PBCore for Chicago Public Media

Starting in 2016, WBEZ Chicago Public Media began the process of creating a digital archive from analog audio formats holding saved broadcast recordings from throughout the station’s history. One of the main goals of the archive was to make sure its architecture would be able to empower journalists and radio producers to be able to retrieve archival audio themselves in order to create new stories from Chicago’s past.

Cataloging broadcast media presents unique challenges, and there was a need for a flexible metadata schema that would be open to modification based on our local needs. The significance of PBCore is that it makes room for an archive’s idiosyncrasies while holding up the technical and descriptive metadata framework that allows for collections to be shared widely and understood in perpetuity. Besides being a comprehensive choice for the description of the audio formats of our past, we can also look to it for describing the future. As our organization grows its digital presence, some of the same local news stories are both broadcast and published digitally; by harnessing PBCore’s ability to describe instantiations of the same content in different formats, it becomes a powerful tool when thinking about the changing landscape of the output of media organizations. By following this path of description, we are able to better preserve the integrity of local journalism.