



With breaking stories and
newswire products from

UN NEWS CENTRE



UN spotlights value and vulnerability of world's audiovisual heritage



United Nations Historic Film Archives

27 October 2011 –

The United Nations today underscored the importance of preserving the world's audiovisual heritage, stressing the vulnerability of sound and film or video recordings to destruction and the need to pay greater attention to ensuring that they are properly saved for future generations.

Marking the World Day for Audiovisual Heritage, whose theme this year is 'Audiovisual Heritage: See, Hear, and Learn,' the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)) noted that countless documentary treasures have been lost since the invention of image and sound technologies.

Through the loss, the world lost some of its means of sharing experiences, creativity and knowledge.

“Audiovisual records offer unique means of learning, sharing and becoming informed through sound and image,” said UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova in her [message](#) to mark the Day.

Audiovisual records offer unique means of learning, sharing and becoming informed through sound and image.

“They are, in form and content, living testimonies to the history of technology, performance and culture. By presenting images and sounds from foreign cultures, historic moments shaping our collective memory, they contribute to cementing the foundations of intercultural dialogue and enriching humanity’s awareness,” she said.

Archives around the world marked the Day with activities highlighting the fragility and vulnerability of audiovisual heritage, while celebrating the work of the heritage [institutions](#) that have helped to protect it.

In Nepal, the UNESCO office in the country held a round-table discussion on safeguarding Nepal’s audiovisual memory and a concert of traditional Nepali music in the capital, Kathmandu.

In the Namibian settlement of Tsumkwe, a selection of the John Marshall Ju’hoan Bushman Film and Video Collection 1950-2000, which has been inscribed on UNESCO’s Memory of the World Register, was screened, as were sound and film archival material from the National Archives of Namibia.

At UNESCO headquarters in Paris, a public screening of short films selected from the agency’s audiovisual archives was held, with all the selected films featuring women characters.

Ms. Bokova stressed that the protection of the world’s heritage records is a cultural and educational imperative and that must never be taken for granted.

“To protect the audiovisual heritage, appropriate safeguard measures should be instituted and training and support for archive professionals, libraries and specialized institutions provided,” she added.

The UN’s own audiovisual [archive](#) in New York will be open on the Day. It holds 80,000 hours of audio recording on 70,000 tapes and discs and 37,700 hours of film and video on 25,000 reels of film and 32,000 video tapes.

World Day of Audiovisual Heritage: Highlights of UN Audio and Photo Archives, 21 October 2011

The archives, which received the 2004 International Documentary Association's Preservation & Scholarship Award, have organized four guided tours for UN staff, delegates and accredited journalists today. Visitors will be shown the archive vault and multimedia displays in the second basement of the General Assembly Building.

The archives also contain 800,000 [photos](#) – 300,000 of which are outtakes that have not been digitized. Over 9,000 hours of audio and video and thousands of new photos are added every year.

News Tracker: past stories on this issue

[Efforts to protect intellectual property in digital age make progress, UN reports](#)