

SO! Amplifies: Indie Preserves

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Abstract

SO! Amplifies. . . a highly-curated, rolling mini-post series by which we editors hip you to cultural makers and organizations doing work we really really dig. You're welcome! — In July 2016, we, Scott Carlson and Norie Guthrie, began the Indie Preserves blog, but this is actually not the best place to start.

Keywords

Music (Subfield), Archival, Conferences, Curation, Digital Media, History



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SO! Amplifies. . .a highly-curated, rolling mini-post series by which we editors hip you to cultural makers and organizations doing work we really really dig. You're welcome!

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In July 2016, we, Scott Carlson and Norie Guthrie, began the [Indie Preserves](#) blog, but this is actually not the best place to start. About six months earlier, Scott became concerned about the preservation skills of Indie and DIY music label owners and musicians. The thought of someone's creative output disappearing in a flash from a hard drive sent shivers down his spine. After speaking with one label owner who was nervous about losing his stuff, we thought it might behoove us to see if others had the same fears.

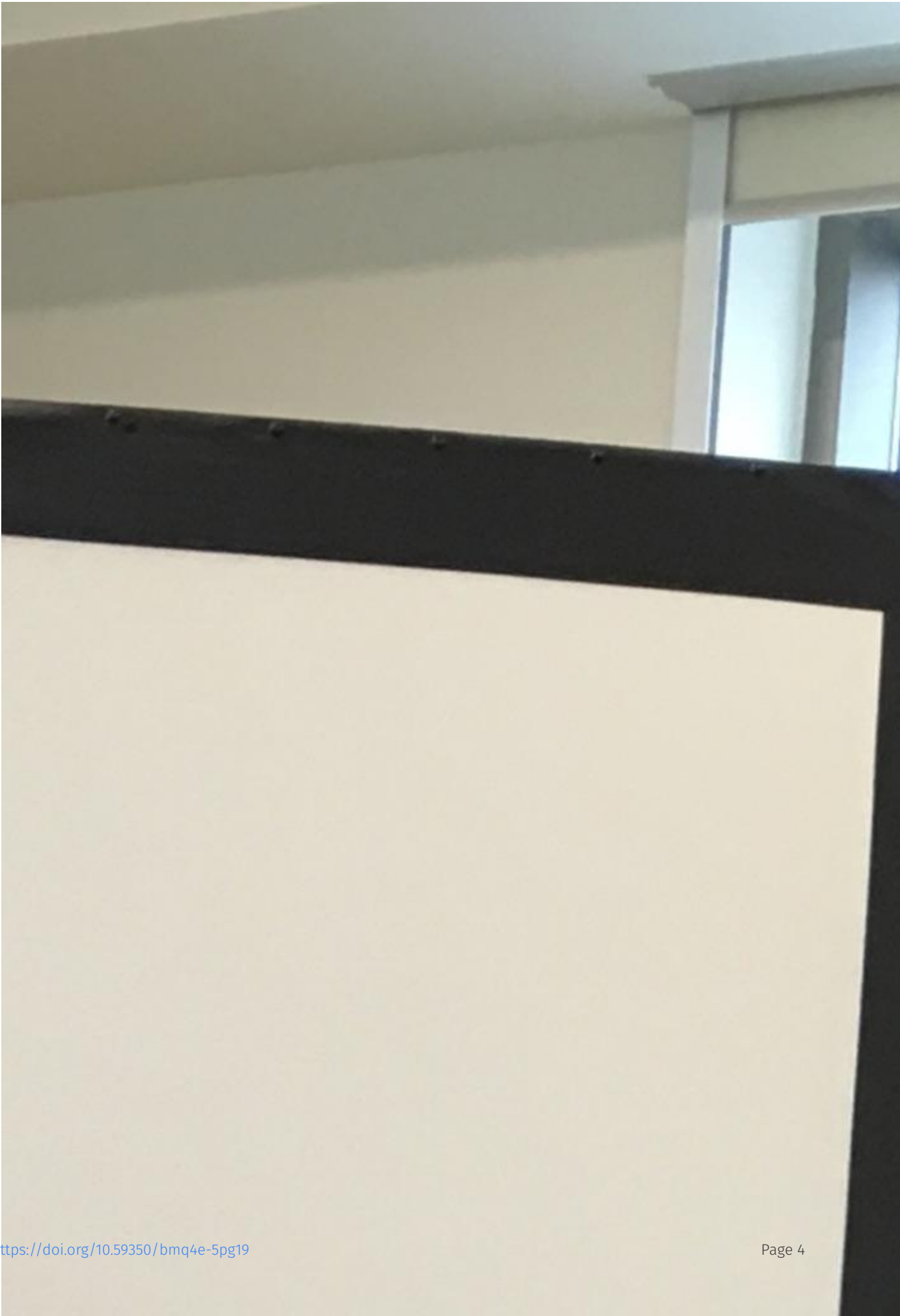
"Sometimes [I'm] scared of how easy it would be to lose everything," [Burger Records's] Sean Bohrman told us. "All it would take is a fire, or a flood, or for someone to come in and take our equipment, and it'd be years of work lost."

We created a survey to ascertain the types of materials and files that Indie and DIY labels save, and how they would gauge their knowledge of physical and digital preservation. Of the 500 labels contacted, we received responses from 168. Of that group, 60% were "somewhat to very concerned" about preserving their stuff.

There were two motivations for *Indie Preserves*, then. Firstly, we wanted to help respondents who wanted to learn preservation techniques (58% for digital and 63% physical). Secondly, a library colleague suggested that we present our findings at Austin's annual SXSW festival. To make it there, we needed an online presence. Thus, our blog was born.

The main subjects of our blog fall in three categories: physical preservation, digital preservation, and interviews. Our physical preservation posts cover [what items to save](#), [what archival supplies to buy](#), [how to organize your papers](#), [where to store them](#), and [items to avoid \(like metal paper clips\)](#). Digital preservation, on the other hand, takes a bit more work. We wrote posts about [embedding metadata](#) in [photographs](#), [PDFs](#), and [audio](#); [the 3-2-1 rule](#); and issues to consider when using [cloud storage](#). As for our interviews, we talked with [archivists on the front lines curating music archives at their institution](#), [DIY archivist and punk legend Ian MacKaye](#), and other preservation professionals like [Jessica Thompson, Mastering/Restoration Engineer and Archival Specialist at Coast Mastering](#).

Essentially, *Indie Preserves* exists to provide advice and a chuckle while hammering home the reasons why our audience should listen. Early on, it was clear that we had caught the attention of library and archives professionals, but we were concerned that we had not connected with the labels. We hoped that [presenting at SXSW would help](#).



Indie Preserves Panel at SXSW 2016, All images supplied by authors

Our panel consisted of Jessica Thompson, Sean Bohrman of Burger Records, and us. The presentation went well, though our audience was a bit light. We did, however, manage to connect with audience members and fielded several questions afterwards.

Moving forward, we are putting together a book proposal that will explore music preservation from a variety of angles. Proposed contributions currently range from the actual restoration and preservation of recorded sound to citizen archivist projects to case studies about the preservation of music culture and “scenes” from particular cities. Along with our contributors, we will discuss music preservation in institutions, our *Indie Preserves* project, and the ways researchers use popular music archives.

Norie Guthrie is an Archivist and Special Collections Librarian with the Woodson Research Center at Rice University’s Fondren Library. She has been building the Houston Folk Music Archive at Fondren Library.

Scott Carlson is the Metadata Coordinator at Rice University’s Fondren Library. An active member of the independent record label community, he runs Frodis Records, an independent reissue label.



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