

Dear Colleague,

Many museums, libraries and archives are finding that they have a need to manage audio and video, moving from analog formats such as magnetic tape, vinyl pressings or wax cylinders to digital formats for streaming and hosting. The Avalon Media System is a Samvera and Fedora-based repository tool for managing and sharing audio and video content for the public, for specific patrons, research and course reserves and tools for connecting to preservation and archival systems. Primarily developed at Indiana and Northwestern Universities, with generous support from IMLS and the Mellon Foundation, this open source application has been free to adopt and customize for any organization willing to run the software.

In 2017, Northwestern University received a grant from IMLS geared toward developing sustainability and plotting a future course for Avalon to ensure the application can continue to develop to meet the ongoing and future needs of the library and archives community. As part of this work, Northwestern and Indiana have charted a course for growing the community of users and inviting their participation, hopefully changing the model from passive adoption of Avalon to taking an active role and sharing a voice as Avalon continues to develop.

The Avalon User Round-Table is a leading factor in the move toward growth and sustainability of Avalon Media System. While the Avalon project will continue to see core development at and be supported by Indiana University, the Avalon User Round-Table is intended to foster a community of practitioners/users/adopters of Avalon, such as librarians, archivists and those who use Avalon for their work and have direct contact with patrons, while also including software developers, system administrators running Avalon.

The Avalon User Round-Table serves three primary functions

1. A communication network for users, which can lead to the creation and documentation of best practices, increased conversation around Avalon's potential in the digital media ecosystem, and further development of audio and video best practices
2. A conduit from the wider community of users and potential users (we welcome those adopting) to share their experience with, and their ideas regarding the best paths forward for Avalon, which in turn enables the core Avalon development team to best weigh potential development against the greatest need in the community
3. A fulcrum for collaborative innovation beyond the scope of Avalon's formal roadmap that facilitates librarians and developers initiating new application features, documentation, training materials, etc... for Avalon, and not depend strictly upon the core development team at IU

This service brings immense value to the wider library community and profession. Libraries, museums, archives and galleries are years behind private industry when it comes to managing and presenting video and audio. As key assets in our collections that carry information and nuance well beyond the printed word, audio and video will not only see increased usage in

archiving work, but also in data management, theses and dissertations, university archives and collections and all of the scholarly work currently underway in the modern lab, classroom and more.

By collaborating on the development and sustainability of Avalon Media System, the work done by the Users Round-Table interest and working groups will ensure the longevity and greater adoption of Avalon as an industry standard in a sub-field still seeking leaders and trustworthy technologies.

The work within the Round-Table will be public, well-documented, discoverable and shareable. Projects of varying scope taken up by the Round-Table will be well-defined, including functionality and impact, and could encompass documentation, product or feature research, training materials, release testing, or more depending on the needs of the community.

Digital audio and video content is still a new frontier in most libraries, museums and archives, and it's our hope that we can grow, share and develop the expertise to serve our patrons and users now and in the future. The effort required to build the necessary infrastructure is large in scale and scope, and requires the diligence and attention of the community in order to succeed. We hope that you will support your colleague as they endeavor to develop new technologies beneficial to the library community at large.

Best regards

Ryan Steans
Avalon Community and Project Manager
Northwestern University