The Sound of Public Humanities & its Oscillatory Accessibility

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MITH Digital Dialogue
1 October 2019
Outline

1. Digital Frost Project
2. The Sound of Public Humanities
3. Editorial Rationale
1. Digital Frost Project
Session Details

618. FrostBytes: Archival Scholarship in the Digital Age

Saturday, 11 January, 3:30–4:45 p.m., Grace, Chicago Marriott

Program arranged by the Robert Frost Society

Presiding: Mark Steed Richardson, Doshisha Univ.; Donald Sheehy, Edinboro Univ. of Pennsylvania

Session Description:

The workshop will share information about Frost collections and about the status of digitization and electronic cataloging at major collections. Tools and procedures for locating and acquiring materials will be discussed. Our purpose is to plan the creation, development, and maintenance of a comprehensive digital resource—under the aegis of the Frost Society—for Frost scholarship.
continuous reformatting of audio recordings & sound migration...
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identifying relevant audio recordings...
overall architecture of the Digital Frost Project
2. The Sound of Public Humanities
the Frost children at the Derry Farm (1907), Frost’s author photo (1913-4)
“There is no denying that his insistent monosyllabic monotony is irritating, but it may be questioned whether any less drab monotony of rhythm would have been so successful in conveying the particular aspect of life presented.”

“[Frost’s] people are left-over of the old stock, morbid, pursued by phantoms, slowly sinking to insanity.”

[And of the corresponding meter used in the poems]:
“halting and maimed, like the life it portrays, unyielding in substance, and broken in effect.”

in the New England temper. Characters and situations impress him, speech does not. It is probably for this reason that he uses no dialect in these poems. New England turns of speech would lose much of their raciness without the peculiar pronunciation which accompanies them.

Mr. Frost gives us no such delicious bits of humour as James Russell Lowell’s:

We’re curious critters: Now ain’t jes’ the minute
That ever fits us easy while we’re in it.

or Alice Brown’s: “I tried to do all I could for them that was in need. But I never lived my life with ’em, even when I was tendin’ upon ’em and gettin’ kind of achey trottin’ up an’ down stairs.”
“Robert Frost Reading His Poems,” the National Council of Teachers of English (1951)
Robert Frost appointment calendars housed in Dartmouth College
3. Editorial Rationale
PennSound Manifesto

1. It must be free and downloadable.

Ideally, all the sound material we put on the web should be cleared for copyright to be distributed free for noncommercial and educational purposes. Users of the site will be able to download the MP3s to their own computers or players or play them in a streaming fashion. Teachers could make course CDs or add the MP3s to their on-line syllabus. Other web sites and libraries could recollect the material. Credits for digitalization and copyright release would also be embedded into each file. One of the advantages of working with poetry sound files is that we don't anticipate a problem with rights. At present and in the conceivable future, there is no profit to be gained by the sale of recorded poetry. There is, however, considerable expense involved in preserving, cataloging, and distributing such material.

2. It must be MP3 or better.

RealAudio is a proprietary format with sound quality that will not stand the test of time. We need to use open formats that reproduce reasonably high quality sound, for a listenership that is used to astonishingly good sound quality from commercial sources.

3. It must be singles.

At present, the vast majority of poetry recordings are for entire readings, typically thirty or more minutes, with no tracking of individual cuts or poems. While these full readings have great literary and archival value taken as a whole, few but the most devoted listen to full recordings of readings or, if they do, fewer still listen more than once. The more useful format is to break readings up into individual poems and to make MP3s of each poem available. MP3s of song-length poems could become a very appealing format for poetry. The implications for audience, listenership, critical thinking, poetics, and poetic production are great.

4. It must be named.

Presently, downloaded poetry sound files tend not to have informative names. Looking at a directory of such files, it is impossible to determine what the file contains from the visual information available. File sharing for music employs a simple system of the name of the singer and the song, but the p2p system is not compatible with FTP, especially in terms of blank spaces between words, which
talks
NOT lectures

saying poems
NOT reading poems