

Metadata Creation Assignment: Latin American Video Archives

The Chilean Collection

Introduction

This paper will address the creation of metadata records for three master tapes of the Chilean Collection of the Latin American Video Archives. The collection comprises more than 20 videocassette tapes in U-matic format and its contents represent a very important recent period of Chilean history. The procedures, decision-making and standard selection are described below.

Part 1: Selecting a Collection

The collection selected for this project is a selection of the Latin American Video Archives (L.A.V.A.), specifically the Chilean materials. I have been working with this archive making a collection assessment and, because access or metadata description was not part of that project, I thought it would be interesting to do it with a collection that I know very well and with which I feel connected and emotionally attached.

The selection of the material was made under the following criterion: it had to be a special collection, for me or for the world, a collection that needed to be preserved. In the case of my selection I believe that the collection is both, important personally and for the rest of the world.

The Chilean Collection of L.A.V.A. comprises 22 U-matic tapes, the “L.A.V.A. masters”, all of them containing works from the 80’s, which were received by the archive during that time in order to distribute them in the U.S. These tapes are worth preserving because video was a very important medium in Chile during the military dictatorship. The government controlled the communications media at that time and free speech did not exist. Portable video machines were accessible for many artists, journalists and documentarians who wanted to show the world – and the common Chilean people, blinded by the partial information they received – the facts and crimes committed by the authoritarian government. Therefore, the materials in this collection are a manifestation of Chilean recent history and an example of the intent to reveal the truth.

As a Chilean archivist, I feel the responsibility to participate in the preservation of my own history, understanding that this work must be done in a joint effort and that heritage without the communities to which they belong is not well preserved.

Part 2: Identifying qualities

The L.A.V.A. currently acts as a private collection. There is no access to the materials, not physical or intellectual. One of the ideas of Karen Ranucci, the manager, is to search for the owners of these tapes, producers and artists who once trusted their materials to the archive; and return the materials to their owners or to look for a better place for these tapes. Metadata becomes a very important tool then, because some tapes may end up in other archives with full cataloging systems. In order to allow a fast incorporation of these materials it is necessary to have some data

available in a standard format. Initially the archive has a spreadsheet with information, which includes several fields. Perhaps this documents was useful when the tapes were being distributed, but now the purpose has changed and metadata exchange is critical for the institution's new goals.

For each type of metadata the elements must be able to comply with the following criteria:

Descriptive: it must be possible to describe content and physical items. This type of metadata is crucial to allow the information to migrate from one institution to another and to be sure that the content is exactly what people are looking for. It is important to describe the physical object too, because it would determine the generation and quality of the content, i.e. U-matics are more likely to be masters and certainly have better image quality than VHS, for instance. The elements needed are:

- Identifier 1: number assigned to each title. One tape could contain more than one title.
- Identifier 2: number assigned by the archive to identify each tape or physical item. This number is the label attached to the tape's spine.
- Title: Must include original name in Spanish and translated title to English.
- Date of Creation: date in which the title was published.
- Subject: one or more subjects.
- Publisher: name of first publisher, whether American or Chilean.
- Genre: to identify type.

- **Description:** brief description, in English and Spanish. This field and title are very important because, in case of sharing the information with a Chilean institution, these fields would be the only ones in Spanish.
- **Relation with other media:** to describe linkage with other items inside the collection, such as copies or special editions. The archive used to make copies of the masters to allow distribution of titles in more widely used formats.
- **Creator:** primarily to name the director or producer or institution behind the creation. The field must provide the chance to differentiate each of them.

Physical or technical: It must provide the elements to describe each item physically and the content technically in a basic way. The elements needed are:

- **Format type:** L.A.V.A. has several tape formats.
- **Duration:** running time, described as HH:MM:SS
- **Language:** it must describe audio language and other sources, such as subtitles or dubbings.

Preservation: It is not so important because the archive is trying to look for the owners of these materials, or to transfer the items to other institution. Although, having these fields could be useful for the final receiver.

Access or rights: This information is not necessary because the archive does not hold any rights and because they do not have any public access system whatsoever. Although it could be useful to have information about the rights holder, it is not a priority at the moment, so the metadata standard must provide the opportunity to allow this information to be included in the future.

Part 3: Selecting standards

Because these materials are somehow unique¹, it is not likely that they will end up in a library, where everybody can access them. They would probably be incorporated in an audiovisual archive; therefore MARC21 is not the best choice. On the other hand, this institution has no funding and it has many other collections from other countries, which may need to be cataloged, and using MARC could imply economical resources or trained staff, making more difficult to accomplish their goals.

Initially, I thought that in order to share the basic information Dublin Core would fulfill the task very well, especially because of the simple language (which would allow to almost any person to create a record, always thinking about the other collections in L.A.V.A.). However, my second thought was to use PBCore, because it would allow describing more details in the future if the tapes ended up in an archive and because this standard provides more attributes for each field. Moreover, I think PBCore is not hard to understand, it has a very clear structure and once the contents for each field are defined, making a record is fairly easy. Also, since PBCore is based on FRBR it is a very good standard to describe audiovisual materials, where you can clearly identify work, expression, manifestation and item levels.

In relation to other standards or rules, I first thought in using AMIM2 or the FIAF Cataloguing Rules. Because in Chile the most important audiovisual archives use FIAF Rules, I decided that they would be more appropriate to use than AMIM2.

¹ Some masters with the same contents were found in a couple of archives in Chile, although some tapes translated to English (subtitles or dubbings) may not be available there. More information at www.umatic.cl

Using authority lists, or subject headings is easy to implement and to understand, so I decided to include: the Moving Image Genre Form Guide and Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) when needed.

Part 4. Fields list and Mapping

Below are the 12 fields selected for this project:

Fields	PBCore
Identifier 1 and 2	pbcoreIdentifier
Title	pbcoreTitle
Date of Creation	pbcoreAssetDate
Subject	pbcoreSubject
Publisher	publisher (contained by pbcorePublisher)
Genre	pbcoreGenre
Description	pbcoreDescription
Relation with other media	pbcoreRelationType and relationIdentifier
Creator	creator (contained by pbcoreCreator)
Format Type	InstantiationPhysical
Duration	InstantiationDuration
Language (including dubbing and subtitles)	InstantiationLanguage and InstantiationAlternativeMode