

Multimedia Information as a Cooperative Service: The German Network of Multimedia Resource Centers

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Introduction

In recent years information and collections in digital form have become an integral part of the library products and services spectrum. In addition to printed library materials, which are still in heavy demand, libraries are offering a growing collection of digital information and digital publications. And libraries have been working hard to find ways to offer printed and electronic materials in an integrated form. Usually the library's web site is the access point to the library's products and services:

- the OPAC
- further catalogs
- journal contents databases
- electronic journals in full text
- electronic full text publications
- electronic dissertations
- electronic document delivery services
- multimedia products
- collections of links
- knowledge portals
- virtual special libraries
- more electronic services

In order to build these digital collections, we have been co-operating intensively on a regional level and sometimes on a national level. In all German regions digital libraries were founded as co-operative initiatives.

Also, we have intensified co-operation with other institutions on our campuses. Libraries have redefined their mission and developed media concepts with the computer center and media center. At a very early point Bochum University Library started to integrate the multimedia products developed at the university and thus contributed to their distribution and acceptance. The producers of these products are the library's clients. We have shaped the collection together with them.

Project

In the following presentation I would like to introduce a current project which we are developing with partners on the Bochum campus and with external partners: The German Network of Multimedia Resource Centers.

The goals of the network are to secure, preserve, develop and make available audiovisual materials as an important cultural and scholarly source for education, research, teaching and art.

The network utilizes and links cultural and scholarly sources and services of archives, libraries, document centers, museums, research institutions all over the country.

Advantages of the open network structure are:

- central access to a system of decentral sources and services
- networking via modern communication technology
- the network as a communication forum.

The German National Broadcasting Archives, in Frankfurt and Potsdam-Babelsberg, and the Museum of Contemporary History, Bonn, initiated the network. At first 15 archives, museums, documentation centers and libraries with large multimedia resources formed the nucleus of the network. At the opening of the new building for the German National Broadcasting Archive in Potsdam-Babelsberg in December 2000, the partners presented themselves as the new media resource network with a common web site. Meanwhile, over 30 institutions from all German regions are partners in the network.

During the first year, the German National Broadcasting Archives coordinated the project activities, since the fall of 2001 the German Museum of Contemporary History has been the project co-ordinator. As a first project step, the German National Broadcasting Archives opened their database and digital full texts for research and teaching purposes to the partners in the network. All partners signed an agreement with the German National Broadcasting Archives. The library and the Institute for Media Studies signed the agreement for Bochum University. Password-protected access to the database of the German Broadcasting Archives is possible from the library and from the Institute for Media Studies. The Institute is the best user of the database on the Bochum campus. The password is required because the German National Broadcasting Archives database was not designed for end-user searching, and there

must be a guarantee that the materials are being used for research and teaching purposes exclusively. The goal of this project step is to gather experience with the transmission of large audio files.

The German National Broadcasting Archives database contains about 475 000 audio tapes, 1,5 million musical recordings, 90 000 radio broadcasts and 12 000 audio files in the real audio format. This collection is of extraordinary value to the university's Institute for Media Studies. Now the researchers also want access to the collection in Potsdam-Babelsberg, the memory of the radio and television past of the GDR. The largest part of this collection is not yet in the database.

Since February 2002 the network has presented itself in the Internet under the URL: www.netzwerk-mediatheken.de.

The Internet portal to audio and video materials is being developed by a working group. It is available in German and in English. It informs about the media resources in the partner institutions and guides the user to media collections and databases. The web site is searchable with a search engine in German and in English. (The descriptors were translated in Bochum. Each partner in the network contributes what he/she can and this is something we could contribute.) The menu includes *Project Aims*, *Project Partners*, *Dates*, which is a calendar of events and exhibitions concerning multimedia in the partner institutions. As a result of the close ties with the network, Bochum University Library was able to hold an exhibition on its premises, which was developed by the German National Broadcasting Archives: *Returning to a Foreign Country? Remigrants and Radio in Germany between 1945-55*. The Institute for Media Studies integrated the exhibition into its teaching programme for the winter semester 2002/2003.

Under *Projects* the partners in the network list their recent media projects, exhibitions and ongoing research as well as joint projects, in which network affiliated institutions have participated. It also has information on the Symposium of the Network of Multimedia Centers which took place on Oct. 7 – 8, 2003, of which I shall say more later.

Research presents research options to the user: *Databases* lists all online databases of the institutions affiliated with the network. There are media databases and library catalogs with literature on media. The A – Z alphabetical list of subjects lists collection focal points – thematic, genre-related, geographical – of the network – affiliated institutions.

Publications lists:

- recent publications by network partners (2001 and after)
- the reference book of essays on Radio and TU compiled by the WDR (West German Radio) archive
- recent acquisitions of Leipzig University Library (Leipzig UL has the national special collection in communication and media studies)
- a literature database on media research with over 13 600 entries compiled by SWR (South West Radio).

A large link collection facilitates access to further sources on the subject of media.

The German version of the website features a multimedia crossword puzzle on German history illustrated by sound and film materials.

The Symposium of the Network of Multimedia Resource Centres with the title *Media Collections in Germany in the International Spectrum: Resources and Access* took place on Oct. 7/8, 2003 in Bonn in the Museum of Contemporary History. The museum has profound media competence with media being important museum objects, it has excellent international contacts and an outstanding reputation as a conference organizer.

The conference discussed media collections, the role of media collections in the information society and free access to media versus authors' rights.

The conference raised the level of awareness for media as a cultural and scholarly source of information. It presented and introduced the network to a broader public. It gave an overview over activities in the field of media in Germany and beyond.

(We heard the head of the British Library Sound Archive, Crispin Jewitt, on Audio-Visual Heritage as a Public Resource – SCENAA a Network of European National Institutions; Gregory Lukow on Building a National Audio-Visual Conservation Center – New Approaches to Digital Preservation and Access at the Library of Congress; Antoine de Baecque on Audio-Visual Media Collections in France; Kurt Deggeller on Memoriam – a Network for the Preservation of the Audio-Visual Cultural Resources of Switzerland.)

The contributions were published in the conference proceedings.

Planned activities

We are planning to add full text materials (articles, reviews, reports etc.) to the web site. We would like to link our network to international projects with similar goals.

Assessment and view of the prospects for the future

The Network of Multimedia Resource Centers is a project in which the project partners are building the bridge while they are walking on it. During the project meetings archivists, documentalists and librarians work together. Of course, some colleagues have decided to wait and see what happens. However, influential institutions like the German National Broadcasting Archives and the Museum of Contemporary History are interested in the success of the project. The president/ the director of these institutions take part in the project meetings and contribute to their success. It is fun to be part of this process. Also, the feedback of the media studies people at Bochum University is a motivating factor for me. Several media studies professors are actively taking part in the activities of the network; and the media studies people need and use the information which we are making accessible through the project.