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Gentlemen:

In 2001 I donated to Florida International University (FIU), my musical collection of commercial 78rpm recordings, Lp's, Cd's, photos, books, magazines and memorabilia, more than 100.000 items. Two years later, I also donated to FIU my discography of cuban music from 1898 to 1960, about 4,500 pages, containing the information regarding thousands of recordings from said period. They were installed in internet by FIU, and they are available cost free in <http://latinpop.fiu.edu/discography.html> .

As part of the donation, there were about 2,000 cassettes containing dubbed copies of thousands of recordings made before 1960. Many of them are not available in other formats, and probably not in existence anymore.

Unfortunately, many of these cassettes, because of their age, are in very great danger of becoming demagnetized and thus losing their important content. Although I have conveyed to the FIU library personnel the urgent need to transcribe those cassettes to a more reliable media, they have doubts whether they can do it, since they don't have the originals of the recordings . So most probably we are going to lose these important sound documents.

That's one of the many situations that Public libraries holding recordings have regarding the access, reproduction and use of the artifacts under their custody. There are definitively many doubts regarding the use of these recordings. On the other hand, as Ned Sublette wrote in his book , "Cuba and its music" (Chicago Review Press, 2004): "In a sense, the history of music only begins with the invention of sound recording. Everything before it is prehistory: we have evidence—descriptions, notation, documents—but we don't know how the music sounded"

I am a member of the Association for Recorded Sound Collections (ARSC). Many of us, as I did, are eager to donate their collections to a library, but there are doubts about how well these artifacts will be useful to the community; on the other hands, libraries wonder if it is worth to dedicate precious space to artifacts that will have a very restricted use.

Please take these arguments in consideration while you take measures that will affect millions of recordings; don't condemn them to oblivion or destruction.

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