Promotion and Accessibility of Audiovisual Collections at the National Library of Latvia (NLL)

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Audiovisual Reading Room
NLL

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Audiovisual collection at the NLL

- First sound recordings acquired in 1961, established as a department in 1975
- Legal Deposit of Latvia’s AV publications (since 2006)
- Materials pertaining to Latvia or Latvians published elsewhere, including diaspora
- Collection for lifelong education, research, leisure
- Currently more than 79’000 items - sound recordings (LPs, CD, audiocassettes, shellacs, other), video recordings (VHS, DVD, Blu-ray), multimedia materials, language and other subjects teaching kits with AV component, born digital sound recordings
The largest part of sound recordings contain classical music (Western, Latvian, Russian). We hold a large number of records by "Melodia" (Мелодия) with many notable recordings by well-known Soviet artists of the time. There are also selections of recordings by foreign labels. Although the majority of sound recordings are music, there are also audiobooks, recordings of plays, nature sounds, noises.
The content of video collection is very diverse – there are feature films, documentaries, animated films from Latvia and many other countries, recordings of opera, ballet and concert performances, as well as musicals and musical films. In the last few years, the collection has been expanded with cinema classics, such as the best examples of the silent film genre, French New Wave, and the works of world-renowned directors.
Our audience

• Our expectations:
  - students,
  - pupils of art and music schools,
  - researchers of music and cinema fields, or people
    with interest in music and cinema
• In reality:
  - students
  - seniors
  - people from lower social levels, including from
    shelters
  - families with young children

Initially, we thought that our audience would be mostly students, researching materials for their studies, and people with either professional or personal interest in music and cinema, broadly speaking. However, we learned in practice that our audience is much more diverse than we imagined, - there are students but also seniors and people with special needs, families with children, and even people without work and fixed residence. Such diverse audience also requires different methods of promoting and discovery of content.
So, to put it in a chart, our audience consists of 3 types of visitors, in roughly about the same number – children, with or without parents, persons with no work or no permanent address (in other words, living in shelters), and the group we would like to see grow most of all – that is, students, researchers, and those with special interest in sound or moving image.
In a survey done by the Research centre SKDS in 2017 about the ‘image’ of the National Library of Latvia among the residents of Latvia, one of the questions was:
Did you know there is an Audiovisual centre where you can listen to music recordings, watch films and use specialised multimedia processing software, for free?
As you can see, almost 2/3 of the respondents didn’t know about the existence of Audiovisual Centre at the library, and hence, no knowledge of our collection.
Whereas most of the people knew that there is a conference centre at the library, and were aware of the various cultural events happening there, and that there is a cafe and a restaurant at the National Library, and even that you can use the online electronic catalogue to find out about availability of the books at the library.
So, what have we done so far to promote the existence of our reading room and collection?

The first information about the Audiovisual Reading Room is often given by the guide during an overall library tour. We are also organising specialised in-depth tours for students and pupils from the culture, music and arts schools, colleges and universities, often in cooperation with Music and Arts reading rooms.
Together with library’s Department of Communication we try to promote our reading room with organised events and exhibitions. However, we have learned from our experience that ‘your event’ often gets lost in the general stream of information because library is literally swamped with events, there are 3 or 4 happening every day! This is in part because the library’s new building is seen as a very ‘cool’ place to hold events in, it has good facilities. Also, library has about 20 reading rooms that each organise events and in a way, competes with each other. So in the last 2 years we have focused on organising 2 events per year, but we change the exhibits in our display cases in the reading room every few months.

We also place information about our events and exhibitions in the library’s social networks, such as the Facebook account, but again, the amount of information is simply too great.
The Dept. of Communication arranged a cooperation project with the Academy of Culture, where one of their students in the faculty of film production wrote scripts and directed several promotional videos about the AV reading room. These videos were made like little movies, involving well-know personalities in Latvia. The videos were then shown before movie nights in the big hall of the library, and at other movie-themed events, at some of those we also prepared a short presentation for the audience, telling of the collection and facilities of the AV reading room.

One of the videos involves a well known DJ in Latvia Toms Grēviņš, and composer Pēteris Vasks, who might be well known more broadly.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yGR5qjpCwzM&feature
4. It is a well-known fact that people generally don’t like to use the library’s catalogue for searching, and to be fair, it is not very user-friendly. So how to make the content of our video collection better accessible, so that it doesn’t get lost in the ‘black holes’ of the catalogue? Unexpectedly, a very popular form of promoting our film collection have been the ‘film lists’ – that is, various lists made by librarian with films grouped according to their subject, genre, or origin. At the moment there are about 15 different lists, of which the most popular are:

- Latvian films
- foreign feature films
- documentaries
- films about music and musicians
- films about art and artists, etc.

These lists are available in printed format, in our reading room, but also on the library’s website, as PDFs (click on the ‘Film lists’).

Each list is created slightly different, we try to predict what is the most relevant information in each individual case, for example, in the list of documentaries we try to summarise what the film is about, in the list of opera performances we name the conductor and the singers. It is also important to show the film language and subtitles.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Originālnosaukums</th>
<th>Alternatīvo nosaukumu vai tulkījumu</th>
<th>Režisors</th>
<th>Filma iznākšanas g.</th>
<th>Rezolucija</th>
<th>Ģrāfs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pierrot le fou</td>
<td>The wall</td>
<td>Godard, Jean-Luc</td>
<td>1965</td>
<td>Franču jaunais vīns</td>
<td>F061/1066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pink Floyd the wall</td>
<td>The wall</td>
<td>Parker, Alan</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Musikālā film. Pašlaik: The other side of the wall: documentary u.c.</td>
<td>F061/542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Platino na blondine</td>
<td>Platino vāja blondine</td>
<td>Capra, Frank</td>
<td>1931</td>
<td>Romantiska komādija</td>
<td>F061/831 F061/2384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play it again, Sam</td>
<td>Jauniklatie; Platanūtne</td>
<td>Allen, Woody</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Fantāzija</td>
<td>F061/2474</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasantville</td>
<td>Jauniklatie</td>
<td>Ross, Gary</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Fantāzija</td>
<td>F061/1018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pokolenie</td>
<td>A generation</td>
<td>Wajda, Andrzej</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>No Andreja Vajdas kara trīsjāzus</td>
<td>F061/1543</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poitou</td>
<td>Ashes and diamonds</td>
<td>Harris, Ed</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Pār amerīku mākslīgumu</td>
<td>F061/1708</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poplūd i diamant</td>
<td>Ashes and diamonds</td>
<td>Wajda, Andrzej</td>
<td>1958</td>
<td>No Andreja Vajdas kara trīs jāzus</td>
<td>F061/1545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poulet au vin</td>
<td>Cep au vin</td>
<td>Chabrol, Claude</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>No stundas Classic from the master of suspense</td>
<td>F061/1409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pride &amp; prejudice</td>
<td>Гордост и предубеждение</td>
<td>Wright, Joe</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Dāna Ostin šovaina ekrāns: Pašlaik: A Bennet family portrait; Jane Austen, ahead of her time</td>
<td>F061/935</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prisoners</td>
<td>Gūstējumi; Пленници</td>
<td>Villeneuve, Denis</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Kriminalīla</td>
<td>F061/2696</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
During the last 3 years, the total number of users of the Audiovisual Reading room seems to be slowly on the rise. As you can see, the lowest usage is generally during the summer, and then it goes up again in the colder months. We have introduced stronger measures, asking our users to leave the premises if they are unhygienic. Also, we have monitored some of our users who were inclined to fall asleep in our cabins, and have denied them the usage of our reading room, in accordance with the Library usage rules.
In this chart we can see that our video collection gets much more usage over our audio (data about our physical collection). The reasons for this might be several:

• video is an easier format to use, it appeals to wider public on all levels of society;
• film lists play a huge role in making it easy to find a film to watch – no such lists exist for our audio material. Some of our audience do not wish to search the catalogue, even if the staff helped them to do it.
Conclusions

• Video wins over audio
• Need to target audiophiles, bring out the audio ‘gems’ in our collection
• Need to establish research partnerships within academic world
• Work on clearly defining our target audiences and what could attract them
Photo credits:

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Thank you!

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