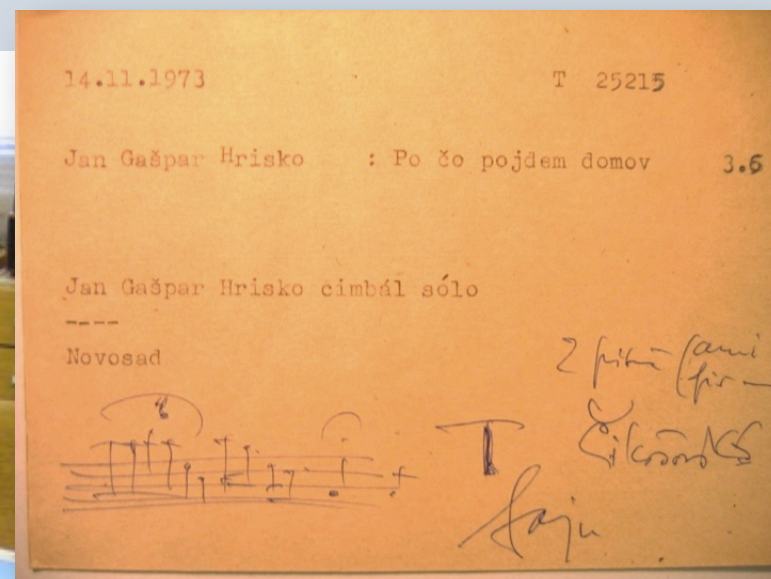# Old-Fashioned and Outmoded?
An Ethnographic Assessment of
Sound Archives in
Ethnomusicologies

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Czech Republic 2005

"Use" as Tactics of Usage

A tactic describes *"ways of operating"* or *"making do"* that allow an individual to make (often ad hoc) use of *"chance offerings of the moment"*

(de Certeau 1984, xii, 37)

Research Question

- What is the nature of research practices that ethnomusicologists use to make archival sound useful?

- *Significance*
  - Understanding how ethnomusicologists use recordings as research tools
  - Understanding "archival use" & "users"
  - Lack of evidence-based knowledge

Methods

- Identify "ethnomusicology archives"
- Semi-structured interviews
- Observant participation
- Interpretation of ethnomusicology studies

- Goal: **Identify & elaborate critical areas of research use for archival sound**

Archival ennui

(Vallier 2010)

Ambivalence

colonial

(Seeger 1986)

emphasis on **behavioral, ethnographic approach**

(Merriam 1964)

Lack of sufficient context

(Topp Fargion 2009)

Repatriation

Relavance

Community Archiving

Preservation

Diachronic & comparative study

(Sewald 2005)

Collaborative Archiving

(Ruskin 2006)

Recordings . . . of many uses, a few

- Four uses for recordings suggested by Stock (2010):
  1. Documentation of field research
  2. Learning performance practice
  3. Historical research
  4. "Playback tool" (also described as "feedback interview," Stone 1982)

- Recordings as "records," "data" (Topp Fargion 2009)

AV in research collections
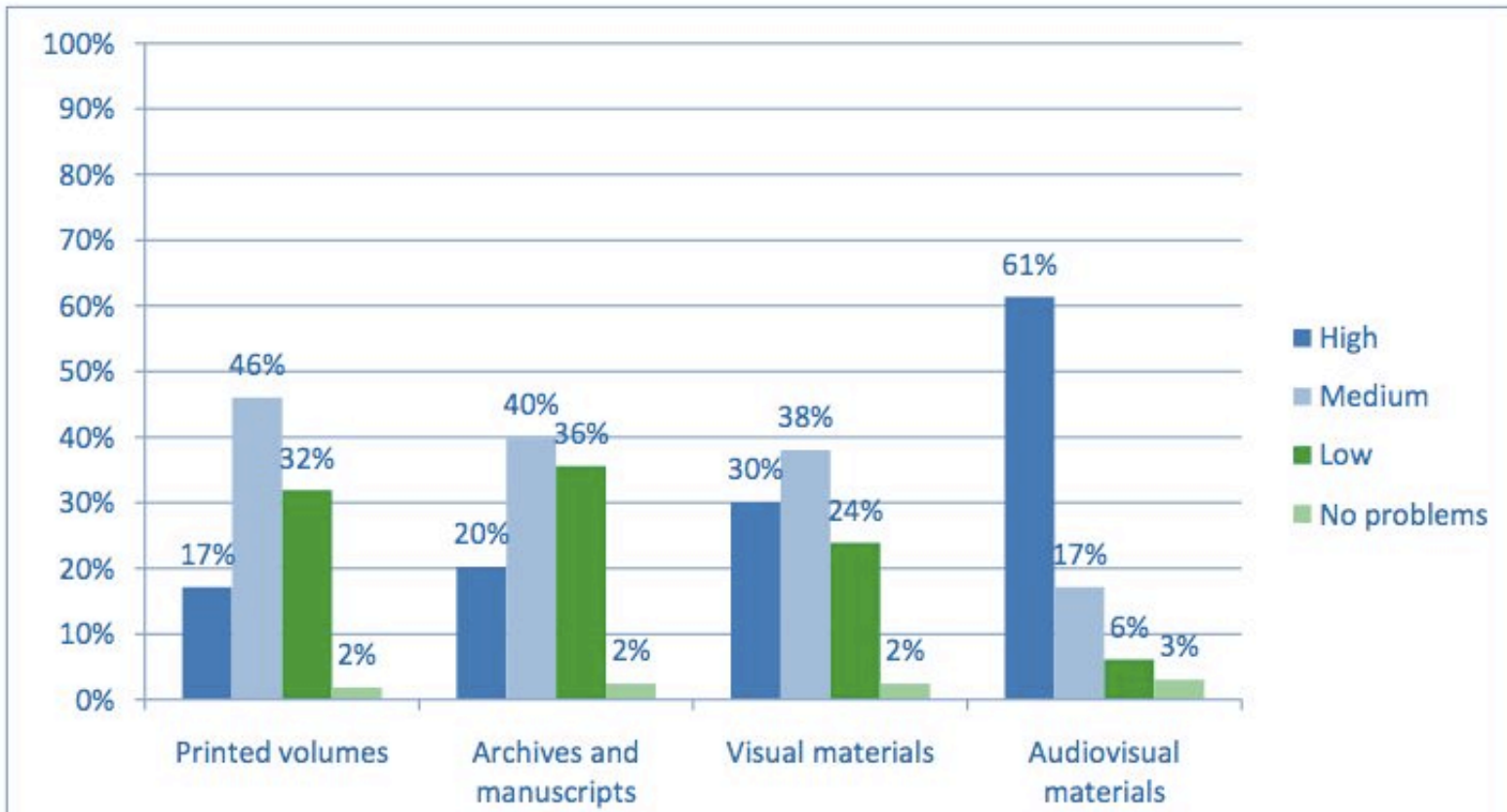
A 2010 survey of the Association for Research Libraries (ARL) reported a 300% increase in visual, audio, and moving-image materials since 1998, while print increased by 50%.

Archival Use

Activities utilizing archival materials in search of information relevant to a research need
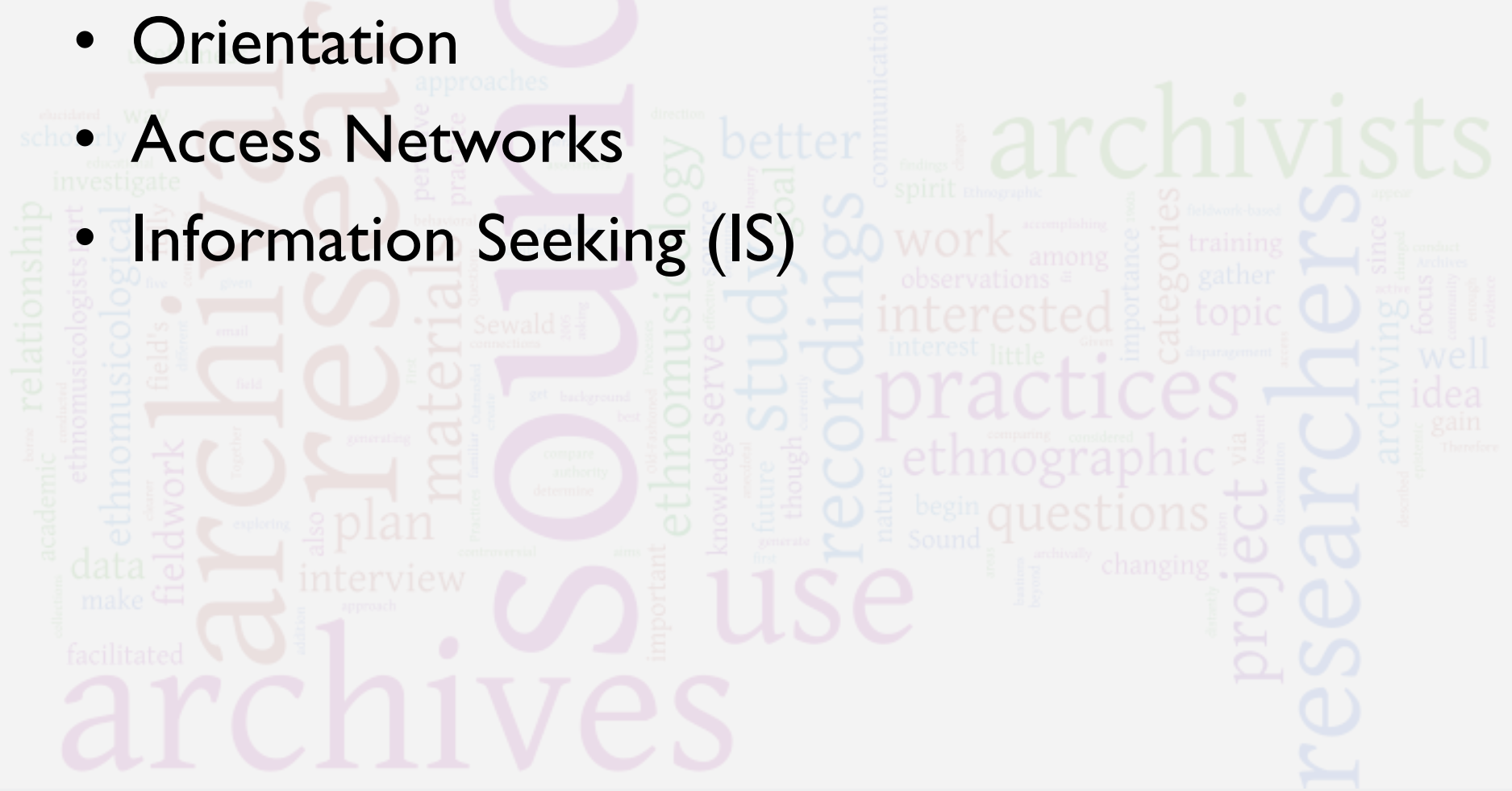
(after Conway 1986)

Archivists understanding Users

Information-Seeking

Scholarly Primitives

Emerging Themes

- Orientation
- Access Networks
- Information Seeking (IS)

Orientation

Unstructured (Tactic)	Structured (Strategy)
We never had a formal, like 'Here's the archive!' It was someplace that we would [socialize]. (A04)	• Reference Interviews *the director also wants to have . . . some individual contact with the researchers. Not to look over their shoulders, but to sort of find out, OK, what are you finding in these materials?* (R02)

Access Networks

In the Field	Enriching Descriptions
one of my contacts, was able to get me entrance to the archives and I hadn't even imagined that they would let me do that. … Just going and knocking on the door isn't going to get you anywhere. (R07)	*anyone who comes in is a potential resource for them. So they want to give them their space and get information from them.* (R02)

Networks as Info-Seeking Tools

Strategies	Tactics
It's usually just either they come in in person and we just chat with them, we're a fairly small collection . . . I know all the [researchers] on a first name basis. (A01)	*I've messed around with these collections for a long time and a lot of my friends are fantastic musicians . . . I've been involved in lots of talking about these tunes.* (R01) *I try to rely on memory, when I'm [in the field] I ask as many people as I can.* (R02)

Implications:
Research Networks as Finding Aids?

- Importance of research networks and contacts

- Emphasis on text searching even though indexed material is audio/video

- Receiving information about recordings via (face-to-face) discussions

Implications:
Usage as Tactics

- As research specialization increases, generalizability of tools decreases
  - Researchers may be content with own tools & methods
  - Also true for formats, contents, etc?

Thank You!

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