How to eat an elephant:
Strategies for using student workers to tackle backlogs

Allison McClanahan, Ryan Johnson, Sarah Ward, Lindsay Weaver

INDIANA UNIVERSITY

Archives of Traditional Music

ATM

1. Assess

An elephant in the dark

Develop a Project Plan
- ✓ Evaluate your collection
- ✓ Define your scope
- ✓ Set measurable goals
- ✓ Stay on track!

Tools:
- ➢ Direct examination
- ➢ ILS reports
- ➢ Spreadsheet Compare
- ➢ Access Database

In Praxis:
Evaluate your collection
- Compared the analog shelf list against existing holdings in the ILS
- Prioritized specific formats
- Sorted cards into categories (uncataloged field / commercial, cataloged, duplicates)
- Created a database to track cataloging

Define your scope
- 23,231 records need created
- Non-English language needs

Set measurable goals
- Identified like-items
- Assigned discrete projects

Stay on track!
- Established project timelines as assigned
- Managed scope creep as issues arose

2. Hire

From each a relevant skill, to each a relevant task

Skill-Driven Selection
- ✓ Assess your needs
- ✓ Identify skills required
- ✓ Target hiring towards goals

Methods:
- ➢ Monitor national listservs
- ➢ Connect with student networks
- ➢ Advertise outside related areas
- ➢ Recruit individuals

In Praxis:
Assess your needs
- Prioritized languages not spoken by staff
- Identified largest projects and the skills needed to complete them first

Identify skills required
- Cataloging proficiency in sound recordings
- Non-English language proficiency
- Subject area knowledge preferred

Target hiring towards goals
- Hired students who:
  - knew less-commonly taught languages
  - had experience in a closely related field
- Worked with students to match projects with their larger academic career goals

3. Implement

Each of us touches one place

Execute the Plan
- ✓ Allocate projects
- ✓ Train for additional skills
- ✓ Track progress

Tools:
- ➢ Written documentation for each task
- ➢ Access Database
- ➢ Cataloger's Desktop
- ➢ ALA Romanization tables

In Praxis:
Allocate projects
- Assigned language groups to students
- Assigned copy cataloging by format

Train for additional skills
- Students with proficiency in complex formats trained on original cataloging
- Students with relevant subject knowledge, but no library background were trained in information organization and cataloging

Track progress
- Students fill out form in Access Database for each item cataloged
- When item is cataloged, physical card moved to cataloged shelf list

4. Reassess

If each of us held a candle there

Determine Progress
- ✓ Consult with tracking mechanism to assess progress
- ✓ Converse with students about work and process
- ✓ Determine any bottle necks or necessary modifications

Tools:
- ➢ Access Database
- ➢ Direct examination
- ➢ Physical shelf list

In Praxis:
Evaluate progress
- Assessed cataloging statistics (new and backlog) from Access Database
- Looked through uncataloged shelf list categories to determine status of language needs and formats left

Measure data against goals
- In 2017, 1,828 records cataloged in ILS (1,283 from backlog)
- 60+ year backlog of Korean recordings cataloged
- (Almost) all accessioned LPs cataloged

Modifications
- Greek records were not a straight-forward issue and will require more investigation

5. Follow Up

And if we went in together

Develop Next Steps
- ✓ Based on completed tasks and goals, assign next-step projects
- ✓ Set new goals
- ✓ Continue to track progress

Tools:
- ➢ Written documentation for each task
- ➢ Access Database
- ➢ Spreadsheets
- ➢ Accession documentation

In Praxis:
Allocate projects
- Students inventory unaccessioned LPs (4,000+) and compare to IUCAT to avoid duplication
- Begin to find copy records for 78 RPMs
- Attempt to reassemble *respect des fonds* of Greek commercial recordings

Track progress
- Students fill out form in Access Database for each item cataloged
- Inventory of LPs compiled in networked spreadsheet so multiple students can work at once
- Weekly meetings to discuss Greek recordings progress

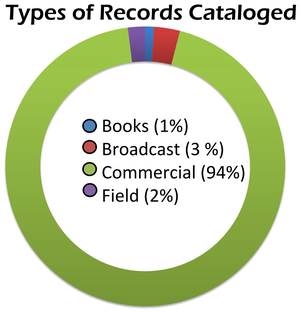
6. Repeat

We could see it

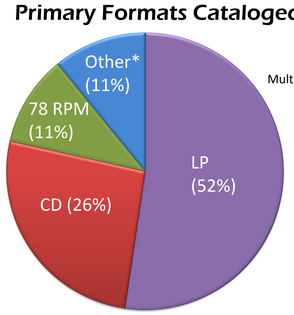
Remain flexible through an iterative process
- ✓ Reassess timelines and develop follow-up projects as needs and priorities change
- ✓ Finding individuals with uniquely applicable skills will help guide your determination of future projects
- ✓ As unique skills come forward, reconsider remaining backlog to identify new groupings of like-material for each skill

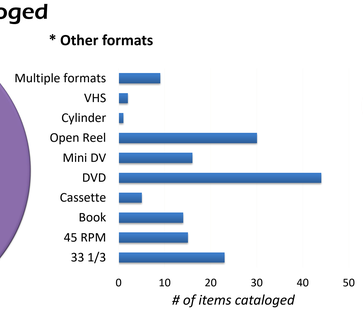
In Praxis:
Upcoming Future Projects:
- Accession all LPs and begin cataloging
- Catalog 78 RPMs with available copy
- Continue to work towards assembling Greek Records collections
- Find people to catalog in remaining languages not spoken by staff

Types of Records Cataloged



Primary Formats Cataloged

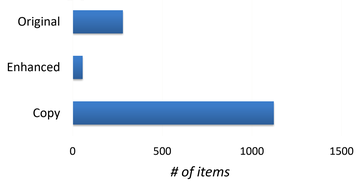




Records left to catalog:

≈21,700 records

Types of record creation:



Languages:

Addressed thus far:

Still Remaining: