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## **DIGITIZATION, PRESERVATION AND PRESENTATION – SERBIAN SOUND HERITAGE**

**Abstract:** National Library of Serbia is carrying out project *Digitization of 78 rpm Gramophone records* for four years and it goes to its final phase. Working hard on this project, National Library of Serbia preserved and made available recordings which present Serbian sound cultural heritage by its everlasting artistic, social, cultural, ethnological dimensions. Going deeper in researching and exploring of earliest Serbian sound heritage it has come to light that many institutions and collectors all over the country, possess various sound recordings on so many different carriers. These remarkable recordings can be lost for good by leaving them in inadequate conditions and far from public. Therefore, National Library of Serbia is willing to establish National Sound Archive, with one and most important goal – to collect, preserve and present (to domestic and foreign public) oldest Serbian sound Heritage.

Along with help from administration, National Sound Archive has to acquire equipment, software for sound restoration, servers, and to create user-friendly database and interface for digital objects and metadata presentation. As pioneer institution in Serbia, National Library of Serbia would like to take active role in NSA establishing and help all institutions which are ready to start digitization, by placing its knowledge, resources, stuff and experience at disposal.

Goal, structure and organization of NSA will be presented by walking through test database and interface along with explanation of each step of digitization and sound restoration process.

**Keywords:** Digitization, Sound recordings, Cultural heritage, Database, Interface, Sound archive, Sound restoration

*Memory is our major link to the past; it has greatly influenced the evolution of humankind. Since the beginning of humanity, we have sought to preserve memories through the creation of artefacts that will transcend our own lifetime and so assure ourselves some form of posterity, perhaps even eternity. For some time writing has been the major complex medium of preserved reality. Not only does writing record human actions, beliefs and emotions, but it is an intellectual tool in itself, giving a temporal perspective on our thought as well as providing increasing levels of abstraction. Other forms have always existed: drawing, painting, architecture, sculpture, music; all of them trying to grasp the essence of a moment, of a belief, or of a way of thinking.*

Daniel Teruggi

Four years ago, National Library of Serbia started *Digitization of 78 rpm records* project. Since then, more than 800 records have been digitized. Last September, the number of records in our collection was about one thousand and today it is almost one thousand and five hundreds, because we are getting more and more gramophone records each month. Nevertheless, we are seriously approaching towards the end of digitization of our collection. New doors we have to open, concerning presentation of digital collection, managing legal proceedings on cultural inheritance issue, and exploring other institutions' collections.

Having a large number of contacts with librarians, collectors, it has become clear that there are so many collections of oldest Serbian sound recordings all over the country, and that

they are so important for Serbian culture, art and social heritage. For example, let's mention only two recent discoveries:

1. Institute of Musicology of the Serbian Academy of Sciences holds really a worthy collection of wax gramophone records, live recorded by famous Serbian composer and ethnomusicologist Kosta Manojlović, in Kosovo and Metochia in mid thirties. This exclusive collection numbers more than 100 master records which could not be played on regular 78 rpm gramophone but have to be digitized and preserved right away.



Wax Record, Institute of Musicology of the Serbian Academy of Sciences

2. Faculty of Music Library owns survived part of acetate, unique master records collection, containing recordings done by Kosta Manojlović in Belgrade, just before the Second World War.

It has come to light that much more collections exist in Serbia. Every institution is obliged to preserve collections digitizing them and make them accessible to users.

Gathering of all Serbian sound recordings in digital format at one place, is a logical sequel of National Library of Serbia's digitization project. Completely aware of importance of sound recorded Serbian culture, history, music and art, we understand that all institutions should act together and right away, for presentation of these recordings, and making them available to the World and ourselves. This would be National Sound Archive's principal duty.

### **National Sound Archive -Serbian Sound Memory-**

National Sound Archive (NSA) goals are:

- to collect, digitize and carry out audio recordings sound restoration;
- to present digital collections and make them accessible;
- to digitize available private collections;

- to cooperate with institutions;
- to gather, research and archive all available documents and information relevant to these recordings;
- to establish NSA database.

As a pioneer sound digitization institution in Serbia, with so much experience right now, National Library of Serbia would like to take active role in National Sound Archive establishing and help all institutions which are ready to start digitization. Also, we will inform all institutions about importance of sound recordings digitization through questionnaires, workshops...

Responsibilities of National Library of Serbia as coordinator institution on project would be:

- gathering information concerning institutions and private collections and creating lists;
- working on digitization and sound restoration;
- cooperation with regional and international institutions involved in similar projects;
- Carrying out legislative aspects.



Every institution in Serbia which has sound recordings, should be included and engaged in establishing and organizing National Sound Archive but major institutions should form some sort of board. National Library of Serbia invites everyone to join its idea for saving and presenting Serbian sound heritage in the best way.

Some valuable collections we found in Belgrade are stored and preserved at:

- Museum of Theatre Arts
- Ethnographic museum
- Institute of Musicology of the Serbian Academy of Sciences
- Museum of Science and Technology
- Matica srpska Library
- Radio Belgrade sound Archive
- Radio Television Archive
- Belgrade city museum
- Yugoslav Film Archive
- Museum of Applied Art
- Faculty of Music

Also, we have established facts that in Subotica, Nis, Sabac, Negotin and many other cities, subsist collections of sound recordings on 78 rpms and on some other carriers, as well.

Later phases of National Sound Archive actions will be dealing with getting in touch with related institutions in region and Europe. For example, there are some Serbian collections of 78 rpm in Berlin, London, Supraphone Archive in Prague.... These collections are highly important for Serbian heritage matter.

This is not one person or one institution project so we have to start gathering expert team to organize and make every action of National sound Archive possible.

Along with financial and other kind of help that we are hoping to get from administration and Serbian government, National sound Archive has to acquire equipment, software for sound restoration (CEDAR), servers and to create user-friendly, WEB 2.0 database and develop interface for digital objects and metadata presentation.

This kind of projects should be supported by government. National Library of Serbia's administration had some first round meetings with representatives of Ministry of Culture and get them informed with our intentions. Completely aware that establishing central sound heri-

tage institution in Serbia is long term procedure, we are making preparations so that we could be ready when government approves it.

Main financial and other kinds of support we expect to get from Ministry of Culture, Ministry for Science, for Diaspora, member institutions, donators and perhaps NGO sector.

The user will as final product get:

- huge digital collection of oldest Serbian audio recordings;
- search engine;
- jagged metadata providing easy search and accessibility;
- scanned labels and covers and photos of various sound carriers;
- link on to bibliographic record (Virtual Library of Serbia) along with location of real, analog item;
- links to additional contents such as biographies, references, pictures, articles about artist, performer, composer, band, orchestra...

And also:

- NSA database could also be part of larger online portals;
- We could commercialize contents, for example – for every listening to recordings, it can be established not so large fee, also for downloading it, in mp3 sound water-marked format;
- We will also make sure that copyrights issues are in it's legal scope;
- WEB 2.0 approach – allowing users to post comments, new (checked up) data, pictures, sound clips, chat with administrators...

Establishing institution of such high importance for Serbian sound heritage is one of the major tasks in front of all of us who are engaged in memory keeping activities. Now is the time to act. For being recognized as nation which remembers and respect past as one of so many parts of existence. For our offspring's sake. To remember who we were and who we decide to be in the future.

### References

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