

ASSOCIATION OF MIDWEST MUSEUMS

MODULE 6

MUSEUM LEARNING HUB PODCAST WORKSHOP 2

EPISODE PLANNING AND WRITING
AND RECORDING YOUR PODCAST

September 23, 2021

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>>DAN YAEGER: Hello and welcome to the second technical session for module six, episode planning and writing and recording your podcast. This webinar is brought to you by the Digital Empowerment Project, the nationwide initiative organized by the six US regional Museum associations and dedicated to providing free self-paced training resources for small museums. This inaugural series of online trainings focuses on digital media and technology topics and is made possible by funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

My name is Dan Yaeger, executive director of the New England Museum Association. My pronouns are in the he/him series and I'm your host for today's program.

In this era of virtual meetings when digital spaces may substitute for our physical sense of place it is important to reflect on the land we each occupy and honor the indigenous people who have called it home. I am speaking to you from Swampscott, north of Boston, the historical homelands of the Massachusetts peoples. Wherever we are each located let us acknowledge all indigenous nations as living communities, their elders both past and present as well as future generations.

We, the Digital Empowerment Project, recognize that our organizations and those of our members were founded within a colonizing society which perpetuated the exclusions and erasures of many Native peoples throughout the United States and beyond. We ask that you reflect on the place where you

reside and work and respect the diversity of cultures and experiences that form the richness of our world and our profession. Thank you.

And now for a few housekeeping notes before we introduce today's presenter. If you have questions or comments during today's webinar please use the chat box and we will relay your thoughts to the presenter toward the end of the program. We will address as many of your questions as time allows. If you have additional questions after the program, we suggest you visit our website Museum-hub.org and connect with our online community forum. I would like to acknowledge our ASL interpreters and let you know that captioning for today's program is embedded in the box just below our YouTube player on the website with controls to adjust your experience. Following today's program you will be sent a link to a satisfaction survey. Sharing your experience with the survey will only take a few minutes and will greatly improve our work. We would be grateful for your opinions. Lastly please follow us on social media to be aware of future programs. Links will be posted in the chat. Now it is my pleasure to welcome Hannah Hethmon as our presenter once again today. Hannah is the owner and executive producer of Better Lemon Creative Audio, a production company focused exclusively on museums, history organizations and cultural nonprofits. She is the author of the popular handbook *Your Museum Needs a Podcast a Step-By-Step Guide to Podcasting on a Budget for Museums*. She is a three-time winner of the AAM news awards for podcasting and her first podcast has been selected for collection by the United State Library of Congress. Hannah lives and works in historic Greenbelt, Maryland. Hannah, thanks for being with us again today.

>>HANNAH HETHMON: All right. There I am. Hi everyone. All right. So getting over to my slides. I do have, these slides are available for download at tinyurl.com/HHpodcast2 if you want to have them for notes or just to reference afterwards because we're going to cover a lot of information. I will put this at the end as well and if for some reason this link does not work email me or one of the producers of this series and they will get that for you.

In this webinar we're going to cover episode planning, mics and other equipment, recording your show and writing a script. Basically we're going to cover everything between planning out your show concept, which we talked about in the first webinar, and editing. Which we are going to focus on and do a whole webinar on that next week because that is such a huge subject. We are going to focus on that middle section today.

Episode planning you have to have a plan [LAUGHING]. The more plan you have going in the better.

So here is the broad to do list that you may have. One, you have your show concept whatever that is. Then you need to brainstorm episode topics and the stories so recently I did this with the Vagina Museum in London. I worked on their podcast with them and their ongoing exhibition about periods and menstruation. What kind of stories do we want to tell? We just made a big list and started thinking about them and then evaluating how they balance out. Do we have too much of this, not enough of that? How deep do we want to get? Do we have focused ideas? Big concepts? You are getting it all out there with possible story ideas.

Then you might sketch out possible approaches for each topic. So what is the focus, universal big themes, we're going to talk about that in a second if that does not make sense. You can see on the left there that screenshot of a spreadsheet is the organization of the thoughts as we went through this process. My coproducer [indiscernible] and I came up with ideas for the Vagina Museum so let's say we're going to do episode 2 is about pain, the pain is real so okay what do we want to do? We might want to talk to this person who goes by the pelvic pain doctor. We may want to have a call for stories. We could talk to this person. You know who would be a good guest for that? We were thinking about okay, well who can talk about that? And sometimes that means internally so this other less neat and tidy image there is of some planning I did when I was working on the second series of podcasts I do called On the Record with the national archives in the UK and for this show the guests are always staff members basically records specialists within the national archives. So it's usually a matter of what stories do we have and which of our team members is best equipped to talk about this part of history? So we are writing notes thinking how the stories will go together. Just three episodes you can see episode one, two, three and I'm making notes for myself there in that image, how do all they fit together? What are the big ideas that we're pulling out?

When you are thinking about evaluating your brainstorm list we have all these possible ideas which of them is good? I'm going to bring back up something that you were in the first webinar last week you will have seen but I want to make you see it again. So this is a snippet from this book called Out on the Wire by Jessica Abel; which I really like about basically how to tell stories in audio. And it has this quote from David Kestenbaum, a famous podcast called Planet Money and he has this formula: I'm doing a story about X. Topic, right?

I'm doing a story about Civil War history and what is interesting about it is Y and that is the story. So what is interesting about it is how many Jewish soldiers actually Jewish people fought in the Civil War and how many of them collected a pension afterwards and that's how we can find them because of the record so something like that and if you just start with I'm just doing a story about X whether that topic is the railroad in your town, that is not a story. The railroad in our town, that is just a Wikipedia entry. What is interesting about it is the way the railroad, for example, inadvertently contributed to women's suffrage. I'm making that up but this is the thing we're looking for so within each topic trying to figure out what is the interesting thing about this story in our episode whether that is the story that you're covering over multiple episodes or within each episode but now we are focused on the idea say we're doing one story per episode. What is interesting about it? What are the big things we want to pull out?

We're going to go through a few different ways to think about how to find what is interesting about your story. How to turn it from a Wikipedia entry into a story into an experience into something fun. What big question is your episode asking?

A great example of this is the podcast Q&A from President Lincoln's cottage in Washington DC and their podcast is actually all about questions. They share questions that visitors have asked them that they could not answer that were just too big and they go on an incredibly deep dive to ask different scholars and academics and different people about this question to find out all the possible answers so the first episode, the whole series which I love was how can Lincoln sleep if slavery was happening? If slavery was happening how could Lincoln sleep? That is a question, a question is an organizing principle for your episode. The episode is a journey of answering that question. Right at the beginning we are posing that question and that is what the organizing, so from then on out, everything focuses on how to answer that question. At the end we might sum up what we have answered.

A less obvious is an episode from how to be American from the tenement Museum in New York City and they have an episode, I don't remember what the title was, something about dough, and the episode description is ever wonder how pizza became New York City's quintessential street food? Get ready to find out as we unveil pizza's very own immigration story. The big question here is how did pizza become New York City's street food? This is great because you are piquing people's interest, you are posing a question and hopefully your listener wants to find out. That's how you take them on a

journey rather than just saying this is the story of pizza, this is the history of pizza. Here are some facts about pizza.

Another thing to think about, another way to come at the meaning, the meat of your episode is what is the big idea? What is the, what are the bigger themes you want to draw out? What is the thing you want your audience to come away with? Maybe a lesson if we are going to be simple about it. So for the Vagina Museum podcast one of the episodes we did was about a monk named Marinos who reflects the trans experience. We called them trans in history. This was a monk who reflects the experience of trans people and so we told the story of this monk but the big idea that we wanted to communicate was that trans people have always existed and that their stories exist in historical records and stories and legends and even in church history. It's just about looking at them and how we save them from perhaps a whitewashing of the past or straight washing of the past.

For another podcast I did for Seven Stories which is the center for children's literature Museum in the UK, we started with a series about Black representation in children's publishing in the UK and the big idea we want to communicate was it is really really important that Black children in the UK have literature that reflects them that looks like them that tells stories that are about families like theirs. That show them a world in which they belong and which they are part of literature and that that is critical for them being able to enjoy and benefit from literature and reading in the way that we all want our kids to benefit.

That is the big idea in those.

Another thing to look for are universals. Going to take this quote from Jack Hart in the book Storycraft I love. "Story makes sense out of a confusing universe by showing us how one action leads to another. It teaches us how to live by discovering how our fellow human beings overcome the challenges in their lives and it helps us to discover the universals that bind us to everything around us." And the reason I have a picture of Frodo from Lord of the rings is because universals help us connect to stories that may not seem like they are relevant to our lives. So the very climax of the story of the Lord of the rings is Frodo in Mount doom trying to get rid of this ring and here we have a story of a creature a short human like creature with a magic ring in a volcano tower trying to throw it away in a world that is totally different from ours so that has nothing to do with the person reading it, but, another way to look at that is that is a story about someone making a decision on whether or not to sacrifice

something that has become part of them in order to save people that he may never see again. This is a story of sacrifice and of strength and of doing the right thing. Of course there are other universals in that story: friendship, and fear, and love. So when you're looking at your topic think about what are these big ideas we can draw out of it that can make this topic a story that is relevant to the people that are listening.

Some examples of that, in on the record we did an episode about Noor Inayat Khan. She was a spy in the second world war, a British spy. We can emphasize the strangeness of that. She was a spy. She was killed for her work but we also emphasize universals. This was a woman who did not want to go to war she was peace loving but she felt like was the right thing to do because she wanted to defeat fascism so she sacrificed one of her values to fight for another value that she felt was even more important so this is a story of someone having a complicated decision on whether or not, what does it mean to do the right thing and deciding to put themselves in incredible danger to fight for a value that they believed in. That is a universal truth we can all relate to on some level. Another story for on the record was about a pauper named Daniel Rush who faced the decision of basically dying on the streets with his wife for no support. Or both of them entering a poorhouse and being separated for the rest of their lives and in this letter to the poor house he describes, this is the only record we have of him. He says I would rather die in the street with my wife basically then be separated after all we've gone through in our long long lives. He is an old man at this point. So this is a story that may not be very relevant to a lot of people to be a poorhouse, a pauper maybe even an elderly person. We might have younger audiences. We can all relate to the idea of loving someone so much that you would do anything to stay with them. And so the themes of love and companionship and marriage and choosing your family members over material gain. These are universals.

If we go back to these two episodes the examples I had at the beginning for Q&A we have a big question, how could Lincoln sleep with slavery happening? But the universal is empathy with the suffering of others. Did Lincoln have empathy? What did it mean to think about that and did he want to do something about it and if so how did wanting to do something about that affect him? How did he wrestle with that?

In how to be American the big question of course how did pizza become New York City's quintessential street food? The big idea is so many quintessential American things are the product of immigration and the cross-cultural exchange it enabled and the pizza is a way for us to get that idea across to

people. So when planning your topics you have your brainstorm you decided here's what we are going to include in the series. You can go through each topic and go what is the big question? What are the universals, what are big ideas that we want to draw out and that is going to help you think about your episode and come at it with a strategic plan of what you want to communicate and what you want people to receive.

Once you know what each episode broadly is about and you don't have to have an exact plan of everything that you want to cover you can kind just have those big ideas. Then you can make a list of potential external guests and/or choose who inside your organization can speak about each subject or story. Pretty basic now that we have these big ideas, now that we have these questions, who can answer these questions? Who can talk about these big ideas? Who can reflect on the universals in this history or art or in this science for example.

Things to consider when choosing your guests does the guest list of my episode season reflect the diversity of my community or audience? I always really like to, it can be really surprisingly easy you are for example a white person, someone who is a majority community to create a whole season and realize we only have white people on this season. And that is not going to give us the full diversity of perspective and experiences that we need in this season. Which would be every show needs that full perspective as well.

But then also are they all white all men does my guest list represent the diversity of communities or experience instead of just having one token person of color are, one token queer person. Are you really making sure that your guest list is looking at these questions that you're asking about the topic from different perspectives. Is it genuinely diverse, does it genuinely seek out a diversity of experiences and lived experiences and life experiences and people and perspectives?

With that but also separately is this the right person to talk about this subject? This seems like an obvious question but maybe, we got this person but maybe we should have maybe they've talked about it too much. Maybe they are not going to be able to ask the question that we want maybe, I'm blanking on examples here but is there someone else who would be better to talk about this? Will this guest be able to spread the word about the show? There's nothing wrong with choosing guests here and there or even more than that that have a large social media following or larger network that will help get the podcast out to other people. If you can get a guest who has a lot of influence,

even locally, relative amount of local influence or influence within the field of the subject you are talking about, getting them on the show and asking them explicitly to promote the show and make sure they have resources like a link and some graphics, whatever, that can be a great way to reach their audience with content that they will definitely like because the person they like is on the show. Of course considering how difficult will it be to get this guest on the show and schedule them so sometimes if you're looking through, I like to have guest number one, guest number two, long shot. If we can get this celebrity, if we can get this book author that would be really really cool but let's not base our whole episode around it. Let's see what we can do. And from there you're going to go to scheduling and recording the people which I'm not going to talk about because I'm sure you can figure that out.

What I want to talk about next instead is what do you ask them? Once you have chosen who your guests are, you've confirmed they want to be involved in the podcast, you need to develop your question list and you do not have to have a perfectly scripted questions all the way through. If you are naturally an interviewer, someone who knows how to dig into a conversation that is great. At the bare minimum you should have an outline of what you want to say and what order you want to say it in. Hold on I was just seeing if I had that on a slide. I don't but something I was thinking about talking about is the order you want to have your conversation go. I like to structure my questions or at least an outline of what I want to ask in that order to make it easier for editing afterwards. A few types of questions I like to ask. Number one my favorite type of question is questions that invite stories. So tell me about this? Why does this matter? What should people know about, say, pizza? In New York? Tell me the history of pizza in New York. How did this restaurant get started? How did this Museum end up here? What is a common misconception about immigration in New York City? Where are we? That is a question that invites description as well as stories. Tell me what we are looking at. It's totally fine to say what is the take away here? What is the lesson to get people to reflect? These are questions that invite stories, that invite description, that invite reflection and invite interpretation as well. And so you can think if I say when was this Museum founded? 1905. Okay, well, that's not really a conversation, that's not going anywhere. If I say tell me the story of why there is a museum here. How did this come to be? Well in 1901, so that invites people to tell you a story, a series of events rather than just a fact. So again not a Wikipedia page, but a story.

I also like questions that fill in background, so especially if you are doing a little more planned interviews. So in this case this a whole question I wrote out

and it goes something like so Jess rather than easing our listeners into this series with a nice straightforward set of court records we are jumping into witch trials. And I say fill in the background of what we are not going to talk about. So could you give us a brief overview of what the witch trials were and what they were not? That's really the question at the end. What were the witch trials and what weren't they? But all behind that is background and the nice thing about this background here is it not only gives us a little fill in of the context, the cultural context of witch trials but it also lets my guest, Jess, know I don't need you to tell me about that they are in television shows, novels, plays. I want you to jump right into what they were and were not, we don't need to do an intro. So it kind of lets her know as well that in this big question I'm asking where do I want you to focus.

Follow-up questions are super super important. So I always use the example of say your guest is talking and they are telling you about this cool object in the Museum and I just it's really cool how we have this displayed. We were going to display it here but that area got wrecked when the zombies ran through so now we have it here and that looks so better and you are like wait did you just say zombies? This is sign posting and follow-up questions is when your guest says something and it's really interesting, make sure you come back to that because if your listener hears something interesting and they don't get more information they may feel unsatisfied so you are standing in as the host for the listener you are asking the questions that they want to know so a lot of follow-up questions I like to ask, sometimes it's good to have these literally written down so you can pop them back in when you're ready to go. Can you tell me more about that? And why is that? Can you expand on what you just said? Do you have any more stories from that experience that you can share? What else can you tell me about pizza in New York? Why do you think this story is so important? Why do you think this artwork is so important? Wait did you just say there's ghosts in the museum? I think our listeners will want to know more about the zombies, the ghosts, can you fill us in on that? And wait until they are done and say I want to go back to one thing you mentioned which is the role of the local Union and all of this. Can you give us more detail on how they were involved? I want to go back to that thing. So just making sure you follow up on interesting leads so that it's not just conversation switch topic, question switch topic. So it has a nice flow through it.

Something else to think about is length. This is a practical note podcast episodes are typically between 20-50 minutes in length. I like to say especially if you are starting out and figuring out your audience, keep it to within the

range of a commute. If you are thinking about someone who commutes 20 minutes, 20-30 minutes maybe 20-25 minutes is where your episodes should be. If you are at the higher range maybe you can go 40-50 minutes and it's okay to have one episode that is 40, one episode that's 50 but if you're doing 20 then 50 then 10 then 30 minutes your audience doesn't have a place in their life they can slot you into. So if you listen to podcasts, you may listen to the same podcast at the same type of activity because you know it will fill in about that amount of time. If I'm going on a 15 minute errand I'm going to listen to a short podcast. If cooking dinner, I might put on a long one. If I'm going for a run, I will put on a long one right? So keep that in mind to keep it in the same type of timeslot and then when it comes to editing again we're going to talk about that on the next webinar but in recording it's important to save yourself time by keeping your interviews closer to the length you want them to be in the end so let's say you have one guest and your episode should be about 30 minutes. Don't do a two hour interview. Do a 30 minute interview, 35, 40 minute interview because by the time you edit it down, add an intro, an outro and music there you are. Let's say it gets to one hour, you will have a lot of decision-making to cut half of that interview out. I've certainly made that mistake early on. Two hours is more, more is more, then I will have all this material to choose from and I'll have a better show but that is not the case because first of all your guest can then just talk and talk without being concise. Think about conference presentations. What is more interesting when someone has one hour to ramble or when they are asked to carefully focus their ideas into 15-20 minutes?

Now some guests can go really well for one hour but focus can also be better so you don't have to record longer interviews. This saves you time, we are all short on time. This is not a professional operation and if we were this American life and could have an entire staff working on every episode for months we could do 15 hours of tape and cut it down but we are not so we have to be practical this is a practical note.

Let's switch to the more technical side of things and talk about recording your tape. I know I need to pause here for the ASL interpreters. ASL interpreters. Hopefully that has given us a moment to pause and shift and let's talk about equipment. I'm going to talk about three types of recording. Mobile recording, a studio set-up and remote. These should be pretty obvious mobile I'm walking and talking, I'm not plugged in anywhere. Studio set up I have got something fixed in a room basically sitting in a room that's my definition of studio and remote we are not in the room together. I'm going to give you a few mic set ups and so you can reference the slides later and purchase just the

equipment you want. I don't like to get too crazy on equipment but there is also no wrong way to do it as long as the sound is good. So if you have a mic that you like better or something, just use it, don't worry about it being wrong. So mobile recording set up here is one set up you might use. A zoom H4N Pro handy recorder, this is a favorite of podcasters. I love this I haven't used it in a while because I haven't gone anywhere and everything is remote right now but in the future you might need this is about \$200 and you can plug into two mics to that, you will need an XLR cable and always with recording you want to wear headphones with your remote recording, in person, mobile headphones allow you to make sure that nothing is weird happening with your sound and monitor was coming into your microphone so that is really important. Then what you might attach to the recorder is you have a microphone and I'm giving you two options here one is a shotgun mic. These are the long skinny ones you will often see them on movie set, this will give you a focused line of sound to your person. If you are in a really loud and noisy environment this will give you a more narrow focused sound and the nice thing about these is they can pick up from longer away so if you need to stand 3 feet away from the person, let's say there is a global pandemic and you don't want to get too close to their mouth that can be a great option. An easier mic, those often need more accessories as you can see with this set up they are going to be more expensive. A cheaper and easier to wield, less finicky option would be a reporter-style mic. Like you see reporters putting in people's faces. The RODE reporter is a gold standard for this and a knockoff cheaper brand that I've used and loved is the Movo HM M2. These are microphones and as you can see in this picture that is me with the exact set up I just showed you on the left with the mobile Movo HM M2 and historic St. Mary's a city in Maryland.

Possible mobile recording set up 2 is you can just record on your smart phone. You are not going to get as good of audio you need to be mindful of your environment always mindful of background noise because it's really hard get that out afterwards always being mindful of the wind or other people talking that is the worst. You really cannot get that out unless it is very faintly in the background. You can use your app your voicemail app on your smart phone or if you want to get fancier or you can download the free RODE reporter app or a similar audio recording app that will give you a bit more control. That will allow you to record wave files and also you can see these little green things on the RODE reporter it will let you know if you are too close. It will go red if you are peaking. You get a better sense of where you should be with your audio, whether it is good audio quality. One thing you can do to make a mobile recording set up that anyone in your office could use that

is going to be a higher audio quality is to get something like this tiny mic on the right, this is a Shure MV 88 this is \$150 you can get cheaper types like this. This is a really great one if you want to invest and then that plugs right into the lightning port on the iPhone and you will have to wear a remote Bluetooth headphones in order to monitor it because you will have filled up the lightning port. Thanks apple for that. There are not a lot of options like this that go in android phones but you can try a few different cheaper ones. There are mics like this you can get for as little as 20 bucks. They're not going to sound as good. Sometimes in that case your built-in speakers are going to sound better but if you want to get a \$20 mic for your phone and test it out go for it. If it sounds good in the end. So test it out and see what you can do but if you want a good one the Shure MV 88 is solid.

Then let's talk about studio set up. Possible studio set up number one you could have a laptop with recording software this could be audacity, Hindenburg, garage band instead of having a handy recorder you record directly into your laptop. And then you can plug in a USB mic. I will show you this is this is the RODE NT-USB mini is awesome. I love this little microphone not only is it adorable it gives you great sound it's also great for narration. It's small enough and compact it does not need other accessories it's all built in, built-in stand, built-in pop filter. It is pretty sturdy if you need to send it to a guest, you can as well so it's pretty sturdy. It costs about \$100 but is my favorite mic right now. Other similar mics, you could do with the Audio Technica ATR 2100 and the Samsung Q2U and you can often get discounts and bundles on those. Like if you look on Amazon. You could buy the headphones and the cord and the stand all-in-one podcast packages.

A lot of people in podcasting starting out get the light blue yeti blue the snowball I don't really like those microphones I don't think they are worth the money. So I don't recommend that they do look cute but I think that is about it. Then you would plug that in and put it on your table you could have two microphones but you'll make sure you have a connector to get two of them plugged into USB port into your laptop and record that way, test it out obviously the mics are facing away from each other or if you are just recording one person you could also just sit really close with the same mic but it's better to have two separate tracks.

A separate set up, it's much more expensive, I know we're talking to small museums here, but I wanted to show you the top of the spectrum if you wanted to drop \$1000 on your podcast set up. We are going to do this in our museum, we are going to do it every week we're going to invest we are ready.

The RODEcaster Pro is a built in everything you need in one place podcast studio you can attach four mics via XLR cable to that and you can get studio mic like the Audio Technica AT 2020 is fantastic I love it, I use it for everything if you listen to audiobooks of my book the first edition the audiobook on audible that's what I used to record that. Again you could use your headphones. I mean, the RODEcaster Pro is \$600, but it's kind of all-in-one if you want something that's also super super user-friendly if you don't like mixing sound mixing and stuff. So let's talk about remote recording. Right now this is what we are all doing there's nothing else. I wanted to give you the other stuff this is all I've been doing for almost, going on two years really so let's say I'm in Maryland and I want to record an interview with Lil Nas X in Los Angeles to congratulate him on being amazing and awesome and his new album coming out. What I like to do is, you have, you can do zoom just a standard zoom call but you need to make sure on the back end that you are recording separate tracks. That's really important. Or I would recommend upgrading for just a few dollars a month to squad cast which is super cool it is like zoom but just for podcast recording so you can see your people and watch them just like a Zoom call, very familiar. You join from a Chrome browser it's really easy, it's easy for your guest. And then when you hit record on your end the big red button it automatically records separate wave and MP3 files for each of your guests. So when you have a separate audio for each of your guests, if I talk over Lil Nas X I can separate that in my editing and cut me off so we don't lose any of his precious voice. So what we're going to do in this situation is I would be wearing headphones on my end and have a microphone on my end just like I have now ideally Lil Nas X would have a microphone on hand but if he or your other guest does not you can ask them to just wear headphones with a microphone but it's really important they wear headphones because you could get feedback loops and stuff if you had the echo on the zoom call where someone's mic is picking up the audio going in. If you want to get more complicated what you can do is either backup recording using your smart phone or if nobody has a microphone you can do a backup on that as well. What we do is, I do this for all kinds of organizations I hope this crazy chart is not too crazy but basically I take my phone and open up my voice memo app or my recording app and I put on the table in front of me as if I'm chatting on smart phone so this high, clavicle height, and maybe a slightly bent arm away from me and I hit record. I have my headphones on so the only thing this phone is picking up is my voice because the zoom call is just going straight to my headphones. Lil Nas X is doing the same thing on the other end and I ask him to email it to me and now I have two separate in-person recordings of our voices. The problem with this is you cannot monitor whether someone's fan is being picked up in the background or whether it's

not sounding right so for me ideally it's great to have the squad cast recording or the zoom recording and this backup and if one is bad I at least have a good one because I'm not going to get a second chance to interview Lil Nas X. The other nice thing about squad cast is that it records locally so the Internet cuts out on one side or the other it still is recording and when you hit stop it uploads so ideally you get a not Internet-ty sound. Zoom you will get the Internet sounds if someone cuts out that kind of break you are going to get that so that's why I like this.

A few more slides to go through before we reach the end and have some time for questions. I might edge into my question time a bit. Where to record first of all always wear your headphones when you are recording and always be aware of how the environment will affect your sound. It is so much easier to set yourself up for good audio than it is to fix bad audio. One of the big things you want to do is avoid echoey spaces so that image on the top, of the office you can just imagine how echoey that room is. That is not a good space for recording. You're going to have an echoing noise. My office probably sounds echoey right now, I don't record in here.

That office on the bottom that is messy and has bookshelves and carpet that is great. Rooms with carpeting rooms with things on the walls, rooms with furniture in them that has, even a bedroom or even a closet if you want to, that is where that stuff muffles the noise and gives you a non-echoey noise. You want to watch out for loud background noises like running AC fans, AC units or fans or street noises especially if you live on a street where someone revs their motorcycle. I've had to redo so much stuff where I don't hear the motorcycle revving until I'm going back into my audio. You can get creative when I was living in London two years ago I lived in an apartment with one room facing a busy street where the ambulances like to pull out and turn their sirens on from the hospital so I would open up my closet doors and move my wardrobe, move my clothes aside hang a blanket behind me in there I have a cozy little recording office. So blankets, that kind of stuff works great. And bottom line you want to test and assess before every recording until you are really confident but even then I would recommend doing that all the time. So do a little test wherever you have a set up, do a little test remote call with someone else in your office just to make sure everything is working and when you listen to audio, that is good because sometimes you might listen at your desk and go oh, there is something in the background that we had no idea. This is really important.

Last, I'm going to take just a few minutes to talk about writing and recording a script. So there are two broad roles of a script or narration in your audio. It might just be an introduction, an outro, and a transition. On the left the script is in italics and we have March Davis with India landmarks saying a quote at the beginning to kick us off and then I have the host, Jane, saying welcome to preservation profiles a podcast by the natural preservation institute and so on, the stock intro and my guest today is Margie Davis so introducing the show introducing the guest and then in the blue you can see we jump right into her question and then it is just a question and answer style podcast all the way to the end where we have another little outro scripted thanking people, saying where to learn more and so on.

The other more complicated role of narration might be as exposition, interpretation and transition. This is a screenshot from the script of whose stories from the seven stories museum I referenced earlier so you can see the italics, guest, italics, guest, italics, guest so we are going back and forth where the host and writer of this show, who worked with me with [indiscernible], she summarizes what the guest is saying and breaks up the guest speaking to allow us for this nice pacing between guest and the narrator and guest and narrator. This is more the public radio, this American life, style of podcast.

When you are writing for audio you want to write like you speak. This is really important a lot of people make the mistake a lot of us are academics a lot of us have gone through degree programs and we want to write formal essay language or formal book language but that is not what works in podcasts. Write like you speak. Always read through the script out loud at least once or twice because as you read it out loud it may feel weird to try and say something and it may look technically good in reading but in audio you need to put the most important information first and the way that the sentence syntax changes as well so you want to use simple, straight-forward vocabulary, avoid jargon and words that you would not normally use in a conversation. Vis-a-vis or juxtaposition or just thinking about what you actually say when you are talking to people. You may I know when I write I tend to use bigger vocabulary, so I want to switch to my speaking vocabulary. I want to use short sentences avoiding unnecessary clauses and digressions within the sentence. This first example is really not so bad. John Davis but it could be better, John Davis, who ran the organization from 1992 until its eventual closure in 2003, spoke to us from his office about the struggles his staff, most of them new to the field, faced in those early years. In writing, if you're reading on screen right now, that probably looks fine but you're just listening you might get lost and by the time to get to the end you have had to be sorting out things

in your head it doesn't work right. So what I would do instead in audio is break it up into manageable bites of information. John Davis ran the organization from 1992 until its eventual closure in 2003. Period. He spoke to us about the struggles his staff faced in those early years. Period. At the time, most of them were new to the field. This is a much easier way to process the information when you can't read or go back. You're getting it one bit at a time, you don't have time to go back and check and make sure you understood. For recording your script, you want to practice reading your script out loud to someone else that can be a great way to work out the kinks but also practice being natural. If you cannot get out of your head, practice reading in a silly voice or accent the whole way through, that will loosen you up. Make sure to test out your space, set up, it can be really simple again this is a public media people showing off their spaces recording like NPR segments during the pandemic or whenever, when they're on the road. What I like to do is record two takes of each paragraph in your narration, so small sections, so rather than going from start to finish and start to finish. Makes it really hard to compare the two takes. Record paragraph one, paragraph one, paragraph two, paragraph two, and so on one paragraph at a time and as you are editing your narration you can easily compare that take one is better than take two and evaluate that way.

Take lots of deep breaths, it makes it really easy to get breathless when you're reading a script. It is surprisingly difficult so just take long pauses and speak slowly and take deep breaths where you need them rather than doing that you can always edit it out but it's easier to do it right the first time and then drink lots of water as I'm doing now when you're speaking and speaking you get dehydrated. And that can lead to your voice changing.

And that is it so that is recording and your podcast and writing planning your episodes, recording your podcast and writing your script so again you can download the slides at HHpodcast2 and that is my webinar. Thank you.

>>DAN YAEGER: Thank you Hannah. That was a lot of info. Take a drink. So a couple of questions regarding scripting. What you were just saying and reflecting on it does this mean that pretty much you need to be consistently one person scripting your podcast? Or can you shift off duties? Because your voice is your voice but then somebody else is going to have a different style in their voice, what do you recommend for that?

>>HANNAH HETHMON: Technically the best practice is probably to have consistency but with museums and museum podcasts, we are not holding ourselves to the standards of this American life and things like that and also I

don't think all our audiences are really going to know the difference that much from one to the other unless they've been listening for years and you have this huge audience. It's okay to switch from one to the other, I think keeping it in the same general style if one wants to be academic and the other really friendly and casual, if that works for you do it but I would say ideally keep some sort of consistency in the style and tone between them.

And you can intentionally rotate people in and out that's what we do with on the record the national archives because none of the staff can commit to being the voice of the podcast single every episode so every miniseries or every episode we usually rotate we have two hosts we rotate one host so someone does two episodes and there is a different set every time but we keep the intro exactly the same, the style exactly the same, teaser clips, intro, music and then to the interview so it is familiar for people because again I don't think people know the difference too much between when we switch out hosts. They're not that rabid listeners. But definitely familiarity will make them feel comfortable from one episode to the other.

>>DAN YAEGER: Some of the questions we've seen from attendees today have to do with equipment, naturally, I think we are all storytellers or more storytellers with this whole notion of what do we need? So very interesting about, people are interested in the longevity of the equipment, how you migrate from one thing to another perhaps as you learn? Can you speak about how should you start out? If you are starting out should you get the base level whatever and then decide what works and then work your way up? Or should you just here is my budget and I'm going to buy everything I need to and learn how to do it all at once?

>>HANNAH HETHMON: With all the equipment I've shown it's most important that you take the time to test and figure out what sounds good and what doesn't sound good. Think it's like you can get the big massive camera and walk out to the pond and start taking pictures but it's not going to a National Geographic make if you don't know how to frame a shot you don't know what color looks good and what doesn't, what time of day to take pictures. That kind of stuff. So someone with an iPhone might out shoot you in that case if they really know how to use their equipment. So I think some of those midrange items I talked about like the \$100 mics that is a great range. If you have the budget and want to start, that is a good place to start. This RODE nt-usb I have right now I love love love it. It's so cute. [LAUGHING]. I make everyone use these. If you have the budget and you want to do a set up and you have someone on your team who has a sense for audio and audio

quality, great. Go for it but if you buy all the expensive equipment the \$1000 set up, it's not going to necessarily sound much better than this \$100 mic here plugged into my computer if you don't know how to make it sound better if that makes sense so I would say it's totally okay to start with a solid basic microphone and something that feels comfortable and not scary to you. When I first started podcasting I did cry when I opened the manual to the zoom handy recorder. I cried a lot and I almost gave up and then my career would've gone nowhere. Also YouTube videos are great for figuring this stuff out. If you plug in the microphone you have or equipment you have, that's great but start with something that feels manageable and when you feel you've done everything you can to make sound as good as possible, taken all that low hanging fruit, then maybe think about upgrading.

>>DAN YAEGER: And batteries. Carry batteries with the zoom, right?

>>HANNAH HETHMON: Oh my God yeah.

>>DAN YAEGER: The thing that resonated with me from my podcasting days, and I did a lot of interviews as you may know going to museum conferences and putting the mic in front of people's faces and so forth and being out remote you become so aware of ambient noise of sounds in the background things that are happening. And it really is important to pick those spots. Rather than interviewing somebody in a big hall in a convention center pulling them aside into those little spaces maybe in a hotel conference room or something is so much more helpful to be able to do it unless you want that exciting feel. Sometimes the person on the street interview has that ambient sound so that is a cool thing, too.

Any particular sort of anecdotes about interviews that have gone haywire? And what should you be looking out for? You mentioned sirens, that always happens. Do you stop the person and say try that again? Say that again so that you can edit that out or do you just sort of go through it?

>>HANNAH HETHMON: A really important thing is active listening. It could be easy to think about the next question but when the siren comes you have no idea what they were saying.. If you are actively listening to them, not only they going to give you better information, they are feeling like they are listened to, you are nodding, you are doing nonverbal affirmations of their story but then the siren comes, you can say so what you were saying was I went downstairs and I went downstairs and so you can help them pick up where they were or if they lose their train of thought you can get back to that. I

think probably interviews that have not gone well for me are when someone was talking super super fast and something was going wrong and I didn't feel comfortable to say hey let's take a minute and slow down there's no rush I will give you as much time to talk about this as you want. Let's take a minute or let's take a breath or I knew that something was not quite good but I didn't feel comfortable interrupting that person. It's ideal if you don't interrupt them but if you were hearing something that's not going to be good or something is weird with the microphone or they have a headset and it slipped down and you can't hear them, find a good break to stop but remember where they were speaking so you can give them that answer.

And I think on the flip side interviews that have gone the best are the ones where I just leaned into it and let people do their thing. I was in Iceland in the north and this woman was really really shy and really shy. And she kept speaking in Icelandic to the other guys in the room to ask them a question and had to come back and think about it and answer so there are these wonderful moments where she is turning aside speaking Icelandic and then okay so what's going on is and I fadeout the Icelandic and bring the English back and but I was surprised when I went to edit it because I kept my microphone nice and close to her, it didn't matter that she was quiet or shy, I edited it and made her such a relatable figure and her voice was so, people ended up loving that episode because her voice was really sweet and nice and it was very intimate. She wasn't shouting.

>>DAN YAEGER: I know you will get into editing next time but as you are interviewing, are you thinking to yourself, I can edit this in a way that will be better than what it is now? Or are there some things you just know you cannot edit out and you have to start over again?

>>HANNAH HETHMON: One thing I did not cover is sometimes people will trail off and you know that they are doing great and this is so good and then they trail off and there is no ending to this. I cannot edit this so I'd like to, can you say that in another way? Can you just say that again? Just we can get a different maybe tell me about that again I want to maybe. Feel free to tell people to say that again. I'd like to hear that again so we make sure we really got that subject. Tell me that story again let's, give me that again just one more take and then they might do it again because if you don't have an ending, you don't have an ending. If I hear that people are trailing off and I'm at the point where the interview is just kind of over, then I will say what's the big takeaway here? We have a Ted talk and you have 10 seconds to give a 10 second Ted talk on this topic to the whole world, what do you want to say?

How do you sum up the importance of everything in two lines and some people say oh. And I say just take your time. You see the importance is and they come back with this pithy line, so I think it's don't be afraid to ask people to give you an ending or to go back and finish their thought.

>>DAN YAEGER: Some of the questions in our chat look as though they have to do a bit with the pandemic and I guess the question is what do you anticipate in live interviewing people again? Are there going to be things that you can literally put on your microphone or sanitize the mic to make people feel more comfortable? Do you think you'll be distancing a bit? What do you think your approach will be as you come out of this?

>>HANNAH HETHMON: I don't know [LAUGHING] I think it's so easy to do remote recording it is honestly so much easier than in person recording with the equipment that I'm going to keep doing remote recording until everyone feels safe. With the microphone in their face and maybe sanitize it afterwards but yeah. One of the things is having a shotgun microphone will allow you to be farther back but get that nice upfront intimate sound. With the recorder you might have to be here. With a shotgun mic you can be farther away but I've no idea. [LAUGHING].

>>DAN YAEGER: Do you ever offer honoraria to any of your interview subjects or is that something that is completely out of the equation?

>>HANNAH HETHMON: I think that is I think that is absolutely in the equation. Whenever you can pay your contributors, pay your contributors whatever you can come up with whether it is a fee for their time or you ask them what their fee is. For me I'm often I'm working with the museum the museum is paying me so the honorarium is between them and I encourage them to do that so I guess I didn't think of it because I'm not often paying people but I do try to when it was in my power to also pay people for their contributions. I know that you can't always. I think if you're asking someone to do an interview it's not the kind of thing that always like you must be paid for if you are asking them to work on the podcast absolutely they should be paid for it so I think it's okay to ask someone to speak on the podcast for free especially if you're going to promote them but it's totally valid for them to ask and if you are at all possible to get them compensation for their time you should.

>>DAN YAEGER: Sort of like doing the book review book promotion thing versus getting someone to do actual content and their expertise there is

a difference. You helping that person versus whatever. One question is how do you keep the podcast from sounding staged and make sure it's natural sounding? I know you said make it, script it like it is a conversation but are there any tips that you can offer that kind of keep it natural and flowing?

>>HANNAH HETHMON: I think in terms of the script again reading it out loud and practicing like that and if you are the kind of person who just cannot read from a script but you are really good to speak give yourself some pointers and speak for five minutes and then chop out some lines to turn it into your introduction. That's okay to do that if it's your plan, you don't have to have a script. I'm working on a project right now where it's going to have two pretty well-known cohosts and neither of them really like to write things they want to talk so we are going to give them bullet point and let them talk and I'm going to edit it down so we will have cleaned up narrative between dialogue but it will sound natural and they will be able to do their thing but without it being a conversation that never ends and in terms of the interviews, warm up your guests. Chat with them ahead of time, let them know this is informal we are just going to chat. You can stop and start, here's who you are talking to. We really just want to have a conversation and then ask questions that inspire their passion. Why does this matter? Why should we care about this? What would happen if this were lost? This gets them feeling excited and it stops them from being like sometimes you are chatting with someone beforehand and they are all passionate and excited and then you put the mic in front of them and they are our organization was founded in 1901 and you are like where was the story? So just keep pushing them, asking questions that draw that out and be like you were telling me a pretty good story in the beginning can we come back to that? Or tell a joke, lighten up the mood whatever you can do if appropriate in the subject matter. That helps it feel natural but also I think it's okay for podcasts to be a little corny. To be a little staged I think people are used to that. I love the podcast By the Book by Kristen Meinzer and Jolenta - I forget her name - but it's like so, Jo, how is it going? Well Kristin this is what I did this week and it's corny but it feels fun and authentically them and they kind of lean into the silliness of that. We all know it is scripted but yeah. It's okay to be corny in podcasts.

>>DAN YAEGER: Our time is up unfortunately but Hannah once again thanks so much for sharing your wisdom. It was fantastic being with you again. Everyone out there listening today thank you for attending today's program. If you enjoyed the program then please do us a favor and share it with your network. We really appreciate your participation and hope to see you again in future programs. After each module all four videos will be

available on our website as well as a complete toolkit of resources provided by our presenters. Stay tuned to museum-hub.org for more information on upcoming events and please join us next week for our tech workshop number three as Hannah leads us through podcasting editing and production. We will see you then. Take care.

[End of program]