

# Saving Your Union's Records and History: A Handbook



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***The records of unions, activists and related organizations are the critical raw material for historians, museums, researchers and students. They are an asset that documents the history of our movement and the achievement of collective rights for workers.***

***Whether you have a box of old records or a closet overflowing with boxes your organization's history is important and needs to be preserved.***

- Appendix A (Guidelines on what Organizational Records Merit Archival Retention, Labor Archives of Washington, University of Washington Special Collections)
- Appendix B (Resource Guide for Digital Conversion/Media Reformatting Companies)
- Appendix C (Sample Index or Finding Aid)
- Appendix D – Standards for digitizing documents.
- Appendix E – Major archives in BC with labour holdings

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## **Make a Plan**

- Union “records” are primarily paper documents, photographs, audio and video recordings, buttons, signs, posters and digital files created by the union in the course of doing business, implementing programs and policies, and representing the membership.
- Union records that have long-term administrative and historical value should be kept permanently.
- The records of a union are the property of the union and they have the authority to determine their overall policies and procedures. Long after the records are no longer used for administration, they have value. They demonstrate pride in your union’s past .
- Union records also become a source of research by a new type of user: scholars, genealogy or legal researchers may find union records of value.

## **Get Organized**

- The first step may be to locate historic records. Former executives may have stored items in locations you are not expecting!
- Order any supplies you may need to preserve your records and prevent future damage or degradation.

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## Setting Up a Records System

- A filing system makes it quick and easy to retrieve information.
- Stick to the system you create.
- Purge records based on a pre-set schedule
  - File by:
  - Subject
  - Date
  - Numerical code
- Keep non-current records separate from active records
- Keep non-current records in a secure, non-destructive physical environment
- Electronic documents are also records, and you should regularly purge, archive or destroy electronic records. The filing system of electronic records should mimic the paper files. Make sure electronic records are backed up regularly and keep a back-up copy in a different physical location.

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## **Cleaning Out Your Records**

Making decisions about what to keep and what to dispose of is often the hardest part!

First things first: do a quick scan through your records to see what you have.

Discard:

- Out-of-date office equipment manuals and instructions.
- Obsolete unrelated serial publications (e.g. directories).
- Duplicates of forms and procedures.
- More than two copies of affiliate publications.
- Flyers and newsletter of unrelated organizations.
- Old magazine and newspaper clippings that are available elsewhere.
- poor quality photos with little or no information
- scrap paper or scribbled notes with no context
- Picture frames – discard the frame but keep the contents

The following retention schedule is useful whether you are setting up a new filing system or purging old records from an existing one.

## Suggested Retention Schedule for Union Records

	Record Category	Retention Period
<b>Administration</b>		
	Executive Board Meeting Minutes	Permanent
	Membership Meeting Minutes	Permanent
	Committee/Other Minutes	Permanent
	Reports to meetings (file with minutes)	Permanent
	Constitution and By-laws	Permanent
	Regulatory Compliance Filings & Reports	Permanent
<b>Correspondence</b>		
	Correspondence – Outgoing (includes circular letters)	Permanent
	Correspondence – Incoming	Permanent
	Internal Memos and Reports	Permanent
<b>Programs</b>		
	Education/Training	Permanent
	Political Action	Permanent
	Organizing	Permanent
	Pensioners/Retiree Groups	Permanent
	Sports Program	Permanent
	Membership Services	Permanent
<b>Officers Files</b>		
	Officers' Employment/Personnel Files	Permanent
	Officers' Office Files	Permanent
	Officers' Personal Files	Permanent
	Subject Files (Usually background information gathered from a variety of sources on programs, and activities. Careful thought should be given to their historical value prior to discarding.)	Discretionary
<b>Financial Records</b>		
	Cancelled cheques, receipts, invoices	7 years
	Statements, Audits, Ledgers	Permanent
<b>Contract Administration</b>		
	Collective Agreements, Memorandum of Understanding	Permanent
	Grievance Files and Notes	Permanent
	Negotiations Files and Notes	Permanent
<b>Events Documentation</b>		
	Photographs	Permanent
	Audio-visual recordings and films	Permanent
	Program artifacts (buttons, placards, signs)	Permanent
	Publicity/news about the union	Permanent
<b>Election Records</b>		
	Ballots & voters lists	3 years
	Balloting Committee Reports & Election Procedures	Permanent

Employer Records		
	Leaves of Absence	7 years
	Employee/Seniority Lists	Permanent
	Job Descriptions	Permanent
	Employer Handbooks	Permanent
Stewards' Files		Permanent
Membership Records		Permanent
	Dues receipts	Permanent
Publications		Permanent
	Newsletters	Permanent
	Flyers, leaflets, pamphlets	Permanent
Personnel Files (keep secure and confidential)		Permanent

Source: Keeping Track of Office Files, by Eugene D Vrana, ILWU Director of Educational Services

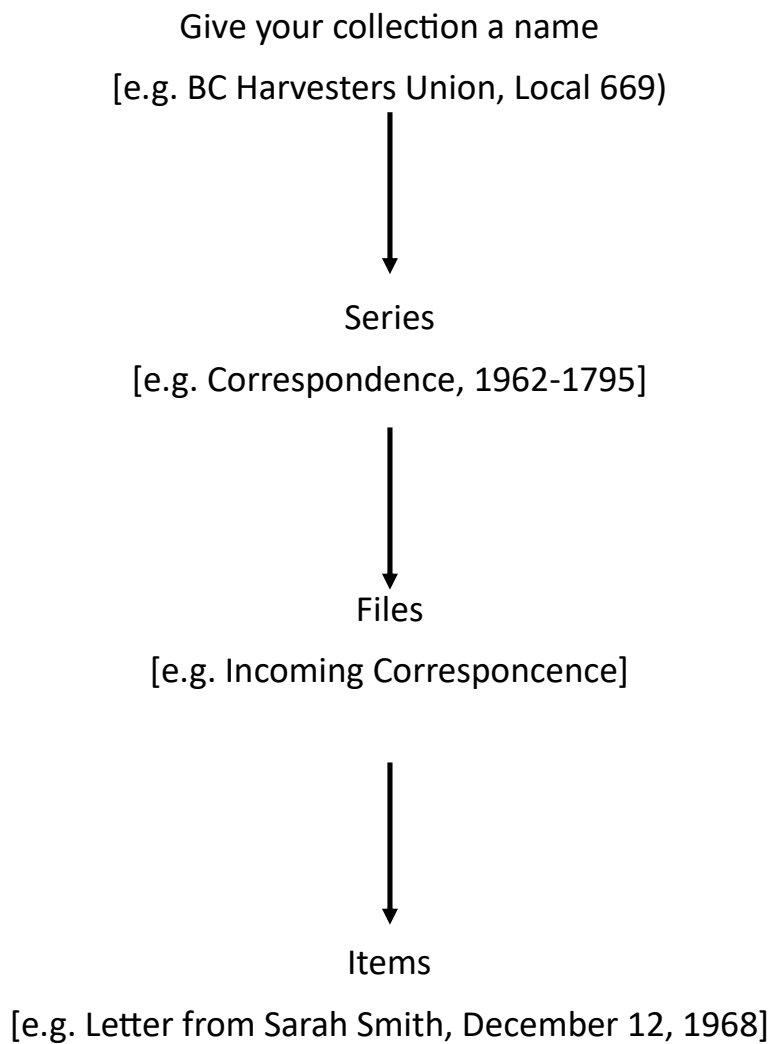
**See also: Appendix A**

(Guidelines on what Organizational Records Merit Archival Retention)

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Many archivists suggest keeping records in their original order, but that may not be logical if they were never organized in the first place!

A suggested organizational “tree” is:





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## **Make an index**

Go through your collection item by item and describe what you have. This will become your index or “finding aid” to the collection. Start with a general description and then become more specific. It is up to you to decide how descriptive you wish to be.

**See Appendix C for a sample index or “Finding Aid”**

## **Best practices for different kinds of records**

### **Textual records:**

- Check for mold or mildew
- Remove any loose surface dirt
- Remove all paper clips, staples, pins, bands or ties and replace with rubber-coated paperclips
- Remove materials from envelopes (paperclip envelope to materials if it provides context or source information otherwise dispose of envelope)
- Do not use post-it notes
- Photocopy any items that are on old thermal or fax paper, original newspaper articles.
- Place records in acid-free file folders.
- Label each file folder in pencil with a number (e.g. File 1, File 2)
- Place file folders in an acid-free Hollinger file box
- Store in a cool, dark place

## Books

- Store upright or if oversized store flat
- If fragile, store in fitted boxes

## Scrapbooks

- Look for bindings that are deteriorating, use cotton tape to repair
- If contents are on newspaper or thermal paper, photocopy
- Wrap in acid-free tissue paper and store flat in a box or on a shelf
- Always wear gloves

## Photographs

- Write an item number in pencil on the back of each photo and on the envelope or sleeve
- Store the photo envelopes or sleeves in a filing cabinet or Hollinger box
- Use gloves when handling negatives and photos.
- Best practice is to remove photographs from albums and place each photographic image individually in an acid-free envelope or plastic sleeve. Polyester, polyethylene or polypropylene plastics are safe for storage.
- If removing the photo may cause damage or if an album contains contextual information (captions or notations) do not attempt to remove. Instead interleave pieces of acid-free paper between pages.
- Negatives should also be stored in this manner. Be aware that some very old negatives may be nitrate and are highly flammable and dangerous.





Picket signs, newspapers, maps, flags, banners and posters and other large items should be numbered in pencil or with a tag and entered on your inventory sheet

Depending on the size and material, they can be rolled or stored flat in appropriate containers. Do not fold.

## Sound and Moving Images (Tapes, Videos)

Make digital copies; keep the originals if you have space

Store digital files in several places to avoid loss.

Keep 3 copies: one master, one back-up, one off-site (in the cloud or physical).



## Buttons and Pins

Buttons and pins should be placed individually in archival specimen bags. You may need to purchase different size bags depending on your collection

Cut pieces of paper or cardstock to fit the bag and give it stability. You can write an item number in pencil on the card.

Store the bagged pins in a larger archival box



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## Stickers, Decals

Bumper stickers and decals often are made of vinyl which emit gases as they age and so should be stored separately from paper items or photos

Store in standard acid-free folders with a sheet of paper between each



## T Shirts, Caps, bulky items

Roll t-shirts in tissue paper; larger items such as hats,



## Basic Supplies:

- Acid-free archival file folders (legal or letter size, 100 per box)
- Acid-free document boxes (standard size is 15 ¼" wide x 10 ¼" high x 5" deep) but are available in many other sizes
- Photograph storage sleeves
- Gloves
- Pencils (2B or graphite) and erasers
- Rubber-coated paper clips
- Acid-free tissue paper
- Document repair tape
- Soft brushes for cleaning documents



## Canadian Suppliers:

Carr McLean <https://www.carrmclean.ca>

Brodart <http://www.brodart.ca>

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## **Decide what to do with your records**

Your union's records can be kept by your organization or donated to a larger institution who can provide access to the public.

We are here to help! Give us a call if you want advice on preserving your union's records.

# Appendix A



## UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

Special Collections

### GUIDELINES ON WHAT ORGANIZATIONAL RECORDS MERIT ARCHIVAL RETENTION

The Special Collections often gets questions about the kinds of records are worthy of archival status. The answer varies, depending on the program of the organization and its record keeping. The classes of records usually important for documenting labor union history are in **bold** below. Please consult with the Labor Archivist if you have questions.

#### What to retain:

- **Agendas**
- **Agreements**
- **Annual reports**
- **Articles of incorporation**
- Artwork
- **By-laws**
- **Buttons**
- Charters
- **Committee files**
- **Conference/Convention programs**
- **Contracts (Drafts, Final, Printed in Booklet Form)**
- **Correspondence**
- Directories/Rosters/Yearbooks
- Documents pertaining to legislative activity or lobbying
- Flyers
- **Grievances**
- Maps
- **Meeting minutes**
- **Memoranda of Understanding**
- **Newsletters**
- **Interviews**
- **Issues files which reflect your organization's work**
- Job descriptions of major staff
- **Officer's files (please identify name of officer and position held)**
- Organizational flow charts
- **Photographic materials – photos, movies, negatives, albums, etc.**
- **Picket Signs**
- Policies
- **Political action files (Committee on Political Action or other committee)**
- Programs – from conferences or other events
- **Publications – ranging from books produced by organization to brochures**
- **Research files on particular actions, negotiations, campaigns, or targets**
- **Reports – annual, financial, committee, etc.**
- **Posters**
- Programs from events
- Resolutions
- Scrapbooks
- **Speeches – audio and transcript**
- **Testimony**

#### Items NOT of interest:

- Cancelled checks
- Financial transaction records
- Job applications
- Personnel files
- Planning files for events
- Financial files
- Tax returns

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## Appendix B

### Resource Guide for Digital Conversion/Media Reformatting Companies (March 1, 2018)

#### British Columbia Companies

Name	Website / Contact details
A++ Digital Video Services	<a href="http://www.clickthedrive.com">http://www.clickthedrive.com</a>  #125 — 1555 East 1st Avenue, Vancouver phone: 604-618-9510
CloseUp Video	<a href="http://www.closeupvideo.ca">http://www.closeupvideo.ca</a>  239 St. Georges Avenue, North Vancouver, BC V7L 4T4 phone: 604-988-6100
Deena Media	<a href="http://www.deenamedia.ca/">http://www.deenamedia.ca/</a>  Unit 14 - 2949 Main Street, Vancouver, BC, V5T 3G4 phone: 604-336-0321
DiGiTaL Multimedia Store	<a href="https://www.digitalmultimediastore.com">https://www.digitalmultimediastore.com</a>  4761 Clinton Street, Burnaby, BC V5J 2L1 phone: 604-929-9279
Gary Barclay Audio Tape Preservation Transfer Services	<a href="http://garybarclay.ca/">http://garybarclay.ca/</a>  #417 — 245 East 3rd Street, North Vancouver phone: 604-682-5983
Innovative Audio  *sells/repairs "vintage" AV equipment	<a href="https://www.iavscanada.com/">https://www.iavscanada.com/</a>  Unit 204 – 13255 78th Avenue, Surrey, BC V3W 5B9 phone: 604-594-9575
Lifetime Heritage	<a href="https://www.lifetimeheritagefilms.com/">https://www.lifetimeheritagefilms.com/</a>  3419 Handley Crescent, Port Coquitlam, BC V3B 2Y4 phone: 604-961-4861
Media Button	<a href="https://mediabutton.com/">https://mediabutton.com/</a>  #1 - 31 E 5th Avenue, Vancouver, BC V5T 1G7 phone: 604-293-7778

**DISCLAIMER:** The Archives Association of British Columbia (AABC) is in no way endorsing the experience or prices of the Companies on this resource list and can take no responsibility for the quality of work that may be provided. It is the responsibility of every individual to check the credentials and expertise of any Company hired.



**Resource Guide for Digital Conversion/Media Reformatting Companies  
(March 1, 2018)**

Media Mart Vancouver	<a href="https://www.mediamart.ca/">https://www.mediamart.ca/</a>  2719 Ontario Street, Vancouver phone: 778-819-8400
Micro Com Systems	<a href="http://www.microcomsys.com">http://www.microcomsys.com</a>  8527 Eastlake Drive, Burnaby, BC V5A 4T7 phone: 604-872-6771
Mr. Edit Video	<a href="http://www.mreditvideo.com/">http://www.mreditvideo.com/</a>  161 Pemberton Avenue, North Vancouver phone: 604-988-5616
Sonrise Duplication	<a href="http://sonriseonline.com/">http://sonriseonline.com/</a>  #102 – 9770 196A Street, Langley, BC V1M 2X5 phone: 604-513-9125
Teamwork Media Television Incorporated	<a href="http://www.tmtv.net/">http://www.tmtv.net/</a>  Nelson, BC phone: 250-229-2209
The Lab	<a href="http://www.thelabvancouver.com/">http://www.thelabvancouver.com/</a>  295 East 2nd Avenue, Vancouver, BC V5T 1B8 phone: 604-876-1737
The Scan Lab	<a href="http://thescanlab.com/">http://thescanlab.com/</a>  <u>8230 West Saanich Road</u> , Victoria BC V8M 1S3
Transfer to Digital	<a href="http://www.transfertodigital.ca">http://www.transfertodigital.ca</a>  Kelowna: 778-699-3377 or Vancouver: 604-343-2776 Toll free: 1-800-832-0844
Triwest Audio-Visual Ltd.	<a href="http://www.triwestaudiovisual.com/film-transfer/">http://www.triwestaudiovisual.com/film-transfer/</a>  Unit 101 - 6147 Hastings Street, Burnaby, BC V5B 1R9 phone: 604-879-1551 toll free: 1-888-879-1551

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**Resource Guide for Digital Conversion/Media Reformatting Companies  
(March 1, 2018)**

Vivo Media Arts Centre	<a href="http://www.vivomediaarts.com/digitization-alternate/">http://www.vivomediaarts.com/digitization-alternate/</a>  2625 Kaslo St. Vancouver, BC V5M 3G9 phone: 604-872-8337
Western Front	<a href="https://front.bc.ca/western-front/">https://front.bc.ca/western-front/</a>  303 East 8th Avenue Vancouver BC V5T 1S1 Contact: Kristy Waller: <a href="mailto:archivist@front.bc.ca">archivist@front.bc.ca</a>

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## Appendix C - Sample Finding Aid

Patsy George Solidarity Collection  
BCLHC\_PG

An inventory of records held by BC Labour Heritage Centre

prepared by Donna Sacuta  
November 2018

Title: Patsy George Solidarity Collection

Dates: 1983-1984

Physical Description: 32 cm of textual records

Administrative History: Patsy George was a Social Worker employed by the Province of British Columbia who was fired as an outcome of the 1983 provincial budget and accompanying legislation. She was hired as a staff member of the Solidarity Coalition and attended meetings, rallies and events and organized on behalf of the Coalition.

Scope/Content: The collection consists of newspaper clippings and intact issues of newspapers and newsletters, contact lists, flyers, leaflets, research papers, legislation, briefs, speaking notes, press releases, personal notes, buttons, stickers, petitions, reports, agendas, minutes, correspondence and notes. 1 photograph. The collection was donated to the BC Labour Heritage Centre in 2018 as part of the 35-year retrospective project, Solidarity35. It is in the order originally donated, duplicate items were removed.

Title Source: Title based on the contents of the fonds.

Finding Aid: File list and inventory available

Names: Patsy George  
Solidarity Coalition  
Operation Solidarity

### BC Labour Heritage Centre Archives Patsy George Solidarity Collection: BCLHC\_PG

Box #	File #	Contents Description
1	1	Newspaper clippings from Vancouver Sun and Province, August-November 1983; two Issues of Solidarity Times, copy of Declaration of Rights of the People of British Columbia.
1	2	Contact lists; The Hospital Guardian Volume 3 Number 3 [November 1983]; research paper, notes for press conference, Solidarity Coalition Bulletin 1, press release Sikh Solidarity Coalition, [January 1984]
1	3	Flyers, leaflets, research paper, Priorities Vol. XI No. 4 [November 1983]; Social Work Perspectives Vol. 5, No. 5 [December 1983]; photocopied newspaper clippings, Canadian Ecumenical News Vol 8 No.4 [September-October 1983], copies of correspondence; BC Business Magazine [August 1983]
1	4	Research notes; Solidarity Coalition notes, reports, agenda, budget, minutes, contact lists, proposals, press releases and correspondence; BC Federation of Labour memoranda, press release; Victoria Solidarity [newspaper] Issue no. 2.
1	5	Newspaper clipping, copies of legislation, Ministry of Human Resources News Release
1	6	Province of British Columbia leaflet, Solidarity Coalition brief and correspondence
1	7	Solidarity Coalition press releases, correspondence, leaflets, proposals, workshop notes, lists; photocopies of newspaper articles, BC Federation of Labour Program of Action.
2	8	Solidarity Coalition flyers, notes, correspondence, research notes, newspaper clippings, minutes, bulletins; BC Federation of Labour news releases
2	9	Speaking notes, press releases, correspondence and research notes from BC Association of Social Workers, Independent Canadian Transit Union, Consumers Association of Canada, BC Teachers' Federation, BC Federation of Labour, Operation Solidarity and Solidarity Coalition, Native Court worker and Counselling Association of British Columbia, BC Civil Liberties Association.
2	10	Stenographer's Notebooks [September 1, 1983-September 20, 1983]; [September 21, 1983 - November 4, 1983]; [November 7, 1983-December 7, 1983] containing handwritten notes and business cards.
2	11	Solidarity Coalition and Operation Solidarity red and white pins/buttons.
3	12	Signed petitions
3	13	Newspaper clippings, 1983
3	14	Newspaper clippings, 1983
3	15	Solidarity Coalition leaflets

## Appendix D

<b>Bit depth</b>	24 bit RGB colour or 8 bit grayscale	24 bit RGB colour or 8 bit grayscale	24 bit RGB colour or 8 bit grayscale	24 bit RGB colour or 8 bit grayscale
<b>Dimensions</b>	6000 – 8000 pixels across the long edge	6000 pixels across the long edge	800 pixels across the long edge	200 pixels across the long edge
<b>Compression</b>	Uncompressed	Lossless compression	Lossless compression	Lossless compression

## Maps

	<b>Preservation and Access Master</b>	<b>Print Access</b>	<b>Screen Access</b>	<b>Thumbnail</b>
<b>File format</b>	TIFF	JPEG or PNG	JPEG or PNG	JPEG or PNG
<b>Resolution</b>	Less than 36 inches on the long edge: 600 dpi Greater than 36 inches on the long edge: 300 – 400 dpi	Less than 36 inches on the long edge: 300 dpi Greater than 36 inches on the long edge: 150 dpi	150 dpi	150 dpi
<b>Bit depth</b>	24 bit RGB colour or 8 bit grayscale	24 bit RGB colour or 8 bit grayscale	24 bit RGB colour or 8 bit grayscale	24 bit RGB colour or 8 bit grayscale
<b>Dimensions</b>	6000 – 8000 pixels across the long edge	6000 pixels across the long edge	1078 pixels across the long edge	200 pixels across the long edge
<b>Compression</b>	Uncompressed	Lossless compression	Lossless compression	Lossless compression

## Audio recordings

	<b>Preservation and Access Master</b>	<b>Screen Access</b>
<b>File Format</b>	WAV, BWF or AIF (Apple)	MP3
<b>Sample Rate</b>	Spoken language: 44.1 kHz Music and ambient sounds: 96 kHz	44.1 kHz
<b>Bit Depth</b>	24 bit	16 bit
<b>Comments</b>	Highest recommended current quality, Standard for DVD/HD audio, Requires conversion to 16 bit and 44.1 kHz for most consumer audio devices	Lowest frequency range acceptable, Maximizes storage space, May not provide sufficient quality for future formats

## Video recordings

	<b>Preservation and Access Master<sup>1</sup></b>		<b>Screen Access<sup>2</sup></b>
<b>File format</b>	QuickTime .mov	<b>File format</b>	.mov
<b>Codec</b>	UYVY	<b>Codec</b>	QuickTime H.264
<b>Bit depth</b>	10 bit	<b>Frame size width</b>	640
<b>Frame size width</b>	720 pixels	<b>Frame size height</b>	360
<b>Frame size height</b>	576 pixels	<b>Pixel aspect ratio</b>	Square
<b>Frame rate</b>	25 frames per second	<b>Frame rate</b>	23.976
<b>Frame type</b>	Progressive	<b>Field Output</b>	Progressive
<b>Frame aspect ratio</b>	4:3	<b>Pixel depth</b>	24
<b>Pixel aspect ratio</b>	1:1	<b>Spatial quality</b>	75
<b>Colour space</b>	YCrCb	<b>Min. Spatial quality</b>	25
<b>Chroma sub sampling</b>	4:2:2	<b>Key frame interval</b>	30
<b>Audio component</b>	Uncompressed stereo audio	<b>Temporal quality</b>	50
<b>Compressor</b>	uncompressed PCM	<b>Min. temporal quality</b>	25
<b>Bit depth</b>	16bit / 24bit	<b>Average data rate</b>	1.331 Mbps

<sup>1</sup> To be truly a preservation master, video should be in an uncompressed state. However, in a raw, uncompressed state, 1 minute of video uses up to 1GB of storage. Another file format (codec with wrapper) suitable for preservation is JPEG 2000 with the MXF wrapper. JPEG 2000 offers lossless compression and reduces the file size by 3:1.

<sup>2</sup> These standards are applicable to born digital video as well. Born digital video captured at these standards can then serve as the Preservation and Access Masters.

<b>Sample rate</b>	48KHz	<b>Maximum data rate</b>	1.331 Mbps
<b>Number of channels</b>	2	<b>Audio Encoder</b>	AAC, Stereo (L R), 48.000 kHz
<b>Audio interleave</b>	1 sec	<b>File size</b>	599.04 MB/hour of source
<b>File size</b>	93 GB/hour (approx.)		

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**dpi** stands for dots per inch, a measurement of resolution for a digitized document (the higher the dpi, the better the tonality of the image.) The dpi setting of the scanner relates to the final pixel size of the scanned image.

**8-bit** refers to method of shoring image information in a computer's memory or in an image file, such that each pixel is represented by one 8-bit byte.

**grayscale** refers to an image in which the value of each pixel is a single sample composed exclusively of shades of grey.

**JPEG** stands for Joint Photographic Experts Group and refers to a type of graphics file format commonly used for images, photographs, etc.

**PDF** stands for Portable Document Format and is Adobe's proprietary file format.

**OCR** stands for Optical Character Recognition. It is the electronic translation of scanned text into machine-encoded text. OCR makes it possible to edit the text, search for a word or phrase, etc.

**24-bit RGB** refers to 24 bits per pixel in which three 8-bit integers between 0 and 255 represent red, green and blue intensities.

**TIFF** stands for Tagged Image File Format and refers to a type of file format for storing images.

**96 kHz 24-bit** refers to sample rate for audio. It means that a sample at 24 bits is taken 96,000 times per second.

**BWF** stands for Broadcast Wave Format. It is a standard used by the broadcast industry whereby metadata can be added to Wave files.

**WAV** stands for Waveform Audio File Format. It is an audio file format standard for storing an audio bitstream.

**MP3** is a digital audio encoding format using a form of lossy data compress

## Appendix E

### Major Archives with BC labour holdings

- University of British Columbia Rare Books and Special Collections
- Simon Fraser University Special Collections
- City of Vancouver Archives
- Vancouver Public Library
- Royal BC Museum and Archives
- Library and Archives Canada

### Other places to look

- Your community museum, archive or public library. Check online or with your municipality.
- Your local community college or university may have an archive.
- Archives Association of BC <https://www.aabc.ca/> has many online resources.

**Remember: We are here to help! Give us a call if you want advice on preserving your union's records.**

# BC LABOUR HERITAGE CENTRE

[www.labourheritagecentre.ca](http://www.labourheritagecentre.ca)

[info@labourheritagecentre.ca](mailto:info@labourheritagecentre.ca)

604-419-0400