

The National Federation of Community Broadcasters Records: An AV-MPLP Convergence

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The **National Federation of Community Broadcasters (NFCB)** is a national grassroots, non-profit organization which has served non-commercial community-based radio stations since 1975. Its mission includes assisting and advocating for the successful operation and funding of local stations, facilitating the production of innovative programming from diverse sources, and promoting the participation of minorities and women at all levels of public broadcasting.

The Collection

The NFCB records document the organization’s administrative activities and its work with member stations. One of the most substantial and valuable components are the reels and paper records of the **NFCB program exchange service**, which promoted the sharing of community-produced content among community radio stations across the United States. The records are part of the National Public Broadcasting Archives at University Of Maryland Special Collections and University Archives (SCUA).

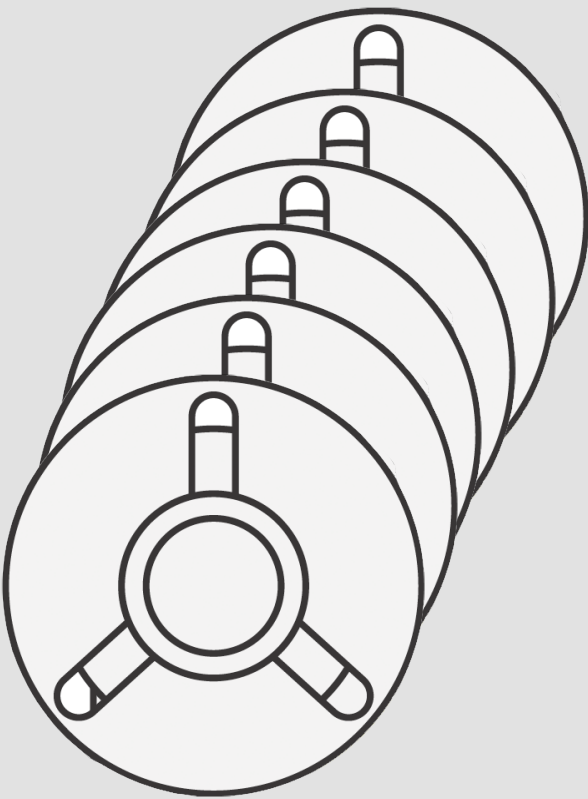


94 linear
feet
of paper
records

The Challenges

While the paper records of the program exchange service were described in the original finding aid (series 3: Program Service), the audio reels were not. It was important make the reels visible to users not only because **the recordings represent part of the original central mission of NFCB, but also because they document the creative output of local communities and provide unique evidence of the history of independent, non-commercial radio**. Several factors posed challenges to intellectually reuniting paper and audio materials and making them visible (and audible) to the public:

- Volume: approximately 6,000 reels
- Only 15% of reels described in preliminary inventory
- Paper records and audio reels acquired together through several accessions were disassociated during processing
- Reels were physically dispersed across several locations



Approx. 6,000
audio reels



138
compact
cassettes

What is a community radio station?

Though the term is used to describe a variety of practices, community radio stations are usually non-profit stations whose programming is directly shaped and created by the community to which it broadcasts. Unlike public radio stations, community radio stations are largely run by volunteers and are not member stations of syndication networks such as NPR.

An MPLP-informed Approach

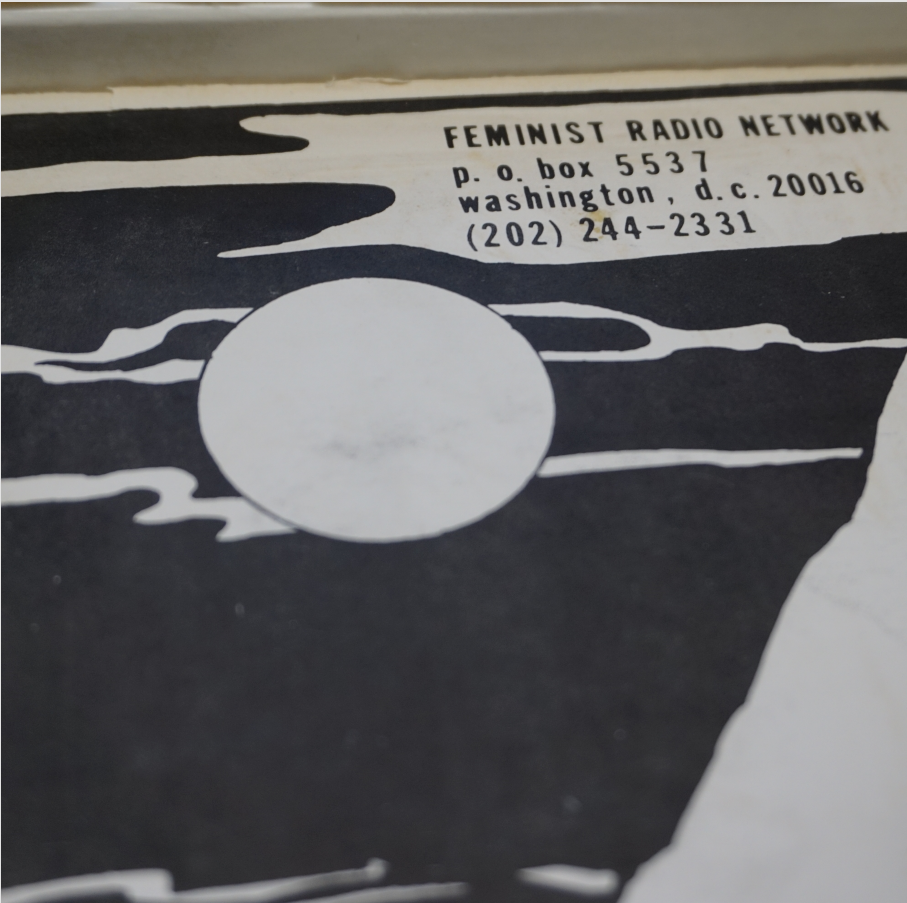
The Access team at SCUA uses a minimal/extensible processing workflow to make previously hidden collections visible to the public, with **digitization prompting improved control through the creation of item-level metadata**.

With support provided through a CLIR *Recordings at Risk* grant, **UMD’s National Public Broadcasting Archives is digitizing 600 NFCB reels** to be made available through University of Maryland Libraries Digital Collections. The digitization plan, in addition to a concurrent migration of finding aids to ArchivesSpace, informed our approach to improving access to the NFCB records:

- Collect item-level metadata for reels selected for digitization
- Build on previous archivists’ work by creating a new series for audio materials
- Describe in the ArchivesSpace resource record the complementary relationship between audio materials and processed paper records, which contain program catalogs and descriptions of many of the reels, as well as files on member stations
- Intellectually reconstruct previous accessions to enhance pre-existing description without undertaking extensive processing or arrangement

Looking Ahead

Planning is underway to share the programs with their originating stations, researchers, and the general public, following digitization. The finding aid for the NFCB records, along with finding aids for other broadcasting collections, will be available at **archives.lib.umd.edu**.



Above, a Feminist Radio Network reel, part of NFCB’s program exchange (and the source of the background image of this poster). Below, member station files.

