

Report: First meeting of the Ibero-American Network of Digital Preservation for Audio
and Moving Image Archives

Shaping the future of Digital Preservation in Ibero America

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The first meeting of the Ibero-American Network of Digital Preservation for Audio and Moving Image Archives (RIPDASA, Spanish acronym) took place on November 4th and 5th, 2019 at Universidad Autónoma de México (UNAM)¹. RIPDASA's goal is to share knowledge and experiences in universities, heritage institutions, private companies, and international organizations with the aim of fostering scientific research on the current state and future perspectives of our sound and audiovisual heritage. The ultimate purpose is to propose solutions to solve or mitigate the risk of loss of these valuable assets. More specifically, the network aims to encourage the identification, analysis, discussion, creation, visibility and promotion of alternative and sustainable methods for digital preservation for sound and audiovisual archives in the region to avoid risk of loss of our cultural heritage and therefore, to ensure access for current and future generations.²

The meeting was attended by the network's researchers:

- Perla Olivia Rodríguez Reséndiz (Mexico)
- Francisco Miranda Fuentes (Chile)
- José Augusto Mannis (Brazil)
- Dora Brausin Pulido (Colombia)
- Matteo Manfredi (Ecuador)
- Alejandro Cornejo Montibeller (Peru)
- Monica Maronna Giordano (Uruguay)
- Fabricia Malán Carrera (Uruguay)
- María Teresa Fernández Bajón (Spain)
- Alfonso López Yepes (Spain)
- Miquel Termens Graells (Spain)
- Pamela Vizner Oyarce (Chile - USA, IASA Representative)
- Virginia Bazan Gil (Spain, FIAT/IFTA Representative)

¹ UNAM Website: <https://www.unam.mx/>

² <http://www.cytod.org/es/ripdasa>

The inaugural session was attended by UNAM authorities and representatives from the International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives (IASA)³ and the International Federation of Television Archives (FIAT/IFTA).⁴

One of RIPDASA's first projects has been to identify the location of archives in the Ibero-American region. In collaboration with the UNAM's Geography Institute, we've made an online tool called the "Sound and Audiovisual Archives Observatory." During the meeting, colleagues from the Institute demonstrated how it identifies and displays the location of institutions who own, collect, and manage sound and audiovisual archives. The project can be accessed here: <http://www.ripdasa.iibi.unam.mx/qits-geoportal-v3/home>

Preliminary Conclusions

The rest of the day was dedicated to presentations on the progress made so far by the research groups. Although each country represents a unique context with its own characteristics and inherent diversity, it was possible to identify common themes and issues throughout the presentations.

The themes we identified (see the sections below) can be grouped in two main areas: (1) issues that are common to the archives in the region, and (2) challenges for the successful development and growth of RIPDASA. Areas in group (1) can serve as a guide for the network to develop efforts in the right direction. Additionally, some of these early conclusions offer support and confirmation of the reasons behind the creation of RIPDASA and reiterate the urgency of its purpose.

These themes are extremely important to consider in the development of the network and its future activities. They represent a preliminary diagnosis that helps us understand the reality of the archives in our region. These observations are invaluable for RIPDASA, but can be useful as a reference for other international organizations that aims to support sound and audiovisual archives in the region.

1. Main Challenges for Archives in the Region

The most common issues found in the archives that were visited and/or surveyed —not considering the lack of financial resources— are related to the following areas: limited access, difficulties processing of born-digital collections, lack of implementation of digital preservation programs, few options for skill development, low access to educational resources, and few professional networks within and between countries.

- **ACCESS: Providing access to sound and audiovisual collections is complex due to copyright issues and lack of resources to acquire appropriate technologies.**
Organizations find it difficult to provide open access to their collections due to intellectual

³ IASA Website: <https://www.iasa-web.org/>

⁴ FIAT/IFTA website: <http://fiatifta.org/>

property restrictions. Access happens primarily in-situ. Additionally, in many situations, access protocols are not documented and vary on a case by case basis even within the same organization. The differences in legal regulations on intellectual properties among our countries makes it difficult to exchange information and methodologies to face this issue and maximize access. Finally, the lack of resources does not allow for the acquisition of technologies to facilitate access.

- **BORN-DIGITAL: Many organizations are currently digitizing collections, but born-digital materials are not being processed or collection and acquisition policies do not exist.** A large number of archives is in the process of digitizing their collections (they do what is possible with the human and technological resources available), but for the most part protocols for the acquisition and processing of born-digital collections do not exist. These types of materials are still being collected but do not receive any type of processing or treatment.
- **PRESERVATION: Digital preservation has not been addressed or has been addressed superficially, since organizations are yet facing the challenges of digitization.** Although there is some awareness on the risks associated with digital collections, the vast majority of the organizations have not yet started a digital preservation program. Efforts in this area are mostly focused on digitization. Both this and the previous point are the focus of great concern since digital content continues being generated without further planning for its long term preservation.
- **SKILL DEVELOPMENT: There is lack of access to specific training, both in the technical and theoretical areas on processing of sound and audiovisual archives.** The lack of access to information and resources affects all archives and professionals, and it is even more problematic for technical documentation. The final numbers for our first webinar series — about 900 attendants from 20 different countries— is a clear confirmation of this need.
- **RESOURCES: The lack of resources and expertise makes it difficult to establish digitization programs and acquisition of required technologies.** The lack of resources solely dedicated to digitization and preservation is a common issue. However, this is exacerbated by the lack of training that would allow professionals to look for and implement alternative, low-cost systems and solutions, such as the use of free or open source software.
- **COMMUNICATION: The lack of communication among archives and professionals in the region does not allow collaborative efforts and maximization of resources.** Many organizations have difficulties to access specific technologies (for digitization and digital preservation), which could potentially be provided by other institutions through collaboration protocols.

It is worth reiterating that this is not an in-depth analysis of the current situation, but a summary of the conversation topics touched upon during the meeting. The final output of the research group will most certainly uncover more detailed information, however, this brief report offers a preview into the most common problems we face. It is worth noting that financial resources is an issue across the board, however, we wanted to focus our analysis on the underlying issues since we think this will allow a more effective mindset to find sustainable ideas.

2. Challenges for RIPDASA

Through the presentations and conversations it was clear that RIPDASA has many challenges ahead. It is necessary to begin planning comprehensive efforts to support mitigation of some of the issues that arose. How possible implementations of these plans are carried out is still a question, nonetheless they open the door to our imagination and invite us to think creatively and collaboratively to overcome limitations.

Based on AVP's proposal, in analyzing the challenges we have used AVP's⁵ approach to consulting that is a cross between traditional consulting (think McKinsey, Deloitte), and human-centered design, or design thinking. Design thinking⁶ is a process for creative problem solving. It is both a way of thinking and a method of doing. It is an approach that is applicable to problem solving in any field. With RIPDASA, we are breaking down the big issues into a series of smaller questions presented in the format "How might we...?" that will allow funneling towards defining the true scope of the endeavor. As we answer these specific questions, solutions for larger problems will rise to the top.

For RIPDASA, these questions are:

¿How might RIPDASA...

- ... support initiatives to activate archival processing in born digital collections?
- ... facilitate access to useful and up-to-date resources that can be applied in our own contexts?
- ... facilitate and/or support the creation of formal training programs on preservation?
- ... establish collaborative relationships with existing local organizations and/or national/regional entities?
- ... be useful for both major organizations (national archives, main libraries, etc.) as well as for minor organizations (independent organizations, community archives, private collections, personal collections, etc.)
- ... help funnel resources available internationally and/or facilitate access to them?
- ... facilitate communication among professionals in archives to minimize deduplication of effort and maximize resources?
- ... help promote sound and audiovisual heritage and communicate the urgency of preserving these contents both to general users as well as to high administrative staff in our institutions?

In addition to our concern to achieve sustainability as a network in the long term, something we are aware of and that we keep as a goal in our horizon, many questions emerged during the meeting in relation to the role of RIPDASA and its growth. These can be summarized as:

⁵ AVP website: www.WeAreAVP.com

⁶ More about Design Thinking: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Design_thinking

¿How might RIPDASA...

- ... position as a recognized entity in the region in the area of sound and digital preservation?
- ... continue growing through the integration of more participant countries to the research group and through the creation of new resources?
- ... do better promotion of its activities and results in order to make them visible?

The Near Future

This first meeting was an important opportunity to meet colleagues and plan for the future of the network. The research teams will continue working and the results will be published in a book. The first webinar series has come to an end, but we are already planning its new version for 2020, which will heavily focus on digital preservation subjects such as digital preservation evaluations and technical aspects. AVP, RIPDASA member states: it is a pleasure to be part of such a promising initiative as well as having the opportunity to share experiences with our colleagues from the network. We are happy to continue supporting the network through the organization of free webinars. Past webinars are all available here:

<https://weareavp.aviaryplatform.com/collections/122>

Our efforts to identify, analyze and discuss our work is getting us closer to a more concrete understanding of the state of archives in Ibero-America. Once that is established, the network can begin to offer the right resources to build capacity in the community. We hope to be able to have answers to some of the questions by our next meeting in Colombia next year. The work of the members of RIPDASA in 2019 has been fundamental since through the identification, analysis and discussion of these results we get closer to getting a more concrete understanding on the state of archives in Ibero-America so the network can offer valuable resources to the community. We hope to be able to have answers to some of the questions by our next meeting in Colombia in 2020.