

Audiovisual Heritage on the Saga Island: the Icelandic Collections

Piret Laas

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MLIS thesis

- Presentation is based on a research for a MLIS thesis at the University of Iceland:

“Preserving the National Heritage: Audiovisual Collections in Iceland”

Research questions

- How have the AV collections developed?
- What is their present situation?
 - collection development, preservation, digitization, collection size, cataloguing, storage, technical equipment, staff and cooperation
- To what extent have they been acknowledged by the authorities?

Data collection

- 10 audiovisual archives and collections
- 14 semi-structured interviews with the staff
 - From August 2008 to February 2009
 - Questionnaire based on the 2006 survey of TAPE (Training for Audiovisual Preservation in Europe)
- Documental material (legal documents, annual reports, media etc.)

Text-orientated environment

- Sagas of the Icelanders
 - Written in the 13th - 14th centuries
 - Unique vernacular prose literature
 - About the first settlers in 10th - 11th centuries
- Essential for national identity
 - Extreme poverty vs literacy
 - Trace their origins to the first settlers

Are AV documents cultural heritage?

- National Heritage Acts
 - **1989**: Identified films and audio recordings as cultural heritage
 - **2001**: Are AV documents “sources of the cultural history”?

How young?

- Audio recordings - 1903
- Motion pictures - 1906
- National Radio - 1930
 - Recording programmes began in 1935-36
- National TV - 1966

- A 2006 survey among 72 institutions: **38** preserved at least some oral documents

Collections of unique AV material

1. National Museum of Iceland (1931)
2. Folklore Collection of *Árni Magnússon* Institute of Icelandic Studies
3. National Film Archive of Iceland (1978)
4. Audiovisual Department of the National and University Library of Iceland (1994)
5. Centre of Oral History (2007)
6. Archive of the Icelandic National Broadcasting Service (1935-1936)
7. Archive of TV Channel *Stöð 2* (1986)
8. Archive of TV Channel *Skjár 1* (1999)
9. AV Archive of the National Theatre (1950)
10. Music Library of the Icelandic Academy of the Arts

Collection size

National Broadcasting Service	More than 121 000 discs, films and tapes
TV Channel <i>Stöð 2</i>	18 579 videos and discs
TV Channel <i>Skjár 1</i>	Not known
National Film Archive	39 000 films, videotapes and discs; 11 910 titles
Árni Magnússon Institute	Ca 2 000 hours of audio recorded folklore
National Museum of Iceland	Not known
AV Dep. of National and University Library	Ca 12 000 of Icelandic published music recordings and 7 000 foreign; 4 000 video and multimedia
National Theatre	710 performances and concerts
Centre of Oral History	Ca 600 hours of audio recordings
Icelandic Academy of Arts	Not known

Collection contents

- All collections hold both analogue and digital material
- Archive of TV Channel *Skjár 1* nearly all-digital

Preservation obligation

- 3 institutions legally obliged to preserve AV material
 - Two legal acts regarding the National Broadcasting Service
 - Legal deposit:
 - AV Department of the National and University Library
 - National Film Archive
- Private TV channels
 - *Broadcast Act* of 2000: obligation to preserve broadcast material for 18 months

Legal deposit

- Legal Deposit Acts of 1977 and 2002
- AV Department of the National and University Library
 - Published Icelandic music and audio books
 - Films and video - shares with the National Film Archive
- National Film Archive
 - Icelandic films and published video, state TV and radio programmes

Preservation conditions

- Physical condition good
- National Film Archive
 - Storage facilities complying to international standards for AV material
 - Systematic monitoring
- Storage and preservation issues in cultural institutions – Report in 2006
 - AV documents form a minor part of a larger heritage collection

Preservation Projects

- 1984 – Folklore Collection of the Árni Magnússon Institute
 - Audio material from original magnetic tapes to higher quality storage tapes
- 1997- first digitization project - National Broadcasting Service

Official policies

- Governmental policy statements on information society (1996, 2004, 2008)
 - Digital access
 - National Broadcasting Service
- Cultural heritage preservation focused on digitization

Digitization

- Eight collections involved in some digitization
 - Upon request
 - Migration projects underway in 3 collections
- High-quality digitization done abroad
- Cooperation:
 - Folklore Collection of ÁMI
 - Icelandic Music and Cultural Heritage Society

Digitization in real numbers

- Ca € 3,2 million to digitize the National Broadcasting Service collection
- In 2007 – ca € 65 000
- It would take 50 years

Professional scepticism

- *.... it is so easy to dispose of it, press delete. But with a tape one has to walk to a waste bin to throw it away*
- *This vision of a world without tapes, it is like the “paperless office” was.... it is just a distant vision and will never substantiate.*