

REPRODUCTION OF CYLINDER RECORDINGS AT  
THE MUSEUM OF ANTHROPOLOGY AT THE UNI-  
VERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AT BERKELEY

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The Museum of Anthropology at Berkeley has a collection of recordings dating from 1902 to the present. It includes some 2700 cylinder, disc, wire, and magnetic tape recordings of dances, music, and spoken texts, principally of the western North American Indians. Among those whose field work is represented are Samuel A. Barrett, Edward W. Gifford, Pliny E. Goddard, and Alfred L. Kroeber.

At various times duplicates of the cylinder recordings have been made. The earliest reproductions were made on wax cylinders at the Museum. This was accomplished by connecting the heads of two spring wound Columbia cylinder phonographs by means of a speaking tube. There was some loss of clarity when this method was followed but the duplicates thus produced were usable. By this method there was at least produced a duplicate copy which was available in case the original cylinder should be cracked, broken, or suffered deterioration by other means.

In 1927 duplicates were made for the Museum by the Phonogramm-Archiv of the Psychologisches Institut of the University of Berlin. The Museum shipped 220 cylinders to the Phonogramm-Archiv in several installments during the pre-World War II years. The Berlin Archives made an electroplate matrix of each, the original wax cylinder probably being destroyed in the process. From these matrices cylinder copies were made. The Phonogramm-Archiv sent the Museum one copy, retaining one or more copies plus the matrix for the former's use. Of the copies made by the Berlin Archive all but one were either destroyed during the last war or are in the Eastern Sector of Berlin. The Museum selected for shipment to Berlin those cylinders that were important or interesting as far as content was concerned or of excellent acoustical quality and in a fair state of preservation.

In 1948 a series of copies of cylinders of the music of the Miwok and Pomo were made by the Library of Congress on acetate discs. This was done as a public service at the request of the University of California

Department of Music and are deposited in the Music Library of the University. The duplication was of songs only; no speech recordings were included. A number of the 97 original cylinders and 47 duplicate cylinders sent to the Library of Congress were found to be cracked or broken and, as a result, only 78 cylinders were reproduced on thirteen 16-inch double face discs. A set of these discs is also on deposit at the Library of Congress.

The next set of duplicates made were on magnetic tape by the Music Department for the Music Library. In this series 1724 cylinders were reproduced.

The last duplication project was initiated by the writer in 1958 in order to have all cylinder recordings of speech of the California Indians capable of transcription transferred to magnetic tape. James Hatch, Museum Preparator at that time, made the transfer to eighteen rolls of magnetic tape. This work required much preliminary listening, testing, selecting for quality, and reorganization and repair of cylinder playback equipment.

In making tape copies of the speech recordings the materials to be reproduced were selected on the basis that no mechanical reproduction of speech can be fully or accurately heard except by a speaker of the language or by a linguistic expert who has had considerable experience in hearing and analyzing it. The important cylinders to preserve on tape were accordingly those of which a handwritten phonetic transcript had been made, a transcription worked out by the interpreter and the transcriber after they both had listened to the recording. Without this transcription the content of the language has been lost although the sound is still present.

Precedence in selecting speech cylinders for reproduction onto tape was therefore given to such cylinders as had transcripts written out while the informant or interpreter was still alive. Notations as to the names of the transcriber, the number of his notebook, and the number of the page of the notebook upon which the transcription is found are indispensable parts of the record.

Other acoustically excellent cylinder recordings accompanied by nothing more than the title of the story recorded may serve to give an impression of the overall sound of the language but are of little other value. In other cases the recordings are accompanied by a written English summary of the content meaning. These are usually paraphrases, not word for word translations. However, they have a degree of value for linguistic study, especially when the particular language recorded is extinct. If speakers of the language can still be found, and through their listening to the recording the material can be re-elicited, the informant then translating as well as speaking the material (a process which should have been followed some thirty-five to fifty-five years ago), such acoustically excellent recordings may still have great value. These recordings may also be of value when they contain a record of traditions which no longer exist except in a highly acculturated form.

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