Development of a Scottish sound archive

Strategic Vision

Vision Statement

Through increasing **Visibility** to sound collections

we can help in **Raising Standards** and sharing best practice

to encourage effective **Care** and promote widespread **Accessibility**

while fostering a supportive public and professional **Network**

nls
National Library of Scotland
Leabharlann Nàiseanta na h-Alba

A national sound archive for Scotland

Why?

Sound collections can be found in a variety of places. Many museums, libraries and archives, commercial companies and individual collectors hold a wide range of recordings. Although there are differences in the way these organisations and individuals manage their collections they are connected in a common purpose. All have an investment in preserving these recordings for future generations.

These organisations have recognised a need for the development of a national sound archive for Scotland for many years. In 2009 a consultation identified key deficiencies in provision for sound collections which included:

- the absence of a permanent provision for cataloguing and digitising analogue collections
- the lack of a national overview of collecting
- insufficient preservation facilities
- the lack of a national digital resource of sound archive material
- no coherent voice for the sector
- no Scottish policy making and training body
- no organisation that collects sound and moving image material in an integrated manner

Where?

The 2009 consultation recommended that the National Library of Scotland should manage the development of a new service to complement existing provision in Scottish sound and moving image collections.

Who?

The National Library of Scotland has been working with Tobar an Dualchais (who delivered a project to digitise and make accessible archive sound recordings 2006-2010) and other stakeholders to plan and develop the new archive. These organisations are committed to working together to achieve the vision described in this document.

Visibility

Visibility is the foundation for providing access to and preservation for analogue and digital collections.

Scope

We will conduct an initial mapping survey and establish a registry of sound collections in Scotland. This will help us understand the extent and nature of the sound collections that exist. Asking questions relating to condition, access and standards will help us to assess the individual needs of each organisation caring for sound collections. By building relationships with collection hosts, we will be able to compile an up-to-date registry.

Search

We will create an online portal to give the sound collections relating to Scotland a central online focus. Members of the public will be able to search the portal to find many different sorts of audio content e.g. published music, spoken word recordings and oral history interviews. Some will be accessible online while other collections will only be accessible at on-site locations. It is hoped the portal will become a popular focus for sound collections relating to Scotland and increase accessibility to the riches contained in archives, libraries and museums.

Share

The portal will also use the connectivity of the web to encourage participation and interaction. Public users will be able to connect and share with others through social media.

In today's digital world sharing data about our collections is essential. We aim to share this data through national and international search discovery tools so audio content can be found and shared widely, alongside other cultural objects.

Raising standards

A Scottish sound archive will be active in raising standards. Using the portal and public upload facility as a platform we will encourage organisations and individuals to improve collection care and access.

Metadata

Many organisations that keep sound collections hold some metadata (data about the collections). However metadata which is useful for sound material can be very different from that used for other types of material, e.g. printed books and moving image. Unfortunately with so many different standards there are many variations in metadata. These are not necessarily incompatible but they do require work to create a standardised approach.

We aim to create a metadata schema which will bring together collections from a wide variety of organisations, irrespective of their approach to metadata. This will allow users to search between different collections through a single portal.

Training and support

Through training we can assist organisations in improving their metadata and help them be part of the portal and the wider national collection.

We will take an active role in supporting organisations which hold sound material but feel poorly equipped or lacking in knowledge to preserve and make accessible their collections. Rather than taking care of collections at a Scottish sound archive, we aim to help organisations to feel confident in taking care of their own collections and improving access to them.

Collection care and accessibility

Physical care

Physical care of sound collections was highlighted by the 2009 consultation as one of the most pressing needs within the sector. There is a clear need to improve the supply of appropriate storage for original material and also to share expertise in handling and caring for physical sound material. We hope that by building a network of Scottish sound collections we can also build a network of sound repositories, bringing together knowledge and expertise on caring for collections.

Digitisation

Digitisation is crucial for both preservation and access. We aim to help organisations find ways to digitise their material which will make it easier for users to access their collections while preserving the recordings for future generations.

Accessibility

The portal will not host content. It will host a link to where the content can be accessed. Through raising standards and visibility we support the case for online digital access to content.

However there are many barriers to providing access to digital and digitised content online. Intellectual property rights legislation prevents organisations from making content accessible to the public without the rights holder's permission. Unfortunately it can sometimes be difficult to trace who has rights to archive material. It can also be difficult to get approval to put a lot of archive content online for free. There are other things to consider such as ethics of putting the recording of an oral history interview online even if rights are granted. Another stumbling block to access is in the financial and resource implications of digitisation and the creation of an online presence for a collection. The benefits of digitisation and online access are, however, obvious.

We also must address the need to capture new content in a digital world. We aim to build an online facility that will allow members of the public to upload digital material for selection to the national collection. This means we will be able to collect sound material today that will help future generations understand our culture. This content will be presented online for users to search and access.

Digital preservation

A recurring concern within the sector is the need to address digital preservation. How do we make sure that the digital content we produce today is still there, and accessible, in future? Technology can become obsolete as has been seen with wax cylinders, open reels and cassettes. Digital material can also be fragile and susceptible to wear through use. We aim to help organisations manage their digital materials if they require it. We will also take care of the digital material which the public donates to the archive through public upload.

Network

We will champion the sustainable management of sound collections relating to Scotland and work to improve communication and co-operation between organisations that hold collections. Collectively we can address the need for better provision of collection care and access by sharing expertise and specialist tools and equipment.

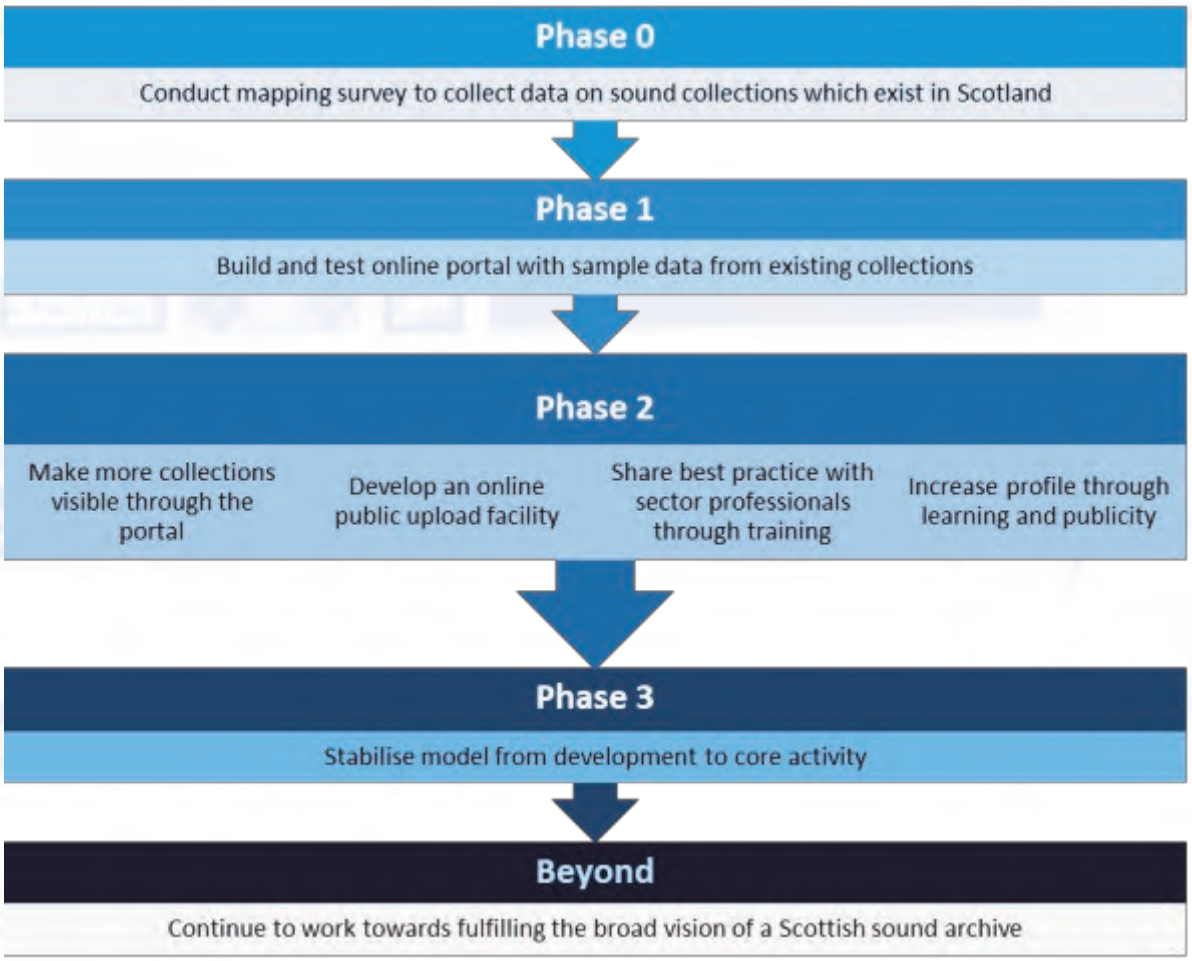
A Scottish sound archive will not exist to take universal responsibility for provision but will complement the work of existing organisations. We hope that by improving communication we can work towards developing more integrated collecting policies between organisations.

Co-operatively we can work to increase the visibility of Scottish collections among the public and professionals, both nationally and internationally. Together we can work to promote sound collections and to source and sustain funding to build and preserve the collections for years to come.

How are we going to do this?

We have broken down the development of a Scottish sound archive into a number of progressive phases. In April 2013 we concluded Phase 0 and began Phase 1. We hope to continue our work to reach Phase 3 in 2016.

Stakeholder organisations are committed to work together to achieve the following phases.



Learn more about the development

For more information please visit

www.nls.uk/scottish-sound-archive

or contact us at

sound@nls.uk

The following organisations are involved in the development of a Scottish sound archive:

Scottish Oral History Centre
University of Strathclyde Glasgow
Supporting and undertaking oral history projects

BBC Scotland

nls
National Library of Scotland
Leabharlann Nàiseanta na h-Alba

The University of Edinburgh

sohg
scottish oral history group

National Records of Scotland

Tobar an Dualchais

Scottish Council on Archives

British Library

UKRAAC
UK Radio Archives Advisory Committee

Museums Galleries Scotland