David M. Walker

AUDIOVISUAL ARCHIVIST / MEDIA CONSERVATOR / EDUCATOR & FULBRIGHT SPECIALIST

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EDUCATION

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
Master of Arts in Museum Studies: Collections and Archives Management

BELMONT UNIVERSITY
Bachelor of Science in Audio Engineering Technology
Bachelor of Arts in Art History, *magna cum laude* with honors

PROFESSIONAL APPOINTMENTS

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION / ARCHIVES OF AMERICAN ART
Audiovisual Archivist February 2026–Present

- Audiovisual collections preservation, management, and access for archival holdings documenting American art and artists.

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION / CENTER FOR FOLKLIFE AND CULTURAL HERITAGE
Audiovisual Archivist, Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections February 2019–February 2026

- Directed the in-house audiovisual preservation program for one of the Smithsonian's largest audiovisual holdings, integrating conservation, reformatting, arrangement, description, digital preservation, and researcher access.
- Led grant-funded digitization, media conservation, and outsourced preservation projects; prepared statements of work, technical specifications, budgets, progress reports, and vendor deliverable assessments.
- Developed archival workflows and policies; co-authored Unit Digitization Plans and collections management guidance; supported institutional repository ingest, metadata quality control, and shared stewardship requests.
- Mentored staff, interns, fellows, and contractors; contributed technical expertise to the Smithsonian Audiovisual Media Preservation Initiative and other cross-unit collaborations.

Audio Media Conservator (Contract) May 2017–January 2019

- Served as project lead and supervised archives technicians, interns, and volunteers on audiovisual collections care, digitization, and digital collections management projects.
- Designed and implemented condition reporting and preservation digital imaging procedures informed by national (FADGI and AIC) and international (IASA) standards.
- Rehoused and conducted item-level condition reporting and technical inspection for over 4,500 fragile audio discs and 20,000 compact audio cassettes in collaboration with archives technicians. Gathered technical metadata covering condition and playback characteristics as well as descriptive information such as artist name, song titles, matrix numbers, unique ID, and digitization status.
- Generated over 20,000 high-resolution preservation images documenting each disc side and all analog metadata.
- Updated item-level EAD finding aid records for each disc and cassette using ArchivesSpace and SIRIS MARC records using Horizon software, as needed.
- Produced a report on the comprehensive condition findings, the extent of the collections, and summary of preservation and digitization priorities.

Audio Preservation Specialist, Digital Audio Asset Management (Contract) November 2015–May 2017

- Managed digital audio asset backlogs for over 100,000 digital files across network staging areas, CD-Rs, and digital audio tape produced between 1990 to 2017.
- Defined and implemented unit policies for digital audio asset creation and management.
- Digitized archival analog audio materials following national best practices.

- Defined workflow and managed grant-funded audio preservation project for over 600 unique analog audio assets (900 hours of content) digitized by outside vendors. Performed QC on vendor deliverables, requested retransfer as needed, and ingested files into DAMS.
- Coordinated over 4,500 hours of intern and volunteer efforts in digitization and asset management projects.
- Co-authored collections care, preservation, and equipment grants.
- Provided audio preservation services to fulfill research and reference requests.
- Authored scripts to automate file management and perform quality control.

Audio Digitization Specialist (Contract) January 2014–November 2015

- Managed and advised on the management of audio collections, including physical and digital storage, preservation, access, and description.
- Produced preservation master audio files of audio recordings from various analog media (¼" open reel audio tapes, instantaneous audio discs, compact audio cassettes, and DATs from ethnographic collections) and implemented national standards and best practices. Performed conservation cleaning and treatments for optimum playback, collected administrative and descriptive information, entered metadata, and managed digital assets.
- Ingested high-resolution digital audio preservation masters into the Smithsonian's Digital Asset Management System (SI-DAMS).
- Oversaw a team of interns and volunteers assisting with the audio preservation work and performing quality control on digital audio assets.
- Monitored the technical quality of sound equipment and managed maintenance.
- Contributed to policies governing preservation of and access to audiovisual resources.
- Collaborated with colleagues in the Office of the Chief of Information Officer to define digitization and asset management workflows.
- Managed and tracked digitization workflows for staff, interns, and volunteers.

Audio Documentation Coordinator (Contract) 2014–2025

- Oversaw the audio documentation at the annual Smithsonian Folklife Festival and related events on the National Mall.
- Directed interns and teams of volunteers in capturing archival audio and creating descriptive records for over 1,200 hours of unique musical performances, narrative sessions, workshops, foodways demonstrations, and panel discussions during each 10-day festival.
- Managed all digital assets, embedded metadata, and ingested files into the DAMS.

INDEPENDENT PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Preservation Systems Engineer 2009–Present

- Design and install complex audiovisual signal chains for archival audiovisual playback devices, digitization workstations, and ancillary professional audiovisual equipment for media conservation laboratories. .
- Installations include preservation systems at the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC), National Museum of American History - Archives Center (NMAH-AC), Smithsonian Institution Archives (SIA), Archives of American Art (AAA), and Tbilisi State Conservatoire (TSC).
- Train staff and associated personnel on the theory, operation, and maintenance of equipment and on best practices for digitization and digital asset management.
- Served as technical lead for audio preservation as part of the Smithsonian's Audiovisual Media Preservation Initiative (2021–2023).

Audio Mastering Engineer, Walker Mastering 2009–Present

- Restore and prepare audio for commercial distribution across various formats, including vinyl, cassette, CD, and digital formats. Credits available upon request.

EARLIER MUSEUM AND TECHNICAL POSITIONS

2011–2012 Sound Collections Assistant / Intern, Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum

2009–2010 Museum Exhibition Intern, Cheekwood Museum of Art

2008 Studio Technician, Deep Blue Sea Recording Studio

ACADEMIC TEACHING APPOINTMENTS

2024–present Professorial Lecturer, "Digitization and Digital Asset Management" (CMST 6206.10), The George Washington University, Corcoran School of the Arts & Design. Teach a semester-long graduate course examining digitization practices, technical standards, digital asset management, preservation workflows, and the long-term stewardship of digital collections.

INVITED WORKSHOPS AND TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION

2026 Instructor, "¼″ Audio & Cassette Repair and Maintenance," Association of Moving Image Archivists (AMIA), Legacy Equipment Series. Virtual workshop on maintenance, troubleshooting, and repair of legacy magnetic audio playback equipment.

2025 Fulbright Specialist and Lead Instructor, "Saving Music Heritage of Taiwan: Conservation of Endangered Sound Recordings at NTNU," National Taiwan Normal University, Taipei, April 14–25. Designed and led an intensive two-week international training program covering magnetic audio and 8mm film conservation, equipment maintenance, digitization, restoration, metadata, and preservation planning. Established functional digitization workstations and directed hands-on preservation of endangered cultural recordings.

2024 Instructor, "Keeping the Groove: Caring for Grooved Audio Media," Connecting to Collections Care, Foundation for Advancement in Conservation. Virtual webinar on the handling, care, and preservation of grooved audio recordings.

2022–2023 Instructor and Project Lead, "Conservation of Endangered Georgian Traditional Music Recordings at the V. Sarajishvili Tbilisi State Conservatoire," Vano Sarajishvili Tbilisi State Conservatoire, Georgia. *U.S. Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation*. Led specialized technical training and developed institutional capacity for the conservation and digitization of endangered Georgian traditional music recordings.

2017–2023 Instructor, "Digital Audio Production for Oral Histories," DC Public Library / HumanitiesDC.

2018 Instructor, "Cultural Heritage Documentation and Archiving Workshop," National Taiwan Normal University, Taipei.

2017–2018 Guest Lecturer, "Museum Audio Preservation and Digitization," The George Washington University, Corcoran School of the Arts & Design.

2014–2026 Instructor, technical workshops on advanced sound preservation and media conservation for Smithsonian staff, interns, and collaborators.

PUBLICATIONS AND TECHNICAL WRITING

2025 Walker, David M., and Crystal Sanchez. "Building Audio Preservation Capacities for Georgian Ethnographic Recordings at the Tbilisi State Conservatoire." *IASA Journal*, no. 55 (August 2025), pp. 41–51.

2025 Walker, Dave, ed. "Introduction to Magnetic Tape Azimuth." *ARSC Journal* 56, no. 1 (Spring 2025): 42–58.

2024 Walker, David M. "Caring for Your Records Like an Archivist." Smithsonian Folkways newsletter, July 5.

2022 "Collaborations with Embedded Audio Metadata: Reusing Cue Chunk Data for IIIF Web Annotations." *The Signal*, Library of Congress, August 24, 2022.

2020 "Preserving Sound Collaboratively: Implementing an Institution-Wide Collaboration." *Archival Outlook*, May/June 2020.

2018 "Getting It On Record: Stabilization, Enhanced Imaging, and Documentation of Archival Instantaneous Audio Discs." *The Electronic Media Review*, vol. 5 (2017–2018).

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS AND PROFESSIONAL LECTURES

2025 "Preserving Regional American Music: A Case Study of Mold and Pest Remediation." Association for Recorded Sound Collections (ARSC) Annual Conference, Tulsa, Oklahoma (virtual presentation).

2024 "Building Collaborative Indigenous Audiovisual Documentation: A Case Study from the Smithsonian Folklife Festival." International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives (IASA) Conference, Valencia, Spain (co-presentation).

2023 "Building Audio Preservation Capacities for Georgian Ethnographic Recordings at the Tbilisi State Conservatoire." International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives (IASA) Conference, Istanbul, Türkiye.

2023 "Building Audio Preservation Capacities for Georgian Ethnographic Recordings at the Tbilisi State Conservatoire." Association for Recorded Sound Collections (ARSC) Annual Conference, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

2023 "New Developments and Ongoing Concerns About the Physical Accessibility of Media." Audio Engineering Society (AES) Conference on Audio Archiving, Preservation & Restoration, Library of Congress, National Audio-Visual Conservation Center, Culpeper, Virginia.

2022 "Transcribing the 1976 Festival of American Folklife." Smithsonian Transcription Center Digital Day (virtual).

2021 "AV Archiving at the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage." New York University, Moving Image Archiving and Preservation Program (invited lecture, virtual).

2021 "Use of CUE/ADTL Chunks at Smithsonian Folklife." Presentation on revisions to FADGI guidelines for embedding metadata in Broadcast WAVE files and BWF MetaEdit. International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives (IASA) Conference (virtual).

2021 "Creating, Archiving, and Accessing Indigenous Media at the Smithsonian Institution and Beyond." University of Colorado Boulder, Department of Media Studies (invited lecture, virtual).

2021 "AAA and CFCH Audio Cassette Collaboration." Smithsonian Audiovisual Archives Institutional Leadership (AVAIL) Group, Washington, DC.

2020 "Unit Spotlight: Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage." Smithsonian Digitization Program Advisory Committee (virtual).

2020 "Use Cases for Broadcast Wave Cue Points." Federal Agencies Digitization Guidelines Initiative (FADGI) (virtual).

2019 "Audio Digitization at Scale: Workflows at the Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage." Smithsonian Audiovisual Archives Institutional Leadership (AVAIL) Group, Washington, DC.

2019 "Audiovisual Preservation at the Smithsonian and Preservation at Scale." Society of American Archivists (SAA) Annual Meeting, Austin, Texas.

2018 "Getting It On Record: Stabilization, Enhanced Imaging, and Documentation of Archival Instantaneous Audio Discs." American Institute for Conservation (AIC) Annual Meeting, Houston, Texas.

2018 "Archival Audiovisual Preservation and Access at the Smithsonian Institution: Contemporary Challenges and Solutions." World Day for Audiovisual Heritage Symposium, Taipei, Taiwan.

2017 "Preservation Re-housing of At-Risk Audio Media: Improving Conditions for More Than 21,000 Unique Audio Items at the Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage." Smithsonian Collections Share Fair, Washington, DC.

2017 "Listening to History." Radio Preservation Task Force presentation, Society for Cinema and Media Studies (SCMS) Conference, Chicago, Illinois.

2017 Radio Studies Scholarly Interest Group / Radio Preservation Task Force. Society for Cinema and Media Studies (SCMS) Conference, Chicago, Illinois (panel participation).

2016 "Smithsonian Folklife Festival Documentation: Born Digital Workflows, Strategies, and Challenges." International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives (IASA) Conference, Washington, DC.

2016 "Five Decades of Folklife on Record: Documenting and Preserving the Smithsonian Folklife Festival." Association for Recorded Sound Collections (ARSC) Annual Conference, Bloomington, Indiana.

2016 "Archiving from Below." Radio Preservation Task Force Conference, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

2016 Local/Community Archives Panel. Radio Preservation Task Force Conference, Library of Congress, Washington, DC (panel participation).

2015 "Audio Preservation at the Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections." Federal Agencies Digitization Guidelines Initiative (FADGI), Washington, DC.

2015 "Preserving a Legacy: Conserving and Digitizing the Cook Labs Records Collection." Association for Recorded Sound Collections (ARSC) Annual Conference, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

2015 "Digital Audio Formats and Digital Audio Migration Workflows." Association of Moving Image Archivists (AMIA), Online Continuing Education Task Force (virtual).

GRANTS, FELLOWSHIPS, AND FUNDED PROJECTS

PORTFOLIO 23 funded grants and fellowships listed below (2015–2025), encompassing more than $1.5 million in preservation grants and related contracts managed or supported. Projects include international cultural heritage preservation, audiovisual conservation, mass digitization, collections care, and technical infrastructure development.

EXTERNAL FELLOWSHIPS AND GRANTS

2025 **Fulbright Specialist Program**, "Saving Music Heritage of Taiwan: Conservation of Endangered Sound Recordings at NTNU." National Taiwan Normal University, Taipei, Taiwan. Fulbright Specialist and Lead Instructor.

2023 **National Film Preservation Foundation**, "Festival in Washington." Grant for preservation of historic Smithsonian Folklife Festival motion-picture film from original film and sound elements. Proposal Author and Project Lead.

2021–2023 **U.S. Department of State, Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation**, "Conservation of Endangered Georgian Traditional Music Recordings at the Vano Sarajishvili Tbilisi State Conservatoire, Phase 1." Project Lead for international audiovisual conservation and technical capacity-building initiative.

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTIONAL GRANTS

2025 Collections Care Preservation Fund, "Pest and Mold Remediation for At-Risk Archival Audio Media, Associated Artwork, and Archival Papers." Arhoolie Records Collection. Proposal Author and Project Lead; secured funding and coordinated initial contract implementation.

2024 Collections Information System Pool, "Smithsonian Folklife Festival Archival Audiovisual Papers Digitization and Transcription, Phase 2." Grant Proposal Co-Author.

2024 Diversity Focused Collections Fund, audiovisual digitization of Gullah Geechee cultural heritage materials, in collaboration with the National Museum of American History.

2023 Collections Care Initiative, "Archival Audio Equipment Services." Proposal Author and Project Lead.

2021 Collections Care Initiative, "Folk-Legacy Records Collection Conservation, Phases 1 and 2: Pest and Microbial Remediation and Audiovisual Preservation Preparation." Project Lead.

2020 Office of the Provost, "Collaborative Preservation of Audio Cassettes," Archives of American Art and Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage.

2020 Collections Information System and Information Resource Management Pool, "Archival Audiovisual Papers Digitization and Transcription."

2020 Collections Care Initiative, "Audiovisual Conservation Equipment and Projects."

2020 Research Equipment Pool, "Digital Fieldwork Archiving Tools."

2019 Research Equipment Pool, "Legacy Audiovisual Playback Equipment."

2018 Research Equipment Pool, "Fieldwork Documentation Audiovisual Equipment."

2018 Collections Information System and Information Resource Management Pool, "Video Digital Asset Backlog Management."

2017 Collections Care Preservation Fund, "Preservation Prioritization of Pan-Institutional Audiovisual Assets, Phase 2." Co-Author and Co-Recipient.

2017 Collections Care Preservation Fund, "Conservation and Preservation Digitization of At-Risk Smithsonian Folklife Festival Audio Recordings."

2017 Collections Information System and Information Resource Management Pool, "Digital Asset Management for Audiovisual Media Housing Scans and Condition Reports."

2017 Research Equipment Pool, “Audio and Photographic Digitization Equipment.”

2016 Collections Care Preservation Fund, “Preservation Rehousing of At-Risk Audio Media.”

2015 Collections Care Preservation Fund, “Preservation Prioritization of Pan-Institutional Audiovisual Assets.” Co-Author and Co-Recipient.

2015 Collections Information System and Information Resource Management Pool, “Digital Audio Asset Backlog Management.”

2015 Research Equipment Pool, “Video Preservation Equipment.”

SELECTED MAJOR PRESERVATION AND RESEARCH PROJECTS

2025 **Saving Music Heritage of Taiwan: Conservation of Endangered Sound Recordings at NTNU.** Fulbright Specialist; designed and led a two-week preservation workshop and hands-on labs at National Taiwan Normal University. Participants stabilized and digitized 28 tapes (nearly 28 hours of audio) and 11 reels of 8mm film (approximately 45 minutes).

2024–2025 **Arhoolie Records and Smithsonian Folkways preservation.** Supervised tape conservation and digitization; supported preservation transfers of Cajun, Zydeco, blues, and Clifton Chenier recordings for institutional access and reissue.

2024–2025 **Festival in Washington.** Project lead for a National Film Preservation Foundation-supported project to assess, digitally preserve, and restore early Smithsonian Folklife Festival film footage; coordinated vendor selection and deliverables.

2024–2025 **Gullah Geechee audiovisual preservation.** Coordinated externally digitized audio and video materials in collaboration with the National Museum of American History, supported by the Diversity-Focused Collections Fund.

2023–2024 **1976 Smithsonian Folklife Festival recordings.** Directed preservation digitization of 1,223 quarter-inch open-reel tapes in FY2024, representing over 800 hours of unique content; addressed deteriorated tape stocks and coordinated preservation workflows.

2022–2024 **Folk-Legacy Records Collection conservation and remediation.** Project lead for a $357,700 Smithsonian Collections Care Initiative award, overseeing specialist vendor treatment and the return of approximately 205 cubic feet of archival materials, including over 2,000 open-reel recordings.

2021–2024 **Smithsonian Audiovisual Media Preservation Initiative.** Founding task force contributor and technical lead for sound preservation; supported cross-unit practices, equipment planning, workflows, and metadata requirements.

2021–2024 **Smithsonian Folklife Festival Silk Road video.** Led in-house video preservation and related training, including Betacam SP, VHS/S-VHS, MiniDV, and HDCAM footage.

2022–2023 **Conservation of Endangered Georgian Traditional Music Recordings, Tbilisi State Conservatoire.** Smithsonian project lead; designed a specialized audio preservation laboratory, led multiple technical training visits, and collaborated in preserving more than 80 hours of endangered Georgian music on 92 open-reel tapes.

2020–2021 **Collaborative Preservation of Audio Cassettes, Archives of American Art and CFCH.** Co-led inter-unit project encompassing approximately 1,000 tapes; developed shared workflows and parallel-transfer infrastructure.

2015–2019 **Pan-Smithsonian audiovisual survey and prioritization.** Contributed to preservation risk assessment, digitization priority setting, and grant proposals spanning multiple collecting units.

2016–2018 **Conservation and documentation of instantaneous audio discs.** Coordinated technical inspection, condition assessment, rehousing, and preservation imaging of fragile recordings from Smithsonian collections.

2015–2017 **Legacy digital audio asset recovery.** Developed metadata and file management procedures for more than 100,000 historical digital sound assets; conducted quality control and repository ingest.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE AND LEADERSHIP

- **Library of Congress, National Recording Preservation Board** — Board Member.
- **Association for Recorded Sound Collections (ARSC), Technical Committee** — Member; contributor to technical guidance and best practices for sound recording preservation.
- **Federal Agencies Digitization Guidelines Initiative (FADGI)** — Contributor to audiovisual digitization standards and Broadcast WAVE metadata guidelines.
- **Smithsonian Audiovisual Archives Institutional Leadership (AVAIL) Group** — Former Chair; facilitated Smithsonian-wide collaboration on audiovisual preservation initiatives.
- **Smithsonian Audiovisual Media Preservation Initiative (AVMPI)** — Task Force Member and Audio Preservation Technical Lead (2021–2026).
- **Smithsonian Digitization Program Advisory Committee** — Member; contributed to institutional digitization planning and coordination.
- **Smithsonian Council of Conservators and Conservation Scientists** — Unit Representative (2020–present).
- **Radio Preservation Task Force** — Research Associate; contributed to initiatives supporting historical radio preservation.

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

- Association for Recorded Sound Collections (ARSC)
- International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives (IASA)
- Audio Engineering Society (AES)
- American Institute for Conservation (AIC)
- Society of American Archivists (SAA)

AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION

Audiovisual preservation and media conservation; magnetic and grooved sound media; analog video and motion-picture film; preservation systems engineering; archival digitization at scale; digital preservation metadata and quality control; ethnographic and Indigenous cultural heritage collections; shared stewardship; technical instruction and international preservation capacity building.