

UNESCO Archives

Finding Aid - Audiovisual archives (AG 12)

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UNESCO Archives

7, Place de Fontenoy

Paris

France

75352 Paris 07 SP

Telephone: + 33 (0) 1 45 68 19 49

Fax: + 33 (0) 1 45 68 56 17

Email: archives@unesco.org

<http://www.unesco.org/archives>

<https://atom.archives.unesco.org/index.php/ag-12-audiovisual-archives>

Audiovisual archives

Table of contents

Summary information	3
Scope and content	3
Notes	3
Series descriptions	4
Film archives, 1946-	4
Audio archives, 1950-	8
Photographic archives, 1945-	12

Summary information

Repository:	UNESCO Archives
Title:	Audiovisual archives
Reference code:	AG 12
Physical description:	12,500 film cans; 9,000 video tapes; 29,000 35mm colour slides; 140,000 black and white 35mm negatives; 1,000 colour 35mm negatives; 15,000 duplicate colour slides; over 30.000 radio tapes.
Dates of creation, revision and deletion:	Created by Julia Pohle, September 2009. Revised AWT 9 March 2011. Updated by Eng Sengsavang, 5 August 2019.

Scope and content

The photo and audiovisual archives consist of analogue and digital records dating from 1945 up until the present day.

- Photographs: 140,000 black and white negatives; 1,000 colour 35mm négatives; 29,000 35mm colour slides; 15,000 duplicate cover slides; photographic prings, 1945 to the present.
- Films: 12,500 cans, containing over 1,000 titles, 1951 onwards.
- Audio reels: 30,000 audio recordings, including UNESCO Radio reports and interviews, and event and programme recordings, 1940s to 1980s.
- Video tapes: 5,000 tapes, corresponding to 2,500 titles, 1983 onwards.

A part of Unesco's film and sound recordings, documenting Unesco events and meetings since 1945, are kept in the Unesco Phonothèque of the Sound and Telephone unit.

Notes

Title notes

Immediate source of acquisition

Unesco's historical audiovisual collection was kept by the Division of Public Information until 2015, when the collection was transferred to the care of the Unesco Archives.

Restrictions on access

In 2018, the Unesco Archives launched a two-year digitization project, funded by member state Japan. As part of the project, 5,000 photographs, 45 hours of 16mm film (100 film titles); 30 hours of video programmes from the 1980s on UMATIC cassettes; and 20,000 audio recordings are being digitized.

As they become available, the digitized collections are accessible on the [Digitizing Our Shared UNESCO History website](<https://digital.archives.unesco.org/en/>) until the end of 2019.

A growing amount of the film and audio material kept by the UNESCO Archives is accessible via the [UNESCO Archives Multimedia website](<http://www.unesco.org/archives/multimedia/>).

Part of the photography holdings are accessible online via the [UNESCO photobank](<http://photobank.unesco.org/exec/index.htm>).

Other film, photo and audio material is accessible upon request at: archives@unesco.org

Please see sub-fonds for further information.

Conditions governing use

See [Unesco Rights and Permissions](<http://publishing.unesco.org/permissions.aspx>)

Finding aids

See under each series for a list of finding aids related to UNESCO film, audio, or photo archives.

Accruals

Continuous accruals

Other notes

- **Publication status:** published

Series descriptions

Film archives

Date: 1946- (date of creation)

Scope and content:

The film archives of UNESCO are divided into three parts:

- The archives of film productions, containing about 7500 film cans of material produced by UNESCO itself.
- The archives of reference films, containing about 1100 works which not have been produced by UNESCO itself but have been given to the organisation by NGOs, foreign film producers or member states.
- The archives of distributed films, containing around 2500 copies of 210 films. These films have been produced by the organisation and concern different programmes or projects.

Online search of a portion of Unesco film material is possible via:

[UNESCO Archives Multimedia Database](<http://www.unesco.org/archives/multimedia/>).

[Digitizing Our Shared Unesco History](<https://digital.archives.unesco.org/>)

All other film material is indexed in an electronic database, originally created and maintained by the Division of Public Information.

For questions regarding access to the film archives, or to request a search for film titles in the electronic database, please contact: archives@unesco.org

Physical description: 12,500 film cans; 8,000 video tapes

Physical condition:

1945-1988 film material
 1988-1988 3/4 Inch (BVU, Umatic)
 Since 1988 BETA SP, BETA NUM DV CAM

Immediate source of acquisition:

Unesco Division of Public Information

Location of originals:

The majority of the film collection is kept in a film depot in Unesco headquarters, Paris. Copies of Unesco films produced before 1960 on the easily inflammable cellulose nitrate are kept by the National Centre of the French National Film Archives, Bois d'Arcy.

Restrictions on access:

See [Unesco Rights and Permissions](<http://publishing.unesco.org/permissions.aspx>)

Conditions governing use:

Reproduction for some film material possible upon request.

Finding aids:

AG 12/1: UNESCO film reference library catalogues, [1953](<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0017/001795/179538eb.pdf>), [1958](<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001800/180007eb.pdf>), [1973-1974](<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0000/000015/001580eb.pdf>) and 1973-1980, [1989](<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000082448.locale>)

AG 12/1: [Catalogues of short films amd filmstrips; selected list](<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000061418.locale=en>)

AG 12/1: [UNESCO films 16 mm, 1975](<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000259862.locale=en>)

AG 12/1: [UNESCO Catalogue: photos, films, filmstrips, 1974](<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000261475.locale=en>)

AG 12/1: [Films of the UN Family: Catalogue of films on international development, 1973](<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000007243.locale=en>)

AG 12/1: Films of the UN Family: 16 mm. Catalogue, 1980-1981

AG 12/1: [UNESCO Film and video catalogue, 1987-1988](<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000183401.locale=en>)

AG 12/1: [UNESCO video catalogue](<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0009/000915/091561eb.pdf>), 1992

AG 12/1: Unesco: television video catalogue
AG 12/1: Unesco: video programmes (VHS)
AG 12/1: Bureau of Public Information (BPI): indexes on cards to films, 1945-

Accruals:

Further accruals expected

Publication status:

published

UNESCO-produced films

Date: 1948- (date of creation)

Scope and content:

The first documentary films produced by the organisation were published in the 1950s in order to show the activities of the organisation and to promote them to the external public. In 1958 a unit for radio and television production was established and started to broadcast regularly images taken on the occasion of official visits of state presidents, journeys of the Director General, inauguration etc.

Physical description: 7500 film cans, some thousands of video tapes

Physical condition:

1945-1988 film material
1988-1988 3/4 Inch (BVU, Umatic)
Since 1988 BETA SP, BETA NUM DV CAM

Restrictions on access:

The archives of film production are stored by and accessible via the Audiovisual Section of the Bureau of Public Information (BPI/AUD) on demand.

Finding aids:

Online search of a small part of the film material is possible via the [UNESCO Archives Multimedia Database](<http://www.unesco.org/archives/multimedia/>).

All other film material is indexed in an electronic database which is accessible at the Audiovisual Section of the Bureau of Public Information.

Accruals:

Continuous accruals

Publication status:

published

Reference films

Date: 1946- (date of creation)

Scope and content:

Wide range of subjects and types

Physical description: About 11,000 works

Immediate source of acquisition:

These films have not been produced by UNESCO itself but have been given to the organisation by NGOs, foreign film producers or member states. UNESCO has a legal responsibility to maintain these films.

Location of originals:

Original material of the reference films kept by UNESCO might be available in archives of the member State

Alternative form available:

Copies of the reference films kept by UNESCO might exist

Restrictions on access:

On demand at the Audiovisual Section of the Bureau of Public Information.

Finding aids:

Indexed in an electronic database which is accessible at the Audiovisual Section of the Bureau of Public Information.

Two catalogues have been published for internal use only:
Film reference library catalogues, 1972 and 1973-1980

Accruals:

Normally no further accruals

Publication status:

published

Distributed films

Date: 1946- (date of creation)

Scope and content:

Wide range of subjects and types

Physical description: Around 2500 copies of 210 films

Restrictions on access:

A small part of these film material is already accessible via the [UNESCO Archives Multimedia Database](<http://www.unesco.org/archives/multimedia/>). In the near future, many more films and videos will be integrated in the UNESCO Archives Multimedia Database.
Others are accessible via the Audiovisual Section of the Bureau of Public Information.

Finding aids:

Online search of a small part of the film material is possible via the [UNESCO Archives Multimedia Database](<http://www.unesco.org/archives/multimedia/>).
All other film material is indexed in an electronic database which is accessible at the Audiovisual Section of the Bureau of Public Information.

Publication status:

published

Audio archives

Date: 1950- (date of creation)

Scope and content:

The sound records contain mostly sound recordings of conferences and other events, speeches of the Director General and other important persons, but also music recordings, interviews and the UNESCO radio programs.

Physical description: About 30.000 sound records

Physical condition:

Sound records on tapes, partly digitized.
Recent recordings are entirely digital.

Arrangement:

Chronological arrangement

Restrictions on access:

The sound material is not easily accessible for outside researchers. Especially for the recordings of the General Conference and Executive Board meetings access is gained - as a general rule - only to member of the Secretariat, Member States or member of the Executive Board. All other sound records might be accessible upon request.

A growing number of sound records of particular interest will be made available on the [UNESCO Archives Multimedia website](<http://www.unesco.org/archives/multimedia/>).

Conditions governing use:

Reproduction upon request within the access restrictions mentioned above.

Finding aids:

AG 12/2: [Catalogue of sound archives issued in connection with the 25th anniversary of UNESCO] (<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000243939.locale>), 1946-1971

AG 12/2: [Catalogue des principaux programmes radiophoniques réalisés en langue française par la Division de la radio de l'UNESCO](<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000179297.locale>), 1954

AG 12/2: [English language radio recordings; catalogue as at November](<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000148085.locale>), 1965

AG 12/2: [UNESCO Radio: English language radio recordings; catalogue as at November 1972 (hard copy only)](<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000243961.locale>), 1972

AG 12/2: [Une Sélection de programmes en langue française: I. Programmes divers, II. Evocations radiophoniques de livres de la collection UNESCO des Oeuvres représentatives, III. Série Grands anniversaires](<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000215406.locale>), 1992

AG 12/2: [A Selection of English language programmes: recordings and scripts available free of charge to broadcasting organizations](<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000215404.locale>), 1994

AG 12/2: General Conference: list of speakers on tape recordings, 1968-

AG 12/2: Executive Board: list of speakers on tape recordings, 1968-

12/2: UNESCO Collection of Traditional Music (IMC)

12/2: Bureau of Public Information (BPI): register and indexes on cards to radio programmes, 1949-

Accruals:

Continuous accruals, especially in the collection of sound recordings of the General Conference and the Executive Board meetings.

Publication status:

published

Sound records of conferences and meetings

Date: 1950- (date of creation)

Scope and content:

These sound records contain mostly floor recordings of conferences and other events, speeches of the Director General and other important persons and systematic recordings of all meetings of the General Conference and the Executive Board.

Access points:

- UNESCO. Executive Board
- UNESCO. General Conference

Physical condition:

Sound records on tapes, partly digitized.
Recent recordings are entirely digital.

Arrangement:

Chronologically for Executive Board and General Conference
By subject and speaker for older conferences

Alternative form available:

Security copies of recordings for certain sessions of the General Conference and Executive Board are preserved in the UNESCO Archives.

Restrictions on access:

The sound material is not easily accessible for outside researchers. Records kept by the Bureau of Public Information can be accessed with the assistance and authorization of the Audio Section. The recordings of the General Conference and Executive Board meetings are - as a general rule - accessible only to member states respectively member of the Executive Board and the Secretariat. Authorizations for external researchers might be gained by the Chief Archivist in particular cases. A growing number of sound records of particular interest will be made available on the [UNESCO Archives Multimedia website](<http://www.unesco.org/archives/multimedia/>).

Conditions governing use:

Reproduction upon request within the access restrictions mentioned above.

Finding aids:

For General Conference and Executive Board, lists of speakers on tape recordings are available for all sessions since 1968.
For events, conferences and meetings before that date, interviews and recordings of the programme sectors a card index is available in the Audiovisual Section of the Bureau of Public Information.

Accruals:

Continuous accruals

Publication status:

published

UNESCO radio programme

Date: 1950 - 1990 (date of creation)

Scope and content:

The aim of UNESCO radio was to contribute to the understanding of the ideals that the Organization stands for, through discussion of issues in the field of education, science, culture and communication.

Around fifteen 30-minute feature programmes were produced each year in at least three official languages of UNESCO, English, French, Spanish or Russian. Their subjects, chosen on the basis of their interest both for UNESCO and the general public, covered a vast field ranging from Aids to astronomy, from biodiversity to bioethics, from street children to indigenous peoples, from the violence of war to the culture of peace.

The recordings were offered on tape or cassette to over 400 national, public and community radios in all parts of the world (257 stations broadcasting in English, 60 in French, 60 in Spanish and 42 in Russian) as well as to international short-wave broadcasters.

Language of the material:

English

French

Russian

Spanish

Physical condition:

sound records on tapes and cassettes

Restrictions on access:

Access upon request at the audio section of the Bureau of Public Information

Finding aids:

The Bureau of Public Information (BPI) keeps registers and indexes on cards for radio programmes arranged by speaker, by theme, by title of program and by language.

There are different catalogs for every language available for the radio programmes:

For English:

- "Selection of English Language Radio Recordings" (PI/R/1587) for the period from 1956 to 1979
- "Selection of English Language Programmes" for the period from 1979 to 1995

For French:

- " Catalogue de Programmes Radiophoniques " covering the period from 1953 to 1972 (PI/R/728)
- supplement Nov. 1972 - Nov. 1976 (PI/R/1332)
- supplement n 2 Dec. 1976 - Dec. 1977 (PI/R/1433)
- supplement n 3 Jan. - Dec. 1978 (PI/R/1561)
- supplement n 4 Jan - Dec. 1979 (PI/R/1622)
- " Sélection de programmes en langue française " from 1977 to 1995

For Spanish:

- "Catalogo de Programas seleccionados" covering the period from 1951 to 1987 (PI/R/110)
- the production restarted in 1992, so another catalog covers 1992 to 1995.

For Russian:

- " Liste de radio-journal et programmes spéciaux" for 1974 to 1983
- Addendum 1 for 1983-1985
- Addendum 2 for 1935-1987
- the production restarted in 1992, o another catalog covers 1992 to 1995.

Accruals:

No further accruals

Publication status:

published

Photographic archives

Creator: Department of Mass Communication UNESCO. Office of Public Information

Date: 1945- (date of creation)

Scope and content:

The photographic archives span the period from the foundation of UNESCO until 2000 and contain photographic material of UNESCO programmes, activities, and events (conferences, meetings, Director General visits). In addition, the photo archives consist of images used for exhibitions or publications of UNESCO (e.g. the UNESCO Human Rights Exhibition prints and negatives found in the series MC).

Physical description: All quantities are approximations:

- 140,000 black-and-white photographic prints and negatives (in a variety of formats)
- 1,000 colour 35mm negatives
- 15,000 duplicate colour slides
- 29,000 35mm colour slides

Immediate source of acquisition:

The bulk of UNESCO's historic photo collection was transferred from the Division of Public Information to the UNESCO Archives in 2015. The transfer included the Office of Public Information Photo Library negatives and prints in three Kardex machines, the portraits collection, and print doubles housed in a separate photographic depot.

Other photographic materials preserved in the UNESCO Archives were transferred from the Office of Public Information beginning from the 1970s (OPI/Photo.1 and OPI/Photo.2 series).

Arrangement:

Chronologically and by subject

Restrictions on access:

A significant portion of the UNESCO photographic archives is currently available online for public consultation.

In 2019, a selection of 5,000 photographs was digitized as part of a UNESCO Archives pilot digitization project generously sponsored by the People of Japan. Until 30 November 2020, the photographs may be consulted on the website [Digitizing Our Shared UNESCO History](<https://digital.archives.unesco.org/en/>). From December 2020, the digitized photos will be available for

public consultation in the below series [AG 12-UNESCO Photo Library Prints - Themes](<https://atom.archives.unesco.org/thematic-prints>).

Undigitized photographs are inventoried at only a basic level (see below under Finding Aids) and may be accessed upon request by contacting: archives@unesco.org

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Finding aids:

AG 12/3: Register of Negatives, 1945-

AG 12/3: Register of Diapositives/Slides

AG 12/3: Transfer lists for OPI/PHOTO.1 - UNESCO events and activities - prints (1944-1996)

AG 12/3: Transfer lists for OPI/PHOTO.2 - UNESCO General Conferences - negatives (1958-1980)

Accruals:

Continuous accruals

Publication status:

published