

Copyright and other obstacles to access

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Not only copyright...

- Copyright is the exclusive right of the author to control the copying of his works (etc.). In extreme cases, copyright law can prevent archives from making copies to customers, or even from making preservation copies
- But even if copyright law did not exist, access would not be "free". There are technical costs and other obstacles, from opening hours to missing documentation
- Rights owners usually want to make their works available, so often it is possible to agree on use. We should study successful contracts, like YouTube
- We would also test access in practice, like the "mystery shopper" tests of successful businesses

A practical example: research on Latvian popular music in the 1980s

- For a recent study, I needed to consult a wide range of Latvian books, periodicals, records and radio and television programs from the 1980s.
- The ideal (and typical) solution would be to visit all the relevant archives in person
- However, "long-distance" access is often also necessary, and my experiences can be read as a test of access

Books and periodicals

- The Latvian National Library has an excellent online catalogue, and the **interlibrary lending system** works fine for books (but costs more than 10€ per book from Finland). I could also order copies of articles at a reasonable cost
- Buying new books by mail was also simple
- Borrowing (or buying) **periodicals** proved difficult. No library has a lending copy of Rīgas Viļņi, the radio program magazine.
- Perhaps libraries could speed up the digitisation of periodicals (rights?)

Records

- Records are also documented in LNBS online catalog, and the library has a good record collection
- There are no copyright problems in interlibrary lending of records, but in this case, interlibrary lending is not available. It is however possible to order copies of individual tracks
- It proved easier to find and buy records on sites such as Discogs
- The cost was not much higher than interlibrary lending!

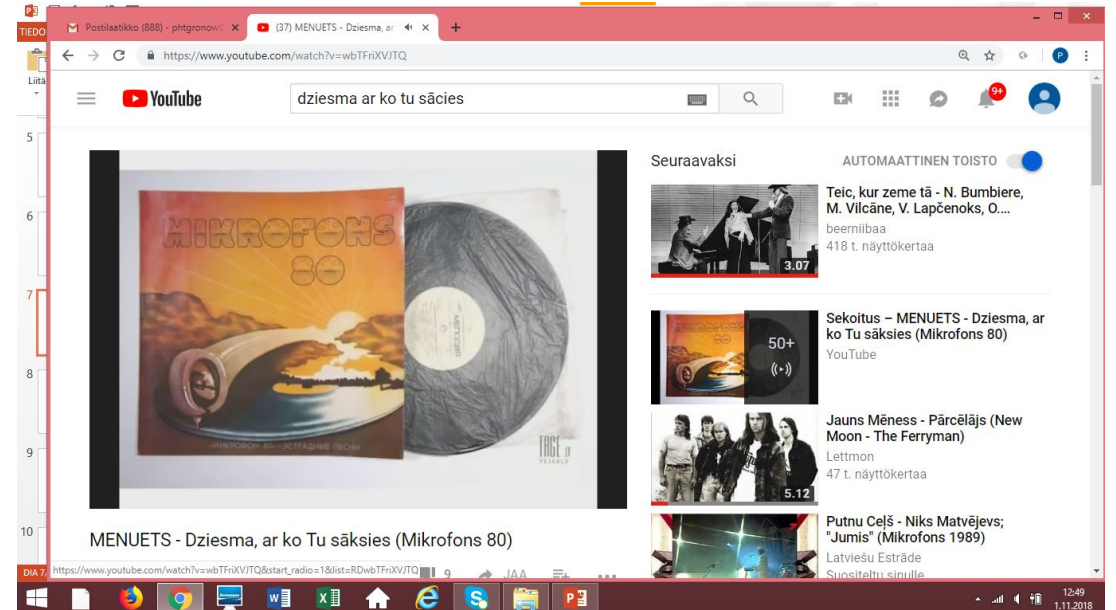


Radio and television

- Latvian radio and television do not have **online catalogs** of their archives (most countries don't) > difficult to find out what exists
- Some historical material is available on websites, but not always accessible from abroad (geo-blocking)
- When I finally found out what I needed, ordering copies for research was simple (but expensive)
- Access to historical radio and television archives is a universal problem which should be addressed

Online sources

- A wide selection of Latvian films, records, and (parts of) TV programs is on YouTube
- It is useful for research, once you know what you need
- It can also be used for a study of current interest in historical materials
- **The documentation is poor, and sometimes (intentionally?) misleading. The record shown here does not exist....**



Some conclusions 1

- The world's libraries and archives are doing a great job, and there is always some road to access.
- Access is never "free", there are always costs and obstacles. Users have to pay for many archival services anyway.
- Typical obstacles: material was not preserved, no online catalog, no lending copies, not yet digitised, copyright agreements do not permit digitisation on demand...
- Traditional types of access such as interlibrary loans will be useful for a long time
- Visiting in person is always the best choice

Some conclusions 2

- My experience in Latvia seems fairly typical: the results in Finland would be similar
- We should make similar tests in other countries. Empirical studies of access problems would be a good argument in discussions on copyright law
- The social media seem to have working arrangements for many uses of copyrighted materials. Would it be easier to negotiate legal agreements for libraries if there was a (small) user fee?

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- **Thank you!**

- Pekka Gronow

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