**Description of the Project and Its Significance**

This project will preserve, document, and make accessible a carefully selected body of the most significant early twentieth-century audio recordings from South Asia along with related documentation. Both scholarly field recordings and commercial records will be included so that researchers and the general public may more comprehensively explore expressive culture in the subcontinent.

Access to audio recordings is a prerequisite for research by musicologists, anthropologists, historians, and others in the humanities. Yet current library and archive collections in the United States, Europe, and South Asia are distinctly ill-equipped to provide scholars with early recordings in many of the languages and musical genres of South Asia. No collections on South Asia have systematically acquired discs and cylinders from the early era of audio recording and as a rule those recordings which are held are not well documented. Demand for these materials has increased dramatically as the result of fifty years of U.S. federal funding for study of "critical languages" and renewed attention in Europe to South Asia as an arena for scholarly engagement.

Musicological research provides an example of the increasing demand for early recordings. It is common for libraries to hold recent critical studies about early musicians of colonial India and yet not have a single original recording. Changes in taste of the South Asian listening public have meant that these musical works have not been reissued in modern form by South Asian recording companies. Many students now find it necessary to postpone their critical inquiry until they can consult recordings during research in South Asia.

This project will add digital copies of at least 890 field recordings (most from wax cylinders), 8,500 shellac discs, 750 photographic images, and 550 archival documents to the stock of research materials available freely via the Internet for non-commercial use. The audio files, field photographs, and archival documents will be prepared according to internationally accepted standards for preservation reformatting. All of the recordings included in the project will be cataloged fully. Bibliographic data will be accessible to scholars and librarians through the major bibliographic utilities and by connection to the Web-based South Asia Union Catalogue. The digital audio files will be archived following established international practices. The digitized recordings and documentary files will be accessible via the Digital South Asia Library Web site and the Berliner Phonogramm-Archiv’s. This project will adhere to international copyright laws and act ethically with respect to the creators and their heirs of the works we handle.

Wax cylinders and the related field notes will be drawn from the renowned Berliner Phonogramm-Archiv collection. The recordings made by Erich Moritz von Hornbostel and Arnold Bake during the first four decades of the twentieth century will receive first attention given their pivotal importance for South Asian studies. Commercial gramophone recordings will come from collections owned by the University of Chicago and sister institutions in South Asia. A small number of shellac discs will also be digitized from archival collections in Great Britain.

The project guidelines for the selection of recordings have been developed to ensure that the resources chosen are diverse enough in musical genre and geographical origin to meet the needs of South Asia scholars from numerous disciplines. Project staff will implement the guidelines in selection of individual recordings for digitization. The Advisory Board will review those item-level decisions periodically throughout the project and suggest necessary adjustments.

The impact of this project will be most pronounced on the universities and colleges where instruction in the languages and music of South Asia takes place, as well as those institutions where graduates of such programs have positions. These scholars will be able to listen to recordings prior to research abroad and consequently have more time abroad for consulting unique resources. Users will also be able to return easily to a recording, a capability of fundamental importance in the humanities. As these recordings are also rare in South Asia, this project will benefit scholars there as well.