

Appendix 3

Guidelines for Outsourcing Audio Reformatting

Planning for outsourcing:

1. **Know your institution's requirements and procedures for purchasing services.** Many institutions have rules governing the purchase of services that may limit the amount of money that can be spent, or require different procedures depending on the amount. These procedures can affect your project timeline by extending the bidding process or setting requirements for funding approval and monitoring. Before you develop your schedule, familiarize yourself with these procedures and requirements so you can allow time for them. Contact the person or department that will be handling your account as soon as you have rough estimates of schedule and budget, so they also can plan for your project. Your purchasing or accounting contact can be invaluable in helping you make sure procedures are followed, all required paperwork is filed on time, and other accounting requirements are met.
2. **Evaluate the work you will require.** How many originals will you have digitized? What formats will you be asking the vendor to work with? What condition are the materials in? Is there any special treatment you would like the vendor to perform, such as restoration of the originals or audio optimizing? Will the vendor create only your master files, or derivatives as well? Special handling or additional deliverables will add cost. You need to have a clear idea of what you want the vendor to do before you can get meaningful pricing information, plan an accurate budget and schedule. Also, consider how you will ship your originals to the vendor, and any requirements you may have for security and storage of your originals while in the vendor's hands. It may be desirable to state what services you do not want ("exclusions").
3. **Ask for recommendations from organizations that have outsourced similar projects.** Contact other organizations that have managed projects like the one you are considering. Ask them for vendor recommendations, pricing information, procedures, tips, pitfalls – any information that could help your own project go smoothly. Vendor recommendations are especially valuable at this stage. Contact any vendors that come well recommended and have handled materials like yours, to confirm pricing, technical capabilities and availability. Make it clear that this is informal information gathering, not a formal request for a bid or a promise that their services will be contracted. This will give you the information you need to plan your budget, refine your project scope to fit the funds and time available, and start a short list of vendors to contact for formal quotes or bids.

4. **Finalize your schedule, budget, and list of vendors.** Using the information you've gathered, make final decisions about project scope, deadlines, budget, and prospective vendors. Check again to make sure you've met your institution's purchasing requirements – for example, that your short list of vendors meets any requirements you may have for number of vendors bidding for your contract. Remember to budget for postage, packaging, insurance, and other expenses associated with shipping the originals to the vendor.

5. **Create the formal Request for Proposal to present to your list of vendors.** This is the document that will inform prospective vendors of your exact project requirements, and will serve as a basis for the contract for services. The type and contents of this document may be dictated by your institution's purchasing procedures. It should include *at least*:
 - A list of the deliverables (master files, derivatives, restored originals) you will require the vendor to produce, detailed technical specifications for each type, including format and medium of delivery, and the naming convention to use for the digitized files;
 - The number and type of originals to be digitized;
 - The schedule for delivery of originals to the vendor, and deadlines for receipt of deliverables. This can include a small initial set of originals, so the vendor can adjust their configuration and you can evaluate the results in the early stages of the project. A small test set may even be sent to each vendor as part of the proposal acceptance process, and satisfactory results used as one of the proposal acceptance criteria;
 - Invoicing requirements and/or payment schedule;
 - Acceptance criteria and quality requirements for the deliverables. This can be qualitative, but should be as precise as possible. It can include the number of deliverables examined from each set – for example, 100% of the first delivered set are examined, and 20% from each subsequent delivery. You also may want to address how quality problems are resolved;
 - Progress reporting requirements (for example, the vendor is required to submit weekly or monthly progress reports);
 - Security, handling, and storage requirements of originals while in the vendor's keeping (for example, secured storage or a climate controlled environment);
 - Request for information from the vendor, including how long they've been in business, their experience handling materials similar to yours, and references from other clients with similar projects;
 - Deadline(s) and contact information for responding to the RFP.

- 6. Send the RFP to prospective vendors, evaluate their responses, and select a vendor.** Vendors may have questions, so be prepared to discuss your requirements with them. Take notes during any phone conversations you have; write up a brief summary of the conversation, and send a copy to the vendor to confirm in writing any information or understandings that were reached. Once the response deadline has passed, evaluate the proposals you've received, and make a selection. Inform the selected vendor of your decision, and inform the other respondents in writing that they were not selected. Draw up a contract for services in cooperation with your institution's legal and purchasing departments. The contract must be signed by representatives of the vendor and your institution, with copies to each. Also, make sure an account is set up or a purchase order generated for your project, so the vendor will be paid promptly after they submit an invoice.

Ongoing project management:

Through the course of the project, make sure you stay in close touch with the vendor, so if the schedule slips or problems arise, they can be dealt with quickly. Again, make notes of any discussions you have with the vendor, and send them a written summary; this will go a long way toward preventing misunderstandings.

Set up an internal tracking system for all the materials you intend to ship to the vendor. This can be as simple as a straightforward spreadsheet. Record the title or unique identifier and number of pieces for each item (for example, one oral history consisting of several tapes), the date it was shipped to the vendor and the date it was received back. Tracking is easier if all the pieces for one item are sent together in the same shipment. If that isn't possible, you will need to record more than one shipping date and clearly list which pieces were shipped on each date. You should always know where all your originals are! This tracking system can be part of an overall project tracking system as well; dates and notes on in-house work like quality checking and production of derivatives (if not done by the vendor) can also be recorded here.

Stick as closely as possible to the shipment schedule you established. If originals are not shipped to the vendor according to schedule, your project may not meet its deadline. Draw up a manifest listing each physical item in the shipment, and include a copy with the shipment even if you hand-deliver. If you're using a shipping service, let the vendor know when you've sent a shipment, its tracking number and the expected time of delivery, and ask them to notify you when it arrives. If the condition of your originals allow, and the equipment is available, make copies before shipping; the sound quality of the copies will not be as high as that of the originals, but if the originals are lost or damaged your audio materials will not be lost with them.

Evaluate the deliverables promptly upon receipt, so problems can be addressed and corrected right away. This is enormously time consuming, so be prepared. Remember, the vendor will have people concentrating on your project and will

ship large volumes comparatively quickly. You must be ready to process and evaluate the returning files. You may want to have the vendor keep the originals until you've run your quality checks and approved the digitized audio. This will prevent the need for reshipment if something needs to be redigitized.

Make sure the vendor's invoices are paid as promptly as possible. Otherwise, you may find the work on your project becomes as prompt as your payments!

It's easy to think the project is over when you've received the last set of deliverables from the vendor. That isn't true. The project ends only when all the contractual obligations have been met: all the originals have been returned from the vendor, all deliverables have been received, and the vendor has submitted a final invoice and received payment. Before you wrap up the project, check again to make sure you've gotten all your originals back, and that the vendor has received final payment.

Additional Resources and Information on Audio Digitization Outsourcing

Library of Congress. 2005. "Project Documents from the First Phase of the Recorded Sound Digital Preservation Prototyping Project." Viewed 7/20/2005 at <http://www.loc.gov/rr/mopic/avprot/avlcdocs.html>

Of particular interest are the "Audio transfer and image scanning specifications" – a sample statement of work for contractor selection – and the "Additional Early Project Documents" section, which contains several attachments from LC's Request for Quotes for this project.

National Initiative for a Networked Cultural Heritage. 2002. "The NINCH Guide to Good Practice in the Digital Representation and Management of Cultural Heritage Materials." <http://www.nyu.edu/its/humanities/ninchguide/index.html>

Section VII, "Audio/Video Capture and Management", covers technical issues in digitizing audio and video, and Section VIII, "Quality Control and Assurance", contains a subsection specifically on digital audio and video.

Section II, "Project Planning", addresses general project management issues, particularly for in-house projects. Section IX, "Working with Others", contains a subsection on outsourcing.

RLG. 2005. "Tools for Digital Imaging." http://www.rlg.org/en/page.php?Page_ID=408

While this page is oriented toward large imaging projects, it points to several good project planning resources, including guidelines to creating an RFP, and a sample RFP and RFI (Request for Information).