# Taking Fieldnotes & Field Recording Campus

Taking notes is a--if not *the*--central practice in field research. In traditional qualitative research (i.e. ethnography, interviews, surveys, site research) researchers trace observations through writing descriptions, summaries, and short jottings as fieldnotes. While often written by hand in notebooks, a range of increasingly available and easy-to-use digital media create more avenues for fieldnote practice. Alongside and with handwritten notes about an experience or a text, how might cultivating practices of recording sounds, capturing images, and taking videos reorient fieldnote practice? An initial response would be to reconsider fieldnotes less as a description of an object and more as an activity of prolonging affective encounters.

For the 2018 Digital Field Methods Institute, we will focus our attention on sonic encounters and employ sonic methods. Using an array of media, you will be introduced to and practiced in a range of techniques for generating materials (i.e. collecting data) for use in qualitative research. These generated materials will of course be used for analysis but they also should be available as the material for the eventual projects.

In the first field trip--and exploration of the sonic landscape across the University of Texas-Austin campus--you will be issued a digital recorder to capture the following items:

- **Event** - An event would be a "complete" sequence of actions that come together as a distinct trajectory. Examples may include a bus ride, a coffee drink order, a long walk.
- **Sound Object** - A sound object is a particular object whose sonic character is undeniably distinct, such as a water fountain, a car, footsteps, or an animal of some sort.
- **Unsound Object** - An unsound object is the sound of an object whose characteristics may be unrecognizable and surprising.
- **Movement** - For movement, capture/generate the sounds for what movement is and does in a sonic environment.
- **Soundscape** - For the soundscape, collect the ambient sounds of a location.

For each sound, take written notes for each of the sound files you record noting the filename you recorded, location in which it was recorded, relationships that compose the sound, mic placement, and any other interesting factors in the sonic encounter.

It is likely--and encouraged--that you will make several attempts to gather these findings, resulting in multiple examples for each category. In our *Feedback from the Field* session, we will discuss our individual findings as a group, paying special attention to what defines a sonic encounter as well as initial experiences for capturing data of those encounters.