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Walking Transects to Explore Soundscapes as Digital Humanities Research and Creative Practice

John F. Barber

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Introduction

With this essay I describe how I explore soundscapes by walking a transect and recording sounds heard along the route, and then use those recorded sounds to create collages and/or narratives representing the soundscape of origin. I argue that walking transects to explore soundscapes provides interesting opportunities for Digital Humanities research and creative practice.

I begin my essay by defining and describing soundscapes as overlapping and intertwined sounds that might be heard in particular spaces. I then discuss soundwalking as a way of exploring soundscapes through listening. I describe my practice of walking a transect to explore a soundscape and provide examples of my recordings. In conclusion, I contend that walking a transect and exploring a soundscape provides a focus on sound listening and exploration that creates not only new phenomena to observe, research, interpret, and report, but more importantly, a relationship with sound(s) and sense of place, which in turn, can help me understand the significance of human actions and activities in the recording site. Thus, considering sound(s) informs my Digital Humanities research and creative practice.

The combination of sound and Digital Humanities may seem unusual, but, as I have discussed previously, sound might be seen as methodology for critique and analysis, a fundamental approach to interdisciplinary research that is increasingly the purview of Digital Humanities, and a resource for interpreting and reporting findings (Barber, "Sound and Digital Humanities: Reflecting on a DHSI 2014 Course"). This essay continues my explorations.

Soundscapes

Canadian composer and naturalist Raymond Murray Schafer founded the World Soundscape Project, with Bruce Davis, Peter Huse, Barry Truax, Howard Broomfield, Hildegard Westerkamp, and others at Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, Canada (Truax et al.; Darò 185). The project's intention, according to Schafer, "was to study all aspects of the changing soundscape to determine how these changes might affect people's thinking and social activities" (Schafer, "Acoustic Space" 29-30).¹

Before Schafer's application to sound studies, the term *soundscape* was used to denote visual or textual techniques to reference sounds visible in natural environments, and establish relationships between space, mechanization, and a listening subject (Picker

148-149). As an example, John Picker quotes from a 1911 edition of the American Automobile Association magazine, *The Club Journal*, about touring Long Island Sound, New York. The article refers to the "restless beat and unwearying energy" of the Atlantic Ocean and Long Island Sound, assuring the reader, and aspiring motorist, "you get plenty of these 'Soundscapes'" on the drive to the end of the peninsula (Anonymous 514; qtd. in Picker 148).

Following World War II, the focus of soundscape shifted to "capture the abstract synesthetic representation of sonic experience" and was often applied "in a figurative painterly sense to music," especially compositions depicting textures of sounds or sounds that formed sonic environments (Picker 150). Again, Picker provides an example when he cites English critic Burnett James' consideration of French impressionistic painting and musical impressionism. According to James, the introduction to *Appalachia*, a composition by Frederick Theodore Albert Delius (1862-1934), was evocative of a natural soundscape (James qtd. in Picker 150).

Perhaps the earliest reference to the term *soundscape* as sounds heard in an acoustic environment was by architect, inventor, and futurist Buckminster Fuller in a 1966 address to the National Conference on the Uses of Educational Media in the Teaching of Music. "When," said Fuller, "man invented words and music he altered the soundscape and the soundscape altered man. The epigenetic evolution interacting progressively between humanity and his soundscape has been profound" (Fuller 52).

In 1969, Michael Southworth, a Boston city planner described soundscape as a perceptual form of an urban sonic environment. Soundscape should be considered, said Southworth, in relation to the quality and type of sounds, their arrangement in space and time, and in relation to the activities and physical settings of the city (Southworth).

Acoustic Space

Schafer borrowed "soundscape" from Southworth, as he admitted in his autobiography (Schafer, *My Life on Earth and Elsewhere* 120) and during an interview with Carlotta Darò (Darò 185). Schafer broadened the term to include "any acoustic field of study," and to signify the multiple, overlapping sounds one might hear in a particular acoustic space. This intertwining of the terms soundscape and acoustic space is important to unpack.

By acoustic space, Schafer meant natural, built, or imagined, physical or psychological spaces where sounds are heard separately or in layered combinations, depending on

how, where, and when one listens, and how those sounds might be modified by the environment. Sounds might originate from non-human sources—animal vocalizations, bird calls, insect sounds—natural, non-living sources—wind, water, weather, earthquakes, avalanches—or human activities—music, sound design, speech, machinery. Specifically, Schafer described acoustic space as "an expression of the profile of a sound over a landscape," the area over which a sound might be heard before falling below the ambient sound level (Schafer, *The Tuning of the World* 271-272). Acoustic spaces then are places where specific sounds might be heard, alone or in combination with other sounds, all without need for amplification. Thus, different acoustic spaces will present different sounds.

To illustrate this difference, imagine being in Stanley Park, just outside downtown Vancouver. There, one might hear wind, bird calls, thunder, water, or waves day or night. But, one might hear different birds and more automobile and human traffic during the day than at night.

In downtown Vancouver, say at a street corner near the inner harbor, one might, during the day or night, hear seaplanes landing and/or departing, ship traffic, automobile traffic, human traffic, the sounds of urban commerce.

It would be difficult, if not impossible, to, on this street corner, hear the sound of wind in trees, or water lapping on the shore. Conversely, part of the ambience and charm of Stanley Park is not to hear the sounds of urban downtown Vancouver.

For Schafer, any soundscape signified the multiple, overlapping, events *heard* rather than objects *seen*, in its acoustic space (Schafer, *The Tuning of the World* 8, emphasis in original). A soundscape then is the portion of an acoustic space within range of human hearing. Sounds below, or above, the normal range of human hearing are not perceived in soundscapes, unless they are modified in some way to bring them within human hearing range. Additionally, Schafer posits a direct link between soundscapes and human invention and/or interaction, a point, as we will see, noted by Barry Truax and described by Steven Feld, in their contentions that the listener's perception of sounds in any particular environment depends on "how that environment is understood by those living within it" (Truax, *Acoustic Communication* 11; Feld, "Sound Structure as Social Structure" 383, 389, 395).

To sum up: soundscapes, like Stanley Park and downtown Vancouver, are unique overlays and interplays of different sounds particular to each of their acoustic spaces. Schafer was concerned, however, for how urban and industrial noise, indicative of

growing, changing environments like downtown Vancouver, were increasingly overwhelming natural sound profiles in places like Stanley Park. Noise might be broadly defined as non-musical sounds, irregular and excessive sounds that disrupt status-quo expectations, chaotic sounds that are uncontrolled and unwanted (Henriques 457). Schafer called noises "the sounds we have learned to ignore." He founded the World Soundscape Project to study noise pollution, determine how to eliminate unwanted noises, and preserve the underlying soundscape(s). "Appreciation of the acoustic environment can give us the resources for improving the orchestration of the world soundscape" (Schafer, *The Tuning of the World* 4).

Experiencing Soundscapes

How might one study and preserve soundscapes? Schafer was confident of success, predicting, "We can isolate an acoustic environment as a field of study just as we can study the characteristics of a given landscape" (Schafer, *The Tuning of the World* 7). He suggested two methodologies for studying the dynamics of soundscapes: earwitness and soundwalks.

Earwitness

By earwitness, Schafer means written accounts from literature and mythology, anthropology, and history. These writings, says Schafer, are often "the best guides available in the reconstruction of soundscapes past" (Schafer, *The Tuning of the World* 9). Such descriptions are earwitness in that they are trustworthy writing about "sounds directly experienced and intimately known" and because they provide useful information about the ambient sound levels of past places, times, or events, against which those of today can be measured (Schafer, *The Tuning of the World* 8).

For example, in his 1929 novel *All Quiet on the Western Front*, Erich Maria Remarque writes, while in the German trenches during World War I, he heard the shells exploding around his position followed by a low, rumbling sound of their distant firing. The shells traveled to his position faster than the sound(s) of their firing.

Earwitness accounts present opportunities to experience historic soundscapes that no longer exist, but which can, through the power of their written descriptions, evoke our memories or imaginations of similar aural experiences, and thus promote our understanding of the sounds being described.

Sound Walks

As for sound walks, Schafer described them as leisurely walking through acoustic spaces "with a concentration on listening," often using a map or score as a guide "drawing the listener's attention to sounds and ambiances to be heard along the way" (*The Tuning of the World* 212). Hildegard Westerkamp, a student and colleague of Schafer, expands this idea when she says a sound walk is "an excursion whose main purpose is listening to the environment. It is exposing our ears to every sound around us no matter where we are" (Westerkamp 18).

Schafer says soundwalking promotes active listening and direct engagement: "[w]hen the sound walker is instructed to listen to the soundscape, he is audience; when he is asked to participate with it, he becomes composer-performer" (Schafer, *The Tuning of the World* 212). French sociologist Michel de Certeau expands this idea of direct engagement when he equates walking with the creative practice of writing. "[T]he act of walking is to the urban system what the speech act is to language or to the statements uttered," he says. Walking can be described as, or compared to, the enunciation of statements and stories, and "begins on ground level, with footsteps" (de Certeau 97). de Certeau finds connection between walking, writing, and composing: "[t]he art of *turning* phrases finds an equivalent in an art of composing a path (*tourner un parcours*)" (de Certeau 100, emphasis in original).

From this overview, I draw a conceptual framework for sound walking as discovering, by moving, a narrative potential embedded within a space, both in the classic acoustic ecology as described by Westerkamp (Westerkamp 2014) and the use of walking and sound walking as research practices and artistic performances as described by de Certeau and David Paquette and Andra McCartney (Paquette and McCartney). McCartney also describes sound walking as creating mobile environmental sound narratives which "take the everyday action of walking, and everyday sounds, and bring the attention of the audience to these often ignored events, practices, and processes" (McCartney 214).

Walking A Transect

If that is the case, and given the purpose of discovering and listening to interesting, specific, or particular sounds, then I assume there is no best route to follow through a soundscape. The route does not have to be fixed, but can be open ended, allowing for one to pursue sound and listening experiences serendipitously, discovering sounds along the way. Specific soundscapes will, of course, promote different sound walks. As

described earlier, a sound walk in Stanley Park will be different from one in downtown Vancouver.

A final inspiration comes from Australian sound artist Kate Carr's practice of "sonic transect," walking through an acoustic space and recording sounds that represent the relationship between people and that place (Carr).

Beyond this use by Carr, my understanding and application of transects is drawn from biology, ecology, anthropology, and urban planning. Biological and ecological sciences utilize transects as lines along which counts and/or measurements of living organisms are made. Anthropologists use transect lines as guides for where to dig below the Earth's surface when searching for evidence of cultural artifacts and/or community evolution. City/urban planners use transects across neighborhoods, urban cores, and natural areas as fieldwork instruments, specifically as first explorations of the diverse conditions found along their lengths.

I adapt these approaches to walking a transect in my own efforts to record particular or characteristic sounds along a path through an acoustic space. I believe these recordings can provide overviews of soundscapes that are insightful and valuable for understanding sound's relationship with human endeavors in acoustic spaces, and for providing a methodology for experiencing sound(s) in new ways, specifically as they may inform our understanding of human activities and resulting artifacts.

Example Transects

For example, my "Transect: London" begins with platform announcements at Charing Cross Station and then samples Fakto, an independent musician, singing in the Westminster underground tunnel, the ambience at New Cross Gate rail station, the Tiny Sounds event at Goldsmiths' College, the Steelyard Passage sound installation, the Trafalgar Tavern in Greenwich, changing the guard at Buckingham Palace, Hyde Park ambience and Speakers' Corner, the Abbey Road crossing made famous by The Beatles *Abbey Road* album cover, the Prime Meridian at Greenwich, the London Underground arriving at Victoria Station, walking the Millennium Bridge across the Thames River, meeting Vera Chok, soon-to-be famous actress, and the time bell at a local pub. *Note: The author maintains an [archival website](#) for this and other recordings. Please visit for more information and listening opportunities.*

[transect-london.mp3](#)

130 MB

All these sounds represent specific acoustic spaces grounded in London, a large, modern, busy urban center of commerce, transportation, entertainment, and culture. The particular sounds I recorded and present as my transect do not represent London's soundscape in totality. Nor, do they represent my interaction with different acoustic spaces in a specific, or linear, order. Rather, this transect represents my interaction with different parts of the city, at different times, so to provide both record and narrative of the potentiality for observing human cultural and communicative activities, technological creations, and environmental contexts at a number of different points. As a collection of data points, "Transect: London," provides a narrative, told with sounds, of this urban soundscape. I hope that listeners will imagine a personal, interactive experience with the city, and that through this experience they will gain insight into the activities and endeavors of human culture, especially as they provide foundation(s) for questions of identity, interpretation of difference, and, benefits of inclusion.

Another example is "Transect: Asheville (North Carolina)." Here, I recorded sounds encountered in a former downtown department store, now repurposed as a hotel. One of those sounds was recorded floor announcements in the elevator—"Second floor, men's clothing, luggage, shoes"—that I remember from my childhood experiences accompanying my mother as she shopped in this department store. *Note: The author maintains an [archival website](#) for this and other recordings. Please visit for more information and listening opportunities.*

[transect-asheville.mp3](#)

55 MB

Of course, no listener will have this same line of associative thinking, unless they shared my experiences. But, as suggested by Garbrielle Proy, who says listening to a soundscape should promote immersion in its sounds, or memories of similar aural environments (Proy), listeners may be able to connect with my transect based on similar, or related experiences, or memories. And, in either case, hearing my transect may help listeners orient their understanding of sound's relationship to architectural and natural spaces, and human activities that occur therein. Granted, this understanding may require engaged and careful listening, but the opportunity to absorb the structure and narrative of the work is part of my intention in its creation. Simply put, my goal for using transects to document and/or narrate my experience(s) with soundscapes is to elevate sound to experiential levels.

Providing a different artifact, my "Transect: Jardin du Luxembourg" explores tensions along the cusp of urban and natural in this large public park located in Paris. *Note: The author maintains an [archival website](#) for this and other recordings. Please visit for more information and listening opportunities.*

[transect-jardinduluxembourg.mp3](#)

23 MB

For these and other transects I walked a route, most often irregular or convoluted, inspired by curiosity, exploration, and discovery, recording sounds that struck me as interesting and/or insightful. Each of these transects is grounded in the serendipitous discovery of sounds, and provides thoughtful listening experiences of different soundscapes. Each presents complexity, or nuanced understanding. Each provides a methodology for exploring a soundscape. Each is a way to investigate sonic flows and changes in soundscapes, a way to document particular or characteristic sounds, all with an ear to the narratives they promote about human existence, experience, endeavor in that space, or place. I am an observer, providing narrative record of my walk through these spaces (Barber, "Walking-Talking: Soundscapes, Flâneurs, and the Creation of Mobile Media Narratives").

Combining walking and listening and recording, along transects, provides new opportunities to appreciate the complex, layered, relationships between landscapes and soundscapes, between human activities and resulting artifacts. The desired result is to experience sounds found along, and around, a transect, and leverage those sounds to develop a sense of place within that world of sound.

So What?

What does it mean to investigate a soundscape? What can be determined and/or learned from what can be heard there? How does this experience inform my knowledge of human endeavor in that space? Why is this important to Digital Humanities?

Digital Humanities is an area of interdisciplinary, collaborative research and practice at the intersection of digital computing technologies and traditional humanities studies (Barber, "Sound and Digital Humanities: Reflecting on a DHSI 2014 Course"). The desired outcome is to challenge existing research paradigms by influencing creation, dissemination, preservation, research, and teaching activities. At this intersection, I have focused both research and creative practice on the interplay of sound(s) and their influence on narratives about human endeavors (Barber, "Sound at the Heart of

Electronic Literature"; Barber, "Internet Radio and Electronic Literature: Locating the Text in Aural Narratives").

One focus for this practice, as I have described in this essay, is walking transects to explore soundscapes. In this practice I agree with Truax, who says a soundscape does not exist outside human perception, but rather as a dynamic information exchange between the soundscape and a listener within the defined space (Truax, *Acoustic Communication*). As the acoustic manifestation of a place, a soundscape is a reflection of the social, technological, and natural conditions, along with the activities and behaviors of its inhabitants. I believe there is something to be learned from the interaction between these factors. What is learned may prompt new methodologies of Digital Humanities research, scholarship, teaching, and learning.

Walking a transect to explore a soundscape, I learn how the interaction of human, natural, and mechanical factors overlap and intertwine to produce contexts for the creation of sounds, as well as my responses to those sounds. I draw inspiration in this practice from Emily Thompson, who says, "a soundscape is simultaneously a physical environment and a way of perceiving that environment. It is both a world and a cultural construct to make sense of that world" (Thompson, *The Soundscape of Modernity* 1).

My desired outcome is to promote experience with sounds so to offer new information in new ways. A model is Michael Vincent's suggestion that we can hear literary, musical events in soundscapes. For example, restaurant soundscapes can be heard, he says, as "spoken word choral performances." The hushed tones of conversation prior to the start of a movie are "akin to the tuning of an orchestra before an evening performance" (Vincent 59).

Walking a transect places me within and as part of a soundscape where my observations are both sensory and physical, each tied with decisions about how to proceed through the acoustic space and where to focus my listening. My reading of American anthropologist Steven Feld supports these ideas. Citing Edward Casey, Feld says,

"[s]oundscapes, no less than landscapes, are not just physical exteriors, spatially surrounding or apart from actors who attend to them as a way of making their place in and through the world. Soundscapes are invested with significance by those whose bodies and lives resonate with them in social time and space. Like

landscapes, they are as much psychical as physical phenomena, as much cultural constructs as material ones" (Feld, "A Rainforest Acoustemology" 226; Casey).

I believe it important, vital, to bodily engage with soundscapes for orientation and agency in the immersive worlds they promote. Again, following Feld,

"[s]ound both emanates from and penetrates bodies; this reciprocity of reflection and absorption is a creative means of orientation—one that tunes bodies to places and times through their sounding potential. Hearing and producing sound are thus embodied competencies that situate actors and their agency in particular historical worlds. These competencies contribute to [actors'] distinct and shared ways of being human; they contribute to possibilities for and realizations of authority, understanding, reflexivity, compassion, and identity" (Feld, "A Rainforest Acoustemology" 226).

Feld illustrates these points poignantly as he describes "some dimensions of a sociology of sound for the Kaluli" people of the Great Papuan Plateau in the Southern Highlands Province of Papua New Guinea (Feld, "Sound Structure as Social Structure" 383). Feld says, "it is broadly understood that every Kululi must become a competent maker, recognizer, user, and interpreter of the natural and cultural sound patterns" heard in the tropical rain forest surrounding their villages (389). Sounds heard there "provide a simultaneous index of the environment as well as deeper symbolic understanding about self, place, and time" (395). Feld describes the Kaluli peoples' "outright enjoyment of the soundscape" upon entering the rain forests, including improvised duets with birds and waterfalls (395). "Kaluli not only take inspiration from, listen to, and enjoy the forest," says Feld, "but become part of it, which ultimately intensifies their sentiments about it" (395).

I have, throughout this essay, described walking a transect and exploring a soundscape, listening and recording, as physical, analogue activities undertaken in present time and physical spaces. What about places, spaces, times, and events no longer accessible, or impossible to access? Digital technologies provide exciting opportunities. For example, the Virtual Paul's Cross Project provides a digital re-creation of the soundscape surrounding John Donne's sermon for Gunpowder Day, 5 November 1622, in Paul's Churchyard, London (*Virtual Paul's Cross*). Participants can move about this virtual space and experience sights, events, and sounds, as if they were present. The experiential insights provided in this way allow the expansion of literary accounts (Schafer's earwitness) through participation and immersion. The

participant is present in the time, place, and context of the human endeavor under study.

A similar locative aural experience is provided by Thompson's *The Roaring Twenties: An Interactive Exploration of the Historical Soundscape of New York City* (2013) which follows and is directly inspired by her book, *The Soundscape of Modernity*, a history of aural culture in early 20th-century America, particularly the interaction between sounds and the material structures meant to control them (*The Soundscape of Modernity* 2004). Thompson notes that sounds of New York City historicized in her book were removed from the material context of their original sounding. This inspired her web-based, interactive exploration of sounds no longer heard in the city (*The Roaring Twenties* 2013).

Soundscapes might also help us understand human endeavors and acoustic spaces not normally experienced. For example, *Electrical Walks* by Berlin-based sound artist Christina Kubisch (2003-ongoing) begins with a map of a space, noting ATM machines, security systems, electronic cash registers, subway systems, etc. where electromagnetic signals are particularly strong or interesting. Participants, wearing bespoke wireless headphones undertake a sound walk through the invisible network of electromagnetic information. The result is a unique investigation of a special kind of soundscape and its connections with human endeavors (Kubish).

I have created a similar work, *Internet Soundscape*, which seeks to sonify the ebb and flow of electromagnetic traffic across the Internet. This of course is not something that we can normally hear, but it is fun to imagine (Barber, "Internet Soundscape"). *Note: The author maintains an [archival website](#) for this and other recordings. Please visit for more information and listening opportunities.*

[internet-soundscape.mp3](#)

23 MB

Finally, Wikipedia, the online open collaborative encyclopedia maintained by a volunteer community of editors, is perhaps one of the greatest examples of human endeavor we might consider. How to understand the volume of content added, deleted, and changed within Wikipedia over time? Numbers are impressive, but how often do these changes happen, at what rate and volume? The *Listen to Wikipedia* website sonifies (portrays as sound) current editorial changes to Wikipedia. Bells indicate additions. String plucks subtractions. Pitch changes indicate the size of the edit. The larger the edit, the deeper the note. The result is a soundscape of the constant editing

of Wikipedia content, and more specifically, the constant collaborative creation of human knowledge (*Listen to Wikipedia*).

These are all examples of how exploring soundscapes can inform Digital Humanities practices by placing the investigator within the space(s) of study, and considering the dynamics of those spaces through sound(s). Engaging with a soundscape in this manner, we take in an impression (hearing) and return an expression (in multiple forms and as multiple artifacts). Actively engaged in this manner, soundscapes are compositions in which we are, Schafer says, simultaneously composers, performers, and listeners (Schafer, *The Tuning of the World* 212).

Walking a transect to explore a soundscape can, as I have outlined, provide a way of taking in impressions. Creating something in response—in my case, recordings—not only returns an expression, but promotes insight into a place or time, an activity or event with historical, cultural, or creative importance. This sound-based creativity acknowledges the fact that sound may provide content for creation that is not confined to specific (musical) considerations, but rather can be contextualized as sample-based compositions, such as transects, while still requiring attention to dramaturgy, communication, and aesthetics.

Walking a transect also emphasizes listening in a culture of looking. Despite multimedia, Western culture privileges the eye. Seeing is the basis for truth and credibility, "That's as clear as black and white." and "Seeing is believing." The eye, and light, forms the center of Christian culture, even though, in the beginning, there was the word (sound). Hearing, and more importantly, listening, engages the imagination in ways more immediate and immersive than any other medium.

Transects can be designed for individual or group listening and/or participation. Transects can highlight interaction and immersion with regard to present or past acoustic spaces, real or imagined, seen or unseen. And, in addition to active, in-the-moment listening on location, transects can be recorded for listening at distant locations, and at different times.

While walking a transect does not provide opportunity to record an entire soundscape in situ, it does expand one's sense, both conceptually and imaginatively, of the interaction and/or interplay between sounds, social identity, and cultural diversity. Specifically, as I have said, sampling sounds heard while walking a transect provides a way of studying and understanding human endeavor and its artifacts as a form of interdisciplinary research and practice. At the heart of this endeavor is a focus on

sound and sense of place. This focus creates new phenomena to observe, research, interpret, and report, all rich opportunities for Digital Humanities research and creative practice.

Conclusion

The world of human endeavor and activity can be experienced through several senses: sight, taste, touch, and hearing. In the field of Digital Humanities, we use what we understand from sensory input, along with analysis and critique, augmented by digital technologies, to better understand narratives about human existence and its evolution.

In this essay I focus on one sense, hearing, because we are surrounded by sounds, from many sources, with many meanings. As Schafer notes, "the sense of hearing cannot be closed off at will. There are no earlids" (*The Tuning of the World* 11). The ear hears all, but some sounds are more relevant than others and humans have developed elaborate psychological mechanisms for concentrating on what is desirable (11). Our ears draw these sounds into our bodies where the information they convey has immediate physical, psychological, and psychoacoustic effects on our feelings, thoughts, actions, and abilities. For example, composer Richard Wagner (1813-1883) is alleged to have said the ear appeals to the inner self, a point illustrated in his opera *Siegfried* when Sigurd suddenly understands the sounds of birds (11, 29).

Soundscapes are all the sounds, ambient, background, and foreground, that we might hear in an acoustic space. Experiencing soundscapes can help us sort out what we hear, and how, why, and to what extent sounds heard are connected with human activities and endeavors. If sounds heard are familiar, soundscapes can be inviting. If foreign, soundscapes may seem frightening. Specifically, soundscapes help make meaning of the world around us by telling what is to be heard, how to listen, and which sounds to value (Feld, "A Rainforest Acoustemology"; Thompson, *The Soundscape of Modernity*; Proy; Vincent).

This meaning may be, as we have seen, presented in a variety of ways so to promote engaged listening. This, I believe, provides a number of new and interesting ways to consider research, scholarship, teaching, learning, and creative presentations.

Experiencing soundscapes may help us better understand the interplay and influence of sound(s) on human habitation of and endeavors in spaces, and resulting artifacts, the things that we humans create to justify, celebrate, and memorialize our existence. Walking a transect through an acoustic space, listening, and recording sounds that can later be arranged to provide a narrative interpretation is one methodology for

experiencing the potentiality of soundscapes. For these reasons, research and creative practice around and within walking transects to explore soundscapes is both interesting and appropriate with regard to Digital Humanities.

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Footnotes

1. The founding year for the World Soundscape Project is contested. Barry Truax, Barry, Hildegard Westerkamp, Adam P. Woog, and Helmut Kallmann say 1969 (Truax et al.), Schafer says 1970 (Schafer, "Acoustic Space" 29), while Darò says September 1972 (Darò 17, 200). Schafer left the project in 1975 to pursue opportunities as a musical composer. Barry Truax directed the efforts of the World Soundscape Project following Schafer's departure. Truax administers, the official World Soundscape Project website, including its publications. To access the full database with complete recordings, interviews, videos, etc. contact Barry Truax (truax@sfu.ca) for a guest password. [↵](#)