

Chapter 2.2 Video Transcript

What You Need to Know:

COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR COMMUNITY ABOUT THIS PROJECT

Do either of these situations sound familiar to you?

In Situation #1, a folk dance team has one member who, for a number of years, has been that person that saves material from the team's activities over the years. It lives at home in one of their closets, and they may or may not have put some moderate organizational structure on it, so they can find things, at least at a very top level. (For example, they may know where the photos from the 1990's are, but that may be about as much detail as they can provide.) They realize that they can't do this forever and would like to pass on this role to someone else in the group. At the same time, the team decides to round up various other historical material that other team members may have and collect it all in one place.

In Situation #2, a folk song organization realizes that some of its treasured older members are aging, and they want to formally gather together what knowledge and resources they can from these elders before it's no longer possible. While many people in the organization have benefitted from learning a wide repertoire of songs, there is no formal centralized collection of songs, lyrics, and historical information held by the organization, so the organization's members decide to create an archival collection of this material.

Perhaps you're an organization that already has a core of material that you'd like to add to, as in Situation #1. Or you may be an organization that is just starting from scratch in gathering archival material, as in Situation #2. In either case, the place to begin is to develop your list of talking points to communicate to anyone from whom you might want to gather material. You may find that people donating material to your collection have a number of ideas about what archives are and how they work, and not all of their information may be accurate.

So, to avoid hitting any one of a number of snags later in the process, we'll lay out a set of talking points framed as answers to some key questions; you can find this list of talking points in the Chapter 2 Resources PDF for this chapter.

Question: What is your archive project? Why are you doing it?

First of all, give people some background and context for this archival collection's purpose. Let them know who is spearheading this effort to create the collection, and why you are making an archival collection. Are you hoping to preserve a team's history? Are you hoping to capture the stories that

embody people's experiences with your organization or at your events over the years? Do you want to create a home for all the photos, slides, or videos that people have created over the years to illustrate these events? These questions, and others about your purpose were part of what you thought about in Chapter 1. Think about how you want to share that information with potential contributors to this collection.

If you have received any funding from various sources, it's important to acknowledge those sources and explain their interest in your effort.

Here's one example:

A folk dance team wanted to get the rest of the team on board with the archiving project, so they created a 2-page vision document outlining what the project would be, and why they were doing it. They were then able to have a larger group conversation about it at their general meeting, and at subsequent evenings at the local pub after practice.

Question: Once the collection is created, how will people be able to see it or use it?

Let people know how they will be able to access the collection once it's created. Will your collection live in a closet at the home of one of your team members? Will you create a website? Or will the materials be given to a local historical society or a library or an archival repository? Or will your collection be purely digital? And how will people be able to access the digital parts of the collection? Whatever the destination of your collection, make that clear to your donors.

Sometimes people have items they value highly that they would be willing to donate to your collection if they know that the items will be cared for properly. This can be especially true if people have items that are historically significant, one-of-a-kind, or fragile in some way. In this case, you may want to talk to those potential donors about how their items will be cared for. Do you plan to store material in archivally safe boxes, or sleeves? How can you assure them the materials will be safe from dust, damage, or loss? In our experience, we had several donors who were happy to donate material once they knew that there would be someone overseeing its preservation.

Question: What kind of material are you seeking for your collection?

If you are hoping to round up additional material to add to what you have, that's important to tell people. You may want to describe what kinds of material you've already got, and what gaps there are that you're hoping to fill.

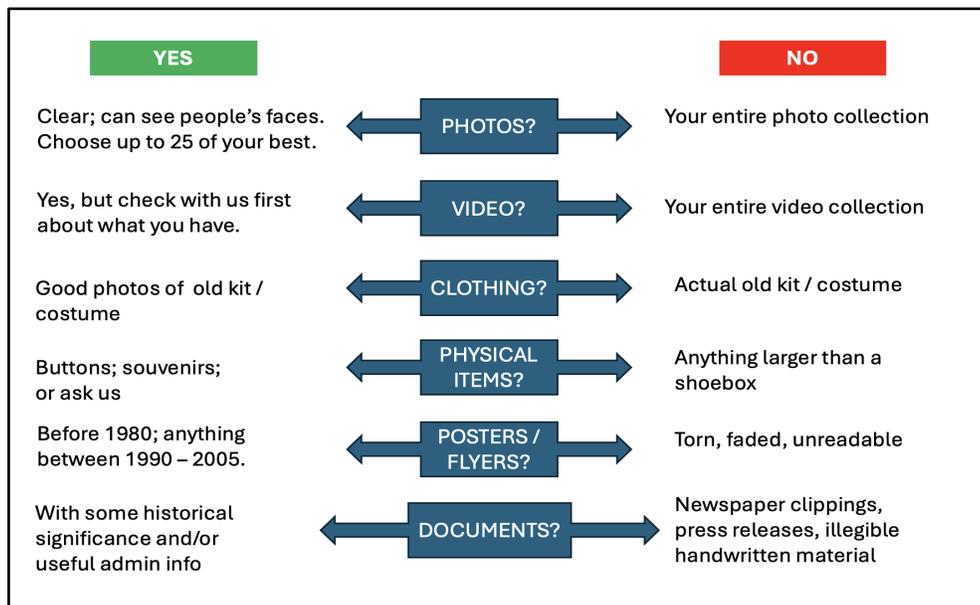
For example, in our collection, we wanted to fill in gaps for some of the material that would have been generated each year, such as t-shirts, posters and lists of team members who

attended that year. So, we posted a public Google doc that listed each category, what we had, and what we were still seeking. From that, various donations started to trickle in and fill in our gaps. And when people asked what we needed, we could easily point them there.

For any material that you want to collect, it's useful to have a prepared list of the kinds of material you are seeking and as part of that list, be clear about what you are NOT accepting into the collection. You may not want to receive *everything* someone has, so share with them any limits you're setting on how much material they can donate.

For example, to make sure they got the kinds of photos they wanted, one group described what they considered a "good" photo for the collection. Instead of prioritizing artistic composition, they wanted photos that either showed faces clearly or helped them identify a particular dance the group had performed, or that gave the best feel of a particular event or had some kind of historical significance. These were more important to them than the most beautifully composed photos (although beautiful composition was certainly a bonus!). They put this information on their website with several examples to illustrate what they were asking for.

Here's another example that tries to clearly articulate, in the "No" column, what items are not being collected.



If someone wants to give you digital files, ask what formats they have. If they have a higher quality format, ask to get that from them. We've provided a reference chart for you that summarizes what these preferred digital formats are.

In the next chapter, we talk in more detail about these higher-quality formats that are best suited for archiving digital material.

You'll also need to let potential donors know that you may need to decline certain materials in certain circumstances. For example:

- if a physical item is moldy from living in a basement or an attic, don't accept it. Mold can easily spread to other items in your collection.
- Newspaper clippings can turn regular paper yellow when they're stored in the same folder, so maybe you don't want to accept newspaper clippings. Or if you do, consider scanning a copy and keeping the scanned copy. This is one of the few times we'll suggest keeping a copy rather than keeping the original.
- You may also need to decline materials if there are any serious privacy issues with the donated material. For example, stories about other people that share some personal information that they may not want to make public should raise a red flag for you. Keep an eye out for anything that may feel like it's treading on personal privacy and use your best judgment about whether that material can and should be made public.

For any of the material you collect, it's helpful to get as much information about it as you can when it's donated. Especially for photos, videos, or slides, what can you learn about places, names, dates, or locations? For documents, printed materials, or physical objects, what can the donor tell you about the context for the item? This information will be great to add in later as you catalogue the material.

Question: Will you accept loans of material, or only permanent donations?

What you say here to your donor will depend on what decision you've made about accepting or not accepting loans of material. In either case, it's important to clarify your decision with your donors. If you're only accepting donations, then make sure they understand that this donation is considered permanent. If you *are* accepting loans, then review with your donors what agreement you're making about how and when they can request a return of their materials.

Question: If I decide to donate material to you for the collection, how does that work?

First, let them know that you'll review their donation once they give it to you and just make sure everything is in acceptable condition.

Next, once you've reviewed the donation and determined you will accept it into the collection, you'll give your donor a "gift agreement" to sign. (We'll go over our sample gift agreement in detail in the

next video.) This gift agreement provides a written record of the donation and the permissions that the donor is granting you to make the material publicly available.

They will then sign and return the gift agreement to you, and then you'll start work on organizing the collection. Once it's all organized, it will be available for them to view.

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So now we've addressed the content of what you need to communicate to donors.

Next, we'd like to share a couple of lessons we learned as we talked with our dance community.

Lesson #1: There's a LOT of information here—spread it out over several conversations, if you need to. Even though we've summarized all the talking points together here in one video, that does not mean that you need to have a single conversation with your donor in which you share all of this information in one sitting. You certainly may want to put a lot of this information on paper for people, but following up with a conversation is really, really helpful.

AND

Lesson #2: Use a variety of means to get this information out to your community and say it multiple times. In our experience, we needed to reach a very large population of Morris dancers attending an annual Ale, so we created several short YouTube videos in which we shared the context for the collection and what materials we could accept, just to give them an overview of what this project was, and then we shared the link to those YouTube videos through social media, emails, and information the teams received when they arrived at the Ale. We released the first video in 2022, then released a follow-up video in 2023 that included some images of what we had already received for the collection, hoping to build some interest, and keep it fresh in people's minds. If you'd like to see our videos, we've provided the links in the Resources section, or you can search YouTube under "Marlboro Morris Ale Archive."

Then, we had the conversations about signed gift agreements with individual donors at the time they needed to sign the agreements.

So be creative in how you convey this information and do what's best for your community and your situation.

Lesson #3: Balance your use of electronic communication with face-to-face conversations. On the one hand, it's most efficient to reach a large number of people by sending out emails, publishing videos, or posting information on a website. However, as we did all this over a couple years, we still

found that many folks had a few misconceptions about what we were doing. We found our most effective communication happened when we talked to people in person, whenever possible.

So, we strongly recommend, especially when you get to the information about the gift agreement, that you have that conversation face to face—whether in person or virtually—and not through a lengthy email. People often have questions that are best addressed in the moment, and the conversation will give you an opportunity to see what they understand and whether they have any misconceptions that you need to address.

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If you're planning on trying to round up historical material that may be out in your community, or to begin collecting material from scratch, the next video, "What You Need to Know: Collecting Historical Material", will talk about how to go about doing that. Also in the next video, we'll talk about how to create and use gift agreements.

If you're not planning to collect anything further beyond what you already have, you can move on to the last video, "Using the Spreadsheet".