Audiovisual archive collections have traditionally been «locked in» by copyright laws. Today a large amount of audiovisual material are directly accessible through the Internet. The contributors are numerous, and sites like YouTube are growing rapidly and have millions of users. In Sweden, The National Library of Sweden – the «new» organization holds about eight million hours of audiovisual content – in fact one of the largest audiovisual archives in the world. Three million hours are in digital form and available online, but due to copyright issues most of the collection is only accessible from the libraries facilities. In this session I will in short present the Swedish collections and some strategies for making the collection come alive beside leading sites like YouTube.

The National Library of Sweden – the «new» organization

The National Library of Sweden has gone through some big changes the last couple of years.

The merge of two memory institutions

Sweden has had a legal deposit law for printed material since the 17th century, and for audiovisual material since 1979. Until the end of 2008, the responsibility for collecting printed material lay with the National Library of Sweden, while the National Archive of Sound and Moving Images (SLBA) was responsible for audiovisual material. As of 2009 these organizations have been merged, and SLBA is now a department of the National Library.
A new role for the National Library of Sweden

In 2009 the Swedish Government also proposed that the National Library should have overall responsibility for all libraries financed by public funds and not only the academic and research libraries. We will be responsible for providing a national overview, promoting cooperation, driving development forward and monitoring the public libraries.

The National Library of Sweden – the audiovisual collections

In the following I will focus on the audiovisual collection at the National Library.

The National Library of Sweden – one of the world’s biggest audiovisual archive

The legal deposit law ensured that Sweden's cultural heritage consisting of audio and motion picture media has been recorded and stored since 1979. In an international perspective the Swedish deposit law came early and has covered audiovisual media in a very broad sense. The audiovisual collection includes the full output of TV and radio programs broadcasted in Sweden, all movies played in theatres and all videos distributed in Sweden, all Swedish music and multimedia recordings. Beside the material collected through legal deposits, several donations have been acquired, especially concerning recordings from the time before the legal deposit (1979). In total the National Library of Sweden contains almost eight million hours of audiovisual material.

Digitalization and digital collection

Over the past years the audiovisual department has been actively involved in building a digital archive – with a fully automated workflow from collection to enabling public access.

Using automated systems developed by the department about 2500 hours per day is transferred from analogue to digital format. More than one million hours have so far been migrated using these systems. An important task in recent years has been to develop digital acquisition systems, in particular for broadcast material. The audiovisual department collects just over 300,000 hours a year of TV and radio material as files delivered via networks.

Systems for research

The audiovisual archive is built along modern lines. The digital archive is set up to allow the digitally collected files and the digitally collected or manually produced metadata to be cross-referenced in a system known as the Swedish Media Database (SMDB). Taking TV material as an example this involves the collection of one-hour files of TV broadcasts that are matched against programme schedules. When a researcher searches the database and gets a hit in a programme schedule, the system can play the file or files directly from the schedule item. However, for copyright reasons this system may only be used in the premises of the National Library.

A new legal deposit law covering the web

During spring 2009 the Ministry of Education and Research began an official inquiry into the possibility of a legal deposit law that includes the Web. The background was of course that more and more material is mainly being distributed over the web – arguably, the future of many medias lies on the web – and this material will be lost for researcher if it is not collected. A new deposit law covering the internet will most likely be launched in 2012. As a result of this new deposit law the collection of text, pictures, sound and moving images will increase dramatically.
You Tube and other free audiovisual sites vs. National libraries

As I already mentioned most of the digital media files can only be accessed at the National library. That is of course one of our biggest concerns. Technically over three million hours of media files can be viewed on any computer in the world, but copyright issues prohibits us from doing so.

However, as we all know, the copyright issue has not prohibited audiovisual material to be spread over the internet by other organizations than the libraries.

You tube, television archives on line and free music sites

The development of new web sites launching audiovisual material has had great impact over the web over the last couple of years. Sites like YouTube are growing rapidly and offer both commercial and private material. The big radio- and TV-companies have their own sites where they offer their productions in searchable on line archives. There are also some music sites with plenty of commercial music for free (financed through advertisements).

Modern times – modern strategies

The libraries have special and unique obligations. The National Library is collaborating in national and international programs to improve the research information infrastructure. It has a long-term responsibility to care for and preserve its collections for the future and a responsibility to make the collections available for all, including people with different kinds of disabilities. The principle of completeness is an important part of the legal deposit law that guarantees that future researchers can have access to the whole picture, not just highlights. Material archived at the National library is not distorted, it is just like it was when it first was published. Those qualities you cannot expect from free sites like YouTube.

The Internet has totally changed the possibility to access information concerning every subject of human knowledge. The mass of information is growing rapidly, as the development of tools for sharing content and to manage on line interactivity. Of course the world of libraries is highly affected by this development, and of course they are also a part of it. Some may see the development of the information flow on internet as a threat to libraries, but the only way to handle it is to relate to it and of course to use it. Many libraries have indexed their catalogues in Google, and many audiovisual archives presents parts of their collections in sites like YouTube. That is examples of how to use the internet and popular sites to draw attention to the library collections and library services. In the following part I will discuss some other alternatives.

The strategy of national and international collaboration and contextualization

What is the mission of the old cultural heritage institutions when it comes to share digital audio visual content?

I would say that one task will be to highlight interesting themes and cross disciplinary digital presentations for the whole community, also in cooperation with the rights owners. Europeana is perhaps the best international example of such an initiative.

Europeana – Video Active

Around 1500 institutions have contributed to the EU funded project Europeana, which gives access to more than 15 million digital objects of Europe's museums, libraries and archives. These objects include: Images, texts, archival papers, sounds, videos / films and TV broadcasts.

Video Active was is a project within in Europeana that the National Library was is engaged in. In this project the library cooperated with the Swedish public service television to acquire the rights to show television programs at the Video Active project web site.

The major aim of Video Active was is to provide access to television archives across Europe. It enables an interactive discovery of television's cultural heritage.
The project archive will consist of 10,000 items of television archive content, which reflects the cultural and historical similarities and differences of television from across the European Union. Video Active offers a resource for exploring both the representation of cultural and historical events within and across nations and the development of the medium itself at a cross-cultural level.

Ten languages are supported: English, French, German, Italian, Dutch, Greek, Hungarian, Catalan, Danish and Swedish. As a result, Video Active enhances an understanding of the shared histories and interrelationships that have shaped collective European memory and identity.

This project is an example how collaborating cultural heritage institutions and right holders on an international level can create interesting online content that reaches beyond the business of offering a mass of video clips out of its context.

Digital presentations at public libraries

I still believe that libraries, archives and museums as physical places have an important role to play as information providers and maybe as places for discussion and meetings over generations and social background.

As mentioned earlier the national library just become the central regulatory authority for the entire library system. This new mission includes the school- and public libraries. As in many other countries the use of public libraries is decreasing.

I think that one way to make public libraries more attractive can be to present different kinds of thematic presentations built on the national libraries digital collections. I estimate that the possibility to get acceptable terms for using audiovisual material at the school- and public library domain is reasonable good. Of course that does not include material from the big film companies. But as an example I believe that there should be a good chance for a fair deal with the public service companies.

Digital presentations can serve several purposes. For an example a thematic presentation showing early audiovisual material presented at a public library can interest new groups in using computers. In a school library the same thematic presentation may be useful for media studies.

The benefit for the national library is that the public- and school libraries would function as windows against citizens that other wise would not get in contact with the national library. To be presented nation wide this way is a great way to draw attention to the National library and its other services.

In the long run I think it would be very interesting to collaborate with the museum- and archive sector in this sort of activities in school- and public libraries.

Links

The National Library of Sweden, The Audiovisual Department:
http://www.kb.se/english/about/organization/Audiovisual-Material/

Europeana:
http://www.europeana.eu/portal/
Video Active project:
http://www.videoactive.eu/VideoActive/Home.do