

Archives in the audiovisual world

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When starting to write this paper I had planned the title to be something like "What is an archive"? After looking in encyclopaedias and on the internet, I understand that the proper title should be "What are archives?"

A short overview of the "proper" meaning of the word:

The word *archives* is derived from the Greek *arkhé* meaning government or order. The word originally developed from the Greek "arkheion" which refers to the home or dwelling of the Archon, in which important official state documents were filed and interpreted under the authority of the Archon.

On the website of Wikipedia it says:

*"An **archive** refers to a collection of records, and also refers to the location in which these records are kept. Archives are made up of records which have been created during the course of an individual or organization's life. In general an archive consists of records which have been selected for permanent or long-term preservation. Records, which may be in any media, are normally unpublished, unlike books and other publications.*

Archives may also be generated by large organizations such as corporations and governments. Archives are distinct from libraries insofar as archives hold records which are unique. Archives can be described as holding information "by-products" of activities, while libraries hold specifically authored information "products". "

The word 'archives' is the correct terminology, whereas 'archive' as a noun or a verb is related to computer science.

Archives were well developed by the ancient Chinese, the ancient Greeks, and ancient Romans. Modern archival thinking has many of its roots in the French Revolution.

A second explanation is given by The Archives Center:

"In the course of daily life, individuals and organizations create and keep information about their personal and business activities. Archivists identify and preserve portions of this recorded information that have lasting value.

These records -- and the places they are kept in -- are called "archives." Archival records take many forms, including correspondence diaries, financial and legal documents, photographs, and sound recordings."

But what about audiovisual then? I can't find a single outstanding explanation: audiovisual occurs mainly with other terms – audiovisual archives, audiovisual art, audiovisual education etc. I will give you an example of a view that combines the two words in a while – audiovisual and archives. For some who uses the word very

strictly says that press archives or a photo archives are not “proper” audiovisual because they do not combine sounds AND images. But how are we going to look upon photos and press clips that are to be found on the web? And a digital archive must have a safety copy in-house or elsewhere.

I will not go into the difference between archives and collections, but be sure that there are people who say there is - and an important one as well.

How to know what is what in this jungle of definitions? I will show some ways to enlighten yourselves or be more confused but on a higher level.

IASA – The International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives has worked for almost 40 years within the audiovisual world. We celebrate our 40th anniversary in 2009. And of course this issue has been discussed over the years.

IASA is an organisation that from the start was mainly for sound archives. The name was at the start The International Association of Sound Archives. But in the beginning of the 90ies many larger archives also had built up collections of images – mainly video, film but also TV (National Archives i.e). So since 1993 the name has included audiovisual.

Today we are around 330 members, both institutions and individuals.

Among our members you can find: National archives, libraries and museums; university libraries, radio archives & libraries, public libraries, film and video archives, music archives, research archives, record companies, music information centres, music schools/colleges.

IASA holds an annual conference - both within and outside Europe. This year we will be holding a joint conference together with the BAAC and the LTV. It takes place in Riga 16th – 20th September.

There is also an organisation that tries to keep an overview in order to co-ordinate matters within the audiovisual world: CCAAA.

And IASA is one of the founding members of the *Co-ordinating Council of Audiovisual Archives Associations (CCAAA)*, an international alliance that seeks to represent the interests of the profession to governments and international agencies.

CCAAA provides a shared platform for eight membership based organisations wishing to co-operate on influencing the development of public policy on issues of importance to professional audiovisual archivists.

Association for Recorded Sound Collections - ARSC

www.arsc-audio.org

Association of Moving Image Archivists – AMIA

www.amianet.org

International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives

www.iasa-web.org

International Council on Archives - ICA

www.ica.org

International Federation of Film Archives - FIAF

www.fiafnet.org

International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions - IFLA

www.ifla.org

International Federation of Television Archives – FIAT/IFTA

www.fiatifta.org

Southeast Asia-Pacific Audiovisual Archive Association – SEAPAAVA

www.seapavaa.org

For instance they hold a Joint Technical Symposium every 3rd, 4th year. One is coming up now in 28-30 June in Toronto, Canada hosted by AMIA.

The CCAAA works closely with UNESCO. One thing has been to create a special day for audiovisual archives. I won't give you the complicated background, but the UNESCO General Conference has resolved that 27th of October each year is declared the World Day for Audiovisual Heritage. And 2007 is the first time it will be celebrated fully. This year there won't be any co-ordinated celebrations, but each institution, country make their own plans.

UNESCO has launched the Memory of the World Programme to “guard against collective amnesia” calling upon the preservation of the valuable archive holdings and library collections all over the world ensuring their wide dissemination – the only MoW in the Baltic is Dainu Skapis, Archives of Latvian Folklore in Riga.

Publication has also been a thing that CCAAA and UNESCO have been working with.

“Audiovisual Archiving: Philosophy and Principles” by Ray Edmondson published on the UNESCO web site 2004. Ray Edmondson is a member of both SEAPAAVA and IASA.

unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001364/136477e.pdf

Ray Edmondson has the following to say on the subject audiovisual archives:

“Audiovisual archiving has its own concepts and terminology, but they are often used – and misused – with little regard for precision, so that communication is not always clear.”

He gives a list of what the term can mean within and between individual languages and cultures. These include:

1. A building or part of a building where public records or historical documents are kept and arranged: a repository
2. A receptacle or container in which physical documents are kept, such as a filing cabinet or box
3. A digital location, such as a place in a computer directory, where computer documents are retained
4. The records or documents themselves, which are assumed to be non-current and may relate to the activities, rights, claims etc. of a person, family, corporation, community, nation or other entity
5. The agency or organization responsible for collecting and storing the documents

“Audiovisual archiving, then, is a field which embraces all aspects of the guardianship and retrieval of audiovisual documents, the administration of the places in which they are contained, and of the organizations responsible for carrying out these functions. It has gained its own particular nuances as the field has developed, and as the terms preservation and access have taken on particular meanings within.”

Ray Edmondson tells me that this document has been translated into Japanese, Farsi, Macedonian and (in part) in Portuguese as well as into official UNESCO languages: French and Spanish. And my German colleagues within IASA have started a German translation. If any of you would find it worth while to translate it into Estonian, please contact me!

IASA has a long tradition of publications. I will mention some of them. Firstly I would like to mention “Audiovisual Archives. A Practical Reader”. Edited and compiled by Helen P Harrison ©1997. This book (443 pages) is out of print and can only be found on the UNESCO home page. You can look in the index and find what you think is useful for your archive.

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0010/001096/109612eo.pdf>

IASA is strong in publications. I will only give you some examples on our latest publications. On the IASA website you can find more. Some are available for downloading.

<http://www.iasa-web.org/pages/00homepage.htm>

- *Standards, Recommended Practices and Strategies*.
“The Safeguarding of the Audio Heritage: Ethics, Principles and Preservation Strategy”. IASA Technical Committee. Edited by Dietrich Schüller. (IASA TC 03). 3rd ed. © 2005. This can be ordered on the web site. Costs: €10 for one copy, a bulk of copies for educational use is €5 each.

We now also have online PDF version in the following languages:

- English
- German
- French
- Swedish - http://www.iasa-web.org/IASA_TC03/TC03_Swedish.pdf

A larger publication on preservation and digitisation is:

- *Standards, Recommended Practices and Strategies.*
“*Guidelines on the Production and Preservation of Digital Objects*”. (IASA TC 04). Ed. by Kevin Bradley © 2004.

“The Guidelines addresses the production of digital copies from analogue originals for the purposes of preservation, the transfer of digital originals to storage systems, as well as the recording of original material in digital form intended for long-term archival storage.”

This is not possible to download, but we hope to get a web version ready after we have launched a revised edition in 2008.

We have a translation in Spanish and a French and German edition will hopefully be published alongside the revised English edition. If you are interested in getting a copy of it please contact me.

Finally I would like to stress the fact that we are living in a world that changes very fast. And the importance of being part of the audiovisual archival world is growing. Being a member of any of these associations I have mentioned gives you the benefit of support and guidelines from the associations and their members. You get publications, networking with colleagues at annual conferences and seminars – you then know that you are not alone with these questions about preservation, digitisation and documentation. It is a question of give and take. Your knowledge of your archives and practical circumstances could be of help to others and you can ask around so that you don't have to invent the wheel all around the world. And with the internet we can contact each other in a jiffy! Send a question to a list-server and you get a load of answers before you can count to 10. That's networking.

With this I stop and thank you for your time – and hope to see you in Riga in September as BAAC members!

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