementary readings can be found in this manual, which also explores the interface between folklorists and archivists. Order from the New York Folklore Society.

[www.nyfolklore.org/gallery/store/books.html](http://www.nyfolklore.org/gallery/store/books.html)

Traditional Arts Indiana Fieldwork Guides.

Traditional Arts Indiana has compiled in its Resources section a series of guides for fieldworkers. Here you will find brief instructional videos that provide documentation tips on recording equipment, preparing for and structuring an interview, composing photographs, and dry mounting photographs.

[www.traditionalartsindiana.org](http://www.traditionalartsindiana.org)

Transom.org

This website channels new work and voices to public radio and public media. The site offers tools, advice, and community. Contributors focus on the power of story and the ways public media can be useful in a changing media environment. The site features shows, guest spots by radio professionals, information about workshops, and tools. In the Tools section, you will find current information about recording gear, including field gear, with reviews by radio professionals.

<http://transom.org>

Vermont Folklife Center (VFC) Online Field Research Tools.

The VFC archive provides a number of online documents to assist those interested in conducting folklore, folklife and oral history fieldwork. The VFC website provides information on field audio recording equipment, the editing of digital audio, and links to other online resources. New documents are added periodically. Digital research tools include: *Digital Audio Field Recording Equipment Guide*, *Audio Recording Equipment Guide: Retired Equipment List*, *Field Recording in the Digital Age*, *Digital Editing of Field Audio*, *Resources on the Preservation of Materials in Ethnographic and Oral History Collections*, and *Advice for Interviewing in the Wake of Hurricane Irene*.

[www.vermontfolklifecenter.org/archive/archive-fieldguides.html](http://www.vermontfolklifecenter.org/archive/archive-fieldguides.html)

### **Working with Film Cameras and Audio Tapes**

Although ease and convenience have made digital photography and audio the preferred tool for many folklorists, there are those who prefer working with film cameras and audio tapes. Below is a guide to audio tapes and camera film and the shooting contexts in which different types of film are used.

#### **Black and White Film**

Use any speed/type appropriate for the situation. This information pertains to prints used for publications, press releases, exhibits, etc.

Plus-X 100 ASA—a wonderful, relatively slow film. Very good in bright light and has rich tonal range and tight grain

Tri-X 400 ASA—for many years the main film of black and white photographers. Still preferred by many; it can be pushed to 1600 ASA, but not as easily or with as good a result as T-MAX.

T-Max 100—T-MAX numbers represent the recommended speed. A print from T-MAX 100 could pass for the now discontinued Panatomic-X.

T-MAX 400—the analog to Tri-X, but with tighter grain. Can be pushed very easily.

T-MAX 3200—a great film for documentary purposes. Very fast and amazingly tight grain if developed properly or carefully. Looks best when shot at 1600 or 3200 ASA, but can be pushed even further. Allows you to leave your flash at home or at least take it off from time to time.

#### Slide Film

Use only Kodachrome, Ektachrome, or Fujichrome at any speed appropriate for the situation. Note that Kodachrome is sent to Kodak for processing, local processors (overnight) cannot do it. Allow up to two weeks. Also, other than 64 ASA, they are often not readily available except in specialty photography shops or by mail order.

25 ASA--best for broad daylight. The best color and resolution.

64 ASA--tight grain, but cannot capture fast movement. Don't use in low lighting situations.

200 ASA--best for low lighting or when you need to capture movement.

#### Color Print Film

Color prints for long term archival purposes are not recommended unless you plan to digitize them. Color prints are still relatively unstable and will fade over time.

#### Audio Tape

Use any high bias, type II (or III) audio cassette tape that is 60 minutes or less. Plan on spending about \$2.50 (discount and in bulk) or more (up to \$4.00 retail) per tape. Lesser quality tape is thinner and will stretch each time it is played. If you are recording music, use a metal tape. Type I, low to medium bias tapes are only suitable to record meetings. Don't skimp on the cost of tapes.