

Texas Medical Center Historical Audiovisual Resources Digitization

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What is the project?

Abstract

The McGovern Historical Center (MHC) of the Texas Medical Center Library (TMC Library) proposes a project to digitize, describe, preserve, and post online historical audio and video recordings from the Library's archival collections. Unique audiovisual assets that document the history and impact of the Texas Medical Center (TMC) and the TMC Library will be sent to a vendor for digitization. Films, videos, and audio recordings have been selected from collections including IC 001 Texas Medical Center Library records, IC 002 Texas Medical Center records, and IC 084 Texas Medical Center Historical Resources Project. These archival collections are foundational to the McGovern Historical Center and reflect the major impacts TMC institutions and associated individuals have had on both medicine and the region.

The recordings from the TMC and TMC Library collections include promotional, documentary, and news coverage pertaining to those institutions. Other selections include oral history interviews and lectures from key figures in the establishment and growth of the Texas Medical Center. The materials span thirty years of Houston and Texas medical history, ranging from as early as 1968 to as recent as 1998. Digitizing these at-risk audiovisual materials will help ensure their preservation, and making them accessible online will facilitate outreach, research, and education. While these recordings will certainly be of interest to the TMC institutions themselves, researchers in medical history, Houston and Texas history, and other areas also stand to benefit.

Background

The McGovern Historical Research Center preserves and provides access to the historical collections and rare materials of the Texas Medical Center's institutions, faculty, and staff, so that the TMC institutions and other constituencies may benefit from the Center's collections that contribute to healthcare, health policy, research and education throughout the world. The MHC has notable rare book and archival collections on the history of the TMC, foundations of medicine, rheumatology, public health, psychiatry, and the effects of radiation. The most prominent collections include the Texas Medical Center, Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission, and *Medical World News*.

The MHC has an established process for identifying and caring for audiovisual resources. In the course of archival processing, the MHC identifies and describes videotapes, films, cassette tapes, and other audiovisual items. Such materials are also routinely rehoused to support their physical preservation. However, audiovisual materials—particularly magnetic tape—are highly susceptible to deterioration over time, making digital conversion a priority. As archivists survey these important but fragile materials, they recommend priority items for digitization. For this project, the MHC is proposing items from our institutional collections that have already been recommended for digitization.

The MHC maintains a collections site (<https://archives.library.tmc.edu/>) where archival descriptions and digital objects are made publicly available. This site utilizes the standards-based Access to Memory (AtoM) software. A number of audio and video recordings—including some from the proposed collections—have already been digitized and made available online. Adding the resources proposed in this grant would help create a center of gravity around which to better organize and promote sound and moving image archival materials from our collections.

The MHC does not currently have the capacity to digitize most of the fragile formats proposed in this application. While in-house transfers of VHS tapes are possible, use of a vendor is most cost-effective and offers an added level of quality assurance.

Following digital conversion, the TMC Library has the resources to support ongoing digital preservation of these important assets. MHC archivists collaborate with the Library's Information Technology (IT) team to ensure appropriate standards for long-term maintenance of digitized and born digital archival materials.

Building on our existing processes and infrastructure, this funding will enable the MHC to send prioritized films, videos, and audio recordings to the vendor(s) for digitization. The cornerstone of this project is a selection of audiovisual resources from IC 002 Texas Medical Center records (10 items) and IC 084 Texas Medical Center Historical Resources Project (29 items). Additional materials from IC 001 Texas Medical Center Library records, IC 004 Harris County Medical Society records, IC 007 University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston records, IC 008 University of Texas Medical School records, and IC 015 Texas Research Institute of Mental Sciences (TRIMS) records are also included. The TMC and TMC Library collections are foundational to the McGovern Historical Center, and all of these materials will be of value to our users and stakeholders in the Texas Medical Center.

Audiovisual items selected for digitization:

Fifty-two items have been identified for digitization using the SCAMeL Speedy Startup funds. These include thirty-nine U-matic (¾") video tapes, four VHS tapes, one open-reel video tape, four 16mm acetate films, two Digital Audio Tapes (DAT), one reel-to-reel audio recording, and one 12" phonograph record.

Examples of selected resources include:

AVV.IC001.001	The Houston Academy of Medicine - Texas Medical Center Library Meeting the Challenge	10/1997	1" open reel
AVV.IC001.002	Channel 10 Midday Stories: Jones Library Features, Rare Book Collection	1983-1985	U-matic (3/4")
AVF.IC002.008	Jesse H. Jones Library Groundbreaking, original	5/25/1973	16mm
AVV.IC002.004	Texas Medical Center Visions	c. 1986	U-matic (3/4")
AVV.IC002.005	The Texas Medical Center. Narrated by Don Macon.	c. 1972	U-matic (3/4")
AVV.IC002.001

Why is it important (what is the benefit)?

Many of these resources come from archival collections expressly created by or about the Texas Medical Center or the TMC Library. Others come from closely associated entities, like the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston and the Harris County Medical Society. They reflect the major impacts these institutions and associated individuals have had on both medicine and the region. The films, videos, and audio recordings span thirty years of Houston and Texas medical history, ranging from as early as 1968 to as recent as 1998.

The recordings from the TMC and TMC Library collections include promotional, documentary, and news coverage pertaining to those institutions. Selections also include oral history interviews and lectures from key figures in the establishment and growth of the Texas Medical Center.

All of the audiovisual formats identified in this application are at risk and in need of digitization for preservation and access. U-matic (¾") tapes—which account for most of this proposal—pose particular preservation concerns. Magnetic tape is inherently at risk of degradation; moreover, working playback devices are increasingly at risk of disappearing

Beyond ensuring their preservation, providing digital access to these recordings will facilitate their research and use. While these recordings will certainly be of interest to the TMC institutions themselves, researchers in medical history, Houston and Texas history, and other areas also stand to benefit. Institutional histories and documentary films are among the products especially well-suited to utilizing these resources once they are available. Through promotion of these resources, the McGovern Historical Center can raise its own profile while also highlighting the contributions of medical libraries and archives more broadly.

What institution(s) is involved?

The TMC Library will carry out this project, in cooperation with the selected professional digitization vendor(s).

Who will carry out the project and what are their roles?

This project will be led by professional staff at the McGovern Historical Center of the TMC Library. A professional digitization vendor or vendors will carry out the digital conversion. Archivists at the MHC have already identified priority audiovisual resources for digitization. Archivists will select the vendor(s), verify selections, and pack and ship materials to the vendor. The MHC will also provide the external hard drive(s) for transfer of the newly created digital files. Archivists will work with the vendor to specify preservation standards for digital conversion. The vendor will evaluate the physical items for preservation or conversion concerns, digitize the audiovisual resources according to agreed-upon standards, create technical metadata, and return the originals along with the hard drives with digital files. The two parties will communicate to resolve any issues as they arise.

Once the digital files are returned, MHC staff will review them for quality control and check the technical metadata to ensure standards were met. They will also be responsible for the creation of descriptive metadata and image thumbnails. In addition, they will upload the files to the Library's Amazon S3 site, and facilitate access by uploading the descriptive metadata, image thumbnails, and links on the MHC's collections site. MHC archivists will also upload the master files to their preservation storage system, and work with IT to ensure their ongoing digital preservation.

To raise awareness and encourage research around these materials, the MHC will undertake a promotional campaign advertising their digitization and availability. This will include broad measures as blog and social media posts, as well as targeted outreach to key constituencies.

What is the timeline?

It is anticipated that the project could easily be completed within the year, with most of the work occurring in the first seven months following a potential award.

From past projects, the MHC already has relationships with several preferred vendors, so a final selection should not take an extended time. Likewise, since the items to digitize have already been identified, the process of retrieval, packing, and shipping should be relatively quick. Digitization will depend on vendor schedules, but three months offers a reasonable estimate for this process. Once the digital copies are delivered to the MHC, descriptive metadata creation and upload of videos should be possible within a similar three-month timeframe. These estimates leave the remainder of the grant period for promotion and outreach.

Month 1:

- Select vendor(s) and communicate regarding specifications, costs, and timeline
- Identify, retrieve, pack, and ship materials

Months 2-4

- Digitization and technical metadata creation at the vendor
- Return of materials and hard drives with digital content to archives

Months 5-7

- Transfer to preservation and access file locations
- Create descriptive metadata
- Publish online

Months 8-12

- Promote newly available resources
- Submit project report to SCAMeL

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SCAMeL Research Committee
Joy Summers-Ables, Chair

How much money do I need for the project (budget)?

MHC archivists estimate that the project will require \$4,645 in SCAMeL Speedy Startup funds. The breakdown of funds includes:

- \$2,795 to digitize 43 videotapes (\$65/each)
- \$500 to digitize 4 films
- \$500 to digitize 5 items in other formats
- \$750 for shipping to and from the vendor
- \$100 for an external hard drive for transferring files