DIGITIZATION AND PROVISION OF FREE ONLINE ACCESS OF THE ARCHIVAL SOUND RECORDING COLLECTION AT THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF LITHUANIA

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The Music Department of Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania started acquisition of Lithuanian sound recordings in 1961 with the aim to collect and preserve them as a sound cultural heritage and in order to develop a collection for public access.

Although acquisition of the collection lasted almost fifty years, the collection received the status of an archive in 2007. The Regulations of the National Archival Fund of Published Documents approved by the Ministry of Culture in 2007 state that the Image and Sound Archive (hereafter, Archive) of the National Archival Fund of Published Documents is preserved at the National Library of Lithuania. According to regulations of the National Library, the Music Department maintains and preserves the archive.

Image and sound documents issued in Lithuania or issued abroad and related to Lithuania by language, authorship, or subject are collected and preserved in the Archive. Acquisition of the archival collection is organized on a basis of legal deposit copies, documents acquired from physical and legal persons, document exchange with Lithuanian and foreign libraries as well as other information institutions, donations, heritage, or documents received by other legal means.

At this moment, the Archive contains 13,083 titles. There is only one physical unit per title; therefore the number of titles is equal to the number of physical units preserved in the Archive:

- Shellac records (2,534 titles)
- Vinyl records (2,209 titles)
- Audio cassettes (3,558 titles)
- Videotapes (173 titles)
- CD (4,006 titles)
- DVD (603 titles)

The comprehensive collection of Lithuanian shellac records forms the most important part of the Archive, collected in cooperation with researchers of Lithuanian records, collectors Algirdas Motieka (Lithuania) and Vytautas Strolia (Lithuanian emigrant who spent the majority of his years in the USA and donated his record collection to the National Library of Lithuania in 2009). The records were issued in various countries from 1907–1966.

This part of the Archive was not accessible for a long time. We had no technique for shellac records playback; breakable and fragile records were not provided for readers' use. With the aim of preservating these shellac records as a part of Lithuanian cultural heritage and to disseminate them to the public, the Music Department in 2003, 2004, and 2007 implemented a long-term shellac records digitization project supported by Culture and Sport Support Foundation of the Republic of Lithuania. Over one thousand shellac records have been digitized—only a segment of the collection. Digital copies of the records are now available on CDs for all visitors of the Music Reading Room of the National Library. It must be noted that the digitization process was organized in an acoustic mode, using an old gramophone (made around 1928), therefore the sound quality of these digitized shellac records, which were also in poor physical condition, is not very high.

In order to ensure preservation of the entire shellac archive, and for better online accessibility, modern digitization technologies should be used in future projects. This became a reality when the National Library in 2010 together with nine partners—libraries, museums, and archives—implemented a national project: "Development of Virtual Electronic Heritage System" (the project ended in 2012, its duration lasted thirty months). This project was the extension of another project, implemented in 2005–2008, which was called "Creation of the Integrated Virtual Information System."

The Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania received financial support of 12.4 million LTL from the European Union Structural Funds and state budget for realization of the project "Development of the Virtual Electronic Heritage System (VEPS)" in line with the implementation measure No.VP2-3.1-IVPK-04-V-01-001 "Lithuanian culture in the information society." During this project, a seamless system for digitization of cultural heritage was created. Also digitization, preservation, and access workflows for cultural heritage objects were standardized. An integrated data bank of digitized objects and a web portal were established.

Common efforts of the memory institutions of the country resulted in the digitization of over 280,000 digital objects (e.g., books, periodicals, manuscripts, and 2D graphics). 11,098 sound recordings were digitized and preserved in the Image and Sound Archive of the National Archival Fund of Published Documents in the National Library.

The Archive contains 4,743 items (2,534 shellac records and 2,209 vinyl records). Through this project, 1,072 shellac records and 1,133 vinyl records were digitized—the equivalent of 2,194 musical works from shellac records and 8,904 music works from vinyl records. In total, 40,640 minutes (678 hours) of sound recordings were digitized (see Figure 1).
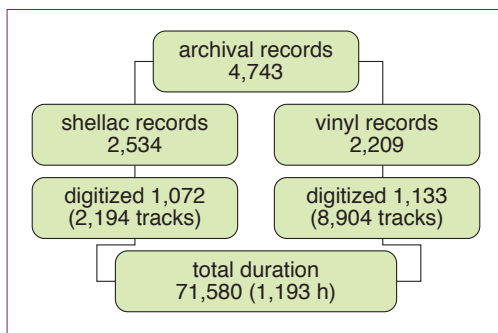

Figure 1. Total sound recordings digitized as part of the VEPS project.

The records were issued in various countries. The publishing period encompassed 1907–1966 for shellac records (1907 was the year first Lithuanian record was published), and 1941–1993 for vinyl records. The decision was made to digitize the remaining not yet digitized shellac and vinyl records, except for the records re-issued in CD format, re-editions, or repeating folk music.

The Project funds were used to acquire equipment for the digitization of records (i.e., Audiotechnica AT-PL 120-USB professional turntable with ATP-2 and Grado 78C cartridge) and sound recording and editing software (i.e., Samplitude 11, Algorithmix plugin bundle). The records were digitized and encoded as WAV files and made accessible to users as MP3s. The labels and envelopes of the records were scanned for visual access.

Bibliographic records were formed in accordance with the "Regulations for creation of bibliographic records for digitized documentary heritage objects in the VEPS Information System," prepared within the framework of the project. Bibliographic records were created using the UNIMARC format in the electronic catalogue of the Lithuanian Integral Information System of Libraries (LIBIS). Each musical work on the shellac or vinyl record is displayed in an analytic bibliographical record that is created for the original and its digital object. All versions of digitized objects are described in one bibliographic record.

The software, METS tvarkyklė, was created for transferring digital objects to the VEPS database and for presenting them for online usage. This software used the metadata exchange standard Metadata Encoding and Transmission Standard (METS). METS tvarkyklė is used for collections of digitized objects composed of digital files, object metadata, and technical and administrative

metadata. Using this software, digitized objects can be uploaded from various systems: LIBIS, Aleph, EAIS, as well as METS files.

Since digitization and promotion is affected by copyright issues, we had to coordinate copyright and neighboring rights issues with the institutions administering those rights—copyright management association NCB / LATGA-A and neighboring rights association AGATA. Licensing agreements on the rights for digital reproduction of works and publishing them on the Internet were prepared for this purpose.

All digitized material can be found at the following website: www.epaveldas.lt. The free playback of the recordings is available; however, downloading is not permitted.

Digital objects within the VEPS system contain descriptive metadata. Users are able to switch to extensive records within LIBIS (library system), LAFSIS (archive system), or IRIS (museum system). Therefore there is a link between each object and its relevant description in the source system, and vice versa.

There are a few possibilities for searching sound recordings in the portal:

- Standard simple search
- Advanced search, where sound recordings can be found by the following parameters:
    □ material composition (shellac, vinyl)
    □ rotation speed (78, 45, 33 1/3 rpm)
    □ sound format (monophonic, stereophonic)

It is also possible to search by collections. Collections of sound records are grouped according to subjects. One large part of the collection is vocal music; other parts consist of instrumental music, stage music, sacred vocal music, popular music, and literature records. Special attention is made to the first Lithuanian gramophone records, which is a very small yet very important part of the collection. It consists of only forty-five titles of shellac records.

The portal has been live for more than one year now. During this time (from May 2012 through August 2013), 4,517 sound files were accessed 12,924 times. The numbers demonstrate the popularity of the portal. We can conclude that Lithuanian users accept it and are willing to use it. The numbers could be bigger. During the implementation of the project we encountered a problem that is irresolvable at the present moment: the Law on Copyright and Neighboring Rights of the Republic of Lithuania only supports access to protected sound recordings on the Internet within the territory of Lithuania. This restriction is only for sound recordings with valid copyright terms. Works with expired copyright terms could be listened to outside the territory of Lithuania. However the copyright management association NCB / LATGA-A has not established the list of these works. Therefore, at the moment there are no works on the website that can be made available to the whole world.

Over 2,000 digitized Lithuanian shellac and vinyl records issued in various countries have been placed on the portal. Among them are the first Lithuanian records published by the Zonophone record company in Riga, from 1907–1909, and in Vilnius, from 1910–1911, which are very rare. There are also shellac and vinyl records that were issued in Soviet times, which represent the cultural panorama of Soviet Lithuania. Rare Lithuanian records issued abroad— in the USA, Canada, South America, and Europe—are also available. The vintage Lithuanian shellac records are in the framework of the UNESCO Memory of the World programme (2007) as objects of the Lithuanian National Registry.

Now we are sure of the necessity of digitization and we strive for its continuity. We aim to re-digitize the shellac records that were formerly digitized in acoustic mode and the vinyl records that remain un-digitized using modern technologies. In the long term we have plans to digitize audiocassettes that were not issued on CD format. All digitized archival material will be presented on the comprehensive Lithuanian cultural heritage portal (www.epaveldas.lt).

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