Chapter 7
Managing Audio–Visual Resources in Selected Developed and Developing Countries

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ABSTRACT

This chapter emphasises that audio-visual (AV) resources are very fragile and need to be stored in ideal conditions to preserve them for posterity. It describes different types of AV materials and the conditions under which they should be kept. It is based on a study that was conducted in the Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (ESARBICA) region. Data were gathered using quantitative and qualitative methods. The results revealed lack of equipment to monitor environmental conditions, absence of policies to govern the acquisition, appraisal, access, preservation, retention, digitisation and disposal of AV materials, and failure to apply the records life cycle (or any model) to AV records. The results point to a need for national archives to develop guidelines that apply to AV materials particularly in Africa. Particular attention should be given to training AV archivists in the region using an integrated curriculum.

INTRODUCTION

UNESCO declared 27 October as the World Day for heritage (UNESCO, 2007a) to curtail loss, neglect and natural decay of AV resources. Many national archives worldwide have taken advantage of Information Technology (IT) to improve access to their cultural heritage (Hall, 2015; Jacobsen, 2008; Lawetz, 2008). Lawetz (2008) opined that "it is an acceptable fact that audio-visual and video recordings have to be digitised to follow preservation aims" (p. 36). The use of AV media has indeed revolutionised archives from dusty basements; making them accessible by all information users. For instance, the Truth and Reconciliation court hearings in South Africa, and Seychelles Digital Archives, among others, can

easily be accessed online (Kenosi, 2008; Seychelles National Archives, 2011). This shows the ease with which computer users are able to access materials that are created or converted in digital format.

AV resources are an indispensable part of cultural and intellectual heritage world-wide, albeit their dissipation on daily basis (UNESCO, 2007b). They are prone to decay and distortion because of their chemical composition. They are made of polymers which are greatly affected by environmental conditions such as heat, cold, dust and humidity. Other dangers that threaten AV materials include floods, fires, storms, earthquakes, human negligence, physical decay and technological obsolescence (Peoples & Maguire, 2015; UNESCO, 2007b). In some instances, the deterioration occurs over time and it may be undetected. This chapter gives a clear definition of AV materials, it covers types and characteristics of AV materials, composition of AV carriers, the historic background to management and preservation of AV heritage, the need to manage, and preserve AV materials, archival legislation and policies, application of archival functions to AV materials, application of the records life-cycle concept to AV materials, intellectual control over AV materials, preservation of AV materials, building and design of archival institutions, environmental control and storage conditions, general security and staff training.

Definition of Audio-Visual Materials

The term audio-visual (AV) denotes a combination of the words sound and visual. AV resources or materials are records or archives in pictorial and aural form regardless of their physical make-up or recording process used (Edmondson, 2016). The term is also used to describe information content held in storage and transmission media, images, and sound rather than, or sometimes in addition to, as well textual content (Hedstrom & Montgomery, 1998). AV materials may be motion pictures with sound, such as video cassettes, CDs, CD-ROMs, 3-D imaging, DVDs, cinematographic films; sound recordings such as gramophone/phonographs record disks, reel-to-reel tapes, magnetic audio tapes, tape-slide displays, traditional music and speeches; maps, drawings, photographs, photographic negatives, scripts, posters, manuscripts, slides, transparencies and art works. The term AV archives also refers to the organizations or units responsible for collecting, preserving, documenting and providing access to and making use of AV materials (Harrison, 1997/98). In this chapter, the terms AV resources, AV records and AV materials will be used interchangeably to refer to the above definitions.

Types and Characteristics of AV Materials

AV materials differ from traditional textual records, in format and characteristics. They are more versatile than textual records as they can capture specific details about events. Details that cannot be captured by textual sources include; intonation, facial expressions, appearance and gestures (Digital Preservation and Access for Global Audio Heritage, 2007; Edmondson, 2016). For instance, AV materials portray people, places and things that cannot easily be experienced first-hand. The Library and Archives Canada (2007) grouped AV media into three categories, namely motion picture film, magnetic tape and discs. Some of the major formats are discussed below.

Motion Picture Film

Films are usually stored in flat circular canisters or wound on reels. They appear in 8mm, 16mm, 35mm and 70mm form. They may be in colour or black and white, with acetate or nitrocellulose bases.

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