

# Preserve This Podcast

An Assessment of the 2018-2020 Project

Meridith Beck Mink

January 2020



Title: Preserve This Podcast: An Assessment of the 2018-2020 Project

Author: Meredith Beck Mink



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

**minkwell**

RESEARCH & CONSULTING

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	3
1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
1.1 Methodology	4
1.2 Project Overview	4
2. FINDINGS	6
2.1 Overview of Major Findings	6
Successes	6
Challenges	6
2.2 General Feedback	7
2.3 Curriculum Evaluation	10
2.4 Challenges & Feedback on Improving Project	14
2.5 Feedback on Expanding the Project & Next Steps	16
3. RECOMMENDATIONS	19
3.1 General Recommendations	19
3.2 Expanding Ways to Deliver Curriculum	19
3.3 Funding	20
4. CONCLUSION	22
WORKS CITED	27
ABOUT THE AUTHOR	28
Appendix 1: Curriculum Advisory Board Members	29
Appendix 2: List of Preserve This Podcast Workshops	30

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report was not formally reviewed; however, it greatly benefited from the generous feedback of several readers. Anthony Lattis, an information professional with an MLIS from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, carefully read and commented on draft versions of this report. The Preserve This Podcast team members—Dana Gerber-Margie, Mary Kidd, Molly Schwartz, and Sarah Nguyen—also took time to read and provide feedback on a draft of this report.

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### 1.1 Methodology

Data for this assessment was gathered from interviews and surveys conducted with the project leaders, curriculum advisory board members, workshop attendees, and podcast producers who engaged with the curriculum. The assessor conducted a group discussion and one-on-one interviews with project team leaders to capture their insights into how the project was developed, its strengths and challenges, and potential next steps. Three online surveys were administered to gather feedback on the Preserve This Podcast (PTP) curriculum: one to podcast producers (hereafter referred to as the podcast producers survey), one to students of a podcasting intensive course in which the PTP curriculum was taught, and one to members of the curriculum advisory board. The assessor designed surveys for the podcast producers and students in the podcasting course to collect their impressions of the curriculum's clarity and effectiveness in persuading them to implement preservation practices. The survey for the curriculum advisory board gathered feedback on the completed curriculum and suggestions on the future of the project.

The Preserve This Podcast leaders also administered post-workshop surveys to attendees of the workshops that they delivered, and these responses were integrated into this report. General feedback from the surveys was integrated into the findings section, while particular consideration was given to input received from members of the curriculum advisory board and the project leaders in writing the recommendations section (see Appendix 1 for a list of curriculum advisory board members). In addition to the surveys and interviews, the assessor reviewed online materials and documentation associated with the project.

### 1.2 Project Overview

The Preserve This Podcast (PTP) project was funded by a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to the Metropolitan New York Library Council (METRO) in 2018. The twenty-four-month project aimed to develop educational and outreach material on podcast preservation primarily for independent podcast producers. The project was co-led by Dana Gerber-Margie, Mary Kidd, Molly Schwartz, and Sarah Nguyen. In addition, Mary Kidd created the illustrations

associated with the project, Molly Schwartz was the lead producer on the podcast series, and Sarah Nguyen created the project's online resources.<sup>1</sup> The PTP team accomplished all major activities stipulated in the Mellon grant, including developing a preservation curriculum in the form of a five-part podcast series, a zine, and in-person workshops, all of which are freely available on [their website](#).

The project originated in part from a workshop entitled “Archiving and Preservation Tools and Techniques for Podcasters,” which was delivered in March 2017 at the Personal Digital Archiving Conference at Stanford University. Two members of the PTP team, Mary Kidd and Dana Gerber-Margie, facilitated this workshop, as well as Danielle Cordovez (New York Public Library) and Anne Wootten (Pop-Up Archive). This 2017 workshop served as an inspiration for the PTP curriculum and emphasized to the project leaders that the long-term preservation of podcasts is an urgent issue due largely to a lack of knowledge and awareness on behalf of both cultural heritage professionals and podcast producers.<sup>2</sup> Dana Gerber-Margie was further attuned to the preservation needs of the podcasting community as the co-founder of the Bello Collective—a newsletter and publication about audio storytelling and the podcast industry—and creator of the Audio Signal podcast.

The primary goal of the project was to develop an outreach and education campaign to “change the behaviors of both podcast producers and cultural heritage professionals.”<sup>3</sup> To accomplish this goal, the project leaders defined the following major deliverables of the project: create a podcast preservation curriculum that guides producers through archival preservation activities; produce a podcast series and a zine tutorial that uses storytelling and illustrations to teach archival concepts; and lead in-person workshops with podcast producers that cover the material in the curriculum. The curriculum was delivered through in-person workshops, the zine, and the podcast series; all three of these methods of delivery could work together or

---

1 In addition to the core project team, the following people provided their expertise: Jeremy Helton (Community Relations Manager); Allison Behringer (Editorial Consultant); Dalton Harts (Audio Engineer); Jacob Kramer-Duffield (Analytics and Audience Research Consultant); Noah Litvin (Web Designer); Austin Eustice (Logo Designer); and Breakmaster Cylinder composed the theme music for the podcast.

2 Metropolitan New York Library Council, “Preserve This Podcast: A Podcast Preservation Tutorial and Outreach Project,” Grant Proposal (New York, NY: 2018), 3-4.

3 Metropolitan New York Library Council, “Preserve This Podcast: A Podcast Preservation Tutorial and Outreach Project,” 4.

independently. The PTP team also designed and delivered tailored workshops at professional conferences, at community-based organizations, and in academic information science classes. For example, the curriculum was delivered to an introductory intensive podcasting class at the Brooklyn Information & Culture (BRIC) Arts Media organization in Brooklyn, New York, and via virtual guest lectures in an audio preservation course at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) and in a web archiving course at Clayton University in Georgia. All of the grant deliverables were completed by November 2019, although the team continued to deliver the curriculum in workshops and classes through the end of the grant period.

## 2. FINDINGS

This section identifies the major successes, challenges, and suggestions for how the Preserve This Podcast project can be advanced based on feedback from assessment participants.

### 2.1 Overview of Major Findings

#### Successes

- Participants in the assessment overwhelmingly expressed that the project had great value and relevance for the podcasting community.
- Participants described adopting or implementing digital preservation practices.
- Participants generally described the curriculum material as highly understandable and pedagogically effective.
- Participants praised the Preserve This Podcast materials in terms of their execution.
- The project effectively raised awareness about the risks to podcasts, as well as to digital files in general.
- All major activities and deliverables described in the grant proposal were completed.

#### Challenges

- Overall, the turnout at the in-person workshops was lower than anticipated.
- Although independent podcasters recognized the value in preserving their work, some identified barriers to acting on the curriculum, such as the time involved in implementing best practices.

## 2.2 General Feedback

In general, the feedback on the Preserve This Podcast project and curriculum from participants in this assessment was extremely positive. A member of the curriculum advisory board summarized the overall tone of the feedback with, “I have really enjoyed watching this project evolve and I think it was particularly successful because of the creativity the team brought to the work,” while another said, “the project is a really huge success!”

Participants in this assessment suggested that the workshops and zine were the most successful means of delivering the curriculum materials. Sixty-four percent of the respondents to the podcast producers survey felt the zine was the most effective way of learning about preservation, while eighty percent of the respondents to the BRIC student survey felt the in-person instruction was most effective. Similarly, forty percent of the curriculum advisory board members who responded to the survey indicated that they felt the in-person workshops were the most pedagogically effective method of delivering the curriculum. Additionally, forty percent responded that all three elements taken together—the zine, podcasts, and workshops—represented the greatest potential for learning. Regarding the workshops, one curriculum advisory board member stated:

The workshops were particularly helpful as they brought together media creators who were seeking solutions to real-world challenges in an environment where those issues could be addressed with facilitators who had expertise in preservation.

The PTP zine and podcasts, however, were directly integrated into the workshops; therefore workshop participants were exposed to all elements of the curriculum materials. As a member of the curriculum advisory board astutely noted, the zine and podcast series were critical to capturing the attention of media makers and the podcasting community.

Survey respondents provided little explicit feedback on the podcast episodes, although the statistics recorded by SimpleCast clearly indicate that the podcasts were downloaded several thousand times. Several listeners, however, reached out directly to the project team with feedback on the podcasts themselves and left reviews for the series on iTunes. One listener emailed the team the following:



I was really impressed by the format of the podcast. It could have been quite dry, but the treatment really worked, and instead it was warm and accessible. Made archiving, the small details of preserving files like underscores fun. I think working with creators who each needed help in that area worked as one can put themselves in their place.

Reviewers on iTunes commented that podcasters will “most certainly benefit from listening to this show” and that the “episodes go a long way to help podcasters organize and ultimately preserve their files.” One reviewer added that “as someone who does not have a podcast, the organizational plans discussed on Preserve This Podcast are useful to anyone who has a desktop full of folders, Word docs, PDFs, etc.”

In general, participants in the assessment felt that the Preserve This Podcast curriculum was easily understandable. Sixty-five percent of respondents to the podcast producers survey found the curriculum “highly understandable,” while most participants who attended workshops also indicated the same. Members of the curriculum advisory board surveyed indicated that the curriculum was particularly successful at identifying best practices and preservation actions; explaining archival concepts, such as digital audio preservation; and raising awareness about the risks to podcasts.

Overall, it was clear that the project was very successful in raising awareness about the risks to digital media, as well as the importance of collecting and preserving podcasts. For example, all of the survey respondents from the BRIC podcast intensive class indicated that digital decay was a new concept to them. Similarly, forty-two percent of the respondents to the podcast producers survey indicated that digital decay was a new concept, despite being media makers themselves, while eighty percent of them said that the project raised their concern about preserving their podcasts. This data further confirms the project leaders’ assertion that podcast producers have a gap in their knowledge and lack of awareness regarding preservation. It also underscores the importance of the project’s aim to raise awareness about the importance of collecting and preserving podcasts at cultural heritage institutions, in addition to teaching podcast producers how to take steps to preserve their own work.

The project also effectively raised participants’ confidence in their ability to preserve their own work, empowering many to act on the lessons delivered. Most assessment participants who were unfamiliar with the process of podcast preservation indicated that engagement with

the PTP project made them more confident in preserving their podcasts in the future. For example, all of the respondents to the podcast producers survey and eighty percent of the BRIC students felt more confident in preserving their podcasts after engaging with the curriculum.

Assessment participants also described specific ways that the project compelled them to take concrete action. Overall, sixty percent of the respondents to the podcast producers survey stated that the project changed how they stored files on devices other than their main workstation or computer. Many said they purchased a hard drive or started saving files to cloud storage, for example, while sixty-three percent of the same group said the curriculum motivated them to implement a 3-2-1 backup plan. Finally, thirty-seven percent of the respondents to the podcast producers survey said they started editing their metadata after engaging in the project, while thirty-seven percent responded that they were already using good descriptive practices. Participants further described how they were improving their preservation practices after engaging with the project, sharing for example: “I’m still working on it, but I got a new hard drive and am working on having my files in 3 places!” and “still working on storing a second hard drive in a different place.” Other participants expressed an intention to archive their work or improve their preservation practices, but did not necessarily take immediate action. Time constraints were identified as the major barrier to implementing good preservation practices. For example, sixty-two percent of respondents to the podcast producers survey said that time factors might stop them from acting to preserve their podcasts. Several assessment participants expressed an intention to submit their podcasts to the Internet Archive or Wikimedia Commons, with forty-four percent of the respondents to the podcast producers survey indicating the intent to do so. A few participants also described specific plans for submitting copies of their files to the UK National Sound Archive at the British Library and to their local historical society archive. These examples reflect success in one of the grant’s key goals to help independent podcast producers integrate archiving into their process.

The post-workshop survey created by the PTP team members was a good opportunity to gather feedback from workshop participants. This survey was distributed to participants in ten of

the workshops.<sup>4</sup> Consistent distribution of the survey after all workshops would have yielded more information from attendees. Additionally, integrating the survey directly into the workshops by asking attendees to complete it during the last few minutes of the session would likely generate more responses. Participants in the assessment also offered suggestions on how to improve the curriculum, summarized below.

Finally, several participants praised the illustrations and aesthetics of the zine and presentation materials. One assessment participant noted, “the visual elements were such an incredibly important aspect” of the project that enabled it “to reach folks in a visually appealing, approachable, and easy-to-understand way.” Overall, the illustrations created a strong aesthetic for the project and contributed to the accessibility of the zine and presentation slides.

### 2.3 Curriculum Evaluation

Participants in this assessment had largely positive feedback on the curriculum. It was particularly effective in raising awareness about the risks to podcasts and the need for independent producers to preserve their own work. Numerous participants thanked the team, noting, for example, that the curriculum “really opened my eyes to something I knew nothing about.”

#### Zine and Podcasts

The podcast series and zine were designed to “walk independent podcast producers through the processes of using archival tools and principles to take control over their physical or born-digital audio media collections and make sure they are accessible into the future.”<sup>5</sup> Sixty-five percent of the respondents to the podcast producers survey indicated that the zine was particularly effective in terms of learning about preservation. Most of the respondents to the assessment surveys, including all of the students in the BRIC podcast intensive course, described the zine and

---

4 The post-workshop survey was distributed to participants in the following workshops: METRO workshop on March 22, 2019; The Center for Investigative Reporting Workshop on May 11, 2019; University of Texas at Austin Libraries on May 17, 2019; Outlier Podcast Festival on May 18, 2019; ALA Annual Conference on June 22, 2019; Rhizome DC on June 23, 2019; Center for Documentary Studies Workshop on September 14, 2019; House of Pod on November 9, 2019; and the ALCTS Webinar on December 4, 2019.

5 Metropolitan New York Library Council, “Preserve This Podcast: A Podcast Preservation Tutorial and Outreach Project,” 2.

podcasts as “very understandable.” One respondent from the BRIC survey “loved that the zine was used in combination with the actual presentation!”

Assessment participants provided little explicit feedback on the podcast series itself. Only twenty-five percent of the respondents to the podcast producers survey said that they listened to the podcasts, while only one member of the curriculum advisory board surveyed felt that the podcasts alone were particularly effective from a pedagogical perspective (note, however, that forty percent of the respondents to this survey indicated the combination of the zine, podcasts, and workshops was very effective from a pedagogical perspective). The PTP podcast series was hosted on SimpleCast, which showed that the podcasts were downloaded more than 5,800 times and that episodes one and five were downloaded more than one thousand times each.

## Workshops

In addition to the zine and podcast series, the PTP team delivered the curriculum at in-person workshops offered across the country. The workshops typically ran for four hours and were held at libraries, community organizations, podcasting hubs, and conferences in 2018 and 2019. A full list of the workshops is available in Appendix 2, but 2019 venues included the Audio Engineering Society’s annual New York convention, The Digital Library Federation’s forum in Florida, the American Library Association’s conference in DC, and the Outlier Podcast Festival in Texas. The most well attended workshops were those hosted at METRO in New York and the workshop at the Center for Investigative Reporting in Emeryville, California. The project team also integrated the preservation curriculum into university and community-based classes through tailored sessions, such as the BRIC Arts Media podcast intensive class in Brooklyn, New York; an audio archiving course at UCLA; and a web archiving course at Clayton University in Georgia.

The workshops were a critical mode of delivering the curriculum and were seen as particularly pedagogically effective by assessment participants. As noted above, eighty percent of the BRIC respondents, and all the respondents to the podcast producers survey who attended a workshop, indicated that the workshops were particularly effective in teaching about preservation. In summarizing the workshop one respondent said that “the skills presented were very practical and actionable, and the amount of information was just right so it wasn’t

overwhelming.” Overall, the members of the curriculum advisory board also felt that the workshops were particularly helpful for teaching about preservation.

The PTP team members, however, described the workshops as particularly labor intensive, requiring significant time and travel. Some of the project team members did not feel that they were sustainable into the future unless the team members were compensated for their time. (See section 2.4 of the report for more information about the workshops.)

### Feedback on Concepts and Content

The following lists additional feedback received on specific elements of the curriculum from the assessment participants:

#### Preservation and Risks to Digital Files

Lessons related to the risks that face digital files were explored throughout the project materials, but explicitly in the prologue and first episode of the podcast series, on pages 5 and 6 of the zine, and through the “Store, Backup or Lose (Choose Your Own Adventure walkthrough)” activity. The later activity is [hosted on the website as an interactive game](#) and described below as it also relates to data backup and storage. As noted above, many assessment respondents noted that the PTP project significantly raised their awareness about risks to their work. Respondents noted that statements from the podcasts, such as “the truth is if you make a podcast, no one is out there saving your podcast for you,” were particularly compelling to them.

#### File Organization and Management

Lessons related to file organization and management were explored in episode two of the podcast series, on pages 7-9 of the zine, and in the “Get Organized! (write a sentence/map it out)” activity. Thirty-three percent of the workshop participants who responded to the post-workshop survey selected “Get Organized!” as the activity they enjoyed most. One respondent had the following feedback:

Exercise one got me going: it was basic (and thus easily digestible); it was interactive (which compelled me to participate); it was thought provoking (requiring me to analyze how I approach radio production and thus how I might approach podcasting—and the preservation thereof); and while creative, exercise

one was colourful, light and fun. Exercise one was a great hook: a definite attention-getter.

Another workshop participant said that this “exercise made me think about what content I create and where it is in a simple but practical way that I had not before.” Finally, one member of the curriculum advisory board noted, “the basic explanation of file organization strategies (and why it’s important) in the zine is extremely important.”

### Data Backup and Storage Solutions

Lessons related to backup and storage were explored in episode three of the podcast series, on pages 10-11 of the zine, and in the “Store, Backup or Lose (Choose Your Own Adventure walkthrough)” activity.

Thirty-three percent of the workshop participants who responded to the post-workshop survey selected the “Store, Backup or Lose (Choose Your Own Adventure walkthrough)” as the activity they enjoyed most. One workshop attendee noted that this activity was “the most challenging (and painful) exercise” because they had been the “victim of data loss.” Another described it as “very clever” and liked that it was “actionable.” Some participants suggested helpful ways to expand the lessons on this topic by “covering the cost of backup storage (both cloud storage and hardware).” Another survey respondent was specifically interested in the viability of long-term storage options, asking:

I’d like to know more about what we can expect from archive.org hosting over the years. How stable is this? Do they intend to be a media streaming service? Is this cool?

### Metadata

Lessons related to metadata were explored in episode four of the podcast series, on pages 12-14 of the zine, and in the “Metadata Archaeology (wrangling unknown.mp3)” activity. One respondent said, “I still haven’t built the time into doing the metadata for podcasts. The transcribing helps, but you know, I learned a lot from you, and it’s a bit slow to put it all in place.” Regarding the “Metadata Archaeology” exercise, one

workshop participant noted, “I like doing a little digging and I think we experienced what happens when you don’t get on this stuff.”

### RSS Overview

Lessons related to metadata were explored in the final episode of the podcast series, on page 14 of the zine, and in the “RSS Overview” during the workshop. Assessment participants had mixed opinions about this topic; many indicated that it was either their least favorite or the most challenging aspect of the curriculum. For example, one workshop attendee noted:

Since I am not (yet) a podcast creator, I was a bit lost. I only know RSS as a consumer of feeds, not as a creator of content for feeds.

Another participant noted that they were confused during this part of the workshop. Forty percent of the ALCTS Webinar attendees—who were largely information professionals—chose the “RSS Overview” as one of their favorite activities, however. Episode five, “RSS Resuscitations,” was also the most downloaded episode of the podcast series with more than twelve hundred individual downloads.

## 2.4 Challenges & Feedback on Improving Project

One of the central challenges facing the project as a whole was motivating podcast producers to act on the curriculum and incorporate preservation practices into their routine. The PTP team members understood that podcasters are often “entrepreneurs; they’re running their own business from the finance, to the marketing, to the actual content creation” and may not have time to include preservation activities in their workflows. In an interview, one team member also noted that podcasting originated from “a very DIY space” and that best practices and specific workflows are not only new, but also challenging to promote in a highly self-reliant culture. Nevertheless many participants in the assessment indicated that they were compelled to either initiate or improve digital preservation practices. Some said that they would benefit, however, from more concrete ways to put the curriculum into practice, such as a checklist of preservation steps to take. The Mellon grant proposal described that the team intended to summarize the project’s findings and “distill them into a set of guidelines posted on the website,” and this

assessment indicates that this would be very helpful for people engaging with the lessons.<sup>6</sup> The project leaders also generated many ideas for how to make preservation easier for independent podcasters. For example, they documented the process for preserving the PTP project materials on the website's "[Self Preservation](#)" page, which could be replicated by podcasters familiar with the tools they used.

Another challenge was that the project team generally anticipated larger attendance at the workshops. One PTP team member noted, "in person, on Twitter, and in emails people came off as very excited and interested in the concept" of podcast preservation, but often not as many people showed up to the workshops as expected. Typically, more people registered for workshops than attended on the day of the sessions. One team member wondered if offering the workshops free of charge might have adversely impacted attendance, noting that when something is free, it's not as high stakes. Another team member noted that many podcasters are working regular jobs and producing their podcasts on their own time, which limits their availability. In January 2020, the team offered a webinar version of the workshop over two sessions for free that attracted over twenty attendees to each session. Remote participation may be key to attracting busy independent producers to the workshops.

An additional factor in the workshop turnout was that the project team largely relied on the organizations that were hosting the workshops for outreach and promotion. Workshops held at organizations with strong ties to the podcasting community were generally well attended. One team member noted in an interview that the project was "at its best when we connected with these very central podcasting hubs."

There was a range in the feedback regarding the length of the workshops and the amount of material delivered in them. One participant in the four-hour workshop, which was delivered over one session, expressed a desire for a longer break midway through the session. Another participant noted that they felt the introductory comments were too lengthy and "a bit slow, lots of thanking folks who are not there. I feel like I could have been more hooked by the intro." This participant suggested saving acknowledgments until the end of the workshop when participants are likely to have "more warm engaged feelings." The PTP curriculum was integrated

---

6 Metropolitan New York Library Council, "Preserve This Podcast: A Podcast Preservation Tutorial and Outreach Project," 5.



into the BRIC podcast intensive course over two sessions, and seventy-five percent of these students who responded to the survey felt that the right amount of material was covered. One BRIC student felt that there was too much material and would have preferred that the curriculum be delivered over more than two sessions. On the whole, this feedback suggests that the workshops—which were typically delivered in one four-hour session—could be either streamlined or separated into two sessions.

Some assessment participants had ideas for how the existing project material could be improved or reimaged. One workshop attendee suggested that the curriculum materials, including the zine, could be made more accessible to the visually impaired simply by distributing them as DOC or DOCX files to allow the font size to be increased as needed. Another assessment contributor suggested:

I'd love to see sections of the zine pulled out and made into posters or cards that people can hang near their desk as beautiful reminders of best practices, or give to colleagues and collaborators to get them on the same page. e.g.: the "what is a file without metadata" blob and ship on page 13; the file naming hamburger on page 9; the cautious cone; the entire "take action" page (#15).

Overall, the feedback collected suggested minor refinements to the workshops and project materials.

## 2.5 Feedback on Expanding the Project & Next Steps

Should the project be taken into a second phase, the team has considered many possibilities for helping podcasters integrate preservation practices into their workflow. The team has discussed collaborating with a podcasting platform to integrate archiving into their suite of services or working with the Internet Archive to develop their collecting and preservation activities. Team members may also develop a script that automates the preservation workflow and could be integrated into podcasting platforms.

The original grant intended for the project to focus primarily on independent podcast producers, but it became clear that there was considerable engagement from a larger audience that included archivists, podcast journalism teachers, larger podcast producers affiliated with an organization, and institutions such as libraries and academia. Archivists, for example, showed up to the in-person workshops more than anticipated. Members of the curriculum advisory board

agreed that the existing curriculum was highly relevant to information professionals, academic podcast producers, and larger media organizations that produce podcasts. Two members of the committee specifically suggested that radio stations moving into podcasting formats could use the curriculum. They also suggested ways to further tailor the project to the audience. For example, as one member stated, the curriculum “could very easily be used by, or repurposed/adapted, for filmmakers, oral historians, and/or folks working in the PR department at arts organizations, among others.” Finally, one noted that “anyone producing media content, including video makers and musicians” would benefit from the Preserve This Podcast curriculum and project in an expanded form.

Participants in the assessment also widely agreed that there was a strong case for some degree of institutional involvement in the project moving forward. One curriculum advisory committee member thought expanding the project’s outreach to library science students by integrating the lessons into lectures would “highlight the need for podcast preservation and to introduce them early on to solutions.” The project team has already demonstrated success integrating the existing curriculum into information science classrooms; for example, in 2019 they presented it in an audio archiving course at UCLA and a web archiving course at Clayton University in Georgia.

The existing curriculum is also appropriate for established librarians and archivists. During the course of the current project, the team presented at the American Library Association annual conference and created a webinar entitled “Preserving Podcasts: How Libraries Can Help” for the ALA’s Association for Library Collections & Technical Services. After the latter, the PTP team administered a survey that suggested there was significant interest in the topic, which was perceived as particularly timely. Feedback also indicated that the curriculum needed to be refined more explicitly for librarians. One participant, for example, wanted more “technical information focused on information professionals.” As noted above, members of the curriculum advisory board agreed that the material was ideal for the library and archives community. One member thought, for example:

It would be great if this project could train library and archives staff across the US/globe to give workshops about, and work with others on their campus, to learn about and provide for long-term preservation of podcasts.

Another saw a great opportunity “for funding through IMLS for the 21st Century Librarian Program that could involve training librarians on how to run the workshops around the country.”

Similarly, several participants in the assessment wanted to see the next phase of the project focus more explicitly on public libraries. As one curriculum advisory board member observed, “public libraries around the country are great venues for this kind of programing.” Some regional historical societies and public libraries, such as the Madison Public Library in Wisconsin, reached out to project members, expressing significant interest in the project. One project co-leader was particularly interested in working with smaller libraries, historical societies, and archives to implement podcast collecting under their collection policy umbrellas.

Other suggestions for broadening the audience included reaching out to radio stations that are moving into podcasting formats, and working with academics that produce podcasts about their research and teaching. One member of the curriculum advisory board observed that academics in the liberal arts are increasingly producing podcasts, but they often lack expertise in audio production and do not “think to reach out to their university library’s archival units who could help them... strategize around long-term preservation.” Finally, another curriculum advisory board member suggested identifying “a home institution at a nonprofit or university and build a center around podcasting studies.”

Expansion of the project would undoubtedly require further funding. PTP team members have identified a few avenues for future grant funding, and members of the curriculum advisory committee expressed a willingness to support those efforts. In the meantime, team members have taken steps to ensure the project materials and website are sustained. For example, they have migrated their audio files from SimpleCast to the Internet Archive and created a GitHub site that hosts their project files, including the XML files for their RSS feed. This system ensures that the work accomplished over the course of the grant period will remain accessible and be preserved.

### 3. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are drawn from the assessment participants' feedback and are designed to inform the future of the Preserve This Podcast project. The recommendations focus on ways to improve and deliver the curriculum, expand the audience, and secure future sources of funding.

#### 3.1 General Recommendations

**Pursue opportunities to publish about the current project.** Team members could sustain interest in the project and further increase its visibility by publishing. Publishing in academic journals will increase the awareness among information professionals and could be critical to developing partnerships should team members decide to pursue ways to institutionalize the project.<sup>7</sup>

**Streamline the workshops.** The introduction to the project should be condensed, and presenters should jump into content more quickly. Workshop attendees are generally prepared to engage with the curriculum immediately.

**Incorporate opportunities to gather feedback into the workshops.** Set aside 5-10 minutes at the end of the workshop for participants to submit feedback via survey. It is likely that the team would gather more feedback by surveying participants immediately rather than waiting until after the workshop has ended.

**Offer Preserve This Podcast “office hours.”** As a way to provide support to organizations offering the curriculum and independent podcasters, the team could establish monthly “office hours” or times when they are available for virtual conversations via the phone, Skype, email, or chat.

#### 3.2 Expanding Ways to Deliver Curriculum

**Distribute the Preserve This Podcast curriculum to organizations across the country.** The project leaders could circulate the existing curriculum to cultural heritage and community-based organizations via email, and encourage them to host the workshops themselves. This would further raise awareness about the existing tools that these organizations offer to their users. The

---

<sup>7</sup> Project co-leaders Mary Kidd and Sarah Nguyen are co-authoring an article with Erica Titkemeyer for a special issue on radio preservation for the *Journal of Archival Organization*, forthcoming in spring 2020.

project leaders created the [“DIY Preservation Workshop: A Guide”](#) on the project’s website as a resource for anyone interested in hosting a workshop.

**Provide open access to a recorded webinar version of the PTP workshop.** In January 2020 the team delivered an online two-part version of their workshop that participants could call into. Providing continued access to the recorded webinar would dramatically expand the audience of the workshop, making it globally accessible, eliminating the need for team members to travel, and leveraging the significant labor that the team has spent in refining the workshops over the course of the project.

**Facilitate Preserve This Podcast watch parties.** Combining the above recommendations, a link to the recorded webinar could be included in emails to cultural heritage and community-based organizations. Local organizations could host “watch parties” where they present the webinar, walk attendees through the activities, and facilitate conversation about the curriculum.

**Submit the curriculum to NPR for inclusion into their Starting Your Podcast guide.** In 2018, NPR created a guide to podcast production, which does not currently include information on digital preservation.

**Create a train-the-trainer program.** The project could focus on equipping library and archive professionals to offer in-person workshops themselves using the existing material.

**Design a curriculum for radio and media organizations.** The team could tailor the curriculum specifically for radio stations moving into podcast formats.

### 3.3 Funding

**Apply for another grant to fund the next phase of the project.** This assessment report suggests a number of ways that the project team could expand on their work in a new phase of funding. Specific considerations include applying for an extension of the Mellon grant, partnering with a scholar based at an institution of higher education to apply for an ACLS Digital Extension Grant, and applying for an IMLS 21st Century Librarian Program grant to train librarians on how to run the workshops around the country.

**Provide paid consulting services to podcast distribution platforms and networks.** The project demonstrated that there is a demand for preservation advising and services directed to large host platforms, such as SimpleCast, as well as major podcast producers. No podcasting platforms currently offer preservation services, but several have expressed interest in ways that they can

integrate digital preservation into their suite of services. The team would be well positioned to offer consulting services to these companies.

**Provide paid consulting services to large podcast producers and internet radio service providers.** The project also demonstrated that there is a demand for preservation advising and services directed to major podcast producers, internet radio providers, and other large organizations. During the course of the project, for example, Pandora approached team members about wanting to learn about podcast preservation. Team members should develop a list of services that they could offer these kinds of clients, such as training staff in basic digital preservation or implementing preservation plans.

## 4. CONCLUSION

The Preserve This Podcast project created a digital preservation curriculum aimed at independent podcast producers and an accompanying outreach campaign. The project was effective at raising awareness about the risks to born-digital media and the need to preserve podcasts. As one co-leader noted in an interview, Preserve This Podcast had “a lot of success in terms of the project as a story... there was some media around it, we were asked to participate on panels, people were definitely interested in the topic.” Turning this awareness into action taken by independent podcasters, such as encouraging them to submit their “files to the Internet Archive like they’d buckle a seatbelt when they get in a car,” was a more ambitious aim.<sup>8</sup> Overall, this assessment found that the project successfully compelled many podcasters to introduce archival practices into their workflows. The majority of the respondents to the podcast producers survey indicated at least one way that the project changed or improved their digital preservation practices. Ultimately, helping independent podcasters habitually integrate preservation practices will require ongoing efforts, which will depend on the project website and materials remaining online and accessible to the public. The initial and overwhelmingly positive response to the project, however, demonstrates a strong need and desire for the project to continue in some form.

To that end, securing additional funding to support an expansion of the project is a vital next step. The project leaders should strongly consider following up with the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation regarding the possibility of a grant renewal. The success of the program’s curriculum and the potential for further outreach to cultural heritage organizations make a strong case for the renewal of funding. The project leaders are aware of other funding agencies, such as the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, who may be interested in supporting a second phase or expanded version of the project. Some members of the curriculum advisory board who participated in this assessment offered their support for seeking future funding. Team members have been in communication with AVPreserve, a data management consulting and software development

---

<sup>8</sup> Molly Schwartz, “Preserve This Podcast! A new grant-funded project will help podcasters make sure their work doesn’t disappear,” *Medium*, Feb. 14, 2018, <https://medium.com/the-bytegeist-blog/preserve-this-podcast-ae8e93ac83ae>

company, to partner on a grant specifically related to creating an open-source software to help preserve RSS feeds.

Based on participant feedback, an obvious next step for this project is to focus on increased integration with cultural heritage organizations. There was more interest in the project from library and archives professionals than initially anticipated, given the focus of the grant, and many suggestions for ways to more deeply engage with this community. In early 2020, the project team added a [“DIY Preservation Workshop: A Guide”](#) to the website that could be used by librarians and archivists. Team members could also establish a train-the-trainer program for professionals at local libraries and archives. This approach has the potential to broaden the efficacy and accessibility of existing curriculum materials, and reduce the burden of travel and organization on current team members. Moreover, a ready-made curriculum on digital preservation for a general audience could represent a valuable outreach tool for librarians and archivists both within the podcast genre and beyond. In recent years, archivists have sought methods and approaches to accession that engage individuals and groups that have been historically underrepresented in the archive. Preserve This Podcast represents a concrete way for archivists to establish relationships with the diverse and decentralized networks of podcast producers and offer them the tangible benefit of digital preservation expertise.

As noted, the Institute for Museum and Library Studies’ 21st Century Librarian Program might be a possible source of funding for a program that trains librarians on how to run PTP workshops at their home institutions. Expanding on the workshops offered to the ALCTS and The Labs at DC Public Library, the team could further tailor the curriculum for public libraries, especially those with Memory Labs. Outreach could start with the Memory Lab Network, which currently includes seven public library partners across the U.S. and is in the process of selecting a second cohort of partners. Preserve This Podcast team member Molly Schwartz served as an advisory board member for the first cohort of partnered public libraries and may be able to facilitate connections to that network.

The PTP project successfully demonstrated that the existing curriculum could be integrated into podcasting classes at both community-based organizations and academic institutions. Building on their successful collaboration with the BRIC Arts Media podcasting



intensive course, the PTP team should continue to pursue ways to incorporate the curriculum into these classes. In some cases, this might simply require promoting the website, zine, and podcast series to instructors. For example, the University of Washington’s Storytelling Fellows Podcasting program includes a link to Preserve This Podcast on their syllabus. Other trustworthy online instructional websites, such as NPR’s Starting Your Podcast guide, may be inclined to do the same. The project team could also pursue more opportunities to intentionally integrate the curriculum into information science classes, similar to how they worked with faculty at UCLA and Clayton University in Georgia.

Opportunities for this kind of integration continue to grow alongside the podcast genre. Several new podcast production programs, including short workshops and long-form courses, have launched in the last two years. For example, the University of California Berkeley’s Graduate School of Journalism and Advanced Media Institute recently began offering both a two-day class on podcasting and a seven-week graduate-level certificate program. Similarly, the State University of New York at Stony Brook’s Southampton campus launched an Audio Podcast Fellow Program in 2018, which is a nine-month hands-on podcast training program. Pursuing ways to integrate the PTP curriculum into these programs would teach nascent podcasters proper preservation practices from the start and address the project’s goal of encouraging independent podcasters to take immediate action to preserve their work.

If the team considers pursuing increased institutional support, or, as one curriculum advisory board member suggested, the possibility of developing a hub for collecting podcasts, New York and Wisconsin are obvious regions to begin the process. METRO may be inclined to lead such an initiative as an organization with experience designing and implementing programs that fill knowledge gaps in the cultural heritage field and connections to organizations across the country. There is also the potential to increase ties to institutions in Madison, Wisconsin, where team member Dana Gerber-Margie is based. Over the course of the project, connections were made to the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the Madison Public Library, and the PodcastRE project led by curriculum advisory board member Jeremy Morris. There are also strong public media organizations in both places, one of which—WNYC—has an archive department and staff devoted to audio preservation.

At the onset of the Preserve This Podcast project in 2017, few institutions were actively collecting and preserving podcasts as part of their acquisition strategies. Although several online platforms, such as the Internet Archive, Wikimedia Commons, and PodcastRE, allow podcasters to upload their files, no organization has emerged as a leader in podcast preservation or accession. There are, however, a few noteworthy projects that have begun to collect and preserve podcasts. The Nomadic Archivists Project founded in 2018, for example, aims to establish, preserve, and enhance collections—including but not limited to podcasts—related to the African Diasporic experience. The British Library’s Sound Archive has also started to acquire some podcasts.

In 2020, the Library of Congress officially launched their Podcast Preservation Project led by Ted Westervelt, which represents a significant development in the institutional acquisition of the podcast genre. The project started reaching out to podcast producers as early as 2019, stating that the Library had begun to acquire podcasts as part of its mission to collect and preserve sound recordings.<sup>9</sup> In a January 2020 interview on the *Radio Survivor* podcast, Westervelt recognized that podcasts are an entirely new development in terms of sound recording, and described them as “crucial creative works that capture this moment in time, this moment in the culture.”<sup>10</sup> As institutions actively acquire podcasts, the library and archives community will need to address issues related to licensing, copyright, and personal privacy.

Although the Library of Congress acquiring podcasts is a significant step in terms of the long-term preservation of the genre, it does not, of course, ensure that all podcasts will be preserved. Collection development policies will determine which podcasts are deemed significant enough to save. Even if large institutions have the goal of acquiring as many podcasts as possible, trained subject experts are required to ensure that the diverse array of creators and subject matters in the field are represented. Collection bias is a particularly critical issue for the podcast genre because podcasting has emerged as a vital platform for underrepresented voices. In addition to large repositories collecting podcasts, ideally curators at small libraries, historical

---

9 “US Library of Congress starts archiving podcasts,” podnews, Jan. 7, 2020, <https://podnews.net/update/congress-archiving>.

10 Jennifer Waits, “The Library of Congress Launches Podcast Preservation Project,” *Radio Survivor*, podcast audio, Jan. 28, 2020, <https://www.radiosurvivor.com/2020/01/28/podcast-230-the-library-of-congress-launches-podcast-preservation-project>.

societies, and archives will work closely with podcast creators to preserve the media. Personal digital archiving will remain crucial to ensuring representative preservation of the genre. The outputs of the Preserve This Podcast project—including the zine, podcasts, website, and online resources—are critical tools that will allow independent podcasters and organizations to learn about and implement effective preservation practices for years to come.

## WORKS CITED

“US Library of Congress starts archiving podcasts.” Podnews, Jan. 7, 2020, <https://podnews.net/update/congress-archiving>.

Metropolitan New York Library Council. “Preserve This Podcast: A Podcast Preservation Tutorial and Outreach Project.” Grant Proposal. New York, NY, 2018.

Schwartz, Molly. “Preserve This Podcast! A new grant-funded project will help podcasters make sure their work doesn’t disappear.” *Medium*. Feb. 14, 2018, <https://medium.com/the-bytegeist-blog/preserve-this-podcast-ae8e93ac83ae>.

Waits, Jennifer. “The Library of Congress Launches Podcast Preservation Project.” *Radio Survivor*. Podcast audio. Jan. 28, 2020, <https://www.radiosurvivor.com/2020/01/28/podcast-230-the-library-of-congress-launches-podcast-preservation-project>.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Meridith Beck Mink is an experienced researcher and consultant. She has worked extensively with libraries, archives, museums, and communities of higher learning. She was responsible for implementing the assessment, including designing the interview protocols and surveys, and writing the final report. She is the lead researcher on the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR) assessment of the National Digital Stewardship Residency programs. She was a CLIR Postdoctoral Fellow in Data Curation for Early Modern Studies at Indiana University and received a Ph.D. in the history of science from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

## Appendix 1: Curriculum Advisory Board Members

Samantha Abrams  
Web Resources Collection Librarian  
Ivy Plus Libraries

Lauren Algee  
Senior Innovation Specialist  
Library of Congress

Will Chase  
National Public Radio

Jonathan Farbowitz  
Associate Conservator of Time-Based Media  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Charles Hosale  
Archivist  
Library of Congress

Jacob Kramer-Duffield  
Independent Consultant

Andy Lanset  
Director of Archives  
New York Public Radio

Rachel Mattson  
Curator of the Tretter Collection for GLBT  
Studies  
University of Minnesota Libraries

Jeremy Morris  
Associate Professor, University of Wisconsin-  
Madison  
Founder, PodcastRE

Yvonne Ng  
Audiovisual Archivist  
WITNESS

Trevor Owens  
Head of Digital Content Management  
Library of Congress

John Passmore  
Director of Streaming and On-Demand  
Audio Architecture  
New York Public Radio

Josh Shepperd  
Assistant Professor  
Catholic University of America

Erica Titkemeyer  
Project Director, Southern Folklife Collection  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Lauren Work  
Digital Preservation Librarian  
University of Virginia Library

## Appendix 2: List of Preserve This Podcast Workshops

The Preserve This Podcast team delivered their preservation curriculum at workshops across the country between November 2018 and January 2020. The workshops typically ran under the title, “It’s the Year 2039. Where’s Your Podcast? A Preserve This Podcast Workshop.” Mary Kidd co-led all of the workshops with at least one other team member.

Sound Education  
November 2 and 3, 2018  
Cambridge, MA

Outlier Podcast Festival  
May 18, 2019  
Austin, TX

Werk It 2018: A Women’s Podcast Festival  
November 13 and 14, 2018  
New York, NY

The Labs at DC Public Library  
June 21, 2019  
Washington, DC

NY Tech Zine Fair  
December 1, 2018  
New York, NY

ALA Annual Conference  
June 22, 2019  
Washington, DC

On Air Fest  
March 2, 2019  
Brooklyn, NY

Rhizome DC  
June 23, 2019  
Washington, DC

METRO  
March 22, 2019  
New York, NY

The State of the Indie (Podcast Movement)  
August 15, 2019  
Orlando, FL

MARAC: Mid Atlantic Regional Archives  
Conference  
April 12, 2019  
Morgantown, WV

Center for Documentary Studies Workshop  
September 14, 2019  
Durham, NC

The Center for Investigative Reporting  
Workshop  
May 11, 2019  
Emeryville, CA

The Bubbler at Madison Public Library  
September 21, 2019  
Madison, WI

University of Texas at Austin Libraries  
May 17, 2019  
Austin, TX

DLF Forum 2019  
October 13-17, 2019  
Tampa, FL

Audio Engineering Society New York 2019  
October 18, 2019  
New York, NY

ALCTS Webinar  
December 4, 2019  
Remote

PRX Podcast Garage  
October 19, 2019  
Boston, MA

Preserve This Podcast 2-Part Webinar  
January 23 and 24, 2020  
Remote

House of Pod  
November 9, 2019  
Denver, CO