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Max Horkheimer's voice goes digital

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The Max Horkheimer / Frederik Pollock Archive is in the possession of some 100 sound media with recorded speeches, lectures and interviews of Max Horkheimer from 1938 – 1972. All these documents (from early long-playing records and so-called cartridges to cassette tapes) are endangered because of their age alone. Furthermore, the equipment needed to listen to these sound recordings is either no longer available or can no longer be replaced. For example, an item which records Max Horkheimer's greetings to his father on the occasion of his 80th birthday bears the following instructions: "Do not use metal needles– for wood or cactus needles only".



Digitizing these delicate originals had high priority. A wonderful spin-off developed from the activities throughout the country in celebration of the Year of Adorno. A camera team from Südwestrundfunk (SWR) filmed a two-part series in the Horkheimer Archive on the life and works of Adorno, which has since been shown on SWR television and ARTE.

As an appreciation of thanks for allowing filming in the Archive to take place the film producer offered to have some of the sound material technically restored and subsequently digitized in the sound studios at the SWR.

The uniqueness of each item was the criterion for selecting the tapes to be digitized. We only selected

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Max Horkheimer
on assuming the office of the vice-
chancellor at Frankfurt University
in 1951
Photo: Archives Centre

Archives Centre.

Jochen Stollberg
(Head of the Archives Centre)

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recordings which have not been hitherto produced by a German broadcasting company. Thus 25 valuable historical documents could be restored and copied onto the most modern and qualitatively better sound carriers. We are most grateful to the Südwestrundfunk for their generous support.

The texts differ in content: they start with the above-mentioned birthday greetings, then there are ceremonial speeches given on the occasion of prize-winning and award-giving ceremonies, biographical interviews, academic lectures on religion and philosophy (1966), on civilisation (1967) congress articles from Rome, Venice and Lugano (1968-1971), talks on Critical Theory (1969) and on marriage and family (1970).

The technical form in which these digitized sounds are available is DAT (Digital Audio Tape). At present we do not have the facility to play these tapes in the