

## Access to Audograph Discs: Recovering Voices of Medical History

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### What is the project?

#### Abstract

The McGovern Historical Center (MHC) of the Texas Medical Center Library proposes a project to digitize, describe, preserve, and post online historical audio recordings from the Library's archival collections. All ninety-two Audograph dictation discs that have been identified within the MHC holdings will be sent for digitization to a vendor with expertise in the grooved media format. The items date between 1949-1962 (some undated) and come from the three prominent collections: MS 007 Hilde Bruch, MD papers; MS 026 Lee D. Cady, MD papers; and MS 076 Philip S. Hench, MD papers. All creators were leaders in their fields. In turn, their archives showcase our collection strengths in psychiatry (Bruch), rheumatology (Hench), and Houston medicine (Cady). Dr. Bruch's collection was one of the MHC's most-researched in Fiscal Year 2023; Dr. Hench is one of the two Nobel Prize winners whose archives are housed at the MHC; and Dr. Cady's collection offers decades of insights into Houston's Veterans Administration Hospital.

#### The Collections

Hilde Bruch, MD specialized in psychiatry at Baylor College of Medicine from 1964-1984. Born in Dulken, Germany, she received her American medical license in 1935 and, in 1937, began research on childhood obesity. Written in simple language in 1978, her seminal work, *The Golden Cage: The Enigma of Anorexia Nervosa*, is still influential today. It is considered the impetus of greater public awareness of the disorder. [<https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.22782>]. The Hilde Bruch, MD papers (MS 007) offer important insights into psychiatric trends in the second half of the twentieth century, particularly into the treatment of psycho-social illness. They also detail in the life history of an individual, the personal and cultural crises precipitated by exile from Nazi Germany, and the struggle of women for greater participation in science and medicine—both significant phenomena in the history of this century. Her papers include correspondence from colleagues as well as hundreds of letters from lay persons acquainted with Dr. Bruch's work on eating disorders. The collection contains eight Audograph dictation discs with cryptic alphanumeric labels. Perhaps, the recordings are early thoughts or drafts of these letters.

Lee D. Cady, MD, was the director of the Veterans' Administration Hospitals in Dallas and Houston between 1946-1963, and the collection deals mainly with his tenure at the Veterans Administration. The collection contains forty-two Audograph dictation discs that document chaplains' conferences, telephone conversations, and teleconferences. The two conferences for chaplains, held in 1956 and

1957, comprise many of these discs. These rare recordings, documenting the intersection of medicine and religion in mid-century America, seem especially promising for research. Typed transcripts are available for many of these discs and will be digitized in-house as part of this project. The Lee D. Cady V.A. Photograph Collection (MS 217) is a companion collection where select materials may be digitized in-house to enhance the project further.

Philip S. Hench, MD was awarded the Nobel Prize for physiology and medicine jointly with biochemists Dr. Edward C. Kendall and Professor Tadeus Reichstein. He is one of two Nobel-prize winners whose legacies are preserved in the MHC archival collections. Some audio from this collection has already been digitized, including phonograph recordings of speeches from the 1949 American Rheumatism Association, the 1950 Nobel Prize ceremony, and media appearances by Drs. Hench and Kendall discussing their discoveries. These audio recordings, as well as photographs from the collection, have been provided to filmmakers for the [Mayo Clinic Heritage Films](#) series, and they have expressed a desire for more materials. While the content of the Audograph discs is uncertain, there is some suggestion that they may feature correspondence, and possibly Dr. Hench's responses to manuscripts by other researchers.

Indeed, across these collections, the content is largely unknown. Some discs have descriptive labels that provide insight into the content. Some even have transcripts. However, the majority have scant or no label descriptions at all. Broadly, we have some indication that we're likely to find speeches and correspondence in these recordings. Based on the specialties of the creators, we anticipate topics related to psychiatry, rheumatology, chaplaincy, and Veterans Hospital Administration beginning around 1946 and spanning into the 1960s. Other content may include anything from informal notes-to-self to formal dictated letters intended to be typed and sent. The unique, intimate nature of dictation—one's voice recorded for the purpose of another ear to hear in the future—is a perspective rarely preserved.

## Background

The McGovern Historical Research Center preserves and provides access to the historical collections and rare materials of the Texas Medical Center's institutions, faculty, and staff, so that the TMC institutions and other constituencies may benefit from the Center's collections that contribute to healthcare, health policy, research and education throughout the world. The MHC has notable rare book and archival collections on the history of the TMC, foundations of medicine, rheumatology, public health, psychiatry, and the effects of radiation. The most prominent collections include the records of the Texas Medical Center and the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission, as well as photographs from *Medical World News*.

The MHC has an established process for identifying and caring for audiovisual resources. During archival processing, the MHC identifies and describes videotapes, films, cassette tapes, and other audiovisual items, noting their media formats. Materials are routinely rehoused based on their format to support their physical preservation. Grooved media, like Audograph discs, are considered more stable and less prone to deterioration; however, due to the obsolescence of playback equipment, the content is inaccessible and at-risk. For this project, the MHC is proposing to digitize all ninety-two Audograph discs identified in archival collections.

In 2021, the SCAMEL Speedy Startup funded the Texas Medical Center Historical Audiovisual Resources Digitization project, making digital files and descriptions of over fifty audiovisual items on the MHC collections site (<https://archives.library.tmc.edu/>). In addition to utilizing the same successful workflow from 2021, this project will incorporate recent experience using AI-based transcription tools to process small oral history collections. AI-based transcription tools save time and will allow us to process all ninety-two digital assets within the allotted year for the project.

The MHC does not currently have the capacity to digitize Audograph discs. Digitizing Audograph discs requires a suite of sophisticated equipment (turntables and stylus) to play the soft, vinyl discs without damaging the material as well as the expertise of sound engineers to perform speed correction in post-processing to account for the variable speeds innate in the format. The vendors being considered for the project have the equipment and expertise to create preservation-quality audio files.

Following digital conversion, the TMC Library has the resources to support ongoing digital preservation of these important assets. MHC archivists collaborate with the Library's Information Technology (IT) team to ensure appropriate standards for long-term maintenance of digitized and born digital archival materials.

#### Items selected for digitization:

Ninety-two Audograph discs have been identified for digitization using the SCAMEL Speedy Startup funds. Audograph discs were a dictation machine format used from mid-1940s into the 1970s. See attached list of all items selected for digitization. Below is a summary of the MHC's holdings of Audograph dictation discs for potential digitization by collection, disc size, and other characteristics. This information has been shared with potential vendors to refine project plans and estimated costs.

Collection	MS 007 Hilde Bruch	MS 026 Lee Cady	MS 076 Philip Hench	Totals
Total discs	8	42	42	92
8.5" discs	8	-	23	31
6.5" discs	-	12	-	12
6" discs	-	30	19	49
One-sided discs	3	4	13	20
Discs with evidence of paper clip	0	24	27	51
Notes:	<p>Most of the discs have some dust and light scratches, but are probably in "average" to "above average" condition for this format. A little more than half of them have some evidence of paper clips having once been affixed. In all but a handful of cases, I would describe the impression/damage as "mild."</p> <p>Several of the 8.5" discs from Hilde Bruch's collection appear about as pristine as could be expected for this format. However, 3-4 of them have some sort of spots along the outer rim. About 10 discs have grease pencil markings on them.</p>			

## **Why is it important (what is the benefit)?**

Audograph dictation discs have been identified as a preservation priority for two major reasons. One, obsolescence of playback equipment makes the content inaccessible and at-risk. Two, the importance of the creators associated with the discs make them an excellent resource for research. These are primary sources—presumably featuring their own voices—that have, until now, been unavailable and untapped. The growth of audio, video, and web-based channels for disseminating research (e.g., podcasts, documentaries, social media, etc.) has also made audiovisual content such as this especially valuable to researchers and creators.

These resources are likely to be of interest to researchers in medical history, psychiatry, rheumatology, religion, veteran's experiences, and Houston and Texas history, among other areas. Through promotion of these resources, the McGovern Historical Center can raise its own profile while also highlighting the contributions of these individuals and the institutions they served.

## **What institution(s) is involved?**

The TMC Library will carry out this project, in cooperation with the selected professional digitization vendors. We have already solicited proposals from five digitization vendors who specialize in audio digitization and grooved media. From these we have selected two preferred vendors: MediaPreserve and Preserve South. While a final decision will be based on available funding, we favor MediaPreserve. They submitted a thorough proposal outlining their workflow clearly and included item costs up-front, such as cleaning and metadata creation. While the project total from MediaPreserve exceeds \$5000, it appears the most accurate. The TMC Library is dedicated to digitizing all ninety-two items and making them accessible online, and it is willing to cover expenses beyond the funds provided through the SCAMeL Speedy Startup if necessary.

## **Who will carry out the project and what are their roles?**

This project will be led by professional staff at the McGovern Historical Center of the TMC Library. A professional digitization vendor or vendors will carry out the digital conversion. Archivists at the MHC have already identified priority audiovisual resources for digitization. Archivists will select the vendor(s), verify selections, and pack and ship materials to the vendor. In order to save money, the MHC will also provide the external hard drive(s) for transfer of the newly created digital files. Archivists will work with the vendor to specify preservation standards for digital conversion. The vendor will evaluate the physical items for preservation or conversion concerns, digitize the audiovisual resources according to agreed-upon standards, create technical metadata, and return the originals along with the hard drives with digital files. The two parties will communicate to resolve any issues as they arise.

Once the digital files are returned, MHC staff will review them for quality control and check the technical metadata to ensure standards were met. They will also be responsible for the creation of descriptive metadata. In addition, they will upload the files to the Library's Amazon S3 site and facilitate access by uploading the descriptive metadata and links on the MHC's collections site. MHC archivists will also upload the master files to their preservation storage system, and work with IT to ensure their ongoing digital preservation.

To raise awareness and encourage research around these materials, the MHC will undertake a promotional campaign advertising their digitization and availability. This will include broad measures as a press release, blog and social media posts, as well as targeted outreach to key constituencies. For example, targeted outreach would include notifying the hospitals and medical schools where these figures were active.

## **What is the timeline?**

It is anticipated that the project could easily be completed within the year, with most of the work occurring in the first seven months following a potential award.

MHC already has reviewed five vendor proposals and made a shortlist of two, so a final selection will be made soon after the award announcement. Likewise, since the items to be digitized have already been identified, the process of retrieval, packing, and shipping should be relatively quick. Digitization will depend on vendor schedules, but three months offers a reasonable estimate for this process. Once the digital copies are delivered to the MHC, descriptive metadata creation and upload of audio files should be possible within a similar three-month timeframe using AI-based transcription tools. These estimates leave the remainder of the grant period for promotion and outreach.

- Months 1-2 April-May
  - Select vendor(s) and communicate regarding specifications, costs, and timeline
  - Identify, retrieve, pack, and ship materials
  - Digitize existing typed transcripts
- Months 3-5 June-August
  - Digitization and technical metadata creation at the vendor
  - Return of materials and hard drives with digital content to archives
- Months 6-8 September-November
  - Transfer to preservation and access file locations
  - Create initial transcripts and summaries using AI-Transcription Service
  - Edit transcripts and summaries
  - Create descriptive metadata
  - Publish online
- Months 9-12 December 2024-March 2025

- Promote newly available resources
- Submit project report to SCAMeL

### How much money do I need for the project (budget)

MHC archivists estimate that the project will require \$5,940 in SCAMeL Speedy Startup funds. The breakdown of funds includes:

- \$5,520 to digitize 92 Audograph discs, creating preservation-quality files with accurate speed correction (\$60 per asset)
- \$300 for shipping to and from the vendor
- \$120 for one annual subscription to Otter.ai, AI-based Transcription service

Again, the TMC Library is dedicated to digitizing all ninety-two items and making them accessible online, and it is willing to cover shipping, transcription service, and other expenses beyond the funds provided through the SCAMeL Speedy Startup if necessary.



2/27/2024

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Katie Prentice  
Executive Director, TMC Library

Date

Or

A letter of support from the Director / An email from the Director

Email your application to the Chair of the SCAMeL Research Committee:  
Melissa Rethlefsen, [mrethlefsen@salud.unm.edu](mailto:mrethlefsen@salud.unm.edu)

Deadline for Submission: *Tuesday, February 29, 2024*

Project Deadline: *Friday, March 29, 2025*

Report Deadline: *Tuesday, April 30, 2025*

## List of Items

Below is the list of audograph discs set for digitization. Items will be adjusted as they are prepared for shipping.

Collection	identifier	title	Date
MS 007 Hilde Bruch, MD papers	AVA.MS007.001	Dictation record. 1B	undated
MS 007 Hilde Bruch, MD papers	AVA.MS007.002	Dictation record. 2B Self [Syndrome?]	undated
MS 007 Hilde Bruch, MD papers	AVA.MS007.003	Dictation record. 3B	undated
MS 007 Hilde Bruch, MD papers	AVA.MS007.004	Dictation record. 1G	undated
MS 007 Hilde Bruch, MD papers	AVA.MS007.005	Dictation record. 3G	undated
MS 007 Hilde Bruch, MD papers	AVA.MS007.006	Dictation record. 1R	undated
MS 007 Hilde Bruch, MD papers	AVA.MS007.007	Dictation record. R3	undated
MS 007 Hilde Bruch, MD papers	AVA.MS007.008	Dictation record. 4R	undated
MS 026 Lee D. Cady, MD papers	AVA.MS026.003a-b	Audograph record. [Teleconference] Dr. Fellows, Mr. Hood and Chaplain [McDonough] [VACo], Dr. Cady; Conference for Chaplains, January 14, 1957 (2 Records)	Jan. 14, 1957
MS 026 Lee D. Cady, MD papers	AVA.MS026.004a-g	Audograph record. Second Conference for Chaplains, American Legion, Chaplaincy Service, February 12, 1957 (7 Records)	1957
MS 026 Lee D. Cady, MD papers	AVA.MS026.005a-j	Audograph record. Second meeting, American Legion Committee meeting; [transcribed]; Conference for Chaplains (10 Records)	January 5 1957
MS 026 Lee D. Cady, MD papers	AVA.MS026.006a-b	Audograph record. Chaplains Conference (2 Records)	circa 1956
MS 026 Lee D. Cady, MD papers	AVA.MS026.007a-d	Audograph record. Chaplain [Mc]Donough and [MR. N.]; Conference for Chaplains (4 Records)	Jan. 8, 1957
MS 026 Lee D. Cady, MD papers	AVA.MS026.008a-d	Audograph record. Mr. Don Peters, Mr. [Bliden], Dr. Cady, Mr. [Vick], Dr. Westphal. Conference for Chaplains (4 Records)	19-Dec-56
MS 026 Lee D. Cady, MD papers	AVA.MS026.009a-d	Audograph record. Finished, 1st [Conference], undated (4 Records)	circa 1952
MS 026 Lee D. Cady, MD papers	AVA.MS026.010a-e	Audograph record. Completed 2nd [Conference] for Chaplains (5 Records)	circa 1956
MS 026 Lee D. Cady, MD papers	AVA.MS026.011a-b	Telephone conversation Dr. Cady and Dr. Freer, Central Office, January 19, 1949 (2 Records)	1949

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MS 026 Lee D. Cady, MD papers	AVA.MS026.012a-b	Telephone conversation Dr. Cady and Dr. Freer, Central Office, January 27, 1949 (2 Records)	1949
MS 076 Philip S. Hench, MD papers	AVA.MS076.011-.019	Records of the seminars on rheumatic disease, spring 1962, including PSH on axioms and psychogenic RA – 9 Audographs	1962
MS 076 Philip S. Hench, MD papers	AVA.MS076.020-.022	Medical Notes Series (from folder titled "Manuscripts by other for review by PSH") (includes Audograph dictation slips noting subject "Denko" discs 1-3 and slides)	c. 1950s
MS 076 Philip S. Hench, MD papers	AVA.MS076.023	In 1950s Correspondence (includes handwritten note)	c. 1950s
MS 076 Philip S. Hench, MD papers	AVA.MS076.024	Unidentified. [Audograph Dictation Discs]	c. 1950
MS 076 Philip S. Hench, MD papers	AVA.MS076.025-.028	unidentified. [audograph dictation discs] (includes strips. discs are in original order labelled with oil pencil)	c. 1950s - 1960s
MS 076 Philip S. Hench, MD papers	AVA.MS076.029-.035	unidentified. [Audograph Dictation Discs (7)]	c. 1950s
MS 076 Philip S. Hench, MD papers	AVA.MS076.036-.048	Unidentified. [Audographs. Correspondence folders and dictation discs (13)] (Discs removed from correspondence folder and rehoused and numbered in original order from left pocket to right pocket of correspondence folder.)	c. 1950s
MS 076 Philip S. Hench, MD papers	AVA.MS076.049	Audograph. Recording of the Man Who Dreamed of and Predicted the San Francisco Earthquake.	c. 1959
MS 076 Philip S. Hench, MD papers	AVA.MS076.050.a-b	Yellow Jack the movie (included inter-clinic routing envelop, Mayo Clinic)	1960



SCAMeL Research Committee  
c/o UNT Health Science Center at Fort Worth  
Gibson D Lewis Health Science Library  
3500 Camp Bowie Boulevard  
Fort Worth, TX 76107

February 27, 2024

Dear SCAMeL Research Committee,

It is with pleasure that I send this letter supporting the Speedy Startup Proposal: *Access to Audograph Discs: Recovering Voices of Medical History* from the TMC Library's McGovern Historical Center team.

The project proposed by the McGovern Historical Center of the TMC Library seeks to digitize, preserve, and share ninety-two Audograph dictation discs from our archival collections that otherwise are inaccessible to a wider audience due to the rare physical format. The digitized items will be of value to researchers, both locally and regionally. These three collections of recordings have been selected because of the scarcity of playback equipment and the variety of content covered. As you will read in the proposal, these are primary source materials that will become available to researchers and creators with SCAMeL's support. The content will include medical history, psychiatry, rheumatology, religion, veteran's experiences, and Houston and Texas history – a treasure trove of content.

Thank you for consideration of our proposal.

Sincerely,



Katie Prentice, MSIS, AHIP  
Executive Director, The TMC Library  
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