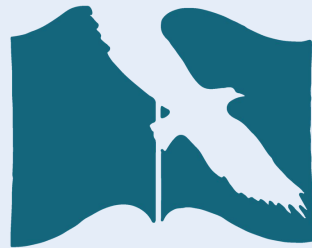Connie Cheng, Michael Ackerman, Isabel Wagner

WTBBL ERRS Archival Project: Reels, Cassettes, and CDs, Oh My!

INTRODUCTION

Sponsor

Washington Talking Book
and Braille Library

Traci Timmons,
Managing Librarian

Washington Talking Book and Braille Library (WTBBL) is a program of the Washington State Library, a division of the Office of the Secretary of State and a regional library of the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled/Library of Congress. WTBBL provides library services statewide, in person at the library and by mail, to any Washington resident unable to read standard print material due to blindness, visual impairment, DeafBlindness, physical disability (cannot hold a book or turn pages), or reading disability.

INTRODUCTION

## Student Team

Michael

Isabel

Connie

We are a group of online and residential MLIS students who are all interested in working with archives and have a passion for creating equitable access for marginalized communities.

OVERVIEW OF PROBLEM

WTBBL's Evergreen Radio Reading Service (ERRS) ran from 1973 to 2011 and provided 24-hour programming for its patrons—readings of several Washington State newspapers, talk shows featuring leaders of and those who provided services to the blind community, as well as other literary and entertainment programs. ERRS broadcasted to transmitters in Seattle, Spokane and the Tri-Cities, and patrons within range could hear the station on specially pre-tuned "second band" receivers provided free to eligible listeners.
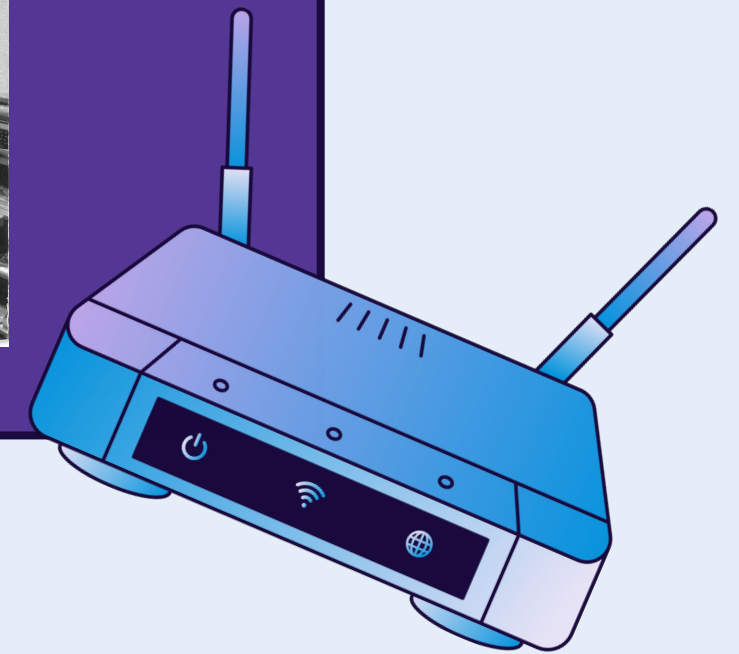
OVERVIEW OF PROBLEM

WTBBL holds an audio archive of the radio program, the Evergreen Radio Reading Service Audio Archive (ERRS archive), on hundreds of magnetic and disk media, namely open reel-to-reel tape, audio cassette tape, and optical disk. This collection is in danger of being lost due to its general obsolescence and material degradation. Without intervention, an important part of WTBBL's history, the history of independent radio and the print-disabled community in the Pacific Northwest, will be lost.
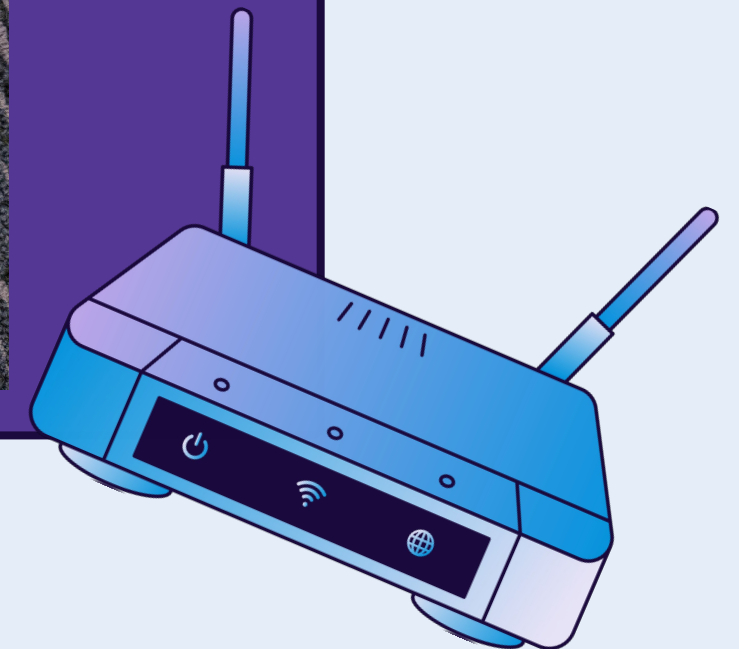
OBJECTIVES

- Establish a standardized numerical identification schema to replace informal legacy numbering systems used prior.

- Conduct a complete inventory of WTBBL's ERRS audio assets in accordance to internal metadata dictionary standards established within an in-house dictionary.

- Conduct a sight assessment of physical items, making note of visible signs of degradations.

- Learn about the history and technical specifications of the original ERRS program.

- Assist in establishing future archival , preservation, and digital collection policies.

KEY INSIGHTS

- We learned to adjust our expectations of what we could accomplish with the capstone project due to the sheer volume of records that needed to be inventoried.

- Understood the importance of learning what degradation looked like for each type of material we worked with.
  - Magnetic Media Crisis

- Had to reckon with how unorganized the collection was previously - had been sitting in an old room/a parking garage for possibly a decade.
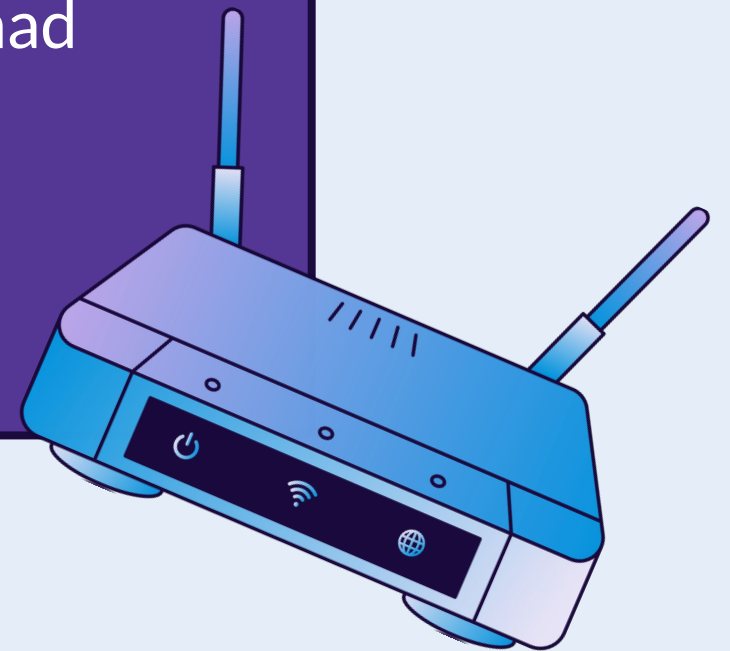
OUR ACTIONS

- Worked with WTBBL Audio Department staff to understand the history of this collection.

- Completed an inventory of the collection. This includes container-based inventorying of magnetic media (reel-to-reel and cassette tape) and digital files on optical disk and WTBBL's network.

- Completed a physical assessment of the collection, noting where material has experienced damage.
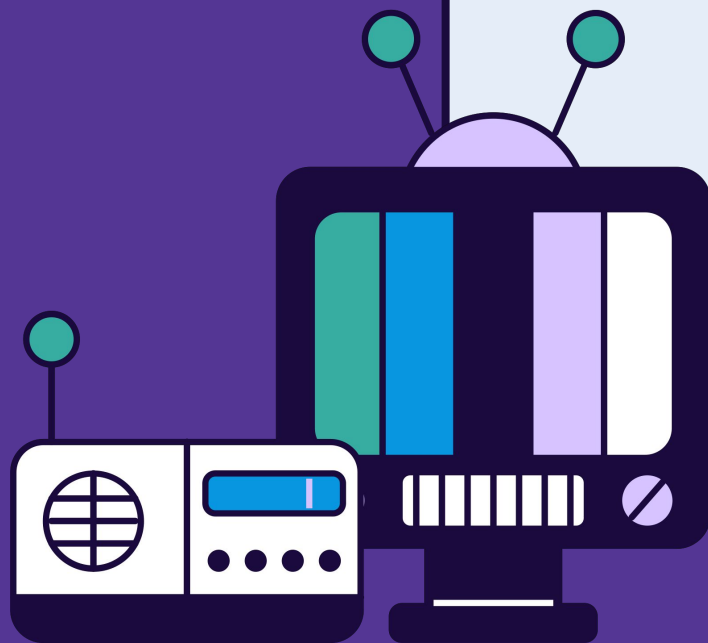
OUR FINDINGS

- A full inventory of WTBBL's known archived ERRS assets, marking the first critical steps toward a great digital preservation initiative, with a total number of 2,497 items in the physical collection.

- Before this capstone, WTBBL had little to no information on the items in the archive. With the completed inventory, the inventorying phase of this project forms the foundation for future steps toward more accurate descriptions of the assets.

- The digital preservation project presents a permanent storage solution for physical assets in danger of degradation, ensuring long-term access over time.

NEXT STEPS

Future participants in the long-term preservation project will be involved in the following:

- Reviewing and cleaning metadata tables for incomplete, ambiguous, or non-standard data.

- Testing physical media for playback.

- Listening to confirmed playable media for content review.

- Researching for usage and copyright.

- Establishing a workflow for all of the above.