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All India Radio - Archives

By

D P Jatav
Country Report

All India Radio/Archives

Set-up The All India Radio (AIR) started broadcasting in 1937. Now, it has a large network of 100 stations with 29 Commercial Broadcasting Stations (CBS) headed by Station Directors/Asstt. Station Directors as Heads of Programmes.

Under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, the Directorate General, All India Radio, New Delhi is headed by the Director General who is assisted by the (DDGs) Dy, Dirs. General in the Directorate and zonal D D Gs of North, South, East, West and North East zones at Bombay Madras, Calcutta and Delhi. Beside the zonal stations, regional stations located at States' Capitals and local stations in each region work under the direct-supervision of their respective D D Gs.

Each station has its own Tape/Record Library for its own use with a Librarian who is responsible to the Head of Programme. Zonal & Regional stations have their libraries for Records/Tapes/Books etc. to cater the needs of their zones/regions.

The Directorate General with Central Production Units for Features (Hindi/English), Drama (Hindi) and Music (Hindustani/Karnataka), News Services Division (NSD) and External Services Division (ESD) - an overseas service has a Transcription & Programme Exchange Service headed by a Director (which is known as DTPES in short) The DTPES was set up in 1954 with PEU Tape Library, Central Tape Bank (CTB), Foreign Tape Records Library, Transcription and Archives wings each being under the supervision of a Programme Officer designated as Programme Executive (PEX)
PEU Tape Library & CTB.

The PEU Library receives & reviews for re-broadcast the selected programme contributions from various AIR stations. After due scrutiny by the respective screening Committees, the approved ones are publicised in Monthly PEU Bulletins circulated to all Stations. On choice requests, it supplies the copies to the concerned. The blank tapes for making copies are procured from the Central Tape Bank on the basis of allocation of CTB quota for each station. Similarly the programme contributions received from foreign broadcasting organisations are processed. The PEU Tape Library has at present about 6000 recordings whereas the Foreign Tape/Records Library has a collection of nearly 3,000 recordings.

Transcription The Transcription Wing transcribes the recorded speeches made by the Prime Minister & Presidents Of India in and out of the country. The transcripts are bound in Volumes & sent to the Archives for preservation along with their recordings. To mark the Nehru Centenary Celebration year 1989, a Nehru Cell was set up to reorganise the recordings/transcripts subject wise and language wise, in April 1988.

Archives The AIR Archives has a collection of 15,000 hours recordings on 33,000 spooltapes/records. Over 7000 Presto Discs were transferred on Mylor Tapes about a decade ago. Now, all tapes preserved in the Archives are mylor and master tapes. Copies of the masters are allowed to go out of the archives,
never the masters. Apart from the recordings of National leaders, Freedom fighters and eminent personalities of India and abroad, the archives has made efforts to procure recordings of old masters of music (classical), regional and folk music, seasonal & festival songs, marriage songs, patriotic and devotional songs. It has secured old opera dramas, skits & audience programmes also. Recordings of ABU, ASIA 82, CHOGM, International Conference & Seminars including those foreign dignatories who ever visited India reflect on the memories to exist. A good number of features based on universal subject themes make a part of the archives. Of late, AIR Archives has started a project to record the eminent personalities in the fields of administration, politics, fine arts, literature, drama, music, sports, science etc. for having a radio-autobiography or say, oral history of the epoch making events witnessed by them, with an embargo that the material would not be used during their lifetime. In addition to the above, about 300 sound effects of various situations and events have also been kept safe in the archives.

Working system of the Archives at present - Improvement in Software Plan

(i) There is only one Programme Executive attending to the Archives. He is (i) making arrangements for preserving and storing of the material received from various AIR stations, (ii) providing facilities to various programmes and researches, (iii) looking after the demands made on the archives, (iv) making arrangements and attending to indents of various AIR stations for
supply of specific material for broadcast purpose and (v) making arrangements for dubbing and transferring of archival material for broadcast and preservation purpose.

(ii) Here is the specialised job which is processed in stages. At every stage, supervision of the work by Programme Executive is essential. All the stages are interlinked. The main job is the preservation of rare recordings/scripts in the Archives. When a programme is received, it goes under process as follows:-

(a) **Receipt**:- A programme tape is received checked and if O.K. sent through entry Register to the Archives. If a discrepancy is detected, the tape is retained, discrepancy is communicated to the concerned through correspondence. Outside station takes a fortnight to do the needful. Till that period, the receipt is incomplete. Such tape/script is kept pending & the receipt is completed after station's reply.

This job is done by PEX himself.

If the tape/script is O.K., it is forwarded to the Archives Library where the tape is further entered into a register known as Library Register and the LR No. is given by the Librarian and placed at proper place for further action.

(b) **Screening** :- As per discipline the tape is to be checked whether the recording tallies with the tape-cuesheet or not. In case it is different, further correspondence is made and mistake is pointed out and the tape is returned to the station concerned. The tape after necessary correction is received back in a
fortnight period, it happens seldom.

This job is partly done by the Librarian and finally and partly by PEX. A number of entries are carried out in this process.

If the tape recording is according to the contents/details provided by the station, this is further listened to by expert-music or spoken word. After approval, the tape is retained for further action and if disapproved, the tape is returned to the station. At this stage PEX is involved.

(c) Transfer of recording:- The approved tape is to be transferred on the tape of the Archives known as Mylor tape. PEX allocates the job to a Production Asstt./TREX and under his own supervision the tape is transferred on the Mylor tape which is signed by PEX and the Engineer on duty.

The tape of the station transferred on archival tape is now free for release. If the tape pertains to the Primary Quota tape of the station, it is returned and if it is a CTB tape, it is released to the Central Tape Bank. At all times correspondence is made & files are maintained for each station.

(d) Accessioning:- The Mylor thus prepared is further forwarded back to Archives where it is adopted and made part of the accessioning. The accessioning work involves entries of all possible details into Accession Register, Card Indexing-tapewise, format discipline and personalitywise. This all is done under supervision of PEX.
(c) **Physical Verification:** The tape thus accessioned is subject to its existence in the archives physically every year. Annual physical verification is 100% done by PEX. After tape of a year-period, the tape loses its coating strength and needs replacement. Further dubbing is required on fresh tape/mylor tape.

(f) **Weeding Out of tape:** Owing to lapse of time, the tape loses its quality and so this is to be weeded out. It is listened to by PEX first, sent to Engg. Section for further remarks, if it is defective, the tape is declared unserviceable and after transfer on mylor tape it is weeded out.

It is done by Pex himself.

(g) **Blank Tapes:** The mylor tapes are procured from Central Stores. The requisition is based on the reviewing of the existing position i.e. how many tapes declared unserviceable are to be replaced. The requisite number of tapes are not replaced by the Central Stores at a time but in parts and follow up action is continued through correspondence.

All is done by the Pex himself.

(iii) (a) **Documentation:** To register the tape received with complete details does not mean documentation. For example, a tape of folk songs is received. It has 6 songs A line of the song, duration, name of the folk party, name of the contributing station, royalty position etc. are given as details of the tape but there is no gist (background) of a song - when the song is
sung that way, which was the occasion, how the tradition started for the singing of that song in a particular place. i.e. the background in writing is not there, the tape how best it has been procured will not reflect relevance. In this case, it will need search for background material. Most of the tapes pertaining to any music do not have such background synopsis.

Under the circumstances, the job of documentation is almost incomplete. What is the use of, say, such folk music which has no historical background - no synopsis. Who is to prepare this sort of documentation) A lot of correspondence to systematise the documentation in respect of all progs. of all discipline required.

Take an example of an old master of music classical. There are rare recordings of Bade Gulam Ali Khan. A raga recited by him, at present has been shown in the tape cuesheet with first words of aslap and drut and the duration. Is it sufficient? Should there not be a background of this raga when it is sung, whose Gharana Khan Saheb belongs to, a short life sketch of Khan Saheb and his qualities in Gayaki etc.?

Such rare recordings can not be reproduced in the deceased voices and afresh their albums with comprehension and historical background printed material are the need of all times immemorial. This is a very painstaking job and needs concentration of one Pex alone. In absence of a Pex, it is lying pending.

Here are rare recordings of voice recitations. These need the documentation. The old time plays and the contemporary plays no documentation at all. When some researcher wants to present a
critical analysis of radio plays will he be able to make out any thing of the existing tape cuesheet?

In all, there are about 12000 recordings which are not documented in addition to the new ones waiting documentation.

b) Preparation of Brochures and Pamphlets

From the brochures and pamphlets received from various Foreign B' casting Organisation it is gathered that the material preserved in Archives needs continuous releases in form of brochures and pamphlets to notify that this kind of material is available in the archives.

For want of a Pex this job is pending and not being executed as this is also a very painstaking job.

(c) Relevant information for documentary purpose scientific indexing and classification of all archival material are the specialised jobs and for want of Pex' supervision remain unattended.

There are about 28000 taped programmes which need execution. It is not an easy job.

(d) In the field of planning and production of progs. based on archival material nothing can be done for want of Pex. So far this aspect is untouched.

(iv) Full time continuous working in each item mentioned above 4 individual Pexs is the need for permanent arrangement.
As the jobs are interlinked and need continuous systematic working without a gap of a single day even, the six posts of PEXS in the set up of National Archives is the must in addition to the one presently Pex working.

By the end of the VIIth Five Year Plan, the supervisory staff position improved to certain extent. Another software 'TAMS' (Tapes Archives Management System) developed by the Electronic Data Processing Unit of AIR is presently in use. A crash programme is now on to computerise all the collections of the Archives by 1990. Consolidated publications are expected by the end of 1990. Mini Computer (ESPL) of the storage capacity of 80 m8 with 5 working stations where programme staff members concerned are accessible, has stored so far 1/3rd documented material of the archives.

But there are difficulties in making correct assessments of the methods adopted for classification, Indexing systems, computerised information retrieval, conservation, standardisation in information etc. which need removal and the workshop being conducted by the AMIC in collaboration with Deutsche Welle may prove to be a landmark in this direction.

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