

ETHNOGRAPHIC SOUND ARCHIVES ONLINE



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***Ethnographic Sound Archives Online* brings together previously unpublished historic audio recordings and their supporting field materials, opening new paths for the study of music in its cultural context.**

The practice of going into the field to “collect” music dates to the early 20th century, as innovations like the portable phonograph enabled sounds to be recorded on wax cylinders. In response to a growing commercialized music industry, and tied to the Romantic Era notion of disappearing cultures, early field workers such as Frances Densmore and Alan Lomax traveled to remote areas to document and preserve everyday songs and language. By the 1960s, sound collectors began incorporating theories and methods from cultural anthropology — and ethnomusicology as an academic field of study was born.

Content

Ethnographic Sound Archives Online brings together 2,000 hours of audio recordings from field expeditions around the world, particularly from the 1960s through the 1980s—the dawn of ethnomusicology as a codified discipline.

Building on their predecessors’ early sound collecting methods, ethnomusicologists began to fill in gaps on the world music map, traveling to field sites to record and document music in its broader cultural context. These collectors’ bodies of work contain some of the most comprehensive surveys of regional music on record, including Mark Slobin’s survey of Afghan music, Nazir Jairazbhoy’s survey of classical Indian music, and Hugh Tracey’s survey of southern and central African music.



Curation

Music is tightly woven into society and culture — it accompanies rituals and dances, and fills social spaces. It is the goal of the ethnomusicologist to document sound in this broader context, so field recordings are often accompanied by film footage, photographs, handwritten notes, and records of the larger soundscape. Where possible, the audio in this collection is presented along with its contextual materials, totaling more than 10,000 pages of field notes and 150 hours of film footage, re-creating music’s relationship to its cultural context in a digital space.



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ARCHIVAL COLLECTIONS

The Afghan Music Archive (World Music Archives, Wesleyan University) contains Mark Slobin's original field documentation of the music and culture of the Afghan North in the years prior to the Soviet invasion and anti-musical Taliban takeover.

Curated to include Slobin's comprehensive body of research, *Ethnographic Sound Archives Online* includes field recordings from his survey of music, along with field notes, photographs, film footage and annotations, enabling scholars to recreate the field experience by linking documentation from the same ethnographic event.

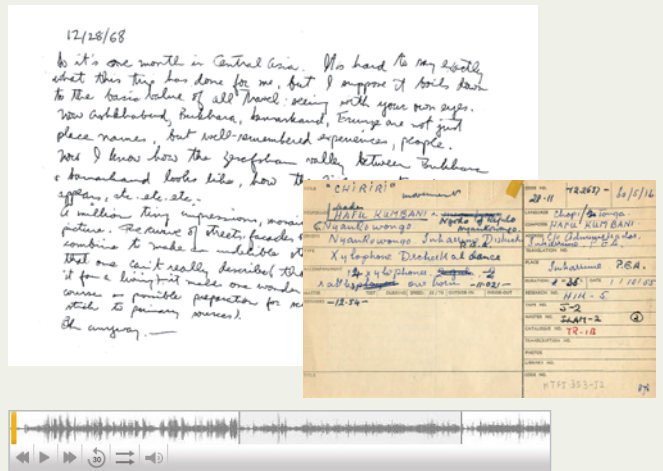


"I never returned to Afghanistan [so] the material presented in this project is something of a fly in amber....The tragic history that has flooded Afghanistan with waves of violence, civil war, and external intervention began with the Soviet invasion of 1979 and shows no signs of ending. Some of my collaborators were killed by various regimes, ... causing great disruption to a music culture that has only partially rebounded since the defeat of the anti-musical Taliban and the American intervention of 2001."

– Mark Slobin, Professor of Music Emeritus, Wesleyan University

Nazir Ali Jairazhboy Archive (The Archives and Research Center for Ethnomusicology, American Institute of Indian Studies) contains curated selections from Nazir Ali Jairazhboy's lifelong research documenting the diversity of musical styles and genres across India. This is one of the most comprehensive surveys of classical Indian music, including the Bake re-study and corresponding field notes and photographs.

The Sound of Africa Series (International Library of African Music, Rhodes University) includes Hugh Tracey's vast survey of music genres and cultures across central and southern Africa. Presented in original finding aid order, each recording is accompanied by Tracey's original handwritten field notes and field data.



SPOTLIGHT: Publishing as Repatriation

U.S.A. South Negro Folklore, Laura Boulton Collection (Center for Ethnomusicology, Columbia University) is a historically significant repository of African American music and language in the Jim Crow South.

"Our hope is that by releasing this set of recordings to a broader public, we can 'crowdsource' the work of returning these materials to their diasporic source communities, [to those] who might still lay claim to these recordings as their family's or community's or institution's heritage The lack of detailed documentation is frustrating, but also creates an aura of discovery ... discovering [the recordings'] connections to living people and communities and institutions and musical practices, and allowing these mysterious old sounds to be reanimated."

– Aaron Fox, Professor of Ethnomusicology and Director of the Center for Ethnomusicology, Columbia University

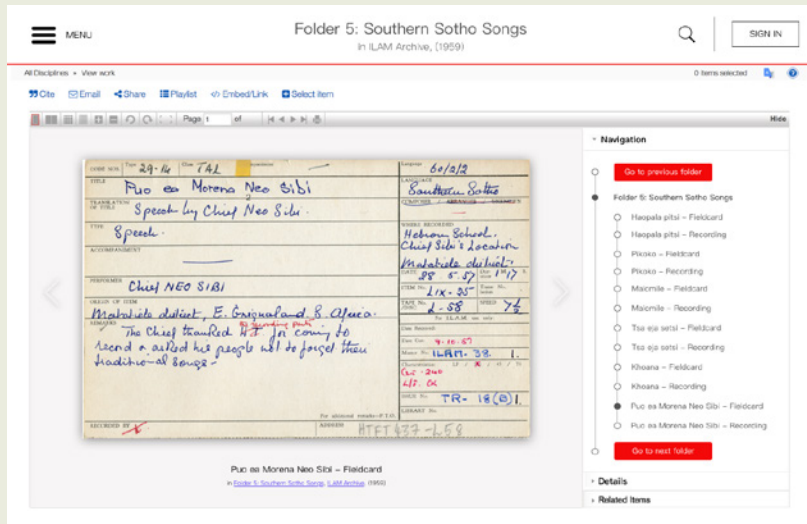
Louis Sarno Archive (Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford) is Louis Sarno's field documentation of the music and cultural landscape of one of the world's last remaining traditional hunter-gatherer societies. It brings together every aspect of music-making, its context in daily life, and the larger soundscapes of the central African rainforest through which it's inextricably woven.



DIGITALLY REDEFINING THE ARCHIVAL RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Access

Archival curation is approached as comprehensively as possible, with the inclusion of full boxes, folders and series where possible. The Alexander Street platform enables users to mimic a live archive research experience in a digital space. Content and metadata are presented in original finding aid order, with box, folder and document organization maintained in digital form. In cases of missing documents, dummy records and metadata will point researchers to the original source.



Ethnographic Sound Archives Online is available individually, or as part of the larger Anthropology Research Library, along with these collections:

Anthropological Fieldwork Online

Anthropology Online

Early Encounters in North America

Ethnographic Video Online, Volumes I and II: Foundational Films

Ethnographic Video Online, Volume III: Indigenous Voices

Ethnographic Video Online, Volume IV: Festivals and Archives

North American Indian Thought and Culture

Documentary Educational Resources*

*Available as a subscription add-on



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