Audiovisual Heritage on the Saga Island: the Icelandic Collections

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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)
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

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

  – 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.