

PROJECT GOAL

The Association for Cultural Equity seeks support to digitize, catalog, disseminate, and repatriate—in the communities of origin and internationally through an online presentation produced in collaboration with the American Folklife Center and UT-Austin's Briscoe Center for American History—40 hours of historic Texas audio recordings made by renowned folklorists John A. and Alan Lomax on behalf of the Library of Congress from 1933 to 1937.

1. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Association for Cultural Equity seeks support to digitize, catalog, disseminate, and repatriate—in the communities of origin and internationally through an online presentation produced in collaboration with the American Folklife Center and UT-Austin's Briscoe Center for American History—40 hours of historic Texas audio recordings made by renowned folklorists John A. and Alan Lomax on behalf of the Library of Congress from 1933 to 1937.

2. CONTENT

The Lomax Texas collections include the first recordings made by the renowned folklorists and feature a staggering diversity of expressive traditions: ballads Old World and new; hymns, spirituals, jubilees, and religious rituals; down-home and barrelhouse blues; oral histories and tall tales; protest and topical songs; old-time square dance bands and hoedown fiddlers; lullabies and children's games; cowboy songs, tall tales, and reminiscences contributed by black, white, and Mexican/Tejano performers in churches, schools, taverns, theaters, state penitentiaries, farms, plantations, ranches, worksites, community centers, and private homes in over 50 cities, towns, and settlements across the Lone Star State. The collection also includes the very first ever recordings of the African-American work-songs of the brutal Southern prison farms. Throughout the Texas penitentiary system, the Lomaxes documented the inmates as they worked clearing ground, planting crops, and chopping timber, keeping time with axes or hoes, adapting to their condition the slavery-time hollers that sustained their forebears and thus creating a new body of American song.

By the mid-1930s, John A. Lomax was well-known for his books of ballads and songs that he (often with his son Alan) had collected throughout the South. His motivation was to find and document site-specific vernacular traditions that had been preserved by local communities in the face of encroaching popular culture via radio and phonograph record—and it had all started in Texas. As a boy growing up along the old Chisholm Trail, he had collected songs and stories he heard from the passing cowboys. Lomax helped

found the Texas Folklore Society in 1910, the year that also saw the publication of his first book, *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*, which included white, black, Mexican, and Native sources, as well as an introduction by Teddy Roosevelt. The book sparked a national interest in folk song, making Lomax the most recognizable name in his field. But it was the Depression that drove Lomax into folklore as a full-time career, when the bank for which he worked went under. In 1933 the Macmillan Company hired him to compile a book of American folk-songs and ballads; researching what recordings there were in the Library of Congress' Archive of Folk Song, he found the national repository to be lacking. Raising money through the Carnegie Corporation and the Rockefeller Foundation, he purchased a state-of-the-art 315-pound disc-recording apparatus that he fit into the trunk of his Packard, and set off with his 18-year-old son Alan to travel throughout Texas on the first of the extensive recording trips he'd make over the next dozen years on the Library's behalf. By the time of his death in 1946, John Lomax would accession over 10,000 songs into the Archive, roughly half of which came from the Lone Star State.

As we state below, our original intent (reflected in our LOI) was to digitize, catalog, and repatriate all 80 hours of the Lomaxes' Texas recordings, made between 1933 and 1946, but for budgetary reasons we were compelled to restrict our scope to a first phase that will cover the first 40 hours of material.

3. OWNERSHIP OF MATERIALS

The recordings in the Lomaxes' Texas collections were made under the auspices of the Archive of Folk Song (now the American Folklife Center [AFC]) at the Library of Congress), and the original discs are and will remain a part of the AFC's permanent collection. (See attached letter of commitment from the AFC.)

4. COPYRIGHT STATUS

The vast majority of material in the collection is unpublished. It is the Library of Congress' policy that the intellectual property is retained by the heirs of the original artists, and ACE—in collaboration with the AFC and the Briscoe Center—will make every possible effort to track down and gain permission from those heirs and estates in tandem with the presentation of the material online. We will respect the wishes of any parties that do not want their family members' music included in the web exhibition.

5. METHODOLOGY

*DIGITAL TRANSFER: As previously stated, the Lomax Texas collections were recorded under the auspices of the Library of Congress and the original, fragile acetate and

aluminum discs remain part of its collections in perpetuity. Funding will support the transfer, by LC Recording Lab engineers, of the 40 hours of 1933-1937 discs to 24-bit/96k broadcast WAV.

***DIGITAL CATALOGING, TRACK EDITING, VOLUME NORMALIZATION, AND SPEED-CORRECTION:** As the Lomaxes' Texas collections have never been transferred to digital formats, nor has there been a digital catalog of item-level metadata—artist name, title, location (setting; town; county), date, instrumentation, genre(s), content and technical notes. In September 2014, ACE (with the support of the National Endowment for the Arts and University of Kentucky Special Collections) completed such a database—built off the Oracle APEX platform—of the 80 hours of Kentucky recordings made by John A. Lomax, Alan Lomax, and Mary Barnicle between 1933 and 1942, and is thus particularly equipped to undertake a similar project on behalf of the Texas collections. (A similar database for the 27 hours of recordings that comprise the 1941-1942 Fisk University-Library of Congress Mississippi Delta collection has just been completed [November 2017] with the support of the GRAMMY Foundation—see attached Progress Report.) The Project Manager will serve as editor, checking the database for consistency, accuracy, and accessibility in consultation with our partners at the AFC and the Briscoe Center. He will also work closely, technically and editorially, with those partners on the presentation of the material online via the Briscoe's digital collections. (See Access/Dissemination below.)

The Project Manager will enter the associated metadata into the catalog at the same time he edits and outputs (also as 24-bit/96k broadcast WAV) each individual recording from the complete disc-side, as received from the Library of Congress Recording Lab. Each digital file will then be given a discrete disc and band ID (referring to the original Archive of Folk Song accession number) that will correspond with its item-level record in the database. A characteristic of battery-powered instantaneous disc-recording machines, as used for these recordings, was their propensity for speed fluctuation, so as a digital catalog is populated and discrete files are created, speed- and pitch-correction as needed will also be applied using guides like pitch-pipes and tuning forks (which the Lomaxes' occasionally employed at the start of disc sides) but most often John and Alan's spoken announcements at performances' end. The original discs will be transferred flat (with no processing or equalization) and, given the relatively crude technology used to make them, the recordings will also require volume normalization to allow for optimal online streaming.

***ARTIST & HEIR SEARCH:**

Lastly, the Project Manager, in partnership with staff at the American Folklife Center, will oversee a good-faith effort to identify and contact the heirs of the artists whose recordings comprise the collection, with the intention of securing their permission to make those recordings available online and involving them in various repatriation programming which we will undertake with key partners in Texas (among them UT-Austin, the City of Austin Music Commission, and the Center for Texas Music History).

6. DIGITAL STORAGE

(See 7/8 below.)

7/8. PRESERVATION OF ORIGINAL MATERIALS/SUSTAINABILITY

The 443 acetate discs on which the entirety of the Lomaxes' Texas collections (1933-1946) were recorded are part of the permanent collection of the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress. A preservation repository without peer, the Library is charged with the storage and care of the original discs in perpetuity. (Back-up copies were also sent by the Lomaxes to the University of Texas in 1940 but, in addition to being second-generation, they have not all survived.)

A pioneering digital repository, ACE's Alan Lomax Archive has maintained preservation partnerships with institutions large and small, all over the world, sharing with them our digital assets for the dual purposes of sustainability and access. In 2004, ACE donated a duplicate digital archive of our entire holdings to the American Folklife Center as part of the latter's assumption, that same year, of Alan Lomax's physical archive. In the case of the 1933-1937 Texas audio, the AFC, the Briscoe Center, and ACE will each receive the complete collection of unedited 24/96 WAV files created by the Library's Recording Lab and—after cataloging the collection and outputting each performance to discrete files—we will share, via hard-drives, the updated digital collection (audio and corresponding metadata catalog) with our partners.

Access and Dissemination

Once the media is edited and catalog completed, they will be shared with our partners at the AFC and Briscoe Center for use in their respective research facilities and for long-term security of the digital files, and a collaborative online presentation of the digital collection—with complete and free access to the media and catalog—will be launched. We will use as a model the Lomax Kentucky Recordings (lomaxky.omeka.net), a site devoted to the 80 hours of recordings made by John A. Lomax, Alan Lomax, and Mary Barnicle in that state between 1933 and 1942. (The site was a collaboration between ACE, the AFC, Berea College, and the University of Kentucky.) The launch of this site will

be celebrated locally through public events—one at the Briscoe, of a scholarly nature, and another, featuring contemporary performers interpreting songs from the collections, in collaboration with the City of Austin Music Commission, at a public venue TBD in Austin. This will complete “Been On the Cholly So Long,” the first phase of three phases of this project.

[The next phase of the project will involve, pending successful fundraising, both the digitization, cataloging, and dissemination/repatriation of the remaining 40 hours of Lomax Texas material, ranging from 1939 to 1946, and, second, a series of K-12 lesson plans for distribution to local teachers and students, compiled and edited by our educational consultant Dr. Patricia Campbell (Ethnomusicology chair, University of Washington). ACE has a long and successful track record of site-specific dissemination/repatriation of Lomax's media collections to their communities of origin, undertaking extensive initiatives with partners in Michigan, Kentucky, and the Mississippi Hill Country and Delta. (The Mississippi Hill Country material—audio, photo, and video—was digitized between 1999 and 2003 with the support of the GRAMMY Foundation; the Delta material digitized and cataloged between 2015 and 2017 with GRAMMY support.]

Please indicate if there have been any significant changes to the project or information submitted since the letter of inquiry.*

Our letter of inquiry stated that this application would seek support to digitize, catalog, and disseminate/repatriate the complete 80 hours of Texas recordings made by John and Alan Lomax between 1933 and 1946. While this remains our ultimate intention, budgetary restrictions have compelled us to focus this application on the first half the collection: 40 hours of material recorded from 1933 to 1937. We consider, then, that "Been On the Cholly So Long" is the first phase of a two-phase project, the second phase of which will involve the Lomax recordings made between 1940 and 1946.