

THE DAVID AND BARBARA PRYOR CENTER FOR ARKANSAS ORAL AND VISUAL HISTORY

Kris Katrosh, Director

The David and Barbara Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral and Visual History is an oral history program with the mission to record audio and video interviews statewide about Arkansas history and culture, collect other organizations recordings, organize these recordings into an archive, digitize all analog collections, and provide public access to the archive, primarily through the center's Web site. The Pryor Center is the state's only oral and visual history program with a statewide, 75-county mission to collect, preserve and share audio and moving image recordings of Arkansas history.

The Pryor Center archive has the largest audio and moving-image archive of Arkansas history in the state, and one of the largest state collections in the U.S. The archive currently consists of approximately 900 audio and/or video interviews with Arkansans about Arkansas history; 20 historical events pertaining to Arkansans an Arkansas history; and 24,000 hours of videotape covering 6 decades of Arkansas history donated by ABC Network affiliate KATV, Channel 7, Little Rock. The collection grows annually by about 200 hours of new interview recordings. The center also receives in donation an average of 1,000 hours of recorded material from other organizations each year.

The institutional goals of the center include:

- Record interviews with Arkansans with a diverse population from all 75 counties.
- Train individuals and organizations to record their community's history for inclusion in the center's archive.
- Collect historical audio and video recordings from other organizations that need archival assistance.
- Digitize and further process all materials to be placed in the center's digital archive.
- Provide all Arkansas students and teachers with primary resource materials from the center's archive.
- Provide public access to the entire digital archive electronically, primarily through the center's Web site.

Strategies for meeting the above goals include:

- Travel to each county at least once every three years to conduct local interviews.
- Provide training sessions, guidelines, and forms in person and via the Web site.
- Collect, digitize and archive recordings donated by others, and provide digital copies to the donors.
- Digitize all analog recordings, add appropriate metadata, and place them in the center's digital archive.

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- Create digital media lesson plans from the center's archival materials, in partnership with educators.
- Expand the digital archive and add back-up systems to secure all recordings.
- Increase server space and bandwidth capability to enable improved Internet access to the archive.

Appropriation Requests

The Digital Archive Expansion Project

The Pryor Center currently has about 30,000 hours of audio and video recordings in its archive, and the archive expands by an average of 1,200 hours each year. Ninety percent of the recordings in the archive are in analog audiotape and videotape formats, which are not accessible electronically (such as over the Internet).

The Pryor Center is actively engaged in digitizing these older materials. However, digital file storage for such digitized materials is currently inadequate at the center. If the Pryor Center had adequate digital file storage systems in place today, the center would have the largest, Internet accessible state historical archive of audio and moving image recording in the U.S.

The Pryor Center is on the verge of becoming the national model for other states. Expansion of the digital archive is essential to our mission goals of providing public access to the archive, and to enable the center to take a leadership role in the research and development of digital video archiving for state collections in the U.S.

The requested funding will provide for 120 terabytes of additional digital video storage, which will enable the center to digitize the next 1,000 hours of the oldest and most fragile one-of-a-kind videotapes of Arkansas history in our collection, and provide secure back-up for an additional 1,000 hours of digital video material at risk on older hard drive technology. This request for expanding the digital archive will enable the center to provide secure storage of our most valuable digital materials.

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The Oral History Training Program

The Pryor Center is requesting funding to expand the current oral history training program. In 2009, the center began providing training, digital recording kits, guidelines, and forms for local groups to record oral histories. Word of mouth advertising among local historians and organizations greatly increased the demand for these services. This is a very positive trend. It is not possible for the Pryor Center's 5-person staff to record every interview targeted across the state. Further, local historians and community leaders are very good at designing oral history projects and choosing excellent interviewees in their areas of interest. However, they generally need training in best practices. In addition, there are many Arkansans over the age of 65 who have important observations, memories and personal activities of historical importance to relate. The center and other organizations are in a race against time to capture these stories before these individuals are unable to tell their stories.

The AHECB recommendation of \$235,000 in 2013-14 and \$240,405 in 2014-15 in general revenue funding will allow the center's staff to travel to more locations in Arkansas to provide training so that local communities can conduct their own oral history programs in a professional and consistent manner using best practices. This will greatly increase the professionalism and consistency of oral interview programs around the state, as well as streamline the processing of the recordings once donated to the center. By providing the right tools and training to communities, the resulting recordings will be much easier to process for sharing, saving labor and time for processing the interviews at the center. This investment on the front end will more than pay for itself in labor saved during the processing stage, as well as expand the number of organizations the center can train.