

Launching the AMPLab Website: Putting the Shelf Online

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SpokenWeb's AMPLab is located on the sixth floor of Concordia University's library building, just off a narrow corridor in the heart of the English Department. It is a unique space dedicated to the practice of literary sound studies, housing an impressive collection of audio-related equipment, from turntables and mixers to microphones, vintage reel-to-reel tape machines, and the latest in digital recording technology.

The AMPLab is available as a local resource for students, professors, and researchers to pursue sound projects and expand the scope of literary sound research. This year, with its growing wealth of expertise and equipment, the SpokenWeb team decided to extend the resources available in the AMPLab to an even wider community—but first we had to take inventory of all it had to offer.

What exactly was sitting on the lab shelves? How did each piece of equipment function? And how could these be best put to use for research or creative projects? It became clear that a comprehensive AMPLab website was necessary to document everything in the lab as well as introduce the unique learning and project-development space dedicated to sound-based study.

The site started with a simple and effective wireframe and design that made it easy to search and browse through the lab's machines. Created by Jaime MacLean at Koumbit, the site structure was developed to showcase the humans behind the AMPLab as well as the equipment and lab stations available for use.

Then Isabelle Poirier (MA Journalism) and I were brought onboard as Research Assistants to compile a complete list of the lab's contents and populate the site with descriptions and images of the machines it holds. From discovering machines hidden at the back of shelves and tucked away in cabinets, to photographing every item, researching vintage equipment, scouring the Internet for original user manuals, and writing the content copy, building the site was a significant and fascinating task that provided deeper insight into the AMPLab's role in literary sound studies.

Isabelle's Favourite Find:



"I had an amazing time exploring the equipment in the AMPLab—it truly felt like rummaging through a museum's storage unit. Dusting off the items to get them photo-ready was both exciting and perplexing, as I tried to make sense of these old, intricate devices. However, my most memorable discovery was the Edison Acoustic Phonograph. I had always been intrigued by the horn resting atop a bookshelf, and the day I finally took it down, set it up, and revealed its stunning floral design, I was completely awestruck. Aesthetically, it's my favourite photo I took for the AMPLab website. Looking back, I only wish I had learned how to use it!"

Tina's Favourite Find:



“The vintage equipment was a lot of fun to research and learn about, but my favourite piece is probably the Rek-O-Kut imperial lathe disc recorder. It’s the precursor to modern vinyls, making instantaneous (if less sturdy) albums on acetate using a lathe and giving recordings that typical crisp and crackly sound. Elvis made his first ever recording on a Rek-O-Kut in 1953: *My Happiness* and *That’s When Your Heartaches Begin*.”

Amplitudelab.ca is a resource for scholars looking to conduct sound-based research, or anyone with an interest in audio across a multitude of formats. The AMPLab website provides an extensive inventory of what’s available on site, from magnetic cassette and digital audio tape decks to powerful analogue-to-digital converters, a heating/drying oven for baking open reel tapes before they are digitized, recording equipment and software, a portable PA system, vintage Walkmans and MiniDisc players, a wire recorder, a Victrola, an original Edison cylinder phonograph player, and much more.

There are also descriptions of the lab’s digitization and listening stations, digital projects, and the soundproofed podcast studio—which is equipped with the latest in podcast equipment and technology to capture and work with sound.

To visit the AMPLab, borrow equipment, find support for your research, speak to an expert, or book time in the podcast studio, please [get in touch here](#).



Tina Wayland

Tina Wayland recently completed her Creative Writing MA at Concordia University, where she won the department's David McKeen Award in 2022 and 2024. She's been published in such places as *carte blanche*, *Headlight Anthology*, and *Soliloquies Anthology*, as well as longlisted for the CBC Nonfiction Prize. She is currently working on a short-story collection about her Lithuanian grandmother, funded by the Canada Council for the Arts.

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