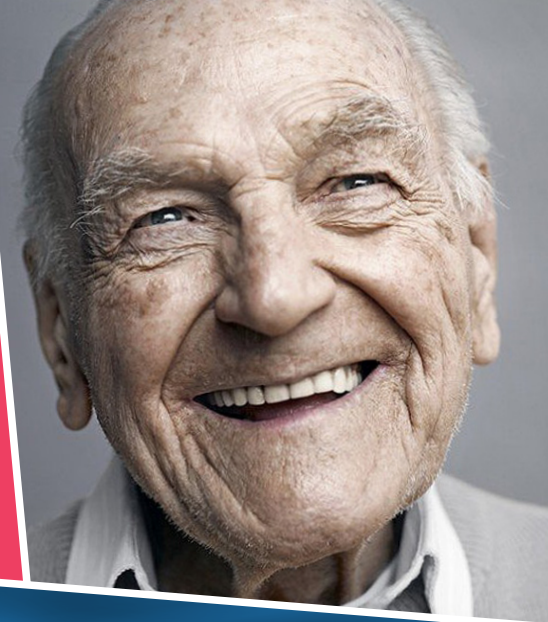# Using sound archives to create reminiscence material

Sounds Familiar Toolkit 1

1 Where are the archives and how can you use them?

There is a lot of sound available on the Internet varying from people talking about the past (oral histories) to wildlife sounds, soundscapes (the seaside, in a forest), music, and sound effects (kettles boiling, old machinery etc.)

The British Library Sounds website has accents & dialect, wildlife, sound effects, music, oral histories and more **https://sounds.bl.uk/**. It also has online exhibitions like this one about sounds inside the home **https://www.bl.uk/if-homes-had-ears**

As well as online sound collections from national museums, libraries and archives, you can find local collections online too. For example, the East Midlands Oral History Archive (EMOHA) has recordings on both Soundcloud **https://soundcloud.com/user-342703332** and the University of Leicester website **http://specialcollections.le.ac.uk/digital/**

If you want to download sounds to create your own soundscapes you can look at the online BBC Sound Effects **https://sound-effects.bbcrewind.co.uk/** ; Freesound **https://freesound.org/** ; Sounds of the Past **http://www.soundsofchanges.eu/** ; Europeana Sounds has sounds from across Europe **http://www.eusounds.eu/**

YouTube also has a wide variety of sounds and memories. For example, here are people talking about migrating into the East Midlands **https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL3Rnsga7PXctl2p1Y9i0hcgSfL5xOkQ3n**

CLICK LINKS TO OPEN

2 Downloading and editing

Whether you use sounds from the Internet, or record your own sounds on a mobile phone or other sound recorder, you will need some software to edit the sounds if you are going to use them.

Audacity is commonly used free software - **https://www.audacityteam.org** - although there are others. If you have used Microsoft software like Word you will be familiar with Audacity's layout. An advantage of Audacity is that there is a lot of help and advice available.

Top tips for sound editing

Use sounds and voices that are clear and easy to hear

Make the sound clip as loud as you can

Leave a second of silence at the start and end

Consider fading in at the s
the end

Don't make the
Usually, aim

Adding sor
Sounds ha
helpful.

Save the fi
.mp3s (ir

CLIC

Using Audacity

Ways of getting sound into Audacity

Go to File>Open and navigate to any sound files on your computer to open them.

You can also record sound using your computer. You need to make sure Audacity is recording sound from either your computer's inbuilt microphone or one you have plugged in. Go to Edit>Preferences to do this.

Important point – if you are editing an existing sound file you should almost always edit a copy!

What can Audacity do?

The basic functions that you will use most are Copy, Cut, Delete. From the Effects menu you will mostly use Amplify, Fade In, Fade Out. Noise Reduction is also useful if working with older, hissy, recordings.

Note – the functions will apply to the part of the sound file you have 'selected' using the 'selection tool'. If you haven't selected a section Audacity may assume that you want to apply to effect to the whole track, or it may not apply it to anything. For example, when applying 'fade in' you should select only that part of the sound file that you want to fade in.

CLICK LINKS TO OPEN

Editing more than one track

If you want to mix two or more tracks together you can open the first one and then import others (use Import, not Open). You can align the tracks using the time shift tool ◀▶ , adjust their volumes using the slider under each track's 'Mute' and 'Solo' buttons, and use Auto Duck from the Effects menu to lower the volume of the background tracks when the main track is playing. When using Auto Duck, the track you want to make quieter needs to be above the 'master' track and you may have to move the tracks by clicking on the triangle by the name of the track and choosing 'Move Track Up' or 'Move Track Down'.

You can also adjust volumes using the Envelope tool and this may work better than Auto Duck.

Add metadata

Add metadata (cataloguing information) to the sound file using File>Open Metadata Editor. This information stays attached to the sound file and can be very useful if paperwork gets lost.

Saving and Exporting

If you save your 'project' then it becomes an Audacity project that you can come back to again and re-open. However, it will not be playable as a sound file. To do this you need to Export rather than Save.

For archival purposes, export as a .wav file. For the web you will usually want to use .mp3. When you press Export you will see the field 'Save as type' and it is here you can select .wav or .mp3. If you choose .mp3 and then press Options followed by Quality you will see many different settings ranging from 320kbps to 8kbps (kilobytes per second), or it might give options from 'Insane' to 'Medium'. These settings affect the size and quality of the sound file. For the web and exhibitions, aim for around 128kbps (Medium) but if the original recording is of good quality, or in mono, you may be able to use as little as 64kbps easily.

Online help and manual - https://www.audacityteam.org/help/