

Going Digital: Scholes Library wins grant for digitalization of fragile audio archives

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Laura Habecker and John Hosford with audio tapes

Alfred University Scholes Library this week announced it has been awarded a nearly \$7,000 grant from the South Central Regional Library Council to support the transfer of valuable, historic audio archives from magnetic tapes to digital format.

The tapes contain more than a hundred hours of lectures and discussions involving scholars, writers and artists visiting Alfred University, as well as local artists and scholars working at the University. They include a 1986 lecture by the English poet Stephen Spender and the 1990-91 conference “Voices of Native North America” sponsored by the Division of Human Studies; plus dozens of hours of lectures and discussions hosted by the School of Art and Design. There are recordings of Perkins lectures dating back to 1999, following the initiation of the Perkins Ceramic History Lecture, in 1998. There are lectures by renowned Alfred ceramic artists including Val Cushing and Bill Underhill.

Altogether, the recordings comprise a priceless heritage; they were also in fragile condition and risked permanent degradation, according to Art Librarian John Hosford.

Hosford says the grant will enable Scholes Library not only to preserve the recordings in digital form; the Library also will be able to make the recordings available safely to larger communities, such as the National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts, through digital media.

In addition, the work will provide Alfred University library personnel with experience in transferring fragile archives to more secure media, and create a program for recording important campus lectures and discussions in the future. The recordings, currently stored on tape cassettes and reels, will be digitalized and stored in WAV files. The files also will be added to the New York Heritage Digital collections data base, which is accessible to the general public through

www.nyheritage.org.

The University will conduct the transfer with assistance from Media Transfer Service, based in Rochester.