



STRATEGIES FOR MULTIMEDIA ARCHIVES

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PLENARY SESSION REPORT

Cultural, heritage and media institutions face a number of challenges when moving even a part of their collection and archival management into the digital age. This conference aims to contribute to the international discourse on the impact of 'going digital' by focusing on four specific questions that newly developing multimedia archives are faced with: how do you position yourself to the need for funding; how is context created and maintained in the multidisciplinary digital archive; what audience do you aim to reach and how do you reach them; and what distribution models can you use?

Nathalie Doury (Paris en Image, Paris): Funding digitization projects by public-private partnerships

How does Paris digitize its cultural heritage and what lessons did it learn from it? That's the main question Nathalie Doury tried to answer during her lecture. The city of Paris has no less than 15 heritage institutions controlling together a collection of ca. three million items, of which remarkably many photographs. Among the different heritage institutions heterogeneous forms of (non digital) reproduction, distribution and collection management systems existed, however. As Paris additionally herited the photography collection of Roger Viollet (good for not less than 7 million pictures), the city was obliged to find a way to bring homogeneity in the (digital) reproduction, to create a space for preserving and distribution and to find a partner to manage the Viollet collection. The solution was the foundation of a semi public company that would manage this collection and would start to digitize, unlock (metadata) and distribute the other photography collections of the city.

Regarding reproduction, Parisienne de Photographie engages in the digitization of photographs, the digitization on-demand of non photographic material (ex. city maps), the integration of metadata and the recommendation concerning best practices of digitization. The goal is the digitization of 60.000 items a year. A committee defines the priorities and bases its choice on a distributive code of 1/3 for preservation, 1/3 for museum activities and 1/3 for commercial use.

Concerning distribution, Parisienne de Photographie delivers digital reproductions to the governmental services, offers online access to reproductions and manages the reproduction rights.

Parisienne de Photographie has a year budget of 3,2 million euro and a team of 40 staff members. The first year, it invested 400.000 euro in material. The city contributes 600.000 euro per year, 75% of the budget is derived from own income (from the reproduction rights).

Until now, Parisienne de Photographie succeeded to achieve its qualitative goals: its business model is sustainable, the collections are more visible and a common methodology is developed regarding metadata. Less positive are the sometimes difficult collaboration between the different heritage institutions and lots of time and man power needed to prepare digitization.

Bridget McKenzie (Flowassociates, London): Context in interdisciplinary archives

How can we reach a maximal outreach by bringing together national heritage collections and by responding to the current subjects? How can we involve the audience and help to extend the collective memory? McKenzie highlighted the growing "infodiversity" in the digital age and the necessity of collaboration and maximal audience implication in the unlocking of content. The creation of files and grids must allow service providers to do something with the content, as for example data mining.

In the post-digital age, a museum is no longer restricted to a building or physical location. From now on, the 'museum experience' can be displaced to the living room and marketed as an intimate experience via online digitized collections. Additionally, unknown possibilities of creativity are offered: visitors can tag content, make mash-ups or edit content. Virtual collections of different museums can be connected. Although some resistance is shown by the museums who want to build up their own experience for their users, it offers extra possibilities to these visitors. McKenzie cited the example of Memory Maker in New Zealand

(<http://remix.digitalnz.org>): visitors can remix New Zealand's history themselves. An other example is the Brooklyn Museum of Art, where visitors are encouraged to tag content. Bridget McKenzie concluded with the statement that heritage institutions need more than ever to follow an 'open culture' in their digital strategy and, as subsidization is not always evident, to involve the audience as much as possible in the unlocking of content.

Max Benoit (INA, Paris): INA, halfway to a broad saving and digitization plan

In 1974 INA, Institut national de l'Audiovisuel, was founded: the French national institute of radio and television. Its mission is threefold: to preserve, disseminate and validate the archive collections and the knowledge build up over the years.

INA's collection is divided in 2 categories. The historical archive contains 70 years of radio and television programs, representing 1.400.000 hours of public radio and TV. Main challenge here is to deal with all the problems of managing a large, analogue, audiovisual collection and the difficulties arising out of the different formats used throughout the years. To treat these problems a digitalization project was started in 2000 to digitize 850.000 hours of endangered material by 2015, to preserve it for future generations and to open it up to the public. Since INA owns the copyright on this material, they could decide on the dissemination of the archives. To select the material a committee was set up to guide INA, consisting of historians, philosophers, artists, and others. Their task was not to select individual items but to define the general concepts of the selection process. The difficult part was to convince the government of investing in this endeavor.

The second part of the collection is more recent. It is the legal deposit of radio and television programs, both commercial and public, since 1992. INA archives the collections, but does not own the rights. INA acts as a mediator between the owner and the user. Since 1992 2.100.000 hours is deposited.

On these collections several portals are implemented: for research, professionals, education and the general public. Depending on the profile of the user, collections can be viewed, downloaded, reused. Researchers can view documents in the legal deposit for free, others have to pay. Everyone can view low resolution video from the public archive, but has to pay for download or DVD in high resolution. This business model generates profits, divided between the rights holders and INA. 1/3 of the annual budget is generated by the commercial activities. For 2/3 of its budget INA has to rely on public funds. INA takes up to 3% of the budget for public tv and radio.

The website of INA now provides access to 100.000 hours of the archival collection. The general public can view this archive but has to pay for a download or a dvd. For education some material of INA is integrated in an educational website, Jalons, initiated by the ministry of education.

Tine van Nierop (Consultant, Amsterdam): Why small institutions should collaborate to digitize now

Every institution, large and small, struggles with the same pressure to be visible on the web. Moreover, they have the same needs concerning the fast decay of the audiovisual carriers and face the same challenge to preserve the material for future generations. Bigger institutions, however, receive funding to set up prestigious projects including mass digitization and fancy, expert websites. A beautiful example is "Images for the future", which received 150 million euro funding to digitize thousands of hours of video, film and audio. Smaller institutions remain often empty handed. And that is why they should collaborate. Together they can form strategic alliances and address the government to stress the importance of local collections to the community. Knowledge and experiences can be shared, costs can be kept under control. Lots of reasons to partner up.

But before a strategic partnership can be set up, common goals must be defined, and, more importantly, an inventory of the collections should be drafted to be able to set up criteria and estimate the budget. And that is often a problem in these smaller institutions. They don't have the means to invest in such an effort. To get help from the large institutions is not realistic. They work on a different level, too advanced to be copied. The only solution is to team up and collaborate, share knowledge and facilities.