Interview with Conor Walker NLS

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**SPEAKERS**

Sarah Wishart, Conor Walker

**Sarah Wishart** 00:02

You probably need to okay.

**Conor Walker** 00:03

I think I did.

**Sarah Wishart** 00:11

Okay, cool. Bye. There we go recording. And I'm just going to tell you a bit about this project.

**Conor Walker** 00:21

Okay, wait, I'm just connecting my headphones. Oh, and it's not working? Oh, yeah, it is okay. Sorry, I should have done all this.

**Sarah Wishart** 00:42

It's fine. We don't have an audience of students.

**Conor Walker** 00:47

So what is an aggregate an aggregate device?

**Sarah Wishart** 00:54

We got that situation. I think it's where you can run like two like, and when I did the podcast in London, which didn't work properly, we ran a single microphone. No we run two microphones off the computer. So it was like there was something that was pulling them together. If that makes sense. Have you used your Bluetooth on zoom before.

**Conor Walker** 01:22

I haven't. Maybe I should just do it. Does it sound okay?

**Sarah Wishart** 01:30

Yeah, sounds fine. It's a bit of like, splurge in the background. But I think it's fine. I think I think the thing is, is that people are used to sound.

**Conor Walker** 01:39

Yeah, yeah, I know. Yeah, that's true. Unfortunately,

**Sarah Wishart** 01:45

at some point, I'm gonna get my podcast guy to teach me how to do it better than I do it. And, yeah, okay. Let me do a bit of a preamble. So this is a project with the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. I think this is where I was getting a bit muddled when I was calling your organisation, the Royal library of Scotland, the National Library of Scotland. And this is a podcast projects with me as a commissioned artists, working with students to make a podcast and some artwork. And I've decided to do this by looking at the archive and how the archive might help artists and filmmakers get out of stuck. And a lot of that has to do with the fact that during the pandemic, people have often not been able to work in the way that they are used to, and it's about them, then we jigging their practice. So I've always found it useful to look at process about how to do things. So I am making a piece where I go back to my own archive, and pull that to pieces. And I wanted to get students to think about how to make their own archive the kinds of things that they needed to think about the importance of the archive, to live art. And so two people that I'm speaking to are from the library Development Agency, and Tate Modern, talking about their archive on performance art. So got a real curatorial angle. And I wanted to talk to somebody about the tech side of it. So you have very kindly provided the students with some content, which they may or may not use, we'll see to make their own little pieces, which like very much, and yeah, I want to talk to you about the National Library of Scotland. And so we can kick off with, could you could you tell us your name?

**Conor Walker** 03:54

Yeah. My name is Connor Walker. I'm the audio preservation engineer at the National Library of Scotland.

**Sarah Wishart** 04:00

And can you talk about what that what that means and what that entails.

**Conor Walker** 04:06

So currently, I'm in the midst of a three year project called 'unlocking our sound heritage', and it is headquartered at the British Library. And then there are 10 regional hubs, the National Library of Scotland being one of them. And we are attempting and I should say successfully attempting to safeguard and preserve 1000s of at risk sound carriers from across Scotland.

**Sarah Wishart** 04:37

And when you say sound carriers, what does that mean?

**Conor Walker** 04:41

Yeah, sorry, that is kind of one of those. This is like archival jargon already. It is basically a sound format, whether it's you know, an LP or a cassette tape or a quarter inch tape, an open reel tape for example. Um, Yeah, the archival term carrier, which which I do like, because what what I love about my my position is that it is also very process based. And with that process, there's a lot of movement and a lot of kind of different temporalities within it. And so even though the term carrier may come across as a bit pretentious I, I do like it, because it's it's basically anything that is that is carrying sound content.

**Sarah Wishart** 05:31

And, and what, I've got questions, I don't want to go too far off them. But just to kind of have a bit of a follow on kind of like, you said that these are at risk, and I guess what puts them at risk? is one question. And I guess the second question is, how does it we'll get to you, like, you know, how does it all get sent in? And how you kind of collating it.

**Conor Walker** 05:56

Yeah, I think there's this massive structure of why these items are at risk, that's quite interesting. And one of them is that sound items are a post industrial material, and they don't have the clout and longevity of archiving paper, for example. And so we haven't developed a culture over 1000s of years to, to, to protect sound items. And like many industrial products, especially, you know, throughout different regurgitation of capitalism, they them, you know, sound items are designed to be ephemeral, and they aren't necessarily they're designed for the for the user. That is, is is with those items in the items, immediacy, which is there's something quite, quite beautiful about that. But then, from an archival point of view it it gets a bit hairy, for lack of a better word. So that's one reason why they're there, they're at risk, I don't want to say that they've they've been, like, neglected by all of these institutions, but just that most cultural memory institutions when when the majority of their work with archiving is book and paper based. And so, for any time based mediums, like moving image and sound, we have some catch up, basically. Okay. And then, you know, there's there's other reasons too, just that the materials themselves, some of them are approaching obsolescence. And sometimes, if the material itself is quite robust, and it's being stored in appropriate conditions, it might not be approaching obsolescence. It might be kind of in this perfect, purgatorial waiting zone, but, but then the playback equipment, perhaps is approaching obsolescence. But there's a balance between those

**Sarah Wishart** 08:02

two and that's 78. So, or tape or like, well, what is that risk at the moment in terms of

**Conor Walker** 08:11

one of the one of the interesting, but I will say frustrating aspects of this hierarchy of what is and isn't at risk or or, or what is what is more at risk is that some of the earliest formats like 78 RPM discs, which in back to the archival jargon, they're referred to as coarse groove discs. Where as a lp is a micro groove disc. And anyways, these these shellacked discs are these 78 RPM discs. They're fragile, if you drop them on the ground, for example, they they really shatter they fragment like nothing else. They are not pliant because you know, they're not they're not a petrochemical like like like vinyl discs or however, if you have them in decent storage, they they last ages and luckily and I would say because of DJ culture and like dance music culture, the playback equipment is not approaching obsolescence at all for these devices. In fact, we use the techniques 1200 which is like the kind of quintessential DJing turntable and has been since the hip hop era. And that's what we use as as the as the playback equipment. So so the actually you you started with the perfect example of something because of its History as being, you know, quite an old item because a lot of these shellacked discs are now approaching 100 years of age. And yeah, there's there is this is this is one of the kind of interesting temporalities of the position is that are not just a position but sound archiving in general is that these these timeframes, they don't they don't follow this linear pattern. In fact, I would argue that the most at risk physical item is the cdr. I really, yeah, absolutely. Not very interesting. They use a die in the desk, and that die kind of saturates out quite quite easily. And they're very prone to, to bit rate rot, and all sorts of all sorts of things. Yeah. So compact discs are really, they're, they're very much at risk.

**Sarah Wishart** 11:01

That's probably, I've, I've got a very large book of compact discs and in the attic, probably need to address that at some point.

**Conor Walker** 11:13

Okay,

**Sarah Wishart** 11:15

so what else we'll be saying. Okay, so I sort of went off a little bit, but why do you think your role is an important role at the National Library of Scotland, or in general?

**Conor Walker** 11:32

Well, I guess I'll start by saying my role is no more less important than, than anyone else's role. In fact, the other positions on my team cataloguing rights clearance. Project Management, I've been through working with a very small team curation, I've, yeah, I've gained kind of a lot of respect about, about their roles. And there's sometimes I think, when people think of sound archives, they think of my role. And, but that's just because it's more there, it's a material role, I have equipment and I'm tapes and that type of thing, you know, it, it more easily tells a story, I suppose. But, but the more I learned about everyone else's real life, I find it to be very Paramount and, and an interesting, um, but with that said, I, the importance of my role, these tapes are pretty much silent. Until, you know, they're silent to a contemporary audience until I transfer them into the digital realm. And so that's, that's one reason why the role is important. Another thing, which is actually just more of a personal preference, I'm sort of at the beginning of the conveyor belts with my team's work. And I, I like that, I like that I can fuss over these materials. And then it's like, I bone them across the wall. And my co workers then get, you know, I start with this messy heap of analogue material, and then I give them this messy heap of digital. And I get to kind of sit back and watch them work with it in a completely different, different way to myself, and so I enjoy that part of it as well.

**Sarah Wishart** 13:32

And, and then and so I guess that kind of talking about the sort of collective people that work on, you know, on sort of retaining all this stuff. And the next question is, why is it important to keep sound archives? And then we've thought of, like, touched on this a little bit, but like, why is sound like, you know, important? Yeah.

**Conor Walker** 13:57

Yeah. I mean, maybe this is a bit unconventional of an ant's answer in terms of this is. There is this, there's this misnomer that or at least I think it's a misnomer that once something is digitised. It's, it's protected. And that's not really the case. And in fact, we don't we don't know whether this digital protection that we're doing right now is going to be more robust than the actual physical archive. And I shouldn't even call it a physical and non physical archive because of course, there's loads of materials that go into this, this digital archive that's kind of you know, fragmented across the across the globe. Um, but I guess, I guess I think it's important that there's continued labour going into these going into this, this material And I think if there isn't, regardless of what the what the medium is, whether it is sound or moving image or or, you know, book based material. If people aren't continually combing through this debris, then history is going to be written in this very stagnant way, which it has been written many, many times. And so there's, there's, there's sort of a deconstructive potential with with, you know, and there's, I'm actually quite optimistic about it. Because I think I think sometimes the daunting thought that you're never finished with protecting this material and pushing it into a new carrier, you know, something else is then carrying the content. And I know that can sound very daunting, but I think that kind of continuous labour is, is what is what is important about it. Now, in terms of like, the medium of sound itself. Yeah, you know, there's just, there's something you know, a book, a book can't carry the human voice. And it can't, it can't carry you what the world sounded like, at a different point in time.You know, like, I digitised the Scottish ornithology club collection. And there were these like elongated field recordings from fields in like East Lothian, for example, from the 1970s. And then, in just 40, 50 years, sorry about that, I'll just get back 40, 50 years, it was quite well, perturbing to hear how quiet the like natural world was, compared to what standing in the field in East Lothian would be like, now. There may be like one aeroplane that would fly by in an hour long take. Or you would perhaps hear like a tractor coming down the road. But it wouldn't be you know, the, the constant roar of the motorway or planes coming in every every three minutes, for example. And yeah, there's just there's little things like that, which some may, can some may deem to just be grey audio. And by that, I just mean that it's like things that are recorded that are unintel unintended sounds, but a lot of that a lot of that grey audio speaks to a setting in a time that that like the written word can't necessarily do.

**Sarah Wishart** 17:58

And what is your favourite file in the national Library's collection?

**Conor Walker** 18:08

I have quite a few.

**Sarah Wishart** 18:11

You can talk about all of them.

**Conor Walker** 18:14

I think my favourite one, I actually don't like listening to it. I don't like the sound of it. But I do think it's interesting. in the same collection - the Scottish ornthology club there at the end of the collection, there was a research recording from an institute in Norway where they hooked a heart monitor up to a grouse. And then they were measuring the the grouse his heart, their heart rate. And I think it started at like 30 beats per minute. And then they introduced some sort of predator to the grouse to see its, you know, sympathetic nervous system and heart rate go into overload. And its heartbeat went to 300 Oh, my God, the recording itself is just you, you hear the pulse of the heart rate really slow at the beginning and relaxed and then really, really fast. And I think it's

**Conor Walker** 19:27

I love the recording and I find it disturbing in kind of equal measure. It's, it's like there. It shows you this technological way of like, making, you know, the the language, the biological language of the heart. You know, it brings sound to it, it makes it it gives it an audit, an auditory presence. And at the same time, there's also this disturbing kind of surveillance surveillance body aspect to it. And that is that's even despite but also connected to, you know, the animal cruelty that was going on in this in this recording. And so yeah, I think the tension between those two things is, is quite interesting. Again, this is I think this is something that would be hard to convey over, you know, like the written the written word. And then that research likely went into a written research paper. And then this part of the research is actually kind of its unintended. And I doubt the researcher ever thought that this material would end up in a national Sound Archive. So, and then,

**Conor Walker** 20:49

there was an entire collection that I just loved working on, it was quite early on project, which was from Strathclyde University and its women in the Scottish Communist Party. It's called against all the odds. There's, there's one recording that they speak of different communist rallies at Calvin Hall. And the moving image and sound collections of the National Library are at Kelvin Hall. So that's where, where I work. And so, yeah, again, there's this aspect of it, you know, so I'm transferring this tape and the exact space that they're talking about these different different rallies. And, and it just it gives breath to, to this history. And it's interesting, and I probably shouldn't say too much about this. But you know, now Kelvin Hall has soft play, for example. And, you know, less than 100 years ago, they were, there was Marxist political rallies there. So, there's, there's sort of an interesting amount of change that that is occurring with, with the space. And then, during like, right before lockdown, I was transferring the Scottish poetry library collections. And so I got to very fortunately catalogue a lot of that material early on in the pandemic when I was at home. And it was just really great a centric company, during during a very lonely time. So I know those aren't singular items. The last two are full collections. But yeah.

**Sarah Wishart** 22:40

And what do you wish within the collection? that perhaps isn't?

**Conor Walker** 22:48

back to what types of sound carriers and what types of materials we deem to have more historical significance, or that needs, you know, to be rescued right now, I wish we could deconstruct that a bit, and that we could really look at what is at risk, and also balance, what's at risk with what types of recordings are there from voices that we we haven't heard from, from more diverse voices, for example, because one of the problems with many of the, like, historic formats. Um, and I should say, I don't think there are any more historic than an mp3, or WAV file. I agree. I really, I really don't. But I don't mean to say I don't mean to disrespect those formats, either. But, but anyways, I what I'm getting at is that let me gather my, my thoughts here. Yeah. So up until about the cassette, that, you know, sound recording was, was only for a very privileged view. And that privileged view is exactly who you think it would be. It was it was people who are wealthy, and generally white men. who, you know, had time for recreation, basically. Because a lot of times, these field recordings and oral history and all this is it, a lot of it's hobbyist, which which I don't mean to demean I think that's great, but it also it also did reflect certain cultures and And it left out other cultures. And so one of the one of the problems is, if, if, if you're focusing on the material from, from that era, you're really just getting the voices of very, you know, small group of people. The cassette was just so widely produced. And you know, it's big boom, happened in like, the massive consumption of the 1980s. And, of course, there's plenty to criticise there in terms of maybe the environmental waste or that type, that type of thing. But at the same time, this the, you know, cassette tapes, and the ability to record cassette tapes, were just, you know, it was amplified all over the world. And so you really, you really don't get to get in autonomy plus autonomous voices from the global south, for example, until because, of course, there's many examples from field recorders from the British Empire and from other, you know, European and North American empires going into the global south and recording things. But you don't have to the same degree. Yeah, more of an autonomous voice until the cassette tape.

**Sarah Wishart** 26:35

And, and how do you think, you know, kind of taking that kind of one step further, like, how do you think decisions about what's in the collection might be made more equitable? By bringing, you know, changing process to sort of see whether or not you can bring in a more wide diversity of content?

**Conor Walker** 26:57

Yeah, I mean, I do think that like, yeah, creating some sort of system that is very deconstructive. That balance is what is truly at risk. And what with what is recorded by marginalised groups in particular, that don't feature heavily in the archive. And I, I can't say this for certain, because it would obviously require a massive auditing project. But I think there would be a lot of overlap, I think some of the most actual at risk material would be coming from, you know, things like things like quarter inch magnetic tape, which which I transfer regularly, and which I love working with and love transferring. Some of it is extremely at risk, and some of it under the right conditions could be kept in a, you know, archival Vault for another 20 years or something. I don't you know, that isn't the case for CDR. Is that that? That isn't the case for a lot of recordings that are on the webinar. Um, you know, even Gosh, what's the name of the the Internet Archive? the Wayback Machine wayback machine? You know, the Wayback Machine does not they don't archive moving image and sound to I don't believe so. When you go back to those, those websites, it's, it's sort of a it's still images of how the web was it's not, you know, it doesn't flow in time, like it like it potentially wants

**Conor Walker** 28:47

did. So yeah, so things like mini discs. CD, Rs, mp3 is even, you know, different content that's streamed on the web. I think, shockingly, even though it's, it's like, it's the most contemporary things that are occurring in front of us. It's, it also necessitates protecting, sometimes more than, than older items. Those older items need to like the the thing with the older items is it is comes down to the obsolescence of playback equipment. And so I'm not suggesting that we should just, you know, put all of the you know, put all the wax cylinders in a bonfire or something. I think that there there needs to be a process for that stuff is continued to to be preserved as well, but it needs to be balanced with with some of these other materials.

**Sarah Wishart** 29:50

And, and so, as I said, like we're talking to about the archive in relation to how how an artist or Performance might get are stuck. And so I thought it might be useful thing as you're the most technical person that I'll be speaking to, and maybe asking a bit, a bit more sort of technical stuff. So if a student was out to make an archive for them from from their own work, whether that's spoken word or performance, or if they're musicians, what advice would you give them about what they should think about, about putting that arc start in that archive have

**Conor Walker** 30:27

to experiment with a process that they believe in, and to really, like, have a lot of faith and respect for that process? Even more so than maybe what the archive what content is being generated? And like how they're going to protect that that content? Again, I think this is the this goes back to these like, you know, the, the Archivist of the archive as, as this entity that is just like moving this debris along. And just getting in with that material. I thought that would be, that would be the main thing. Yeah.

**Sarah Wishart** 31:08

Cool. And, okay, so let's say somebody is recording an interview, which like forms, the vast majority of my archive was that I, you know, my PhD was interviewing lots and lots of different kinds of people in lots of different audiences. And I've got something like, I don't know how many hours but it's 95,000 words, plus of just straight interviews. And so say somebody was recording an interview? And what I mean, I've asked the question, what sort of ethical questions should they ask if their process?

**Conor Walker** 31:40

Yeah, well, there's obviously GDPR issues to contend with. I know, that's not actually, I know, some co workers that can speak to GDPR and more excitingly than, than I can. Um, so so that's, that's, that's one thing.

**Sarah Wishart** 31:59

Um, yeah, I mean, and let's, let's unpack that a little bit, let's unpack I mean, I don't really want to go down the entire let's have a huge conversation about GDPR. But like, that's making sure that people understand what it is that they're doing, and that they're happy for you to hold it and like retain records.

**Conor Walker** 32:20

And also beyond that, like, if they say, things that are private and protected. trade unionism affiliation, this is something we ought we constantly have to listen for, in the archive, medical conditions, addresses any, any sort of any data that can, you know, can add to their body being further surveilled. Or, you know, can get them in trouble for slander, or, or whatever is something to watch out for.

**Sarah Wishart** 33:01

And I guess, kind of like, so for example, with my own archive recently, like, I went and interviewed lots of people, and they understood that they were being interviewed in relation to my PhD research. But now that I've got a lot of those, that sound stuff that has been on different light recordings, in order for me to even keep it, let alone, do anything with it, I need to go back to them to change the kinds of permissions that they gave me to use with it. And so that's been an interesting process in itself, in that I've, you know, there's been some people that are a bit like, well, the conversation I'd have with you in private about this, that I understood would feed into research is it is a different thing, for the idea that you might use those audio recordings for something in public. So that's been a negotiation, and a really interesting one about I'm not sure that you can ever future proof that the ethical conversations that you have at the beginning of a project, cuz you've got no idea how you might use it in future. So

**Conor Walker** 34:00

I think I think one thing that is important is to try not to be a gatekeeper. And to, even though it is it's even if it is your project that you're working on, to not have too much ownership over this, you know, you may be a conduit for this content, but, but it's not, you know, it's not some property. Empire. And, and, yeah, you may be because you're involving the voices of other people. Yeah, that ownership is shared. It's collective and, and so I think you're, I think how one should feel about it is that they're responsible for ensuring that that that it is that it maintains to be collectivised?

**Sarah Wishart** 34:56

Yeah. And do you think

**Conor Walker** 34:59

people so I think if, as the recordist or the person who is who's maintains archive, if you if you approach it in this way and the people you're recording they they understand that they feel they feel safe with, with how you're approaching it, I do think you're going to get better content, I think it's going to be more in depth than I think when people aren't, aren't scared to share. That's when they they really share. But of course, when somebody really shares that means your responsibility is is heightened. Because Yeah, because they're giving you something because they, they trust, how you're going to be interpreting it and maintaining it and presenting it, etc.

**Sarah Wishart** 35:47

I guess I guess, Michelle, I think the thing that I wish I'd thought about when I was doing it was to make it more to make it a larger process, no more ongoing conversation. So, you know, I might have said something along the lines of, you know, what you're giving permission when you're using this, this for this. And it might be that I want to use it for this and this and future. But in that instance, I will come back to you before it gets used. So it's only going to be used under these conditions. And that you retain the kind of like, ongoing relationship with people, you know, as things kind of, like, you know, go on. Yeah,

**Conor Walker** 36:25

yeah. I mean, to give, to give an example, there are, there are countless recordings of very, very colonial recordings of recordists not getting permission, for example, to make a sound recording of an indigenous ceremony. And going back to, you know, maybe these recordings have existed in an archive, and they haven't been listened to for say, 50 years. And then there's this attempt to to put them online and to democratise those recordings in that way. And there's a permissions process where they go back to you know, the indigenous people where these recordings originally came from and they asked for permission of of can we can we preserve this recording can we present it online etc. And there's there's many reasons why people would want those recordings to either be protected and go online or to be destroyed You know, there there there are examples where they it wasn't meant to be recorded and those ceremonies are that the recording itself is this is surveilling a ceremony that was meant to take place in a very specific time in a very specific context. And when that time and context is no more then nothing should exist of it at all. Of course, that's not always the context it's the it's it's the importance of like like you were saying kind of again, it goes back to this process is endless and it's a continuing dialogue to ensure that that it is being protected in the right way.

**Sarah Wishart** 38:17

Yeah. And is that any piece of kit that you think would be essential to somebody making their own archive

**Conor Walker** 38:28

um yeah get just a basic handheld field record digital field recorder little zoom device or there's there's plenty of companies that that that make them but yeah, just something that you can carry around with you and you can record everything you can record yourself cooking a meal or singing in the shower or you know, watering the plants or talking with a friend whatever, just bring it everywhere and record record every

**Sarah Wishart** 39:01

Do you record? Do you record? Do you make field recording?

**Conor Walker** 39:06

Yeah, I do. Yeah, and have for for a long time. I think it's probably it's it's the cornerstone of my own kind of artistic process.

**Sarah Wishart** 39:20

And which came first the artistic process or or working as a as a preservation person.

**Conor Walker** 39:27

I think at the time I didn't even know it was a process but I it recording has recording has definitely structured my process for me it's it's as if I didn't have to design it is on the process. I did. Yeah. And again, like I find the design of that process to be much more important than their their recordings that I that. I have that I captured that I that I mean a lot to me and that I've used for, you know, for projects and other artworks and stuff but there's also the majority of the material I hope I never spend time listening to or I hope I never archive them and I don't I don't care if it's just dying on a hard drive somewhere but but the but the process that it has created is really like what what is the most meaningful about Yeah,

**Sarah Wishart** 40:29

about about the recordings and and yeah, I share your obsession about process and I think recording Yeah, shape the shape the process or take it on further or kind of like get you think about it. I'm going to do it this way now. But what's, what's one of your favourite pieces that you've recorded?

**Conor Walker** 40:54

Well, in Scotland I was I went on a sailing residency with this with this programme, sail Britain and we went all around the small Isles. So Eigg, Rum, Muck and Canna , although we didn't make it to Canna because of the storm. But it was hilarious. I had been I've been using hydrophones for years.

**Sarah Wishart** 41:17

What's that? What's the hydrophone?

**Conor Walker** 41:19

A hydrophone is an underwater microphones and microphone that, yeah, dip into into the water. So they're famously what are used to, to that scientists used to record cetaceans or whale songs. And I was so used to like, you know, standing at the beach, chucking it into the into, like, the tide, and then all of the noise of it kind of tumbling back to me and just just them being these ridiculous, like, unless I wanted to do some sort of noise performance, they really weren't, like, capturing much. And so being on a sailboat and being able to just like, you know, dip it into the ocean at any time was, was, was an incredible treat.

**Sarah Wishart** 42:06

Did you get whale song?

**Conor Walker** 42:07

No, unfortunately, we saw we saw some porpoises. Actually, I got kind of up close and personal with a few porpoises while I was being sick off the side of the boat, but no, I think my favourite thing I recorded with the hydrophones were pistol shrimp, and they make this really especially especially on when the sea is calm. You can really they make this like really nice, glassy rhythmic sound.

**Sarah Wishart** 42:37

And like, do you have some of that?

**Conor Walker** 42:40

Yeah.

**Sarah Wishart** 42:41

Well, we could we could mix in.

**Conor Walker** 42:43

Yeah, yeah, we could. Yeah, I can I can I can send you some,

**Sarah Wishart** 42:47

that'd be great. And

**Conor Walker** 42:49

speaking of process, because you just reminded me what one thing I I contribute to this open source sound map called 'radio aporee'. And that's been a really important part of my process, even before, before I was more kind of archive focused, and I made spreadsheets and that type of thing. This map was kind of like my, my spreadsheet.

**Sarah Wishart** 43:15

What can you talk about? Because I have actually shared it with some of the students that I've been working with. But like, this is obviously going to go out a bit further. So can you explain what that that is?

43:25

Yeah, it's basically just a website, run by a programmer and field recorders in Berlin. whose name is Kudos? But I'm not certain, but anyways, um, and people from all over the globe, they upload field recordings, that they have to be over, there's a few limitations that they have to be over a minute long. They can't be like, you know, they can't be collage. They have to be raw field recordings. And they use you know, it uses Google Maps and Google Earth as sort of its its GIS interface. And, and yeah, you can it's, it's this, it's this massive field recording archive from all over the world. And you can go to Antarctica and zoom in and click on, you know, someone boiling beans in the ice, or whatever it is, whatever.

**Sarah Wishart** 44:27

So our students could contribute to that?

**Conor Walker** 44:31

Yeah, absolutely.

**Sarah Wishart** 44:32

Amazing.

**Conor Walker** 44:33

The nice thing too, not to get too deep into it, but you can, you can create specific projects on the map. So like, I have one for recordings of the Scottish canals. And what you can do is you can set it so that you're the only contributor or you can make it public and then anyone else can can also add recordings. So I guess I guess what could happen with with a public group, if you if you had a number of students, they can all contribute to the same map,

**Sarah Wishart** 45:06

Amazing,

**Conor Walker** 45:06

and themed as you can, you can make the themes as tight or as like, you know, as kind of broad as you'd like.

**Sarah Wishart** 45:16

And obviously, you were saying that those particular recordings wouldn't be edited. But I imagined that there'll be some recordings that students do that they want to do some post production, and, you know, have you got any recommendations about what sort of software might be good, especially to people who might not have used stuff before?

**Conor Walker** 45:37

Yeah, um, I mean, DAWs, or digital audio workstations there. There's some I mean, you know, it's, it sounds stupid, but they're all different, but they're all really the same. And so, you know, I guess I would recommend just starting with one that's open source and free, like, Audacity. Um, another one that is really affordable. And that is, that is open source as well. And yeah, it's really affordable for how professional it is, is Reaper. Um, but I would, I would say, and I'm someone who like appreciates the digital realm as much as I appreciate the analogue realm, but but I would say to not get too obsessive over the specific software and to, to have it be augment what what you are doing with it. To do stuff outside of the computer.

**Sarah Wishart** 46:46

Okay, do it in a in a camera and but,

**Conor Walker** 46:49

of course, yeah, use it as a tool but not, you know, it's not the, it's not the one at all.

**Sarah Wishart** 46:58

Cool,

**Conor Walker** 46:59

and then there are a number of digital audio workstations that are are good for more specialised things. Ableton is really good for making electronic music and sampling and, you know, synthesising sounds, etc. Even though it has an abalist name, as a co worker pointed out to me,

**Sarah Wishart** 47:25

um, is there anything else that you think would be of interest to our students? Or have we covered a lot?

**Conor Walker** 47:35

No, is there something that I could be more succinct about that?

**Sarah Wishart** 47:39

No, I think that there's been lots of very nice replies, what I'll probably do is and make largely the full, like, interview available, I think what we're going to have is like a podcast on a page and then there'll be opportunities to have other resources. So we're going to point to the National Library of Scotland like you know, archive where we if there's an if there's a digital sort of space, but also I'll try and make the full If nothing else, transcripts available to people so that Yeah, they can look at the whole thing.

**Conor Walker** 48:14

The audio is available, can it can it not include the video?

**Sarah Wishart** 48:19

There's no video Don't worry? That just just audio no video? Oh,

48:24

yeah. Yeah.

48:27

That sounds good.

48:28

That's a given we don't want video.

48:31

Yeah. colleagues in the Moving Image archive deal video.

**Sarah Wishart** 48:34

Yeah, exactly. You know, where the audio side of things. That's fine. Okay, I'm going to stop recording now.

**Sarah Wishart** 48:41

Okay.