



GUIDANCE NOTE

ON MUSIC COLLECTIONS AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT



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Scope: Who is this for?

- Anyone who uses archived music collections for various reasons, such as research, artistic work, studies, or informational purposes.
- Communities that want to determine how the materials collected from them will be used in the future
- Institutions that want to provide guidance on the use of music collections, taking into account the perspectives of communities

Objectives

This guidance note provides instructions and inspiration for different stakeholders working with archive collections, as well as for communities relating to the materials collected from them. It explains how to provide more contextual information and how to keep users of the collection informed about the wishes of the relevant community or communities.

This guidance note outlines the process for engaging community members in the various stages of the documentation process. This could involve archives or museums, for example, and could be applicable whether the music collection has already been compiled or if more material is to be added.

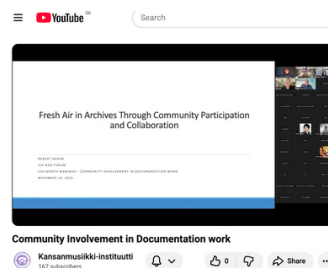
MAIN TOPICS



The guidance note covers three main topics, emphasising community involvement.

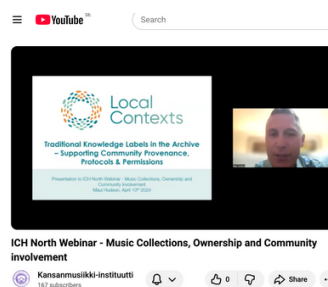
1. Documentation

- What do communities think should be collected related to their heritage, and how?
- Webinar *Community Involvement in Documentation work*:
<https://youtu.be/xqg4GrPM4wM?si=FziVe0AAjvjBLNRZ>



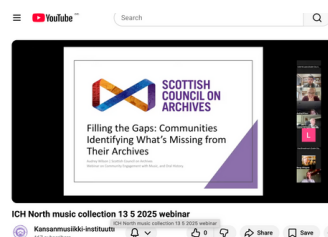
1. Ownership & Control

- How can communities be involved in defining the principles of usage and accessibility?
- Webinar *Music Collections, Ownership and Community involvement*:
https://youtu.be/OHyk2_4WgI0?si=qgP7PijeBSotj9NR



1. Dissemination

- What information do the communities think should be disseminated, how and to whom?
- Webinar *Making music collection public with the communities*: <https://youtu.be/UrdFSqTqaVM?si=IPT3aUQjx5Cp5CGP>



Guiding questions for all three topics are:

How can communities be involved and engaged in situations where archival material to which they can identify is being used or applied?

How can more decision-making power be transferred to communities?



GUIDING DOCUMENTS

The emphasis in the guidance note is on community involvement, especially in relation to the 2003 UNESCO Convention: “Recognizing that communities, in particular indigenous communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals, play an important role in the production, safeguarding, maintenance and recreation of the intangible cultural heritage, thus helping to enrich cultural diversity and human creativity” (UNESCO 2024).

The main concept is *intangible cultural heritage*. According to the 2003 Convention, this refers to “the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature, and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. For the purposes of this Convention, consideration will be given solely to such intangible cultural heritage as is compatible with existing international human rights instruments, as well as with the requirements of mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals, and of sustainable development.” (UNESCO 2024)

See more: <https://ich.unesco.org/>

Ethical principles: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/ethics-and-ich-00866>



PROCEDURES/STEPS

A: Working with a specific archive collection

Defining the community

- Who might consider this collection to reflect their identity? Who might find it special, either now or in the future?
- If you are using this guidance note as a member of the community, you can decide whether you want to organise the workshop with other community members and then move on to the next step.

Finding the community or practitioners

- The community may be very local, consisting of one or more nodes in a specific area. Alternatively, it may be a global network of people, which could include a diaspora dimension, for example. They may be connected virtually, or they may see each other daily. There may be several communities associated with the same collection that interests you.
- While it may be more work to identify the collection as important to several communities, it will also tell you more about the collection itself and its significance to practitioners.
- What if the community no longer exists? Can you think of any communities that might be interested in the music collection you chose and be able to identify with it? Might the material still empower some people?

Contact the community/communities.

- Arrange a workshop or several workshops to discuss the collection you are interested in.

B: Organise a meeting or workshop together with the community members

Create a list, description or presentation of the archive collections that were collected earlier from the specific community.

- The community may not be aware of the existence of the collections or of their contents. At the beginning of the workshop, describe the type of material that has been collected by the archives and is related to the community with which you are organising the workshop.
- This will be helpful when discussing specific documentation and what can and cannot be found in the archives.

Tip: Start with the easiest topic to help all the participants in the workshop get off to a smooth start.

Themes to discuss:

Documentation work, both past and future:

- What situations do you think the previous documentation covered?
- How would you define the need for safeguarding in your community? How 'alive' is the cultural heritage at the moment, and in what situations does its vitality become apparent?
- In what ways is the phenomenon currently thriving? Should cultural heritage be strengthened or revitalised in your community? Has the number of practitioners decreased/remained the same, or increased?
- What new material would you like to see added to the collections? Is anything missing?
- The UNESCO Convention emphasises the transmission of heritage from one generation to the next. Where does this take place? Would it be interesting to document these moments? Might it reveal more about the moment of transmission?
- In what situations should the archive's recording and documentation work take place in the future?

Ownership and Control

- In an ideal situation, who should decide how the collections are used? For example, should it be an archive, a family, a village band or many communities?
- Who should have access to the materials, and who can invite others to view the collections? Are there any access restrictions?
- Does the material contain anything that could be considered culturally sensitive? What could be considered as such? Is there any material that you would consider culturally sensitive, even if it could be used for any purpose? What purpose would you not accept?
- Do you think the collections should have an owner? If so, who should it be? Who definitely should not be the owner? Could ownership become a source of dispute, and has it been disputed in the past?
- Who defines/is currently defining the content of the heritage? What kind of involvement does the community have in this? Has this involvement increased or decreased in recent years?

Distribution: making the material available

- Are there any restrictions on distribution? For example, who should be able to use the materials? For example, should it be within or outside the community?
- If someone wants to use the materials for their own research, music hobby, or professional music-making, are there any restrictions on who can use or distribute the collections? For example, should there be different restrictions for community members and people outside the community?
- What should the archive materials be used for? For example, commercial, non-commercial, or other cooperation. New technologies have also opened up many new possibilities for using archival material.
- In what ways could the dissemination of archive materials support the safeguarding and transmission of musical heritage within communities?
- Should more material be made available? How could accessibility be improved?
- What kinds of materials would you like to see published for open use from archived music collections, e.g. digital services, publications, sheet music collections, books, or CDs?
- Based on the materials, is there anything that should not be published?

C: Share the findings from the meetings and workshops for future use of the material

List the findings and outcomes of the workshop

- Share concrete ideas with users who are interested in the same or similar kinds of collections.
- Could these instructions be added to the contextual information for music collections in archives and museums?
 - For inspiration: This could also involve 'tagging' the material, see for example Traditional Knowledge labels (<https://localcontexts.org/labels/traditional-knowledge-labels/>)

OUR FINDINGS

Examples of the results of the workshops from the Finnish Folk Music Institute and Västernorrlands Museum and a questionnaire

Case 1. Workshop meeting with two members of a village music group from Kaustinen.

The Finnish Folk Music Institute conducted an interview with two members of a village music group from Kaustinen. The entire interview focused on archives and the three main topics for the guidance note. Reflections from the interview:

Documentation work, both past and in the future:

We began the workshop by looking at archival recordings of the group from the last few decades. Many of the recordings were stage performances, but the group members said that they often heard more background information about the tunes during rehearsals. Searching for old tunes was interesting, especially identifying those that had been omitted from the repertoire, offering the possibility of reinstating them. The members hoped that the archive would organise evening gatherings where the group could listen to old recordings and watch old videos, and play some of the tunes live for the audience.

They hoped that, in the future, the archive would conduct more interviews, rather than just making recordings of stage performances. They might be interested in offering more of their own recordings to the archive. The situations in which they play, especially with their children, are so spontaneous that it would be challenging to organise them; it would be better to just record them and bring the recordings to the archive collections. Family celebrations, birthday parties, and funerals also feature many performances by musicians of all ages. Often, only stage performances are recorded, but these don't include parts where the speaker asks questions, especially of the older players in the group. This was more common earlier on, when stage performances were almost like interviews with a speaker who was chatting with the performers.

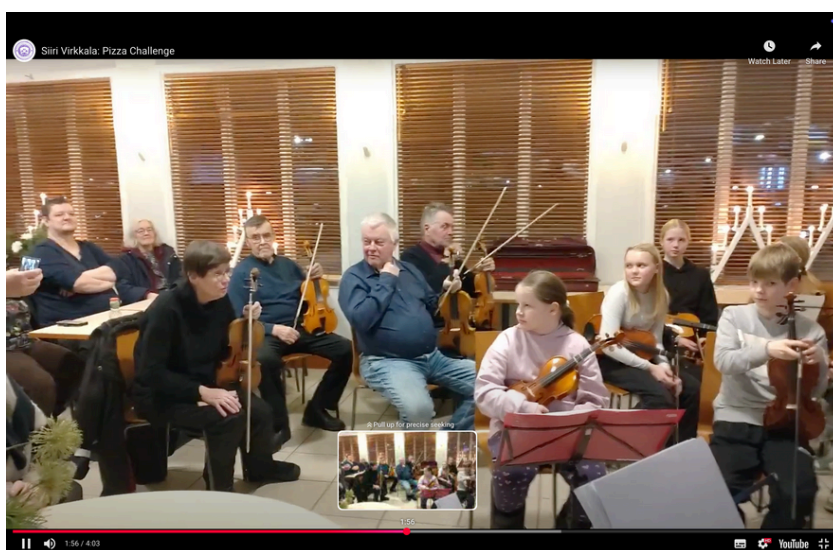
Ownership and Control

Initially, it was thought that the archive collections had no owner; rather, they were simply a way of life. The main hope was that anyone could use the material, as long as they did so appropriately. The material has been documented for research purposes, and if someone else plays the tunes that the family group usually plays, that isn't a problem; it just isn't their performance. However, they did consider what might be offensive, such as playing the local funeral march in a comedy show (they mentioned the Pulttibois sketch series as an example). Many memories are connected to the tune, so misusing it would show poor taste, especially if it were used as a joke. They had previously experienced their song being used in a commercial advertisement. In a somewhat sarcastic move, they renamed the tune according to the company that used it. They didn't know more about the actual rights; they just recognised that the tune was played by their family group.

Dissemination of the materials

Even during the workshop, members shared information about archived recordings from their family group via WhatsApp, and thought that many people would be interested in finding out more about what has already been documented.

In terms of dissemination, the local folk music association is planning to create instructional videos of local folk music tunes that you can listen to and practise with at slower and faster tempos. These are aimed especially at the younger generation. The members also mentioned the pizza challenge as an effective teaching technique presented in the digital map (<https://kansanmusiikki-instituutti.fi/ichnorthmap/project/siiri-virkkala-pizza-challenge/>), which supports the transmission of heritage to future generations.



Case 2. A Sámi performer - interview was made as part of a presentation.

A Sámi performer was interviewed as part of a presentation. The interviewer was from the Finnish Folk Music Institute. Reflections from the interview:

Documentation work, both past and in the future

For the discussion, the participant chose two recordings that are meaningful to her: an archive recording and a more contemporary one from Spotify, both of which include a joik of her late relatives. As the relatives were the subjects of the joiks, they were not performed by them. The participant has also made her own field recordings and felt that you need to consider where the recording is made and ensure that you have enough time with the person you are with.

Ownership issues

It's good to know that the recordings are safe if something happens to you, as they are stored in many places. Also, if traditions are not passed on in the traditional way from generation to generation, you have the option of finding the materials in the archives to practise with. If the recording were to be made today, it should be archived and recorded in the Sápmi area, as this feels like a safe place. It is also important to communicate with relatives and hear their stories to gain more information.

Dissemination of the materials

It is considered good practice to ask permission from the relatives if the people in the material have passed away before publishing it. In this case, permission was asked from the relatives of the person who was joiked at the recording published on Spotify. Nowadays, it has also become common practice to ask for permission to joik someone at a concert. So, in both cases, permissions are important: with the persons who have made the joik and with the persons that the joik is about.

More information: Ethical guidelines for research involving the Sámi people in Finland:
<https://oulurepo.oulu.fi/handle/10024/50115>

Case 3. Västernorrlands Museum's interviews with three folk music groups

Västernorrlands Museum conducted interviews with practitioners for the ICH North project, and the discussions involved short reflections related to archives. Reflections from three different interviews:

Ownership issues

A folk music group from Sweden:

We discussed ownership, particularly in relation to their existence as a collective within museum collections, but this felt like a secondary issue. The music and the recordings belonged to everyone.

A family group from Sweden (consisting of a woman and her two adult children):

The discussion included views on who owns the material. The easy answer is that it belongs to the museum, and therefore to everyone. Yet the family realised that they still had feelings about how the material should be used. One recording in particular moved the other family members to tears because the man in the recording was also their late father and husband. This raised questions about when and how songs and recordings should be used. The song had been sung to the children by their father during their adolescence, and they felt protective of the recording. However, the mother noted that the song had not been written by their family, but had been taught to them by someone else, and was performed by many. The recording was made at a public event where both parents performed songs from the local area, so the children's understanding of it as a private lullaby did not match what they saw at that performance.

The mother also described how finding groups to play with after her husband's passing became a place of refuge for her. She had performed the song many times while her husband was alive, sometimes as a lullaby, and many times after his death with other musicians. She challenged her children's fixed idea of the song's status, arguing that it did not "belong" to them. Her children partly agreed, but at that moment, they struggled to set aside their understanding of this particular piece.

Feelings of protectiveness and openness coexisted within the same family. These views can coexist within the same family and illustrate the dilemma of appointing one person to represent a community. Everyone is entitled to their own interpretation of a recording, but how can an institution such as an archive or a museum decide who is "right"?

Dissemination of the materials

A student group from Sweden (consisting of full-time folk music students):

The discussion covered themes related to the use of the archives, the searches conducted and the results obtained. They found the archives difficult to navigate. Databases were often outdated, and users didn't always know which keywords to use or how to structure a search. Their initial excitement about delving into the archives quickly faded when they found that either their searches didn't yield the desired results or interesting material wasn't available online. They wished that more recordings were easier to find and play.

When asked which keywords should be used to search for recordings of themselves, they didn't have a simple answer. Should the metadata reflect where each of them is from and where they learnt to play? Where is the tune itself from? Or where is the person who taught them from? Should the folk high school be listed, given that they are students there, or should they be described as individuals with broader backgrounds?

Case 4. Questionnaire

A total of 14 respondents completed the questionnaire: six from Sweden and eight from Finland. Reflections from the questionnaire:

Documentation work, both past and in the future:

The survey respondents primarily used archive material to learn tunes, with the most common reasons given being learning tunes and playing techniques (9 mentions), research (5 mentions) and teaching purposes (4 mentions). As one respondent could mention several things, the number of mentions is greater than the number of respondents. Almost all of the respondents (13) identified with a specific community. One respondent identified to some extent with a regional community.

Responses to the question of what kind of new material people would like varied greatly. Suggestions included, for example, more specific information about the practitioners, as well as bibliographical information (3 mentions), to help describe dance and music practices more closely, and there was also a call for a closer examination of playing techniques, for example, through the use of more video recordings (2 mentions). Other responses included more contemporary tunes (1), digitised historical material (1) and more pedagogical archive materials (1).

Participants also expressed a desire for new material to be documented within their own community, requesting more material from individual practitioners (2 mentions), emphasising the diversity of the recordings (2 mentions), and proposing recordings from different situations (3 mentions), such as rehearsals, street music, and jams. This would provide more practical contexts; for example, tunes sung in their real environment compared to the recording studio.

Ownership issues

We asked in the questionnaire how musical communities could be better involved in deciding how archive materials related to them are used. Many of the replies proposed meetings together with the communities (6 mentions), emphasising discussions with different kinds of communities related to their needs and closer communication, where the communities can be more aware of the collections related to them, and also collecting new materials. Another emphasis was placed on more open music collections (3 mentions), so that the documentation could be used to safeguard living traditions, and so that the material would be open and accessible to everyone, except for sensitive information about individuals during their lifetime, or for a certain period of time after their death.

Dissemination of the materials

Respondents were asked what kind of material they would like to see made public from the archived music collections, both in general and in relation to their own community. In general, respondents hoped to see more sheet music (6 mentions) and published recordings (6 mentions) made available. One respondent emphasised the importance of digital accessibility overall, and another mentioned the need to ensure that the publication does not violate copyright or GDPR. This is because there may be material for which they have forgotten or not noticed that the occasion was documented. The answers regarding hopes for published material related to their own community were mainly the same, with more concrete ideas being added about what could be included in the sheet music or published recordings.



CONCLUSIONS



Where might the findings from the meetings and workshops help?

1. The quality and coverage of music collections improve when communities provide information on what should be recorded, what situations should be covered, and what content or perspectives are missing from the archived material.
2. Another perspective to consider is whether the archives contain materials that do not accurately reflect the community.
3. The importance of community-driven action in achieving depth and context, and in avoiding cultural appropriation.
4. Taking note of culturally sensitive material for the community. In our workshops, these materials were related to grief.
5. Recognising rights holders that are important to the community but not necessarily recognised by the legal system.
6. Providing tools for using archives in a way that is also approved by the communities attached to the material.

Possible follow-up plans for the archives involved in the guidance note:

1. Hold more workshops with different communities connected to the archive collections.
2. Make practical adaptations, such as adding tagging or more contextual information to the collections used in the workshops, according to the discussions held during them.
3. Create a specific plan for community involvement for the archive's collection policy paper
4. Work with researchers to analyse workshop discussions and publish a research-based policy paper.



References / Related Documents

Unesco 2024. Basic texts of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. 2024 Edition. Paris: Unesco.
<https://ich.unesco.org/en/basic-texts-00503>.

Contact Information

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Photos: Lauri Oino / Finnish Folk Music Institute Archive, Risto Savolainen, screenshots from ICH North project videos.

