

# Cultural Heritage Archives on Bulgarian National Radio Platforms

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**Abstract.** The article describes radio archives as cultural heritage and presents their practical use as integrated resources on different radio platforms. The current situation and plans for the Bulgarian National Radio (BNR) for preserving and using these repositories are discussed.

**Keywords:** Digital Sound Archive, Multimedia, Radio, Culture, National Heritage

## 1 Introduction

Bob Collins [1] stresses that "As public broadcasters, we are called upon to generate, to preserve and to make available the material that will offer to our own programme-makers and to the generation that succeed them the opportunity of greater understanding of the experience of our time... Among other things, this means that a new kind of responsibility falls on our generation to maintain, conserve and to use this archive."

The public service radio broadcasting is not only a wave of sounds – broadcasting has been elevated to the ranks of heritage.

The BNR archives conserve the sound memory of more than 77 years of modern history. It is an indelible part of our national heritage. So far, for us radio archives are equal to cultural heritage.

Today public radio archives are an integral part of the cultural heritage of each country and it is more than necessary these archives to be available - at first primarily for professionals, students, researchers, etc., and then – to provide access to a wider audience.

The paper is organized as follows: Section 2 makes a brief overview of the cultural heritage (sound archives) in some European Broadcasting Union (EBU) radio stations archives and access to them. Section 3 presents the cultural heritage in BNR and describes the integrated use of the different resources. Finally, in the conclusion Section 4, problems and steps for future development are highlighted.

## **2 Cultural Resources in EBU Radio Stations and Their Integrated Use**

The European Broadcasting Union is the largest association of national broadcasters in the world. The EBU promotes cooperation between broadcasters and facilitates the exchange of audiovisual content. EBU serves 85 national media organizations in 56 countries in and around Europe. Its member broadcasters reach an audience of 650 million people weekly. On all media platforms the EBU members offer to the audience part from their archives, which no doubt represents a heritage with a great cultural and historical value.

The EBU Core Metadata Set [2] is proposed to aggregate information within the EBU community. The Dublin Core used in the EBU Core Metadata set allows EBU members to contribute to Europeana (the European Digital Library Project in collaboration with National Libraries and Museums), and EUScreen (a European project to provide access to broadcasters of audiovisual resource with a participation of several EBU members and in liaison with Europeana) [3].

Is there room for radio production in the museum as cultural artifacts? What is the ontological status of radio sound? Does it make sense to view radio shows as artifacts on a par with Thracian treasures and Roman goddesses? The International Council of Museums (ICOM) perceives sound as an informational tool like other multimedia and not as artifacts. However, radio sound should not only be a soundscape for other artifacts. Radio shows should be treated as artifacts of the media heritage in their own right. So nowadays, we have to consider the need to combine the immaterial auditive heritage in the form of radio with a museological concept of artifacts, and hence as cultural heritage.

Viewing sound as artifacts is further complicated by the temporal extent of sound. Sound is events rather than artifacts. Also sound does not exist independent of an ear (or microphone) to register it. Sound is pure effect in the form of sound waves. So how do we delineate these auditive artifacts? Is it only the whole radio show or is it meaningful to treat individual segments of the show as artifacts? Of course, these considerations have consequences for the exhibition practice of the museum in the form of new challenges in exhibiting sounds as artifacts [4]. EBU radio stations offer different levels access to their archives: British Broadcast Company (BBC) is a datum in every respect when it comes to radio, standards and digitization of archives, and providing free open access to most of them. The BBC has accumulated one of the largest multimedia archives in the world and has created a programme catalogue providing a rich source of metadata upon which the BBC has relied for decades. Information and archives department is collaborating across the BBC to provide a simple and open environment in which it can be ensure that the digital content will be delivered both to the customers and to the audiences "whenever, wherever and however" they want it, leading to further creative exploitation of the content.

BBC Information and Archives role is to provide to the BBC a diverse range of media asset management services which support the programme making process and which ensure that this valuable content is including; television programmes, radio programmes and photographs ("media assets"), are stored and made accessible for

research, reuse and heritage purposes [5]. A good example for integrated cultural resources application is the project World History for 2010 - a unique and unprecedented partnership between BBC Radio 4 - a historic and cultural icon, and the British Museum. The 20-century Spanish sound history has been preserved in digital format and can now be consulted online through intranet. This is a pioneer project in the broadcasting industry around the world finalized in December 2002. The Radio Nacional de España (RNE) sound archive has been massively digitized and several applications to access this information online have been developed. This archive is considered the most important audio archive in Spanish language in the world [5]. Norwegian Radio archive is also digitized, a limited amount is open to the public, but everything is open for research (Researchers can log in using username/password from their institution). The copyrights is unclear in some cases, some parts from the archives are available for all on the Internet. Finnish Broadcasting Company (YLE) offers access through search and retrieval system, the user can search digital and/or analog materials, browsing-quality sound streamed to all users, production is offered on demand. The users can access the digital archive through YLE's Intranet system and find the desired items in the catalogue. Example for good practice using the archives with new technologies are historical programmes which document the Finnish Winter War, sixty years ago, on a day-by-day basis. Other frequently-needed items from the archives are: the voices of well-known Finnish and international personalities from the worlds of politics, business, sport, culture and entertainment; reports of historical events such as the first moon landing or the fall of the Berlin wall; the Olympic games and other major sports events; popular radio personalities of the past, and so on [7].

Good praxis example for cross media events, based on the integrated use of the cultural heritage from radio archives are the Swedish Radio experience with the Chopin Maraton and the Arts Birthday Party, Radio Swiss - Images for a Change of Image - music, arts, literature, history and society, Czech Radio Music Festival. For Ireland's National Television and Radio Broadcaster (RTE) Archives "content is King and Metadata is Queen - content (essence) plus metadata equals a reusable asset that can be exploited in many ways [8]. Finding content, i.e. search and retrieval is dependent on good accurate metadata that gives access to programmes to generate new ideas, for research purposes, editing and for publishing on existing and new digital multi-platforms. Therefore, new digital audio preservation tools and techniques will be essential to enable future exploitation and access to our dynamic digital audio collections". There are important research projects in various areas including visual recognition for video browsing e.g. object recognition (color, shape, texture), shot and scene recognition, segmentation and keyframe extraction, setting and retake detection, camera motion. Equally important is ease of use and understanding with intuitive interfaces and new visual representations of search results e.g. visual cluster-ing and immersive media interfaces [8]. All EBU members share their good practices broadcasting emissions with cultural heritage content on the platform Euroradio.

### **3 BNR Archives**

#### **3.1 What are the BNR Cultural Resources?**

The Bulgarian National Radio is part of the Bulgaria culture, a unique cultural heritage and modern cultural treasure. BNR Archives are responsible for collecting, preserving and making accessible the creative and documentary output of the national broadcaster. The BNR Gold Fund has status of National Sound Archive of Bulgaria. BNR is the largest music and cultural producer in the country, has six music formations, and is broadcasting two national programs and eight regional radio stations, offers multilingual service on the BNR Website to provide access to some of our cultural collections. BNR is a key cultural actor not only in Bulgaria but also in Europe.

As keeping these audio records BNR is looking to make more content available on an increasing number of platforms and devices. BNR provide content for radio programmes. Our website contains items chosen from hundreds of thousands of hours of archives. Other radio content has been published and is available to purchase on CD.

The Gold Fund is available to our listeners through all BNR programs; the largest contribution to this is the show "Selected from the Golden Fund of Radio" on Hristo Botev Channel. In the emission, poems in copyright performance of Bulgarian poets are broadcast, excerpts from theater and opera performances, and phonograms of Bulgarian films. As a cultural and educational public broadcaster, Hristo Botev Channel has the commitment to deliver educational contents in its programmes, to protect, preserve, give access and promote cultural heritage. Another goal is to give support to different cultural and educational institutions through the access of our radio productions as educational tools. The objective of some specifically programmes is that our audience takes conscious of the importance in preserving our sound memory. Various music BNR programs are cultural institutions. BNR with its digital archives is a hypermedia publisher.

As partner in the Hermes project (heritageradio.net) BNR made numerous experiences on how to approach cultural heritage from a different angle. Preservation through active use as best form of protection has been the key idea.

#### **3.2 BNR Archive Architecture**

In Figure 1 the architecture of BRN archives and their use in the BNR production systems is given.

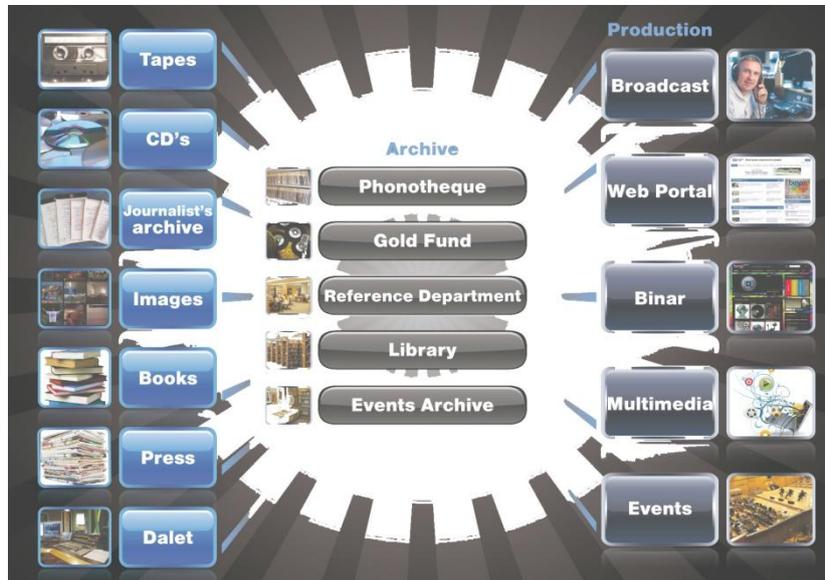


Fig. 1. The architecture of BRN archives and their use in the BNR production systems

### 3.3 Simultaneous use of Various Resources

BNR's ambition is to continue to open up our Archives to the public in as many different ways as possible. New technologies are enabling new forms of interactivity that is in turn generating a social and community value.

BNRadio platforms are already quite diverse – broadcasting, website, internet radio, multimedia projects, and crossmedia production. The Internet Radio Binar is a great project that is the focal point of the linear and non-linear technology. Today's language requires new technologies that integrate into a production and distribution of words, images and texts of our culture and forward them to the new generations. A quality radio production will now reach the new Internet generation, thanks to our new platform - Binar (binar.bg), the audience will discover the abundance of video products and animation, and galleries with interesting collections and cultural projects. Beyond the traditional schemes, this is the new way of thinking, communicating and seeking active person.

Virtual audio library presents richly illustrated books, in the spirit of the latest trends in modern media development Binar is already developing its platform, which will be available through mobile devices. Art Atelier on Hristo Botev Channel, Varna Art Complex, Plovdiv Art Hall – this are a few from our examples for integrated and simultaneous use of various resources on different platforms with the goal to bring to our audience part from the Bulgarian cultural heritage.

Archives are places for material to go to be re-used, not to be locked away. There are various ways in which archive content can be re-used, and as technology changes the opportunities for this grow. Radio has been traditionally repurposed by large

broadcasters for different channels (e.g. public service/commercial), different types of audiences (e.g. international/domestic, adults/children, etc) and for different editorial propositions.

The radio is not just about radio anymore. In addition to radio, every network and local station has one or more websites that feature program content. They often share website content with other websites or aggregators. Radio content is also repurposed and distributed to mobile phones and various handheld devices. Repurposing radio programming for CD (special radio drama) has been a significant growth area for authoring facilities for some time.

Repurposing radio content for new media distribution channels and consumer devices creates production and distribution problems not encountered when programming is distributed only over traditional radio transmission channels. Content distributed to computers and handheld devices requires different creative and assembly techniques, both technical and aesthetic [9].

#### **4 Conclusions and Future Work**

The content in BNR archives is unavailable to the general public. Much of the content is unique, master material and all of the content has copyrights issues.

Integration of radio production and archiving systems is not yet fully completed.

Combining hundreds of thousands of hours of sound recordings together with significant collections of photographs, manuscripts and administrative documents, BNR Archives contain a unique record of Bulgarian life.

Our goal is to finalize the digitization of all our archives in about seven years and to create a basic online portal where online users will be able to search across our digital cultural heritage multimedia collections. The event archive will permit simultaneous access to documentary multimedia databases. We have different target groups with different needs – so we will offer different channels to our users. First, we like to offer service for researchers and educational purposes.

By the time when the entire radio archive will be on-line - what shall we do with it? This brings us to the larger question of opening the radio archives to other users. After digitization, it would be technically possible to open the archives to users outside the broadcasting company – to scholars and students, through terminals in libraries and universities, or even to a larger public. Now, we do not have the right to release a large part of the material in our archives to outside users. To open our archives without proper authorization would be out of the question. The Finnish Broadcasting Company raises the question “should we strive to open our archives to a larger public, beyond the one that we reach through the airwaves, or should this problem be left in the hands of the National Library or other similar institutions?” With the new possibilities opened by new technology and the new media, many European broadcasters will have to consider this question in the future. In order to do that, there is need of national legislation. It is not sufficient just to provide access to our radio heritage as the Danish Broadcasting Corporation does on their website. The modern audience does not have the knowledge or prerequisites to understand or get the full pleasure of

listening to historical radio shows. At the most, it will generate a curious amusement along the lines of: “They sure talked funny back then!” The audience needs contextual information and thematic links to their own horizon of experience to appreciate their radio heritage. In other words, they need instructional scaffolding to borrow a term from Jerome Bruner. Therefore, there is a significant difference between making radio heritage available in databases and Content Management Systems and exhibiting it in a meaningful way.

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