

The StoryCorps-Warmamas Community Archive at the University of Miami Libraries: A Collaborative Oral History Project and Case Study

Patricia Figueroa Sowers, Bryanna Valentine Herzog, and
Béatrice Colastin Skokan

Introduction

The StoryCorps-Warmamas Community Archives is a collaborative project between StoryCorps' Military Voices Initiative, Warmamas — a Miami-based grassroots organization — and the University of Miami Libraries Special Collections.¹ Warmamas' initiative gives a voice to the mothers of service members who serve, or have served, in our military in a time of war by providing a public space to share their individual stories. These accounts are often hidden from major news headlines. Most of these service members have been deployed to the Middle East and Southwest Asia. Many have returned home. Others have not. Warmamas allows the mother of each service member the opportunity to tell her own story, thereby collecting narratives that are as unique as they are universal.

This essay examines and considers the StoryCorps-Warmamas Community Archives as a case study for community-driven oral history work with institutional archives. While the literature on oral histories in community archives is extensive and beyond the scope of this paper, the authors explored points of contact with other oral history projects involving armed forces and the effects of war on enlisted individuals and their families. The authors also consulted oral history repositories that included collections on war and the military experience: University of California (UC) Berkeley Oral History Center,² the Oral History Archives at Columbia University,³ the University of Texas at Austin Voces Oral History Project,⁴ the Center for Oral and Public History at California State University, Fullerton,⁵ and Baylor University.⁶ While rich in the documentation of World Wars I and II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and with some regional foci on Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as the experiences of Veterans from various specializations within the armed forces, no other project was exclusively devoted to the experiences of the mothers of service members. Research within the West Point Center for Oral

¹ Warmamas, accessed September 8, 2020, <https://www.warmamas.com/>.

² "Search the Oral History Center," University of California Berkeley Library, accessed September 8, 2020, <https://www.lib.berkeley.edu/libraries/bancroft-library/oral-history-center/advanced-search-form>.

³ "Oral History Archives at Columbia," Columbia University Libraries, access September 8, 2020, <https://library.columbia.edu/libraries/ccoh.html>.

⁴ "VOCES Oral History Center," The University of Texas at Austin, accessed September 8, 2020, <https://voces.lib.utexas.edu/>.

⁵ "Military/Conflict," The Lawrence de Graaf Center for Oral and Public History, California State University, Fullerton, accessed September 8, 2020, <http://coph.fullerton.edu/collections/militaryconflict.php>.

⁶ "Search Our Collection | Institute for Oral History," Baylor University, accessed September 8, 2020, <https://www.baylor.edu/oralhistory/index.php?id=931703>.

History⁷ revealed two interviews with “Gold Star Mothers,” but little else was found online that highlighted and honored the perspectives of service members’ mothers.⁸ Warmamas’ emphasis on oral histories from the mother’s point of view, as well as the group’s collaborative approach with StoryCorps and the University of Miami Libraries, seems to point to the StoryCorps-Warmamas Community Archives project as a unique endeavor initiated by Florida women for all women with connection and/or concern for enlisted children.

Creation of Warmamas

Patricia Figueroa Sowers founded Warmamas in 2011, based on a need to connect with the feelings and experiences of mothers whose children had been deployed to the Middle East in a time of war. Her own son had just left on a diplomatic mission to that region. Although his situation differed from those actively deployed to the battle fronts of Afghanistan and Iraq, Patricia’s concern for her son’s safety was real. She felt a strong need to reach out to the mothers of these service members to better understand how they were able to cope emotionally. She wanted to learn more about the experience of war from their perspective. Indeed, during those years, there were many local women’s groups supporting the troops. None, however, focused on the mother’s narrative. What was it like to have a son or daughter join the military? Did a mother’s opinion of the war make any difference in the way she dealt with her child’s decision? What was it like to say goodbye before deployment? What was the effect on the family? How did she support her child? What happens when the service member returns home?

Patricia and a small group of her friends and artists, including Philip Busey and Gail Ruiz, set out to find answers in 2011, several years before connecting with StoryCorps. They contacted mothers’ and Veterans’ groups, spoke to other friends, and gradually began to find names of mothers of service members. When contacted, many of these women were surprised that anyone would be interested in what they had to say. Once the conversations began, however, they discovered that the act of talking about their children and themselves could be liberating. For many, it was the first time they had ever spoken at length about their feelings and experiences.

The first interview with a service member’s mother was recorded at a park in 2012. The setup of the recording was simple. Patricia used the Rocket Lawyer website to create release forms that each participant signed before recording began.⁹ The camera used was a simple \$400 Sony Handycam Digital HD Video Camera with a built-in microphone. Patricia admired NPR’s Terry Gross for her conversational interview style.¹⁰ Even though Patricia Figueroa Sowers had prepared an extensive list of questions, once the mother interviewee (also named Patricia) started talking, the conversation came naturally and developed organically. Despite the noise of children playing in the park and the deafening roar of airplanes overhead, the camera was able to capture the mother’s voice and everyone involved realized that stories like that were important and needed to be collected and heard.¹¹

⁷ The West Point Center for Oral History, accessed September 8, 2020, <https://www.westpointcoh.org/>.

⁸ “Mom, This is What I’m Supposed to Do”: Memories From a Gold Star Mother,” The West Point Center for Oral History, accessed September 8, 2020, <https://www.westpointcoh.org/interviews/mom-this-is-what-i-m-supposed-to-do-memories-from-a-gold-star-mother>; “Are you Here About My Son?: A Gold Star Mother Remembers,” The West Point Center for Oral History, accessed September 8, 2020, <https://www.westpointcoh.org/interviews/are-you-here-about-my-son-a-gold-star-mother-remembers>.

⁹ Rocket Lawyer, accessed October 1, 2020, <https://www.rocketlawyer.com/>.

¹⁰ “Terry Gross,” National Public Radio (NPR), accessed October 1, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/people/2100593/terry-gross>.

¹¹ “Interview with Patricia (Part 1 of 3),” University of Miami Mediaspace, accessed September 8, 2020, https://umiami.mediaspace.kaltura.com/media/Interview+with+Patricia+%28Part+1+of+3%29/0_gkdamp4/129360801.



Figure 1. Screenshot of “Interview with Patricia (Part 1 of 3)” oral history hosted on the University of Miami Mediaspace website.

The interviews were edited by Patricia, using iMovie.¹² She learned how to edit by going to Apple store tutorials. She worked closely with Aurora Molina, a fiber artist, teacher, and patient friend, to develop the Warmamas brand identity and logo while Aurora completed an art residency in India. The collaboration between these two women on different continents was intense as they hammered out the best approach for presenting the oral history concept on a website.¹³ The decision to make the videos black and white was a creative choice to eliminate the possible distractions of color. By using monochromatic imagery both women felt that the focus would be on the mother and her personal narrative. And, although the voice of the interviewer Patricia Figueroa Sowers is heard in the conversations, she does not appear in any of the videos for the same reason. Furthermore, there is gravitas associated with black and white that calls attention to the universality of a mother’s story about children and war.

¹² “iMovie,” Wikimedia Foundation, last modified October 22, 2020, 15:42, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/iMovie>.

¹³ Warmamas, accessed September 8, 2020, <https://www.warmamas.com/>.



Figure 2. Warmamas logo/brand identity.

Once Patricia Figueroa Sowers edited the interviews, Aurora uploaded them to a public YouTube channel. No more than 15 minutes of video was allowed to be uploaded to YouTube at the time. Not wanting to shorten or edit the narratives, which could easily run well over an hour, she used the built-in quarter hour timeslot limitation to divide the recordings into equal segments. This enabled easier viewing.

Collaboration with StoryCorps

In 2014, StoryCorps came to South Florida to introduce the Military Voices Initiative.¹⁴ StoryCorps is a non-profit organization founded in New York in 2003 by David Isay to record the stories of everyday people. The emphasis on partnerships with regional organizations is fundamental to StoryCorps' various projects throughout the country. The Military Voices Initiative is an extension and expansion of deep listening to the testimonies of the experiences of enlisted members and their families:

The Military Voices Initiative provides a platform for veterans, service members, and military families to share their stories [...]. The military community knows well the challenges of multiple deployments, combat injuries, and long-awaited homecomings. Yet few civilians truly understand the complex realities of our troops' service and sacrifice.¹⁵

While Story Corps' Military Voices Initiative involves conversations among Veterans and their families and friends, the Warmamas oral history project is unique in its focus on mothers. In addition, while StoryCorps prefers audio-only recordings, all of the Warmamas' created interviews with mothers are recorded in video formats. Hearing of the Military Voices Initiative and seeing a connection, Patricia contacted StoryCorps' New York office and spoke with its National Director, Sylvie Lubow. They agreed to collaborate. StoryCorps asked Warmamas to find the right venue for a three-day recording session as well as to locate 18 participants and their companions. Patricia contacted the Director of the University of Miami Osher Lifelong

¹⁴ "Military Voices Initiative," StoryCorps, accessed May 6, 2020, <https://storycorps.org/discover/military-voices/>.

¹⁵ "Military Voices Initiative," StoryCorps.

Learning Institute, who agreed to host the event from June 25 to 27, 2014. This is how the local-institutional-national partnership came about.

The recording sessions usually included a Veteran accompanied by a family member or friend with whom to talk about his or her military experience. In situations where Veterans came alone a companion was chosen from a group of Patricia's friends who supported the initiative, making it a true community effort. Six 45-minute interviews per day were recorded by the StoryCorps crew. The interviews are presently stored at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC as part of the congressionally mandated Veterans History Project.¹⁶



Figure 3. An oral history interview conducted at University of Miami Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, on June 26, 2014. US Army Veteran Jack Diamond, who served in WWII and was a POW rescued by the Russians, was interviewed by Patricia Figueroa Sowers of Warmamas.¹⁷ Setup of the recording done by a StoryCorps staff member. Photo courtesy of Patricia Figueroa Sowers.

StoryCorps contacted Warmamas in 2015 to propose a second collaboration in hosting the Military Voices Initiative. The event took place March 11 to 13, 2015, at the University of Miami's Otto G. Richter Library, culminating in the creation of the StoryCorps-Warmamas Community Archive.

¹⁶ "Veterans History Project," Library of Congress, accessed September 8, 2020, <https://www.loc.gov/vets/>.

¹⁷ "Jack Diamond," University of Miami Mediaspace, accessed September 8, 2020, https://umiami.mediaspace.kaltura.com/media/Jack+Diamond/o_xcgmuito/129360801.



Figure 4. Depicts post oral history recording reception gathering family members, enlisted individuals, StoryCorps staff, and UML staff. Photos taken at the University of Miami Libraries Special Collections department in 2015. Photos by Andrew Innerarity.

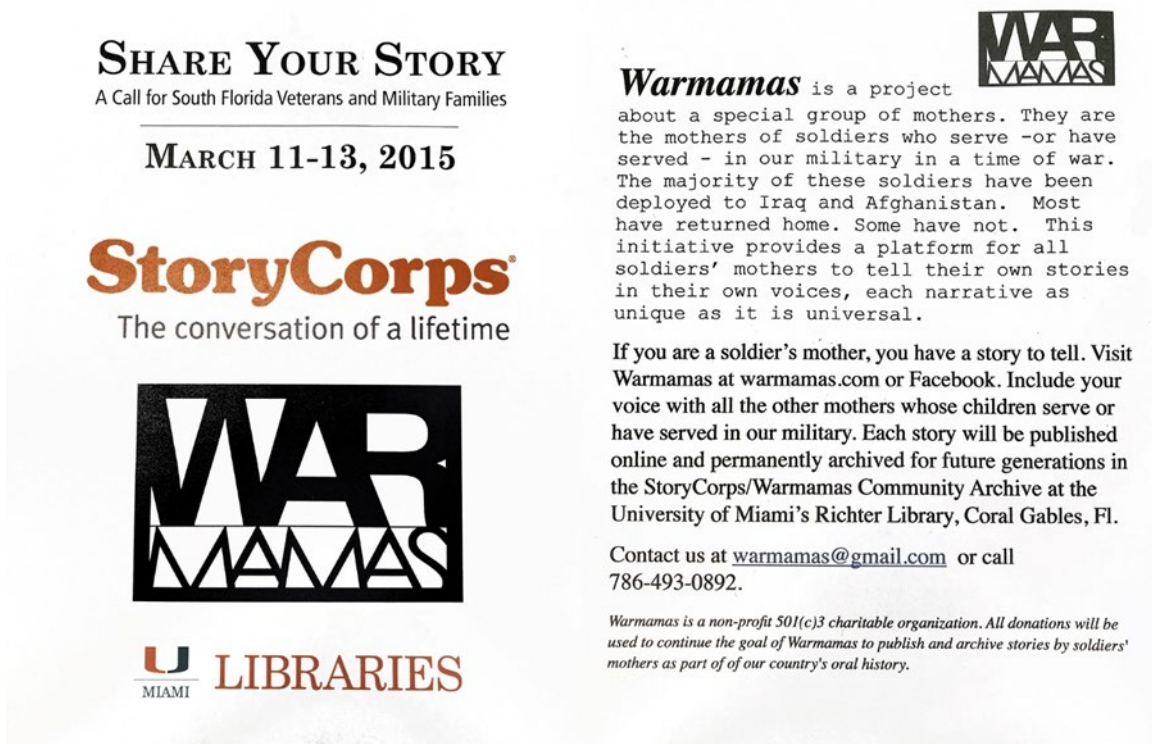


Figure 5. Flyer for the 2015 collaborative recording event (front and back).

Collaboration with the University of Miami Libraries

From the perspective of the archivist at the University of Miami Libraries (UML), the Warmamas project, which began through civic conversations and community engagement, is a pivotal mechanism for building comprehensive archives that reflect multiple voices in the cultural and historical record. The UML Special Collections curates over 600 archival collections with an emphasis on Florida, the Caribbean, and South America. Oral histories are an integral component of the repository and have increased in the past decade as archivists have focused on capturing the testimonies of marginalized groups that may not be featured in written documents.

Partnering with Warmamas and StoryCorps was a unique opportunity to combine local historical knowledge and professional expertise. In practical terms, UML provided the physical space for community gatherings and, later, the curatorial and technical expertise for the long-term preservation of the mothers' testimonies. As a result, the StoryCorps-Warmamas Community Archives was created. Since that time, all the Warmamas interviews have been preserved as a part of the UML Oral History Collection.

The recordings are also part of the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress, but StoryCorps partners with local organizations to ensure access to content at the regional level as well. At the time this essay was written UML hosts over 153 oral histories recorded over the span of five years, and thanks to Warmamas' expanded effort beyond the Miami community, these recordings also include communities in Central Florida, Colorado, Ohio, New York, and Oregon. The entire collection of interviews for the StoryCorps-Warmamas Community Archives is hosted on the University of Miami (UM) Mediaspace site through a video platform called Kaltura.¹⁸ They are also stored on the UML archive server for long term digital preservation.

Each recording series has a different level of access rights. All oral histories conducted exclusively by Warmamas from 2011 to 2013 are accessible and freely available to the public on the Warmamas YouTube channel and the Warmamas website.¹⁹ The StoryCorps-Warmamas interviews held at the University of Miami Otto G. Richter Library are available for online access in the Special Collections reading room or at computers in the Otto G. Richter Library on the University of Miami campus. Subsequent interviews conducted by Warmamas in collaboration with Special Collections are available on the University of Miami Libraries Oral History webpage.²⁰ In addition, the audio recordings completed in collaboration with StoryCorps are also available through the StoryCorps archive as well as at the Library of Congress Folklife Center (Veterans History Project).

Digital Access and Preservation

The web of project collaboration for the StoryCorps-Warmamas Community Archives collection extends internally within UML with colleagues in Digital Production. While the archivist is involved in the community outreach and researcher assistance side of the initiative, the processing of the recordings takes place behind the scenes thanks to the technical expertise of UML Digital Production staff. In recent years, donations to the archives, like Warmamas', are

¹⁸ University of Miami Mediaspace, "Warmamas-StoryCorps Community Archives, accessed May 6, 2020, <https://umiami.mediaspace.kaltura.com/category/Library%3EUniversity+of+Miami+Special+Collections%3EStoryCorps-Warmamas+Community+Archive/129360801>.

¹⁹ Warmamas, <https://www.warmamas.com/>, accessed May 21, 2021.

²⁰ StoryCorps-Warmamas Community Archives, <https://digitalcollections.library.miami.edu/digital/collection/asm0700>, accessed June 21, 2021.

often born-digital content with audio and video in a variety of file formats and codecs.²¹ Each combination of these file formats, codecs, and other variables, requires a specific set of transcoding settings in order for the media to be processed into the recommended archival and access files, according to best practice.²²

Inventory and Tracking

At the start of this work the Digital Production staff conducted a thorough inventory of all the available born-digital files. To ensure that the original files were not lost, edited, or overwritten, they were copied to an archives-dedicated server that acted as the master copy and backup of this content until the final, processed files were created. After that critical step, the files were then copied to a cloud-based local access server (in this case, the department’s Box account) and deposited into two separate folders — one to serve as the local archival copy and one to serve as the working copy.²³ The working files were the only files that went through the editing process, while the local archival copy was readily available in case a file was corrupted or an edit was made in error.

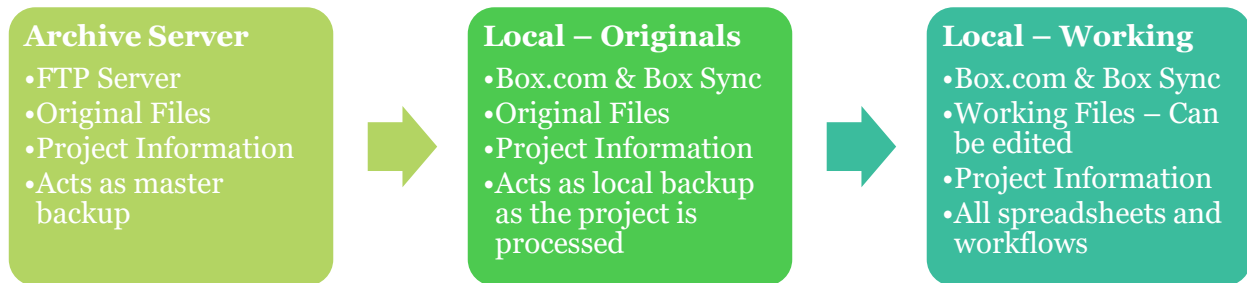


Figure 6. File management for born-digital projects.

A tracking spreadsheet with the following categories was created to capture basic metadata about the files and keep track of the steps that each file went through as it was being processed and transformed:

- Original file name
- Digital ID (according to UML archival naming standards)
- Were title cards added?
- Was the audio acceptable?
- Was the outline created?
- Did the original file go through Quality Control by the Digital Production staff?
- Was the archival file created?
- Was the access file created (if/when applicable)?
- Were all applicable files for that record uploaded to the archive server?
- Was the access file uploaded to UM Mediaspace?
- Was the basic metadata created for the video on UM Mediaspace?

²¹ “Definitions of born digital and codec,” Federal Agencies Digital Guidelines Initiative (FADGI), accessed October 12, 2020, <http://www.digitizationguidelines.gov/term.php?term=borndigital> and <http://www.digitizationguidelines.gov/term.php?term=codec>.

²² “What is Transcoding,” Kaltura, Inc., accessed October 12, 2020, <https://knowledge.kaltura.com/help/what-is-transcoding>.

²³ Box, accessed October 12, 2020, <https://www.box.com/>. Box is a cloud application which provides file sharing, collaborating, and other tools for working with files that are uploaded to its servers.

- Was the release form reviewed, access restriction noted and then file archived?

At the time the initiative was completed, the cost of producing captions was out of the scope and budget of the project. Instead, outlines were created by noting timecodes next to relevant topics, making content discovery more efficient for end users online.²⁴ Notes in the release form column helped to identify files that needed to be given different access restrictions on the UM Mediaspace website. Furthermore, release or consent forms are a fundamental component of oral history interviews. The person being interviewed signs a legal agreement giving permission to share their story in a repository or online under the specific conditions outlined in the document. The Oral History Association, as well as many of the institutions previously listed provide helpful quality resources and guidance for conducting effective oral history projects and documenting the consent and re-use conditions for interviewees' recorded and transcribed words.²⁵

Variables and Technical Metadata

The Digital Production team also created a technical metadata spreadsheet using XML documents and Microsoft Excel spreadsheets.²⁶ The software program MediaInfo was set-up to create XML files for each audio/video file.²⁷ These XML files contained the relevant metadata needed for analysis and streamlined that process. In an effort for efficiency, analysis of the files was further simplified by importing the XML files into a handy Excel spreadsheet. Then, by sorting relevant columns in the Excel spreadsheet, files needing similar treatment were identified and grouped together into manageable batches. For example, files with the same access restrictions could be easily grouped together, processed similarly, and uploaded with the correct settings to the UM Mediaspace website via batch processing.²⁸

²⁴ "Timecode," Wikimedia Foundation, last modified August 23, 2019, 3:43, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timecode>.

²⁵ Oral History Association Best Practices, accessed January 19, 2021, <https://www.oralhistory.org/best-practices/>.

²⁶ "XML Introduction," W3Schools, accessed September 8, 2020, https://www.w3schools.com/xml/xml_what.asp.

²⁷ "MediaInfo," MediaArea, accessed September 8, 2020, <https://mediaarea.net/en/MediaInfo>.

²⁸ "Batch processing," Wikimedia Foundation, last modified December 26, 2020, 9:36, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Batch_processing.

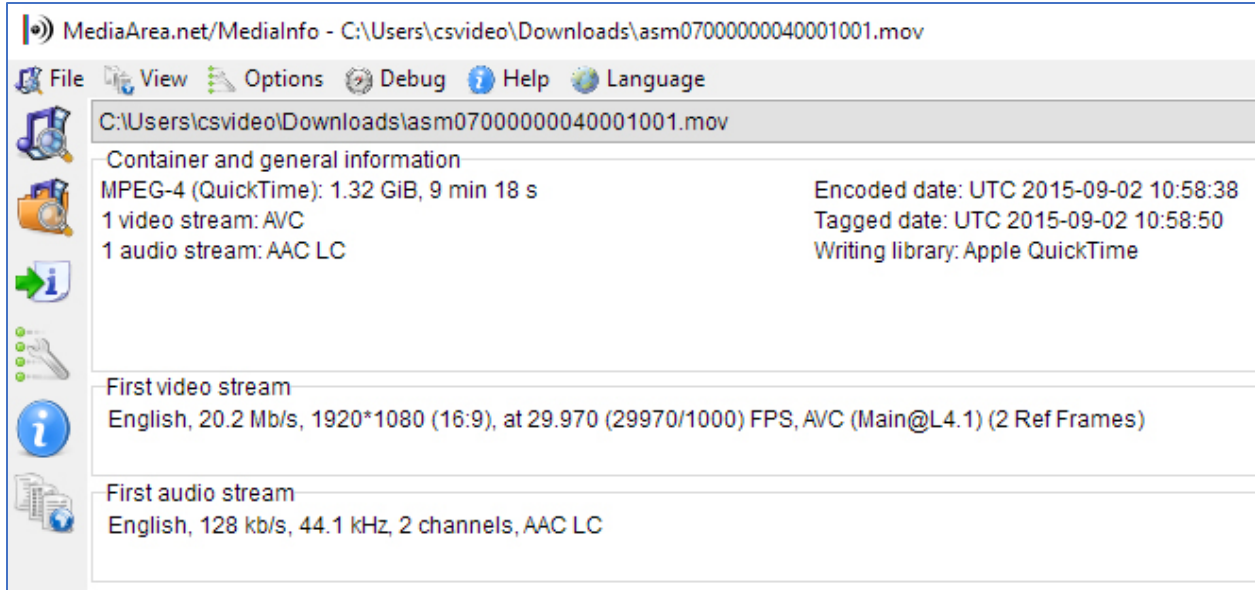


Figure 7. Example of the technical metadata which MediaInfo made accessible from a video file.



Figure 8. Example of a portion of an XML document which MediaInfo created from a video file.

file	ns1:CodecID	ns1:FrameRate	ns1:Width	ns1:Height
asm07000000550000011.mp4	mp42	23.976	1920	1080
asm07000000550001001.mp4	mp42	23.976	1920	1080
asm07000000570001001.mp4	mp42	29.97	1920	1080
asm07000000570002001.mp4	mp42	29.97	1920	1080
asm07000000640001001.mp4	isom	29.97	640	360
asm07000000640001011.mp4	isom	29.97	640	360
asm07000000670003001.mp4	isom	29.97	854	480
asm07000000670004001.mp4	isom	29.97	854	480

Figure 9. Example of the technical metadata spreadsheet created from the XML documents that MediaInfo created, showing as a table the name of the video file and file name extension, the video codec whether mp42 or isom, the frame rate as frames per second, and the frame size in pixels width and pixels height. The eight video files listed are differently color coded according to group files with similar characteristics.

Collecting technical metadata is critical because files can be batched by members of the processing team based on codecs, frame rates and/or frame sizes, and other distinguishing format specificities that impact the viewing and playing of each file. For example, in one section of the Warmamas recorded interview files, there were four sets of videos, each set with different video codecs, frame rates, and frame sizes (See Figure 9).

Because the tracking spreadsheets could group like files together (see above), the staff could then build workflows to easily batch analyze and process the files based on their similar technical needs. Importantly, without the XML files created by MediaInfo, this type of analysis would need to be conducted at the item level by opening and exploring the properties of each file manually, and then recording that data into a spreadsheet by hand; such a process could be very confusing and might easily be mistranscribed by a processor.

Quality Control Checks and Workflow Decisions

As previously mentioned, the audio and video files from this collection were recorded in different years, on different sets of equipment, and edited by different software. Before being added to the UML Special Collections archives, they were not saved according to the UML's archival standards, nor the institution's access standards. Since the files were not standardized, the Digital Production staff, after analyzing the technical metadata closely, had to assess whether it was possible to transcode files into archival settings and standards without degradation. This was an important consideration because video players automatically expand videos to their largest frame size, which could possibly cause distortion. As with the examples above, two of the batches analyzed were below the recommended archival standard in their pixel frame size, 1920 x 1080 pixels (see batches 3 and 4 within Figure 9). Further investigation proved that files in the collection with smaller frame sizes could be distorted by transcoding; in other words, making the frame any larger would make the video unrecognizable. In these cases, the exception to the preferred archival standard was noted in the tracking spreadsheet, transcoding was not performed, and the original file was considered the archival file.

The Digital Production staff also performed quality control checks on the original files, in regard to their playback and clarity. Could the file be played? Could the file be heard? If not, could anything be done to mitigate the problem with the audio? Were the audio levels where they should be? Could background sounds be removed to make the audio more audible?

Beyond these quality questions the Digital Production staff looked at other possible post-production needs. Did the file need title cards added to the beginning/ending?²⁹ Was there content that needed to be redacted/edited out? If the original file was considered the archival file because of the frame size or video codec, but it did not have title cards, a new file had to be created to include the title cards, and then that file had to be set as the new archival file. All these variables and decisions were noted in the tracking spreadsheet before any editing or processing was initiated.

Once analysis was complete, the staff separated the files into like groups, as already described, and conducted batch processing whenever possible. A few batches needed to be transcoded to align with archival and access standards; some needed audio editing, then transcoding; and others needed title cards, audio editing, and then transcoding. The process was rather complicated and nuanced. The files went through a final quality control check at the end of the workflow to ensure standardization. They were checked for playback issues that may have been introduced during editing and/or transcoding, and when an issue was found, the staff processors had to retrace their steps to find the problem, or sometimes just re-transcoding the file proved successful. Upon verification that the file was properly created and the sound was of high quality, the tracking spreadsheet was marked and the files were moved to the online publishing and archiving stage of the project workflow.

Publishing and Archiving

After Digital Production processed the files according to archival and access standards, supplementary content was created. Either a still image from the video was created or photos taken during the recording of the interviews were used as the thumbnail image on UM Mediaspace. As staff watched each interview, they created outlines to indicate the timecode where a certain topic was discussed or a question was asked. The outlines also included biographical data about the interviewer and interviewee, when available, as well as a general summary of the interview. A quality control review of the outlines and an additional quality control check on the audio/video files was then conducted by the archivist.

Next, the Digital Production staff created ingestion spreadsheets using Kaltura's bulk upload XML schema.³⁰ The spreadsheet was created to export the correct XML syntax, which was used to ingest all the files into UM Mediaspace with the proper titles, descriptions, access restrictions, and other metadata components. Kaltura transcoded the ingested files into derivatives that enabled proper playback across a multitude of devices and bandwidths. One last quality control check was performed on each file by the Digital Production staff, this time on the UM Mediaspace website's administrative interface. The preparation process was marked as complete in the tracking spreadsheet after this step was taken for every file. Then, all files were sent to the Metadata & Discovery Services team to process the collection and prepare it to be published to the publicly accessible side of UM Mediaspace.³¹

²⁹ The UML title cards include basic metadata about the oral history. For example, the repository name, collection number, name of the collection, person(s) in the oral history, object ID, and/or the date of the interview.

³⁰ "Entries XML Bulk Upload," Kaltura Knowledge Center, accessed October 12, 2020, <https://knowledge.kaltura.com/help/uploading-and-ingestion#entries-xml-bulk-upload>.

³¹ "Story-Corps Warmamas Community Archive," University of Miami Mediaspace, accessed October 12, 2020, <https://umiami.mediaspace.kaltura.com/category/Library%3EUniversity+of+Miami+Special+Collections%3EStoryCorps-Warmamas+Community+Archive/129360801>.

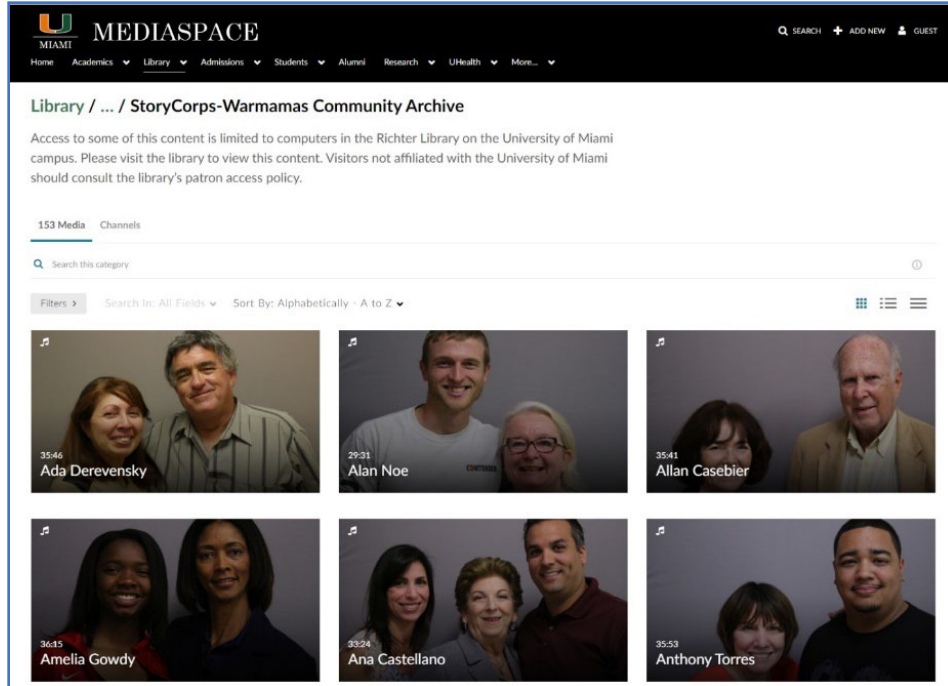


Figure 10. Screenshot of StoryCorps-Warmamas Community Archive landing page hosted on the University of Miami Mediaspace website.³²

Upon creation of the digital gallery, further enhanced metadata about the content of the interviews was added to UM Mediaspace and a formal collection was created within the larger UML repository (UML Digital Collections).³³ This online repository is where the discovery and access of each file come together in a single, one-click interface. Without metadata, the digital files would be unfindable and undiscoverable to end users. All metadata and descriptive information is also searchable in UML's catalog and via online search engines.³⁴ Upon publication, all applicable files were added to the UML archive server including the original born-digital video files, the final archival video files (master copies), the final access-friendly video files (access copies), the Excel spreadsheets (including all tracking, technical, and ingest metadata), any and all thumbnail images (JPEG), interview outlines (both Word and PDF versions), and copies of all oral history release forms (print scanned as PDFs). At this time, future publication processes are temporarily on hold as UML migrates its repository platform to a new system, however, this work will resume after the migration is complete.

Moving forward, the Digital Production staff wants to work closely with the oral historians at Warmamas to simplify some of the steps taken throughout the creation of the oral histories. For example, previously a decision was made to edit out the interviewer from the video, but if the interviewer could remain part of the recording that would reduce the time between filming and finalizing the oral history. In addition, the introduction of file standards throughout the project could help keep the technological variables to a minimum for processors

³² "Story-Corps Warmamas Community Archive," University of Miami Mediaspace, accessed October 12, 2020, <https://umiami.mediaspace.kaltura.com/category/Library%3EUniversity+of+Miami+Special+Collections%3EStoryCorps-Warmamas+Community+Archive/129360801>

³³ "University of Miami Libraries Digital Collections," University of Miami Libraries, accessed October 12, 2020, <https://digitalcollections.library.miami.edu/digital/>.

³⁴ "University of Miami Libraries uSearch Catalog," University of Miami Libraries, accessed October 12, 2020, https://miami-primo.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/primo-explore/search?vid=uml_new&lang=en_US.

and better ensure the integrity of the files throughout their entire lifecycle. It may be possible for the videographer/editor to be given instructions on how to export video files according to the Libraries' archival and access standards, and such a change would make the ingest of the files into the archive more seamless. The interviewer might also be asked to submit interview questions to UML in advance of the recording, which would speed up the creation of the interview outlines and other relevant metadata. Furthermore, future funding for the project could include transcription and captioning services which would enhance the online discovery and accessibility of these interviews even further.

Impact and Future Work

Creators of community archives provide the public with unique regional history and important local perspectives. Organizations such as Warmamas and StoryCorps validate the lived experiences of regular people by making space for their stories in the historic record. Archives and library staff can help to support this work through their professional expertise, technical skills, and genuine interest in collections involving civil society. The UML experience of working with Warmamas points to the effectiveness and legitimacy of collaborative, community-based work as a trusted and repeatable method for creating and preserving the cultural record. Most importantly, the creation of this oral history project has provided a safe space for a community of people to voice their personal perspectives and concerns, to struggle with complex issues of national and international importance, and to leave a recorded testimony of experiences for others to reflect upon and hopefully learn from. Patricia Figueroa Sowers, the founder of Warmamas, emphasized this value when she wrote to the editor of the *Miami Herald* in 2015 when the archive first debuted. She described the University of Miami Libraries' new collection of oral history interviews as a "repository for all military voices in South Florida and beyond, focusing especially on mothers of service members...a place where these stories can begin to be documented, preserved and honored for decades to come."³⁵ This purpose is, of course, perfectly in line with the mission of all archives, and importantly such a program strengthens archives' connections to the communities they serve and document.

The Warmamas initiative connects a large community of artists and writers, citizen advocates, and military families in South Florida and elsewhere to the University of Miami Libraries. For example, Svetlana Alexievich is a Belarusian investigative journalist, essayist, and oral historian prized for her non-fiction work documenting the Soviet and post-Soviet war experience through the personal voices of men and women. In 1985 she wrote "The Last Witnesses," which consists of the oral histories of children in World War II. In 1989 Alexievich wrote "Zinky Boys," a collection of interviews of mothers whose children returned from Afghanistan in zinc coffins provided by the government. In 2015, the year the StoryCorps-Warmamas archive was created, Alexievich won the Nobel Prize for Literature for her impressive work underscoring the interconnections between women's oral testimonies and the war experience. Warmamas continues to find inspiration in Ms. Alexievich's seminal work and aims to support her and other writers and researchers who examine wartime dialogs.

The Warmamas oral history initiative is equally tied to the ongoing work of the many citizen advocacy groups it has partnered with over the years through programming and outreach, both local and national. For example, on March 16, 2016, Warmamas sponsored a booth called "A Mother's Story" and 12 runners in the local Tribute to the Military 5k in South Florida. Runners included interviewees and interviewers from the StoryCorps-Warmamas

³⁵ "Military Voices at UM," *Miami Herald*, October 17, 2015, accessed January 24, 2021 <https://www.miamiherald.com/opinion/letters-to-the-editor/article39556344.html>.

Community Archive. The collective experience reinforced the sense of community between all the individuals and families involved with the project.



Figure 11. Photos of participants in the Team Footworks Tribute to the Military 5K run in South Florida.

As a corporate partnership, on Mother’s Day 2014 the Univision cable network chose to highlight Warmamas’ work in the community with a TV tribute.³⁶ As a result, reporter Ashley Lapadula interviewed two mothers featured on the Warmamas website, Juana García and Rose Bagley, whose children served in Iraq. The interview focused on how they, as mothers, learned to cope with a difficult reality and support each other in shared community.

In an equally rich partnership, talented local multidisciplinary visual artist Maria Lino facilitated a collaboration between Warmamas and the Karen Peterson Dancers (KPD) — a Florida-based physically integrated dance company — in the Spring of 2018.³⁷ In a series of performances directed by Karen Peterson, dancers’ movements and choreography were directly inspired by Warmamas’ oral histories. They captured the love, trauma, and family ties present throughout the Warmamas community and presented a narrative about those who live through armed conflict and its painful consequences. “Warmamas: A Performance”³⁸ was performed at Miami’s Light Box Theater (2018)³⁹ and again at the Judson Memorial Church Theater in New York City (2019). These physical performances were a reminder to all involved in the project of the potential for archives to be incubators for new ideas and creative expression.

³⁶ Univision is an American media company headquartered in Miami that caters to the Latino population.

³⁷ Karen Peterson Dancers, accessed May 6, 2020, <https://www.karenpetersondancers.org/>.

³⁸ “Warmamas,” Karen Peterson Dancers, accessed May 6, 2020, <https://www.karenpetersondancers.org/warmamas>.

³⁹ “The Perils of War Through Dance: Karen Peterson Dancers Present ‘Warmamas,’” by Cameron Basden, MiamiArtZine, accessed October 12, 2020, https://www.miamiartzine.com/Features.php?op=Article_152580948031415.



Figure 12. Photos from “Warmamas: A Performance” at Miami’s Light Box Theater at Goldman Warehouse; May 4 and 5, 2018, and rehearsal. The montage element in the lower right is the community discussion panel following “Warmamas: A Performance” including the Karen Peterson dancers and, in darker clothing in the middle, Multidisciplinary visual artist Maria Lino, Dance Choreographer and Director Karen Peterson, and Patricia Figueroa Sowers of Warmamas.

Initially, Warmamas’ outreach outside of the state of Florida started in September 2014, in a meeting at La Casa Azul Bookstore in East Harlem, New York City. This experience also led to a connection with the National Conference of Puerto Rican Women, Inc.⁴⁰ Then, in 2015, Warmamas was asked by the League of Women Voters of the City of New York to lead a panel presentation on Veteran and family issues. Other presenters included Sylvie Lubow of StoryCorps; Janine Lutz, Founder and President of LCpl Janos V Lutz Live to Tell Foundation, Inc.; and retired Brigadier General Loree K. Sutton who was then the New York City Commissioner of Veterans’ Affairs.⁴¹ The panel’s discussion was productive and diverse. It touched on topics like: the unique dynamic of having a son or daughter serving in the military during the United States’ withdrawal from Iraq, the large number of PTSD cases and Veteran suicides in the U.S., the resources available to Veterans and their families in New York City, and the many developing oral history initiatives for service members returning home from war.

Archives’ collaborations with community members and organizations can be mutually beneficial experiences for both parties, and this is certainly the case for the StoryCorps-Warmamas Community Archive project. Such initiatives show how important it is for archivists to remember that knowledge creation happens within many different spheres of society and is

⁴⁰ New York Chapter Second Vice President-Elect Melissa del Valle Ortiz wrote, “On behalf of mothers who cry in darkness, who keep their children’s rooms as they were left, who hug their children’s clothes at night until the scent has worn off and who dream of their children returning, thank you.”

⁴¹ LCpl Janos V Lutz Live to Tell Foundation 501(c)3 is a non-profit organization that supports military and first responders, named by its founder in honor of her son LCpl Janos V Lutz who died as a result of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), accessed July 13, 2021, <https://www.lutzlivetotell.org/>.

not the sole purview of “experts” from exclusive research settings or purely academic centers. Furthermore, this case study stresses the power of combining all areas of expertise in the library in service to a single, shared goal. With the assistance of a variety of contributors and several support teams at different stages of the work, much can be accomplished for oral history collections. The digital workflows illustrated herein show how critical it is for archivists, digital production experts, and metadata specialists to work proactively and closely with each other. In addition, it is good practice to work with content creators at the beginning of a project (if possible) to help in the standardization of file formats, plan processing workflows, and streamline of other critical steps before online publication, therein reducing the overall time between accession and public access for community contributed multimedia content. Most importantly, the success of community-based projects is closely tied to purposeful and continuous trust building practices amongst all partners — interviewees, content creators, donors, advocates, and, of course, the archival professionals from cultural institutions who are entrusted with the long-term care of individuals’ personal stories.

References

- Aleksievich, Svetlana, Richard Pevear, and Larissa Volokhonsky. *Last Witnesses: An Oral History of the Children of World War II*. First ed. New York: Random House, 2019.
- Aleksievich, Svetlana. *Zinky Boys: Soviet Voices from a Forgotten War*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1992.
- “Are You Here About My Son?: A Gold Star Mother Remembers.” The West Point Center for Oral History. Accessed September 8, 2020. <https://www.westpointcoh.org/interviews/are-you-here-about-my-son-a-gold-star-mother-remembers>.
- Basden, Cameron. “The Perils of War Through Dance: Karen Peterson Dancers Present ‘Warmamas.’” *MiamiArtZine*, May 14, 2018. https://www.miamiartzine.com/Features.php?op=Article_152580948031415.
- “Batch processing.” Wikimedia Foundation. Last modified December 26, 2020, 9:36. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Batch_processing.
- Box. Accessed October 12, 2020. <https://www.box.com/>.
- “Definition of Born Digital.” Federal Agencies Digital Guidelines Initiative (FADGI). Accessed October 12, 2020. <http://www.digitizationguidelines.gov/term.php?term=borndigital>.
- “Definition of Codec.” Federal Agencies Digital Guidelines Initiative (FADGI). Accessed October 12, 2020. <http://www.digitizationguidelines.gov/term.php?term=codec>.
- “Entries XML Bulk Upload.” Kaltura Knowledge Center. Accessed October 12, 2020. <https://knowledge.kaltura.com/help/uploading-and-ingestion#entries-xml-bulk-upload>.
- “iMovie.” Wikimedia Foundation. Last modified October 22, 2020, 15:42. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/IMovie>.
- “Interview with Patricia (Part 1 of 3).” University of Miami Mediaspace. Accessed September 8, 2020. https://umiami.mediaspace.kaltura.com/media/Interview+with+Patricia+%28Part+1+of+3%29/o_gkdamph4/129360801.
- “Jack Diamond.” University of Miami Mediaspace. Accessed September 8, 2020. https://umiami.mediaspace.kaltura.com/media/Jack+Diamond/o_xcgmiuto/129360801.
- Karen Peterson Dancers. Accessed May 6, 2020. <https://www.karenpetersondancers.org/>.
- “MediaInfo.” MediaArea. Accessed September 8, 2020. <https://mediaarea.net/en/MediaInfo>.
- “Mom, this is What I’m Supposed to Do’: Memories from a Gold Star Mother.” The West Point Center for Oral History. Accessed September 8, 2020.

<https://www.westpointcoh.org/interviews/mom-this-is-what-i-m-supposed-to-do-memories-from-a-gold-star-mother>.

“Military/Conflict.” The Lawrence de Graaf Center for Oral and Public History, California State University, Fullerton. Accessed September 8, 2020.
<http://coph.fullerton.edu/collections/militaryconflict.php>.

“Military Voices at UM.” *Miami Herald*, October 17, 2015.
<https://www.miamiherald.com/opinion/letters-to-the-editor/article39556344.html>.

“Military Voices Initiative.” StoryCorps. Accessed May 6, 2020.
<https://storycorps.org/discover/military-voices/>.

“Oral History Association Best Practices.” Accessed January 19, 2021.
<https://www.oralhistory.org/best-practices/>.

“Oral History Archives at Columbia.” Columbia University Libraries. Access September 8, 2020,
<https://library.columbia.edu/libraries/ccoh.html>.

Rocket Lawyer. Accessed October 1, 2020. <https://www.rocketlawyer.com/>.

“Search Our Collection | Institute for Oral History.” Baylor University. Accessed September 8, 2020. <https://www.baylor.edu/oralhistory/index.php?id=931703>.

“Search the Oral History Center.” University of California Berkeley Library. Accessed September 8, 2020. <https://www.lib.berkeley.edu/libraries/bancroft-library/oral-history-center/advanced-search-form>.

“Story-Corps Warmamas Community Archive.” University of Miami Mediaspace. Accessed October 12, 2020.
<https://umiami.mediaspace.kaltura.com/category/Library%3EUniversity+of+Miami+Special+Collections%3EStoryCorps-Warmamas+Community+Archive/129360801>.

“Terry Gross.” National Public Radio (NPR). Accessed October 1, 2020.
<https://www.npr.org/people/2100593/terry-gross>.

“Timecode.” Wikimedia Foundation. Last modified August 23, 2019, 3:43.
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timecode>.

“University of Miami Libraries Digital Collections.” University of Miami Libraries. Accessed October 12, 2020. <https://digitalcollections.library.miami.edu/digital/>.

“University of Miami Libraries uSearch Catalog.” University of Miami Libraries. Accessed October 12, 2020. https://miami-primo.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/primo-explore/search?vid=uml_new&lang=en_US.

“Veterans History Project.” Library of Congress. Accessed September 8, 2020.
<https://www.loc.gov/vets/>.

“VOCES Oral History Center.” The University of Texas at Austin. Accessed September 8, 2020.
<https://voces.lib.utexas.edu/>.

Warmamas. Accessed September 8, 2020. <https://www.warmamas.com/>.

“Warmamas.” Karen Peterson Dancers. Accessed May 6, 2020.
<https://www.karenpetersondancers.org/warmamas>.

“Warmamas.” YouTube account. Accessed May 6, 2020.
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCQmV35xEncKHnA18OY7xQOA>.

“Warmamas-StoryCorps Community Archives.” University of Miami Mediaspace. Accessed May 6, 2020.
<https://umiami.mediaspace.kaltura.com/category/Library%3EUniversity+of+Miami+Special+Collections%3EStoryCorps-Warmamas+Community+Archive/129360801>.

“What is Transcoding?” Kaltura, Inc. Accessed October 12, 2020.
<https://knowledge.kaltura.com/help/what-is-transcoding>.

The West Point Center for Oral History. Accessed September 8, 2020.
<https://www.westpointcoh.org/>.

“XML Introduction.” w3schools. Accessed September 8, 2020.
https://www.w3schools.com/xml/xml_what.asp.

Further Reading

Freed, David. “A son heads off to war.” *Los Angeles Times*, April 1, 2012.
<https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2012-apr-01-la-oe-freed-father-son-military-20120401-story.html>.

Healy, Patrick. “The Anguish of War for Today’s Service Members, Explored by Sophocles.” *New York Times*, November 11, 2009.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/12/theater/12greeks.html>

Kristof, Nicholas D. “A Veteran’s Death, the Nation’s Shame.” *New York Times*, April 14, 2012.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/15/opinion/sunday/kristof-a-veterans-death-the-nations-shame.html>

Kristof, Nicholas D. “Veterans and Brain Disease.” *New York Times*, April 25, 2012.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/26/opinion/kristof-veterans-and-brain-disease.html>

Lieblick, Amia. “Mother-Son Relationships in the Shadow of War.” In *Mothers & Sons: Feminism, Masculinity, and the Struggle to Raise our Boys*, edited by Andrea O’Reilly, 235-250. New York: Routledge, 2001.

Ruddick, Sara. *Maternal Thinking*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1993.

Sharrock, Alison. “Woman Wailing? The Mother of Euryalus and Gendered Reading.” *Eugesta*, no.1 (2011): 55-77. <https://eugesta-revue.univ-lille.fr/en/issues/issue-1-2011>.