

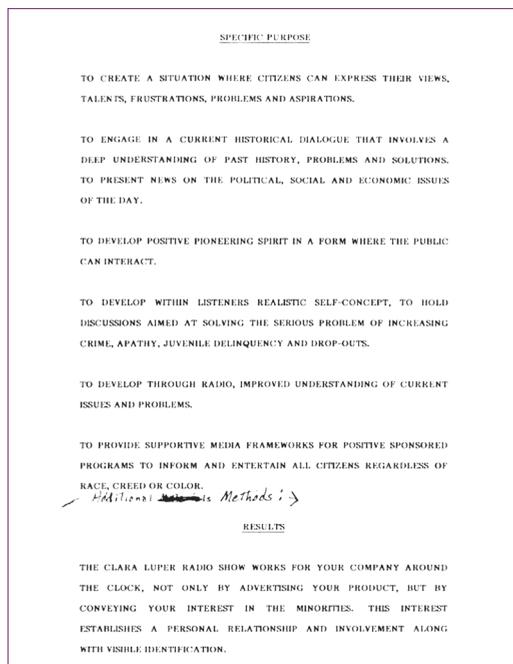
## THE CLARA LUPER COLLECTION AT THE OKLAHOMA HISTORICAL SOCIETY: COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

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If not us, then who?  
 If not now, then when?  
 – John Lewis, U.S. civil rights leader and political figure

In the fall of 2012 the Estate of Clara Luper graciously donated Luper's entire collection of scrapbooks, magnetic tapes, photographs, manuscripts, books, and paper records to the Oklahoma Historical Society (OHS) to serve as guardian of Luper's life-long work with civil rights in the United States. Educator and civil rights leader Clara Shepard Luper was born in Okfuskee County, Oklahoma in 1923. In 1944 Luper received a bachelor's degree from Langston University. She later attained a master's degree from the University of Oklahoma in 1951 and was the first African American admitted to the graduate history program in the University of Oklahoma. Luper taught history and public relations at Dunjee High School in Spencer, Oklahoma, and at John Marshall and Classen High Schools in Oklahoma City. While teaching, Luper wrote, directed, and produced *Brother President*, a play based on the life of Martin Luther King, Jr.<sup>72</sup>

Luper's legacy in the field of civil rights is recognized not only in Oklahoma but also throughout the African American community in the United States. The Clara Luper Radio show was broadcasted for over three-quarters of Luper's life and roughly totals over 550 recordings, including 1/4" open reel tape; cassette tapes; and CDs from 1960–2006. The gradual decay of the carriers over time has caused great concern for the loss of these original recordings.



Caption: Draft description of the goals of the Clara Luper radio show. Imaged from OHS archives.

72 Decker, S. L. (2005) LUPER, CLARA SHEPARD (1923 – 2011 ). Retrieved May 15, 2014, from <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/l/l0005.html>

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Because of the unquestionable significance of the Clara Luper Collection, the OHS Audio Department not only recognizes the importance of proper handling but also recognizes the immediate need to take measures to ensure that our State's oral history is safe and available for future usage. The goal of the OHS Audio Department is to inventory the collection and create an organized database of information documenting the recordings, as well as to identify the state of the recordings in terms of current and future accessibility and current and future requisites of care.

The steps in our process are as follows:

1. Identify the media—composition of tape, reel, or disc
  - Visual inspection
  - Technological inspection—to identify the tape, origin, material, and composition of the media
2. Clean the media—making repairs and preparing for preservation
3. Assess the stage of deterioration and make a detailed plan for transfer to a digital file
  - Best available long-term preservation method
4. Prepare for digital conversion
  - The digitization specialist will verify the tape has been properly prepared for transfer, and that signal path, tones, levels have been appropriately calibrated
5. Create master and access copies—plan for storage capabilities and future accessibility
6. Create metadata—through the Clara Luper Pilot Program
7. Perform quarterly assessments of the master and access copies of all media as well as the original reel or cassette will be aligned with the original calendar of preservation as determined by the Digitization Specialist. If damage or external circumstances call for a re-evaluation of the material, the Digitization Specialist will begin conservation efforts immediately.<sup>73</sup>

This paper documents the efforts made during step #6 above. In May 2013, the Clara Luper Pilot Program was established to reach out to the community of Oklahoma through the development of a crowd-sourced description program that allowed for community supported data collection of the Clara Luper Radio Show. As the profession advances and technology evolves the need to preserve and share the Oklahoma Historical Society's holdings has become a greater need. Thus, through community and organizational efforts we have begun an inexpensive and effective manner to provide detailed and accurate data for user retrievability. As with most small organizations, the funds and staff necessary to be successful with a large scale project is nearly non-existent. It is with the support of our local community and innovative ideas that we can perpetuate the legacies of our Oklahoma legends.

The absolute need to prevent the loss of historical data is not only imminent and falls within the mission of the OHS to "preserve and share Oklahoma history" but is also a must in order to share the history of Oklahoma with patrons, educational organizations, and staff and future generations. The first step in the process is the evaluation and assessment of the current state of the entire Clara Luper Collection. Through collaborative efforts the audio laboratory functions as a digital outlet as well as a quality preservation environment that adheres to strict standards of operation following technological guidelines that enhance the digital quality of the original recording.

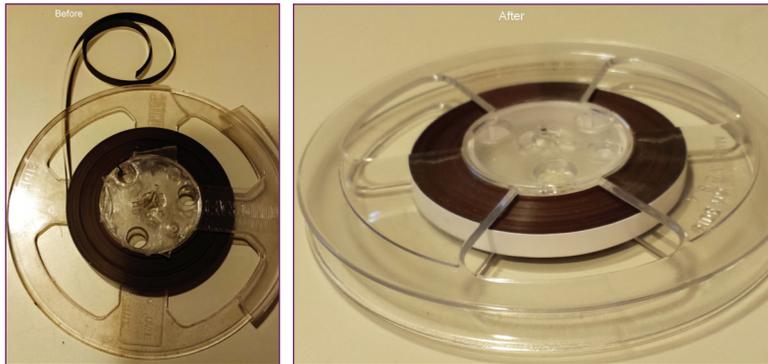
Samuel Brylawski, preservation pioneer, explains, "The future of audio preservation is reformatting audio tapes and discs to computer files and systematically managing those files in a repository." Further Brylawski writes, "The well-planned repository presumes media obsolescence, plans for it, and, according to its supporters, frees the archive community of the futile search for an affordable permanent medium." One major issue stated by Brylawski is that

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73 Guidelines on the Production and Preservation of Digital Audio Objects (web edition). (2009). International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives. Retrieved May 15, 2014, from <http://www.iasa-web.org/tc04/audio-preservation>.

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“whether for lack of foresight or funding, libraries are not creating mass-storage systems for audiovisual works... We face an extraordinary dilemma: at a time when a greater range of audio is available to more people than ever before, and the means are finally at hand to preserve those sounds for prosperity, we stand the greatest risk of losing them.”<sup>74</sup>



Caption: Before and After images of a tape from the Clara Luper Collection.

Establishing a well-planned repository not only safeguards the Luper collection but also ensures future accessibility of the digital files through effective metadata creation. The Clara Luper Pilot Program acts as the instrument which provides the metadata through community member's actual experiences. Personal knowledge of key figures, dates and events provide a more thorough understanding of Luper's Radio Shows. As Luper was extraordinarily involved within the community, it is evident that the subjective experiences of her community should be involved in preserving and perpetuating her legacy.

In July 2013, digital copies of Clara Luper Radio Shows were distributed to the Oklahoma City African American Community (OCAAC) by way of the Clara Luper Legacy Committee and the Black Heritage Committee. Packets delivered included 8–10 digital radio shows each; a worksheet; and guidelines to listen and write their interpretation, views, names, and sources. The community involvement has led to greater community support of the Oklahoma Historical Society increasing interests in assisting with the next phases of the program.

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74 Brylawski, S. (n.d.). Preservation of Digitally Recorded Sound. – Council on Library and Information Resources. Retrieved May 15, 2014, from <http://www.clir.org/pubs/reports/pub106/sound.html>

## **INSTRUCTIONS and INFORMATION:**

Please write any descriptive data that you might hear on each individual track such as DATE, KEYWORDS, and SUBJECTS, IMPORTANT FACTS mentioned or anything at all that we can use to describe the specific track. Please use as many pages as needed. There are no limits to our cataloging. The main focus is getting as much info so that we can link the public to digitized files.

### **EXAMPLES:**

Track# 2012.188.0301

Date: (Mrs. Luper mentioned that "today Jimmy Carter was inaugurated") January 20, 1977

Keywords: president, United States, democrat, oath of office etc.... (the track also went into other subjects such as advertisements 'Rainbow Bread', Tire's Etc...., First Baptist Church.)

Mrs. Luper WILL go into several different subjects or topics on each track (radio program) PLEASE mentioned ALL KEYWORDS for ALL SUBJECTS and TOPICS!

Locations: Sometimes Mrs. Luper is reporting from another State or from another town in Oklahoma, if the location is mentioned or you just know where she is then PLEASE list this location.

**\*\*note\*\*** some of the tracks are of Mrs. Luper's history classes. If you happen to know any of the kids in the audio or any significant information about the tape or the class please let us know by writing this on the form.

Our goal with this pilot project is to get this important information to the public, to the community and to the world. Mrs. Luper's legacy must carry forth and with your help we can make this happen!

Thank you for your time and your help with this extremely important task.

*Caption: Example of text as delivered to community volunteers.*

When planning a project where the professional experiences surrounding archives and archive management are limited it is best to avoid technical information and more important to effectively explain what is necessary. Therefore, creating the packets that were delivered to the community took a well-thought-out structure in relatively lay terms and with options for computer-based applications or paper and compact disc (CD) packets. The OCAAC surveyed the community. The results of the survey highlighted the need to have mixed formats readily available. Within each packet were a set of instructions and a worksheet to fill out as each show was listened to:

As each packet was returned, metadata was created, embedded, cataloged, and uploaded to the Oklahoma Historical Society Oral History and Audio Collection Channel available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/OHSAudioDept>. Future goals include housing the files on The Gateway to Oklahoma History website <http://gateway.okhistory.org/> as the primary mode of effective distribution. The Gateway to Oklahoma History was developed to host the OHS National Digital Newspaper Project and provides a searchable web-based resource that allows

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access to selected newspapers from Oklahoma free of charge.<sup>75</sup> The Gateway also provides a multi-line outlet that presents other materials including digital representations of text, film, photographic images, audio, and visual materials.

The long-term goal of The Oklahoma Historical Society is to digitize, preserve, and make available to the public the entire Clara Luper audio collection, which totals over 550 recordings, including 1/4" open reel tapes; audio cassettes; and CDs. The OHS believes that this undertaking will successfully contribute to the perpetuation of these significant sound recordings that represent a number of national subjects, events, and individuals of historical note. Continued community support is necessary to reach this goal. With only one full-time Digitization Specialist on staff, the magnitude of the collection could be lost in time, not due to lack of concern but lack of staff support. With the Clara Luper Legacy Committee and the Black Heritage Committee's continued support, and with the support of Bruce Fisher, retired Administrative Programs Officer and Administrator of Special Projects; Chad Williams, Director of Collections; and James Holley, volunteer, the Clara Luper Pilot Project will succeed and prove to be an effective model for those institutions challenged with financial and staffing limitations.



Caption: Clara Luper at the microphone, working on her radio show.

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75 The Gateway to Oklahoma History. (2014, January 1). The Gateway to Oklahoma History. Retrieved May 15, 2014, from <http://gateway.okhistory.org/>.