



Preserving the American Black Journal at MATRIX

Digital Video • Public Television • Community News

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The ABJ Project

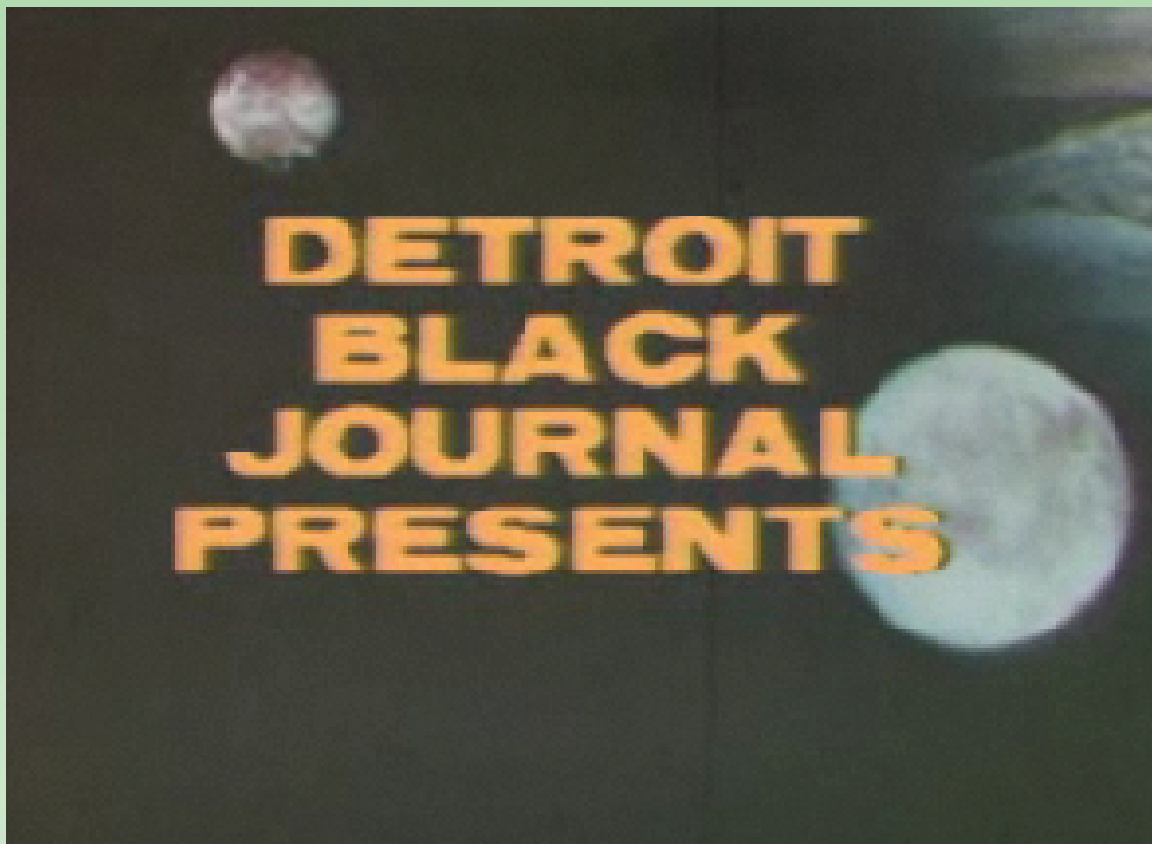
MATRIX undertook the digitization of the *American Black Journal* (ABJ) in 2002. The ABJ offers a weekly news magazine from an African-American perspective in the Detroit area. The project has been a partnership between the MATRIX Center at Michigan State University (MSU) and Detroit Public Television (DPTV).

The project has had **three main phases**:

1. Digitization of all of the ABJ broadcast and unaired footage from 1968 to 2002.
2. The ABJ website, which streams program clips to a new generation of viewers.
3. Preservation of the digitized footage (and original tapes) for the long term.

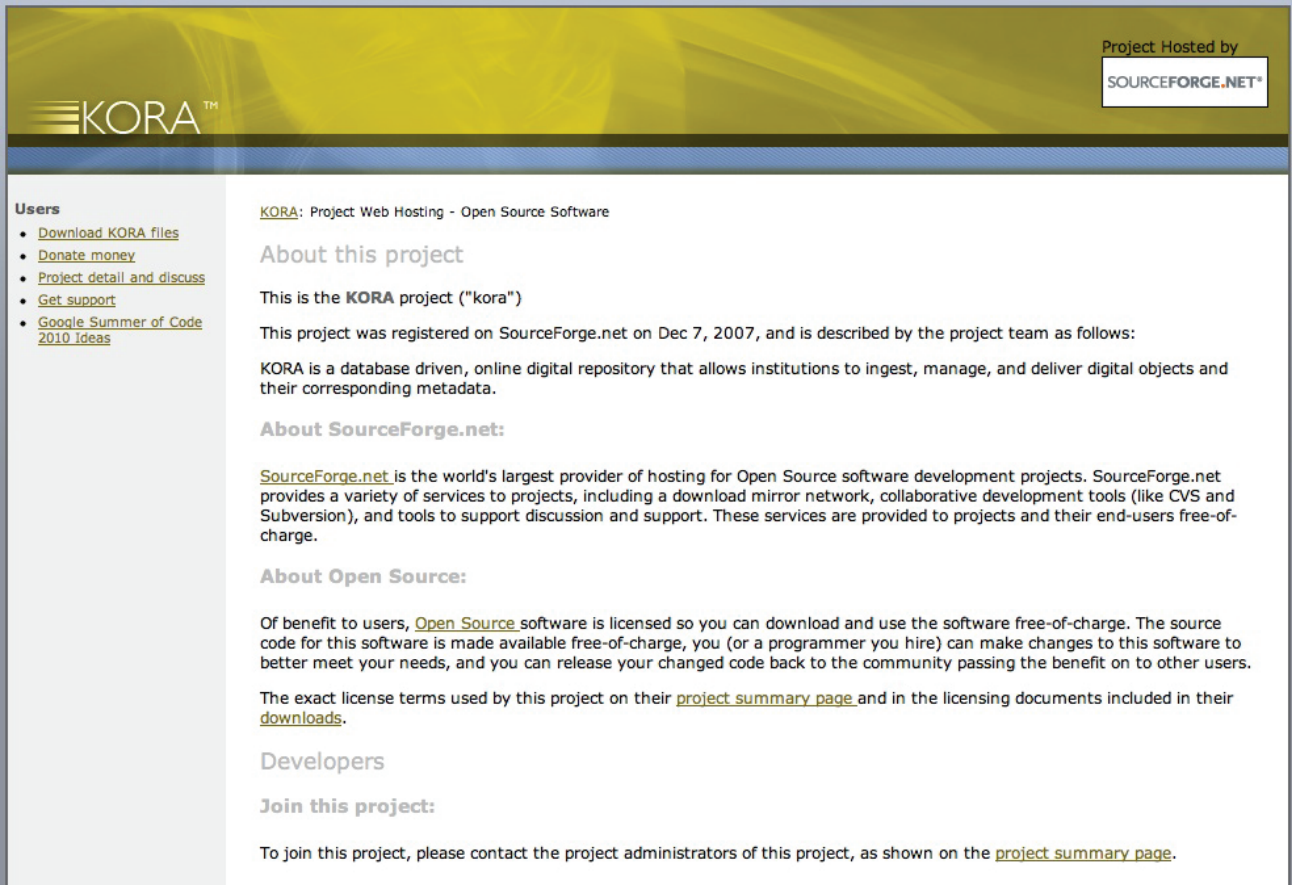
Community History

The ABJ has offered a weekly news magazine of **current events** and culture in the **Detroit** area from an **African-American perspective** for over four decades. Originally titled *Colored People's Time*, the program offered a media outlet that encouraged involvement from Detroit citizens working to improve Civil Rights and resolve community problems. The program has been on air continuously since 1968, the year following the infamous 12th Street riot in Detroit. The program has value for historians, urban scholars, and others, and it also provides unique media coverage of Southeast Michigan urban communities. Thus, the project offers crucial archival implications for community archiving, outreach, and education.



Digital Content Management: KORA

- Joins expertise of digital librarians, archivists, programmers, and designers
- Custom metadata schemes
- Open source
- XML compatible
- METS conformant, adaptable for TRAC and OAIS requirements



Digital Format Challenges

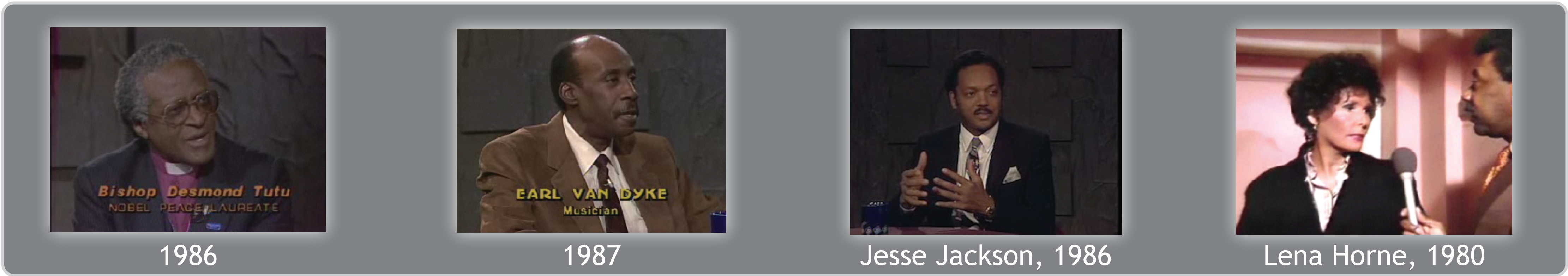
In 2002, MATRIX chose to digitize in DV format because:

- DPTV studios used DV format in editing
- Files editable with non-proprietary software
- Comparable or greater quality than tapes
- Quick to process and economical file size

The decision was good for MATRIX, DPTV, and the intended audience of the collection. It took into account provenance, prior and future use of the tapes, MATRIX's existing infrastructure, processing demands of digital video, and user needs.

Preservation and Digital Video: Implications and Challenges

MATRIX did not plan to retain the collection for the long term at first. The goal of the project was to digitize the ABJ tape archives up to 2002 for use by DPTV in subsequent broadcasts, as well as to make clips available to the public. This poster reports on an internship with the ABJ in early 2011.

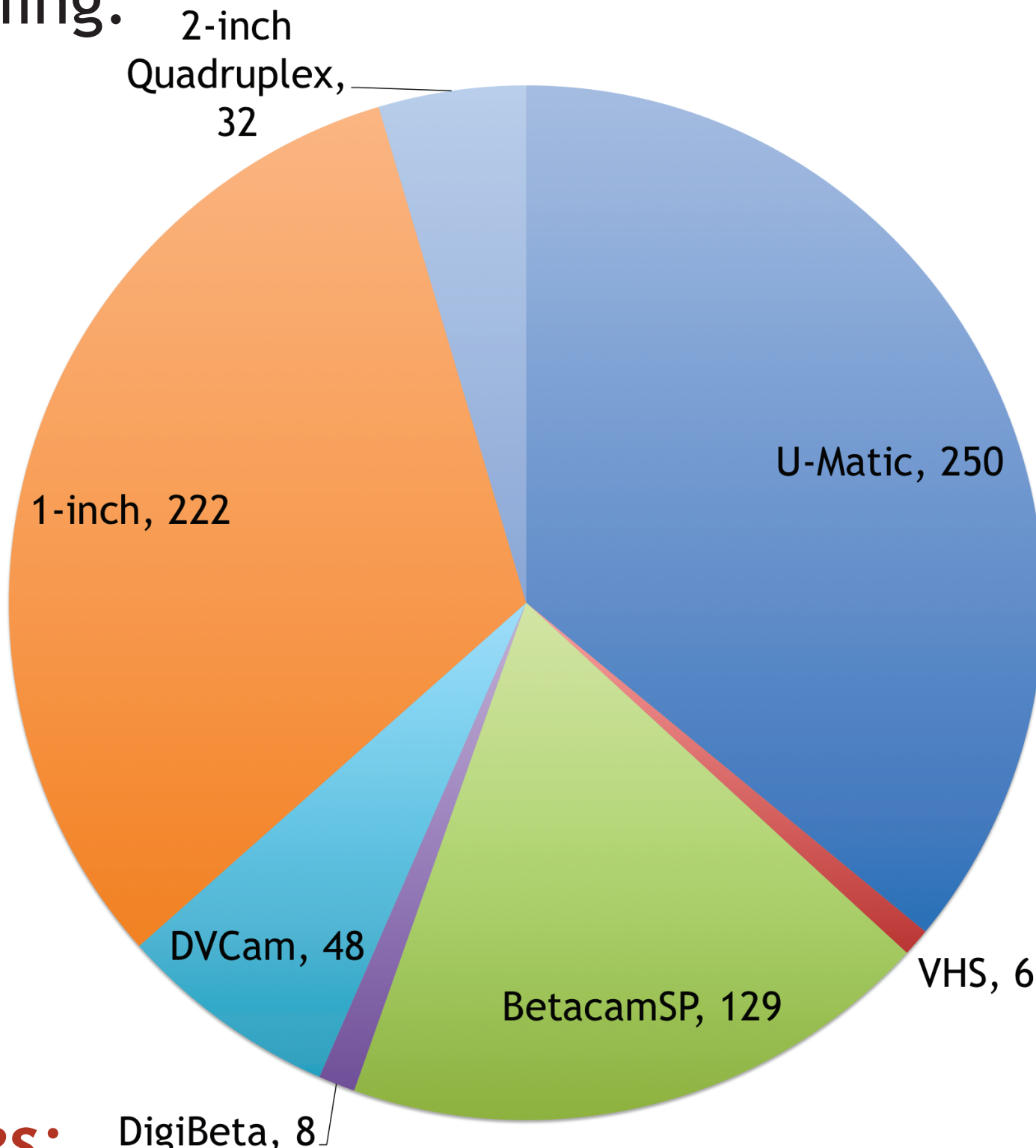


The case study illustrates aspects of many themes important to digital humanities and digital preservation concerns, including:

- Strengths and opportunities for small, multi-faceted heritage institutions to make rich, long-lasting, and engaging digital resources that speak to a community.
- Importance of collaboration between archivists, digital librarians, audiovisual experts, programmers, and educators in creating valuable digital humanities products.
- Examples of agile planning and documentation efforts in the face of swift media change, obsolescence, and the need to migrate formats
- How to plan and evaluate digitization projects in light of ad hoc media decisions and infrastructure legacies.
- Power of digital humanities to document local history with evocative media.

Tape Formats

Each tape received a unique identifier and was inventoried at box level prior to storage in the MSU Special Collections. In total, MATRIX digitized 695 videotapes of various formats spanning 34 years of programming.



Challenges:

- At-risk or obsolete formats
- Unclear or incorrect case labeling
- Many tapes included broadcast material *and* unaired features and interviews

Digital Assets for Access and Preservation

ABJ digital objects exist in multiple copies and in diverse locations and formats.

Master Files

- DV copy, LTO-4 tape, MSU Special Collections
- DV copy, LTO-4 tape, MATRIX
- MPEG-2 copy, DVD, MSU Libraries
- MPEG-4 copy, DVD, Charles Wright Museum of African American History

Intermediate Files

- MPEG-4 part 10 (H.264), LTO-4 tape, MATRIX

Access Files

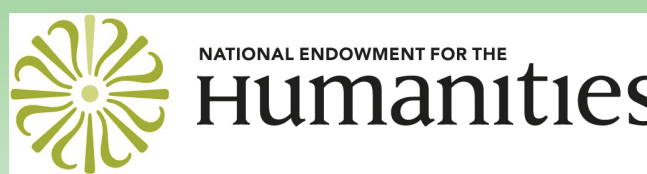
- Flash, managed in KORA, streamed on ABJ website

Descriptive Metadata (website and KORA)

- Synopsis and personnel for each show
- Associated by theme with educational materials

Preservation Metadata

- New policy implemented in July 2011



Credits. Many organizations supported this project and the internship, including MATRIX Center for Humane Arts, Letters, & Social Sciences Online at Michigan State University; University of Michigan School of Information; Institute of Museum and Library Services; Detroit Public Television; National Endowment for the Humanities.