

Sonic Memories Audio Letters in Times of Migration and Mobility

EVA HALLAMA | KATRIN ABROMEIT

S

O

N

NOVEMBER 2021 – OKTOBER 2025

M

E

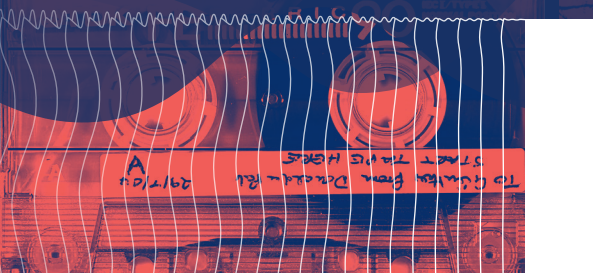
Since the invention of the phonograph cylinder at the end of the 19th century, it has been possible to send spoken letters over long distances. New inventions in the course of the 20th century produced new analogue formats that could be sent more easily, such as self-cut foils, or were cheaper and easier to use like magnetic tapes or compact cassettes. While the early audio letters were often sent by hobby phonographers or travellers from the middle class, the cassette formats were also used by people in precarious migration contexts.

The SONIME project collects, preserves and researches audio letters that are currently hidden in public archives or are privately owned. These unique items are by all means cultural heritage of great value, yet they can hardly be found and accessed in public archives and – on the account of a lack of knowledge about the historical substances and their conservation – are severely threatened with loss. The latter is due to the decay of material but also the absence of public awareness of the significance of these objects for our cultural memory. Migration, flight or wars also account for the loss of much valuable material.

We combine methods from conservation research, cultural and media history. We conduct interviews with private donors about the audio letters as 'sonic memories'. In participatory workshops, archiving parameters – and thus forms of their inscription in the collective memory – are worked out. A focus lies on the acoustic characteristics of the recordings, especially on the affective moment of the spoken voice. The conducted material analyses via FT-IR provide comprehensive data for conservation research and lay the foundation for restoration measures.



2. SEITE		
NR.	DATUM	AUFNAHME
1	1955	Köln
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		



5 Pluspunkte für das neue BASF Briefband

festes Kleinspulen
Schmaler – 45 m Lang

9,5 cm/sec



WWW.OEAW.AC.AT/PHONOGRAMMARCHIV/SONIME
WWW.MEDIATHEK.AT/SONIME