

# Videos in Public Libraries: New models of collaboration in Europe

## *Film festivals and libraries collaborate to provide access to films*

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### **1. Introduction**

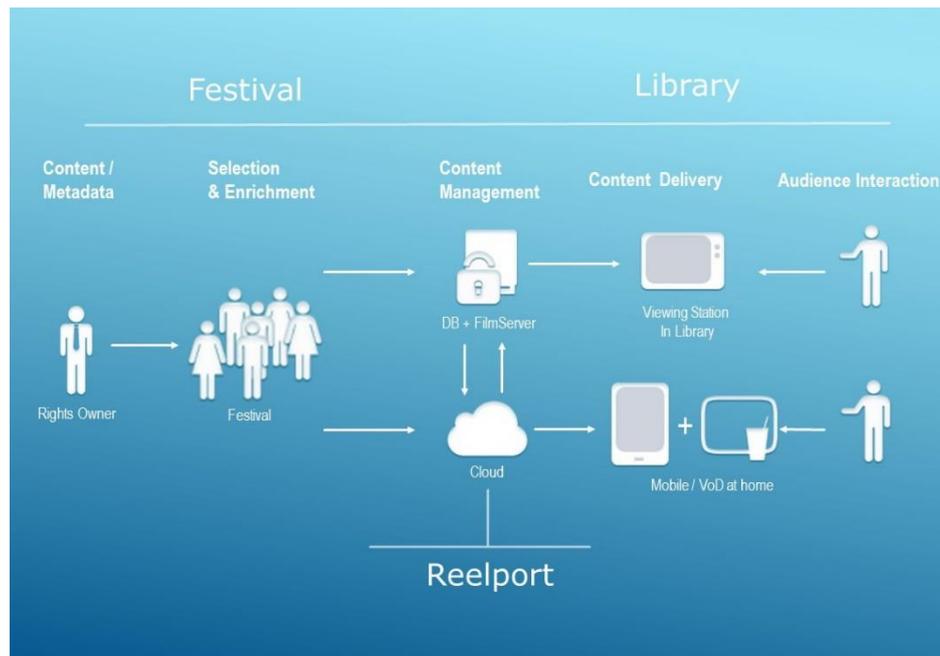
New technologies create new partnerships, research environments and business models. Technology may not only reduce cost but also allows for content management approaches that have not been known before. This is the case with new media technologies and new forms of access to audio-visual content.

AVA (Audio Visual Access) aims at establishing a new infrastructure for access to content by bringing together audio-visual content providers, libraries and a content management system provider. The cooperation partners of the project are major Film Festivals who select films, curate programs and clear rights; Public libraries screening these films and the b2b Video on Demand Service PicturePipe of the reelport GmbH, providing the technology to disseminate videos in this very particular environment. The lessons being learned in AVA can easily be applied to a scientific and academic research environment, from rights clearance via closed audience screenings to content management systems for educational and research institutions.

The project is supported by the MEDIA program of the European Commission in the framework of the Audience Development Call.

### **2. Collaboration – The workflow**

All films shown in AVA have been submitted to the participating film festivals. After the end of the festival, the festival staff will clear the rights, enrich the metadata with synopsis, subtitles or jurors' comments, then it will curate programs (children films, films dealing with specific subjects), it will determine who is allowed to watch the films until when and finally the festival staff will upload the film files and the metadata of its programs to the AVA film server. In the library the films can then be watched in viewing booths. Additionally, registered library users may watch festival films at home using the AVA Streaming Video on Demand service.



**Fig. 1 – AVA - Overview**

Thus, by cooperating on AVA, film festivals and public libraries complement each other in various different ways: Festivals have the knowledge and the experience to curate films. They are in touch with the filmmakers and copyright holders, so it is easier to clear the rights. And as an event, they have experience in marketing and creating awareness. The libraries on the other end are deeply rooted in the cultural infrastructure. They have a steady stream of visitors throughout the year and provide an audience that does not necessarily attend film festivals but is highly interested in audio-visual content.

### 3. Libraries & Film

As information and knowledge are increasingly transmitted in audio-visual form, modern libraries increasingly need to integrate audio-visual content. For instance, a medical library like the Wellcome Library London, UK is unthinkable without its collection of audio-visual content.<sup>1</sup>

For the libraries there is an urgent need to establish a digital strategy for giving access to audio-visual heritage and ensuring the long term preservation. So far, with a vast majority of players, the digital strategy consisted of buying DVDs and Blu-Rays. Not only that these data-carriers are labour-intensive, they may also vanish in the not so distant future – as in the music industry – and be replaced by online services. AVA is addressing this issue by creating a VoD offer that is specifically tailored to the libraries' needs.

In a time when digital in general and film in particular have conquered the world, libraries still struggle for a strategy to give access to new media and to audio-visual content. DVDs and Blu-Rays are bought and lent out, but in a time when the people get access to non-physical works like e-books

<sup>1</sup> Wellcome Library Moving Image and Sound Collection <http://wellcomelibrary.org/collections/about-the-collections/moving-image-and-sound-collection/> [ 24.09.2015].

or, for film, to Video on Demand, the concept of lending out physical carriers seems to have little future. A new agenda needs to be found.

With AVA we propose a solution that enables visitors to watch films from viewing booths in the library directly connected to a server within the library storing all films. This will allow AVA to play out all films seamlessly in the highest possible quality. It is also possible to add Video on Demand, letting authorized library card holders watch the films at home.

In addition to the overall digital strategy, libraries need to establish know-how on how to work with moving image content. Know-How is needed in a variety of fields: How to acquire AV – content for libraries (licensing) how to ensure protection of minors, how to select the films, how to curate, etc.

#### **4. Film festivals & Events**

Film festivals are events. A lot of work is invested into selecting films, creating programs, organizing venues, inviting filmmakers and gather an audience for films. All this work is leading to a couple of days of exhilarating experiences - then everything is over. What remains is a catalogue and, for the audiences, a great experience. But after some weeks of recreation, the preparations for the next edition begin and what has been done before is mostly forgotten. It has been in the interest of festivals for a long time to make the work more durable, to extend the impact of the festival for the time after the festival too.

To this end, AVA will provide the festival programs to the local libraries, allowing library visitors to watch these films throughout the year even if they have missed them during the festivals. Thus they develop a taste for the films, hopefully visiting the event in the coming years. And, almost as a side effect, AVA will serve as an archive for previous festival editions.

#### **5. PicturePipe**

The reelport GmbH is setting up AVA utilizing its PicturePipe service. PicturePipe already operates complex Mediatheques in various film and TV events, among them the biggest film libraries in the world at MIPJunior and MIPDoc with 260 viewing booths each. In addition PicturePipe provides highly customized Video on Demand for the largest film market in the world (on cinando.com, the website of the Marché du Film, the film market of the Cannes Film Festival) as well as for the selection of the European Film Academy award.

#### **6. The Audience**

For the audience it becomes increasingly difficult to navigate in the world of media. An avalanche of books, games, apps and moving images is pouring over us every day. What is needed is a guide to audio-visual content and curated information services.

One of the major advantages of AVA is that it draws on the expertise on film of the film festivals. When it comes to film, festivals provide guidance by carefully selecting quality films out of the huge mass of works which are produced every day. But not only the selection itself is done by the festival, in addition the films are curated to programs, the metadata is enriched, often subtitles in the local language are added and tags are given. All this metadata will allow library users to research the films in a much more meaningful way than anywhere else.

The target audience is not only the audience in the cities where the festivals of the consortium members take place. The cooperation between festivals and libraries is a model that may grow to more and more cities across Europe.

## 6. The market

It is hard to imagine a market that is larger than the library market. In Europe alone, according to a study commissioned by the European Union, 25 % of its citizens or 97, 5 million adults make use of public libraries (2013). In the US, 145 billion visits per year are paid by 170 million library users.

Out of the many media given access to by public, academic and research libraries, films form the tiniest group. In comparison to books, the number of films tend to be less than 1 % of the libraries assets. However, when it comes to usage, films surpass books by far. Of course the numbers vary widely from library to library, in average the number of lend-outs per medium is up to 12 times higher than per book, for example, and it continues to rise every year. Audio-visual content is of increasing importance for information and research.

It also has to be added that there is a social component to the project. Libraries ensure equal share to digital information and services, this includes access to audio-visual information and new media technologies.

## 7. Funding opportunities.

Collaboration projects like AVA prove immensely popular with funding institutions. AVA itself is funded as an Audience Development project by the MEDIA program of the European Union. A similar funding application, **DDD60**, a collaboration between documentary film festivals and technology providers aiming to provide Virtual Reality capabilities for video libraries, as well as **film265**, a research project on video codecs by the Technische Universität Berlin and the Cannes film festival market, have been awarded funding in the H2020 program of the European Union. We therefore encourage all science and research institutions to look for partnerships beyond the established ones: publishers, events, private companies – all can provide collaboration opportunities that make exciting projects possible.

## 8. Innovation

Modern libraries have hybrid collections: they offer media on physical carriers as well as digital content online. The way films are currently given access to in libraries by lending out physical carriers– in the vast majority of cases, at least – not keeping up with changes in media technology and the way the audience expects to get access to films. Typically a library has a small budget to buy DVDs and Blu-Rays. This procedure has a number disadvantages:

Rarely the films are selected by staff that has been educated in film. Only very large libraries can afford a film person to decide upon which films to acquire. For this reason the films that are available often reflect either the taste of a particular person or they are bought based on their success at the box office (favouring US films) but rarely based on their place in film history or on their artistic value.

In addition, DVDs and Blu-Rays deteriorate. Not only that they have a limited life-expectancy, but they are scratched and destroyed easily by its users. As a result, DVDs and Blu-Rays have to be re-bought regularly, a cost which can be saved totally once the films rest on a server.

Finally, a DVD can only be watched by one person at a time. The number of viewers is limited by the number of copies available. In the moment the films are on a server, everybody with the right to watch these films can do so.

## **9. Rights Clearance**

The most difficult task for showing films in a public library is the clearance of rights. Traditionally, public libraries buy DVDs or Blu-Rays and rent them out. In most countries, the library acquires the right to lend out the film together with the physical copy. Depending on the country, however, a different set of rights is involved if films are played out via a server to multiple viewing posts or even via VoD to registered library users. As a result in some European countries these rights need to be acquired. For AVA, the festivals are clearing the rights. An astonishing 70% - 90% of content providers agree to show their films in public libraries for free.

## **10. Age Rating & Copyright Institutions**

One of the major obstacles for the acquisition of digital moving image content for libraries has been rights clearance. Another challenge is the mandate to ensure authorized access and to observe laws for the protection of minors.

In some territories age rating is a major challenge because many of the films shown in festivals have not been age rated (and may never be age rated). The most practical solution is to not age rate films at all and let only adults watch the films.

A special case are festivals which are focused on children. They tend to have agreements with age rating institutions on which films they are allowed to show to which age group. These “festival ratings” might then be utilised by other selections as well.

In the world of feature films, especially if the films already had a distribution, age ratings from DVDs can easily be transferred to the AVA’s library offer. A very similar approach is chosen for all issues regarding payments to copyrights organisations. In most cases producers will have acquired the necessary rights, but in case they haven’t the festival will have to find an agreement with these organisations. In a worst case scenario, AVA will take over the costs. The business plan is drafted accordingly.

## **11. Conclusion**

AVA should just be a starting point for working with audio-visual content in libraries. Once the infrastructure and the workflows are in place, more festivals and film programs might be included. It can also serve as role model for similar collaboration projects, bringing together science or cultural institutions, events and private business together to create new and exciting ways of sourcing and disseminating video.