# On producing SpokenWeb podcast episode #3: Invisible Labour

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On Monday, SpokenWeb Podcast released its 3rd episode: Invisible Labour. Our UBCO SpokenWeb team has been following the podcast series since the inaugural episode, the occasion for which we hosted a big listening party in the AMP Lab. However, our team was *particularly* stoked about episode #3. Why? Because we made it.

Now, lest you think we just like the sound of our own voices, let me explain: first, we had a lot of fun making this podcast so it's no surprise we were excited about its much-anticipated release. "We made a thing!" But importantly, making this episode was meaningful to us as a team because it gave us a chance to listen to and learn more about each other's particular contributions and perspectives. Our goal was to describe the process of bringing a single recording through accessioning, condition assessment, digitization, editing, and online access, and to make that labour *audible*.

Although our research team meets on a weekly basis and everyone knew our podcast's story arc in advance, our interviews were all recorded separately by our fabulous student podcast producer Nour Sallam. So it wasn't until the first round of edits that the team heard all of their stories pieced together. The resulting podcast is, I think, pretty fun. Here are a few valuable lessons we learned in the process of making it:

1) **Get the very best quality audio capture from the start**. We have nice new equipment, access to a sound booth, and talented folks on the team, but this was our first podcast so, understandably, we're still refining our process. Equipment-wise, we used Shure SM7b mics, a microphone pre-amp, a MixPre 6 audio recorder, and Hindenburg software to edit. Post-production touch ups to the sound are possible, but as collaborator and audio engineer extraordinaire Craig Carpenter has stressed, it's important to get really good quality audio from the beginning. All of this takes practice, practice, practice.

2) **Scripting is so important!** The team works so closely and we know our design principles, the ethos of the collection, critical approaches well. We'd also talked through the podcast concept at length and so I knew it would be easy enough for people to stay on point. However, because of our busy schedules we each recorded interviews separately; as a result we had more overlap / repetition than I anticipated. SpokenWeb podcast taskforce lead Hannah McGregor tells me this style of podcast is one of that hardest to produce and in hindsight I would like to have scripted more to create a stronger narrative through line, without losing that feeling of spontaneity.

3) **You never have as much time as you think.** We started production on this podcast maybe two months in advance? Our project manager and podcast producer did a brilliant job coordinating the different interviews and rounds of edits. We ran into a few technical glitches nevertheless and with the end-of-term busy-ness, we still came up short on time. SpokenWeb podcast producer Stacey Copeland (SFU) gave us some great feedback and we were able to address some but not all of it in the time we had. That said, I feel confident we'll get more efficient as we get our process down and make more podcasts.

4) **You never have as much time as you think**. Wait, didn't I just say this one? It applies to the actual podcast as well. We had more stories to tell than ended up fitting into the length of the podcast. Fortunately, we're about to launch a podcast series of our own called SoundBox Signals and I think we'll see those stories appear in a few of our minisodes.

5) **It takes a village**. In co-producing an episode on invisible labour that tries to make that collaborative labour audible, I want to give a shout out to folks who contributed to the making of this episode: Mahshid Alinoori and Mathieu Aubin who helped set up equipment; Amy Thiessen who kept us organized with her project management wizardry; Craig Carpenter who advised from afar on technical specs; and Marjorie Mitchell who provided podcasting advice and general advising on this project and the UBCO SpokenWeb project as a whole. And finally, podcasting duo Hannah McGregor who gave the episode its beautiful introduction and Stacey Copeland who guided the whole process. Thank you!

With those lessons in mind, the UBCO SpokenWeb team is looking forward to creating more episodes including the upcoming SoundBox Signals podcast series in January 2020. Stay tuned!

## Karis Shearer

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