Multimedia Document "Cult pograms" - an Insight Into the Status of the Archives of Radio Stations in Serbia

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1.   Introduction

Multimedia, as an integrated form of text, audio and video, represents efficient way of using modern technology for the purpose of preservation of achievements of a society. In fact, multimedia is an information presented or memorized in the form of combination of text, graphics, sound, animations and video, which are integrated using computer programs. It enables users to orient easily and more thorough acquainting with certain topics, it motivates user and retains his attention, and helps in clarification of certain doubts.

2.   The project

Fourth year students at the Department of Library and Computer Science of the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade participate in making of a multimedia document, as a mandatory project for the subject of the same name. The aim of the project is to preserve and present a part of a cultural heritage, so students take part in the digitization process through making of a multimedia

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document. The topic of this year's project is "Cult Radio Programs". The initiator of the project is professor Cvetana Krstev, the Head of the Department of Library and Computer Science, while coordinator is Aleksandra Trtovac, teaching collaborator. Production of the technical part of the multimedia document has been supported by Vanja Radulovic, student at the Faculty of Philology, and Andjelka Zecevic, assistant of Informatics, the Faculty of Mathematics. Colleagues from Master studies, Biljana Djordjevic and Jelena Andonovski, which took part at the last year's project, have also contributed a lot to the work.

During the decades before television, basic means of spreading information, as well as of entertaining, was radio. Thus, through the showcase of the most popular radio programs, we intended to present culture, interests and needs of the audience of that time. Even after the rising of television, certain radio shows, such as "Good morning, Belgrade", "The Wishing Well" of Radio Studio B, "A Merry Eve" of Radio Belgrade 1, "The Postcards of Old Times" of Radio Novi Sad, "Radio Mosaic" of Radio Valjevo or "The Music Time Machine" of Radio Subotica, would stay the favorite means of entertaining and informing the society. Such was the popularity of those programs, that some of them are still being broadcasted today. Some of them are "Good morning children" and "At Two White Pigeons" of Radio Belgrade 1, "Starry Hours" and "Classics Please" of Radio Belgrade 2, "Discometer" and "The Blues Hour" of Radio Studio B, "Rendezvous with Music" of Radio Novi Sad.

Students have participated in the project production during the academic year 2010/2011. The document has encompassed programs and shows of exclusively entertaining character, while those related to politics and sport were excluded. The boundary year was 1990, meaning that the programs and shows up to that year were included. The document covered programs from nine cities in Serbia: Belgrade, Novi Sad, Subotica, Valjevo, Pozarevac, Negotin, Cacak, Krusevac and Prijepolje. It is worth mentioning that the selected towns are the home towns of those students. Students first contacted the authorities of radio-stations, and the employees kindly met their needs and acquainted them with those programs and shows that were broadcasted at the time, as well as with those that were the most popular. Out of vast quantity of material that was at their disposal, students chose the following:
   -11 videos
   - 26 audio records, 229 minutes in total
   -16 newspaper articles and
   - 81 photos.
Selected materials were than catalogued, enabling them to be included in the document, and than the technical part was produced. Document was created with the use of computer formats HTML [1], CSS [2] and SMIL [3].

3. Practical examples

This paper tends to encompass certain problems which we have run across, and which we find to be relevant and influent in the course of preservation of very significant deeds. The key point while working on the project was, without doubt, to get the material needed for presenting the famous radio programs. Unfortunately, many of those materials were unavailable to us.

The major problem that we faced was the fact that some of the aforementioned radio stations have been privatized recently. The Regional

1 HTML – Hyper Text Markup Language
2 CSS- Cascading Style Sheets
3 Synchronized Multimedia Integration Language

Radio, Negotin, Radio Polimlje, Prijepolje and Radio Cacak, Cacak underwent the process of privatization completely, while Radio Subotica and Radio Valjevo are still in the process. Materials of radio broadcasts of some of those stations have been stored in depots and are no longer available to the public. That is the potential cause of disappearance of many radio shows traces. Thanks to the individuals which are fully aware of of the importance of those materials, we managed to obtain some of them. Mr Radovan Misovic from Radio Valjevo put at our disposal the entire material related to radio programs and shows, and Mrs Indira Hadzagic did the same on behalf of Radio Polimlje. Thanks to Mrs Zdenka Golubovic we got the interview about The Regional Radio. Some of the employees put at our disposal even some materials from their own, private collections.

Large quantity of very significant and listened programs has not been preserved, or only some fragments of them have been preserved. The audio records of introductory jingles of popular programs of some stations have been irrecoverably lost.

The proof of very existence of those programs is indirectly found in the archive of some famous people. Materials show no systematic arrangement, so they are not easy to find. It is essential to apply some adequate principle for the storing of it.

Different archives in radio stations use different systems of catalogization, i.e. registration of entries. After the use materials are very often put back to some other place, which in time makes the situation worse. There is neither standardization nor regularity in the work with audio materials. Institutions themselves use different software for work and in many cases there is no database. There is no national strategy for choice and use of adequate software in description of tone archives. By the rule, materials are not kept in adequate conditions.

Because of all aforementioned, protection of audio materials and other types of materials which represent cultural heritage is to be undertaken in the following period. This is the area where respecting of the Statute and regulations concerning cultural goods is to be exerted. It is also necessary to define bylaw covering preservation of materials in phono-archives, such as Bylaw of closer conditions for retention of library materials which is being enacted in our libraries. We strongly emphasize that this problems are to be solved as soon as possible, in order to help institutions to prevent the decay of precious materials. Virtually all radio stations are facing serious material difficulties and the problems mentioned are surely not the consequence of their carelessness. In our perception, these problems are to be presented to the authorities capable of influencing events and actions leading to the solution. One of solutions might be cooperation with the Department of Library and Computer Science. Students of the Department could take part in the process of arranging phono-archives through practical courses or the volunteering work.

Of course, it is essential to highlight the examples which represent good practical efforts, where, in spite of many obstacles, radio stations managed to preserve materials which will certainly witness the toils, efforts and achievements of a certain epoch. Such an example are radio stations which belong to larger systems such as Radio Belgrade, Radio Novi Sad and Radio Studio B, which have neatly arranged archives, respectively.

4. Worldwide status

Recently, digitization represents significant factor in preservation of cultural goods in the western culture. It represents adaptation and

retention of culture achievements, which may appear in some of the following forms: born-analogue, digitized, and born-digital. Such data are stored in specialized repositories such as digital archives or digital libraries. There is a range of problems and challenges when it comes to the use and preservation of that type of data.

Digitization represents a leap forward concerning ways of storing, registering and retention of cultural heritage. State institutions, private enterprises and media houses invest money into digital archives, striving to preserve past and present for the sake of future.

Comparing old and new ways of conveying information, we conclude that the crucial difference is in stability. Old ways of preserving data are statical in their nature and characterized by scarcity. On the other side, electronic revolution in preserving and production is characterized by abundance of possibilities, but also the accompanied problem of choice of the relevant one. For searching the old-fashioned carriers of information (paper, magnetic sound carriers etc.) it is essential that the researcher should "have a nose" for discovering the proper location of items. As an advantage, the researcher, during his scanning of materials, may run across some materials which he could use on some later occcassions, and of whose existence he was not aware at all.

Well-known problem related to digitization and recording of radio and television programs is the change of the contents meaning after emission. Radio and television shows may be transformed into text, and thus have their expressive nature changed. In that sense, the interaction with audience is lost. Adequate instruments are required for the program recording.

The challenge of the present and future is an integration of old archives and new digital sur-roundings. In reality, that integration has already begun. An example are electronic catalogues which make researchers' job easier and save their time. However, due to expansion of available material, researchers will have more difficulties in telling the relevant and irrelevant items apart.

Who preserves those materials? In majority of countries there exists a national strategy for preserving of such materials. Those materials are taken care of by public institutions and private companies which find their interest in it. Public institutions preserve materials for three major reasons:

- their obligation to present national heritage
- their obligation to preserve national heritage
- national libraries, archives and museums
- their obligation to store the emmited material for a certain period – public media houses are obliged to do so in order to be able to respond to possible complaints of people (for that reason BBC keeps television materials for a period of 90 days after emission, and radio programs for 42 days after emission).

The question which will be the object to discussion in the future period is should the preservation of materials remain in private hands. Possible solutions lie in determining of national and international strategies, as well as in cooperation of private and public sectors. Moreover, it is essential not to preserve complete content of programs or shows, but only those most representative ones. The problem of telling relevant and irrelevant items apart should be left to experts.

The National Library of Norway accepted the obligation to preserve radio material. The project contributed to saving money, creating a digital domain, preserving audio materials, decreasing the physical space requirements, as well as enabling access to wider range of users.

Such is the case in the Great Britain, where there exists audio archive at the British Library. Moreover, BBC strives to avail users of access to those materials. The most interesting recordings from the history of their broadcasting are to be found at http://www.bbc.co.uk/archive/.

The world is facing the increase of production of born-digital data. Much of such data are consequence of modern way of work and communication. Modern communication and culture are based on production, use, reuse and making repositories of binary data. While the new challenge in the world is digitization of web sites, radio stations in Serbia, except for the largest, such as Radio Belgrade, Studio B, Radio Novi Sad, do not have even their web presentations. Digitalized audio materials of Radio Valjevo are kept on a hard disc with neither system for storage and searching, nor adequate monitoring. Certain radio stations, such as Radio Polimlje, have been privatized, their materials put to depots and made unavailable to public, except for couple of programs which have been saved thanks to employees and their own care and interest.

5. Conclusion

In spite of everything, thanks to those institutions and individuals who kindly met the needs of our students, and thanks to diligence of the students, production of multimedia document about radio programs has been successfully completed. The result represents the collection of carefully chosen material, with the aim to conjure up interests and needs of listeners, and the zeitgeist which characterized devoted admirers of radio.

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