

Vermont Folklife Center Listening in Place Project

Rev Call Recorder Telephone Interview Process

Overview

1. Roles and Process
2. Coordinating Interview
3. Setting Up Rev Call Recorder
4. Conducting and Recording Interview
5. Processing Files

INTRODUCTION

The Vermont Folklife Center (VFC) initiated the Listening in Place (LIP) project in direct response to the emergence of COVID-19 in the United States as a way to encourage Vermonters to maintain interpersonal connections remotely during the winter/spring stay-at-home period of the pandemic. LIP (<http://vtfolklife.org/listening>) encompasses four overlapping facets, three of which foster interview-based communication between residents of the state. Due to the nature of the pandemic, LIP encourages remote interviewing between people not residing in the same household and offers suggestions for platforms and software for recording. The ubiquity of cellphones led us to identify a number of free and paid options for call recording apps on both Android and iOS. This case study outlines our experience using Rev Call Recorder for iOS.

Rev Call Recorder is developed and maintained by the speech-to-text/audio and video transcription company Rev (<http://www.rev.com>). Their free recording tool serves as a gateway to the company's paid media transcription services. This case study is based on the use of Rev Call Recorder 1.18 on a 2020 iPhone XE running iOS 13.5.1 on the AT&T network. Due to poor cell service, calls have been made with "Wi-Fi Calling" engaged. Internet service at the site is provided via Comcast, and local Wi-Fi via a Netgear R6400 router using the 2.4GHz band.

We selected Rev Call Recorder for the project after conducting research into several free call recording apps available for iOS. Based on our investigation, Rev Call Recorder emerged as one of the most widely adopted and best reviewed free options available for cellphone-based call recording on iPhone.

Rev Call Recorder generates a monophonic 32bit 22.5kHz MP3 file of the recorded call, allowing it to represent the dynamic range and limited sound frequency bandwidth of cell phone audio transmission. While recordings made using Rev Call Recorder are superior to old landline telephone recordings, they are inferior to in person recordings made with quality gear.

We employ Rev Call Recorder in a specific facet of LIP—what we call "Virtual Vox Pops" (<http://vermontfolklifecenter.org/virtual-vox-pops>). Rather than provide an overview of the use of Rev Call Recorder in the specific context of LIP and Virtual Vox Pops, this document provides a generic, practical overview of the use of Rev Call Recorder for remote interviews on iPhone with reference to VFC approaches.

Rev Call Recorder works via a merged call system—first the Interviewer dials the Rev recording line via the app, then, using the “Add Call” button in the iOS Phone app, puts the recording line on Hold and makes a separate call to the Interviewee. Once contact has been made with the Interviewee and both parties agree to begin recording, the Interviewer uses the “Merge Calls” button on the iOS Phone app to merge the two calls and recording commences.

While in the United States federal and many state laws do allow for “one party consent” in regard to telephone call recording, the requirements of ethical engagement with our research partners supersede these legal distinctions. In the context of interviewing for oral history, ethnography or any qualitative research process, receiving consent to record from interviewees prior to initiating recording is an ethical necessity. Do not record telephone interviews without getting direct permission from the interviewee prior to commencing recording of the call.

ROLES AND PROCESS

Two roles are required to set up and host these interviews: Interviewer and Interviewee

Interviewer: Coordinates scheduling of interview. Conducts the interview, thanks the Interviewee afterwards and provides Interviewee with a copy of the recording.

Below is an overview of the responsibilities of each person within the process of managing the technical aspects of the interview.

1. The Interviewer and Interviewee communicate regarding scheduling of interview and the potential scope and content of it
2. Prior to the interview, Interviewer shares release form (electronically or via mail) with Interviewee and explains the consent procedure
3. Interviewer calls Interviewee on appointed day at appointed time, informs Interviewee prior to initiating recording, and initiates recording when approved by Interviewee
4. Interviewer delivers copy of recording to Interviewee

COORDINATING INTERVIEW

- Initiate contact with Interviewee in accordance with personal or institutional approaches. For the Virtual Vox Pop facet of the LIP project, Interviewees filled out an online form to request an interview with a VFC staff member. Staff members responded to these submissions via email.
- Finalize date and time of interview

SETTING UP REV CALL RECORDER

Rev Call Recorder is accessible via the Apple App Store. To download and install the app on your phone you will need to know your Apple login and password. We recommend making several test calls prior to the interview to familiarize yourself with the app.

CONDUCTING AND RECORDING INTERVIEW

- Open Rev Call Recorder app:
 - Select “Start Recorded Call”
 - Select “Outgoing Call”
 - Select “Call Rev’s Recorder”
 - iOS Phone app dials the Rev’s Recorder telephone number. A beep will sound indicating that the call has connected.
 - Select the “Add Call” button
 - Dial Interviewee’s telephone number
 - Greet Interviewee, inform them that they are not yet being recorded. When they are ready for recording, tell them they will hear silence for a few moments and then recording will begin.
 - Press the “Merge Calls” button. This will merge the call to the Interviewee with Rev’s Call Recorder line and begin recording.
 - Return to merged call, begin interview
- At conclusion of interview, Interviewer hangs up, ending the call and the recording

PROCESSING FILES

Accessing the Recording

- Immediately after completing your call, the recording will be available in the app for download. Audio files are identified with a date and time (e.g. “5/21/2020, 2:01 PM”). To download:
 - Tap on the appropriate file, this will open the audio player and display a “Transcribe” button. To the left of the button is an upload button—a small image of a rectangle with an upward pointing arrow.
 - Click on the upload button
 - Click on the “Share Recording” button
 - Chose how you would like to send the file. Options will differ depending on apps installed on phone, but standard options include sending the file to a computer using AirDrop, sending it in an iMessage or SMS, or via email.
 - Retrieve the file and save it to your computer

Saving and Naming the Files

- Rev Call Recorder generates a monophonic 32bit 22.5kHz MP3 file
 - Open the file in the audio editing software of your choice.
 - There will be a period of recorded silence at the head of the file captured during the time the Rev’s Recorder line was on hold. Delete this silence if you wish.

- Save file as a 24bit 44.1kHz mono WAV. Name the file in accordance with your own or your institution's file naming protocols. This will be your preservation file.
- Save an additional MP3 version of the file. This will be your use copy and the version you share with your Interviewee.
- Rename the original file in line with file naming protocols and save it along with the others as the original source file.

Sharing Recording with Interviewee

- Contact the interviewee and ask how they would like to receive their copy of the interview recording. VFC options generally include Dropbox, Google Drive, or via mail on a USB thumb drive, SD card, or CD- or DVD-R.