

Report on the 2025 IFLA Audiovisual and Multimedia Section Mid-Year Meeting and Conference in Berlin, June 10–13, 2025

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Figure 1. A selection of pictures taken during a trip to Berlin. Photo: Hélène Brousseau, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/deed.en>

This report documents my participation in the 2025 IFLA Audiovisual and Multimedia Section (AVMS) Mid-Year Meeting held in Berlin from June 10-13. Supported by a travel grant from BI-International, the event offered me valuable opportunities to engage with international colleagues, explore German audiovisual institutions, and share knowledge on access, preservation, and ethical use of audiovisual resources.

[IFLA AVMS](#) brings together professionals from around the world who work with audiovisual and multimedia materials in libraries and related cultural institutions. Committed to creating, collecting, describing, preserving, and providing access to this content, AVMS acknowledges the vital role of sound and visual resources in safeguarding cultural heritage and fostering lifelong learning. The section offers international guidelines for managing these collections and shares expertise for both library and non-library sectors. AVMS members are also leaders in technological innovation; they explore emerging technologies and reimagine uses for legacy media to ensure they remain relevant and accessible.¹

I have been a member of the AVMS standing committee since 2023. This is the first time I have had the chance to travel from Montreal, Canada, to attend the meeting in person. A rare opportunity for face-to-face collaboration within this globally distributed group.

¹ International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, "Audiovisual and Multimedia Section," accessed July 12, 2025, <https://www.ifla.org/units/avms/>.

While much of our work is carried out online, in-person meetings are essential for building trust, complicity, and strong working relationships. This gathering allowed members to exchange knowledge, share challenges, and advance key committee initiatives that promote awareness, stewardship, and use of audiovisual and multimedia collections.

The main objective of the meeting was to continue ongoing work on the revision of the *IFLA Guidelines for Audiovisual Resources in Libraries and other Institutions*. The meeting was planned to coincide with the end of the worldwide review of the first draft. Therefore, the Berlin meeting was the perfect occasion to go over the feedback received, to contribute directly, and facilitate the creation of a roadmap for the next phases leading to the final version of the document.

In addition to working on the guidelines, section members, both in person and online, were required to prepare and deliver a presentation of their choice to other members.² These presentations serve as the starting point for discussion and the exchange of expertise within the group. Such discussions enable each participant to bring back outside knowledge and perspectives to their own institution.

Finally, the meeting also served as an opportunity for committee planning, including event organization and stewardship of the committee in the coming years, as some current members' terms end and new members will be joining next year.

Engaging with library professionals and experts in audiovisual resource management in this context provides me with new perspectives on challenges and practices from different institutions that I can integrate into my work at [Concordia University Library](#).

This report is organized into three sections: an overview of the timeline by day, a description of the institutions visited, and my personal reflections and key takeaways from the experience.

Overview of the Meeting

Day 1, the program began in Berlin at the Haus Berliner Stadtbibliothek, part of the Zentral- und Landesbibliothek Berlin (ZLB). The opening session (Anna Bohn) was followed by a collaborative editorial review of the IFLA Guidelines for Audiovisual and Multimedia Collections for Libraries and other Institutions, evaluating feedback collected through the global review process. This session marked a significant step in enhancing the guidelines and strengthening the network's commitment to international best practices.

The afternoon featured a guided walking tour of historic Berlin, offering participants both cultural insights and an informal opportunity to make connections. The tour was followed by a series of hybrid presentations covering the use of artificial intelligence for speech recognition and semantic image search in the [TIB AV Portal](#) (Sven Strobel) and, navigating copyright exceptions to improve access to collections for education (Hélène

² Visual support for each presentation to be made publicly available in the IFLA repository.

Brousseau). The day concluded with a planning session for the [Preserving African Film Heritage webinar](#) (held June 16, 2025), led by Michele MacKensie.

Day 2 started with a visit to Potsdam, where the group visited the open collections ([Schaudepot](#)) of the Filmmuseum Potsdam. The visit was led by Dr. habil Ralf Forster (see figure 2). This was followed by a visit to the [Library](#) of the Film University Babelsberg Konrad Wolf, where Katja Krause, head of the library, gave a tour. A screening of a restored student film was presented by Anke Wilkening, project coordinator of the Film Heritage Funding Programme.

In the afternoon, the group returned to [ZLB](#) in Berlin for presentations on AR/XR tools integrated into library services for teaching and research at [Auburn University Libraries](#) (Shali Zhang), and on audiovisual documentation of past and present social movements in Serbia showcasing the documentary [New Life: Restart \(The Second Awakening\)](#) (Mirjana Nešić). The day concluded with collaborative webinar planning.

On **Day 3**, the group spent most of the day at the [Federal Archives](#) (Bundesarchiv) in Berlin with Florian Höhensteiger, Film Archivist. The agenda included detailed expert discussions on digitization and access to film collections and archives, metadata, and the legal deposit of audiovisual materials. The day also featured a collaborative session focused on future planning for the AVMS network's strategic initiatives, documents, and outputs. It concluded with a group dinner serving a traditional German dish, which fostered informal exchanges and reflection.

Day 4, the final day, returned to the ZLB with a series of presentations addressing AI in supporting accessible hearing and vision services in libraries (Anna Bohn), and an exploration of an open-source platform, [Madek](#), to archive and make available audiovisual collections in the context of higher education (Raffael Ammann). The presentations were followed by a report on the current work of the [Accessibility Metadata Network](#) (Hélène Brousseau). Participants then embarked on a scenic boat tour along Berlin's waterways. Followed by a cultural walking tour, which included notably a stop at the Berlin State Library.

Description of Visited Institutions

During the event, participants had the opportunity to discover the local library and archive institutions with close ties to audiovisual collections. These institutions reflect Germany's strong investment in audiovisual preservation, public access, digital transformation, and infrastructure related to audiovisual media and cultural memory.

Site visits enabled participants to connect with local librarians and archivists whose work relates to the topics that our group explores within the IFLA standing committee.

Zentral- und Landesbibliothek Berlin

Figure 2. Haus Berliner Stadtbibliothek, host institution for the meeting. Photos: Mirjana Nešić (3), H       Brousseau (1, 2, 4), CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/deed.en>

The meeting and conference took place at the [Haus Berliner Stadtbibliothek](#), which is part of the Berlin Central and Regional Library (*Zentral- und Landesbibliothek* Berlin, ZLB). The ZLB, Germany's largest public library, serves as Berlin's official library and provides both regional and central library services. It was established through the merger of the American Memorial Library (*Amerika-Gedenkbibliothek*), opened in 1954 in the former West Berlin, and the Berlin City Library (*Berliner Stadtbibliothek*), opened in 1901 in the former East Berlin. The ZLB is regarded as a successful outcome of Germany's reunification.

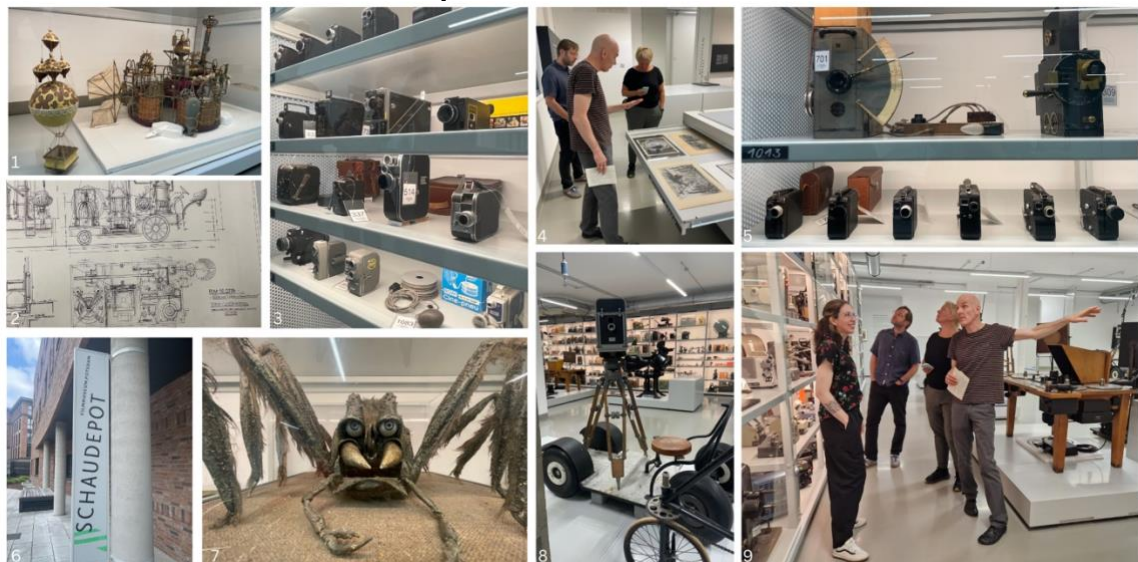
Filmmuseum Potsdam Schaudepot

Figure 3. Visit to the Collections of the Filmmuseum Potsdam. Photos: H  l  ne Brousseau (1  8), Anna Bohn (9), CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/deed.en>

The [Filmmuseum Potsdam](#) is a national film museum dedicated to preserving and showcasing Germany's cinematic heritage. The visit to the Collections Building provided a look at a selection of objects from the museum's holdings, including technological devices used in the capture, production, and public presentation of film, as well as props and materials related to storyboarding and animation. Through this exhibition, the museum effectively demonstrates the type of preservation work carried out by the institution.

Film University Babelsberg Konrad Wolf Library

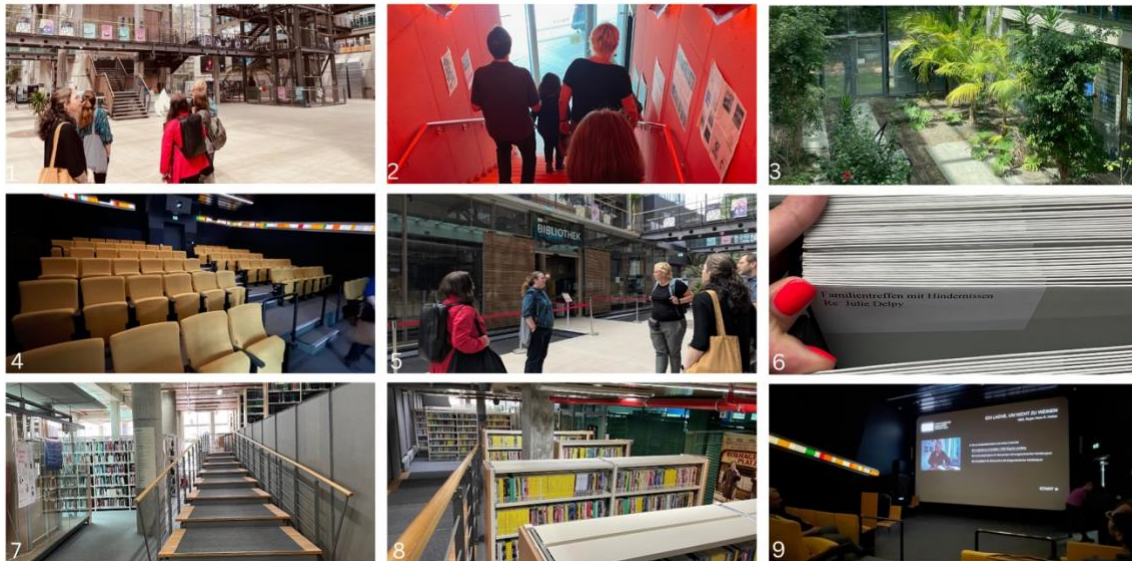


Figure 4. Visit of the Film University Babelsberg Konrad Wolf Library. Photos: Mirjana Nešić (1), Shali Zhang (5), Hélène Brousseau (2–4, 6–9), CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/deed.en>

The [Film University Babelsberg Konrad Wolf](#), Germany's leading film school, boasts a dedicated film library and audiovisual collections. During our visit to the University Library, we examined a unique collection of newspaper clippings compiled by filmmakers, as well as an impressive film collection available for teaching and research.

As a librarian responsible for managing a film collection used in teaching and research, I was especially interested in learning about the development of acquisition methods and preferred access models for instructional use at the Film University. We are experiencing similar challenges related to changing film distribution methods, which often do not adequately support the needs of film analysis in academic settings.

Although we operate in different regions of the world, it was striking to see how many of the challenges we encounter in our daily work are shared.

Bundesarchiv

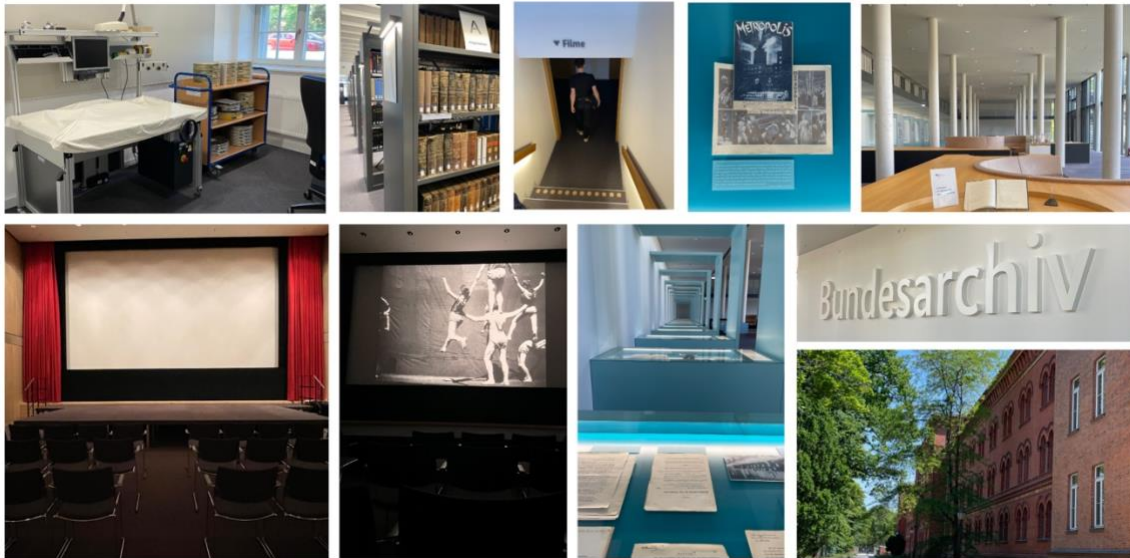


Figure 5. Visit of the Federal Archives (Bundesarchiv). Photo credit: H  l  ne Brousseau, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/deed.en>

Our visit to the [Federal Archives of Germany \(Bundesarchiv\)](#) focused on the [Film Department](#). The tour started with an introduction to the history of the site and its buildings from the outside grounds. Inside, the visit concentrated on the work and services of the Film Department, followed by a screening of the first German films.

Following the tour, we met with members of the Film Department team to discuss a range of topics, including audiovisual preservation, copyright, accessibility metadata, and the archive's digital access infrastructure.

The team explained that external users can access film materials by submitting an access request form, which shifts the responsibility for copyright and personality rights to the user. Furthermore, more than 7,000 films are currently accessible through their online platform, with additional titles in an offline digital reading room. In the absence of a collective licensing agency in Germany, the Bundesarchiv operates within the EU's "out-of-commerce" framework in order to make the films available.

As a librarian responsible for a film collection that supports teaching and research, I was especially interested in how the Bundesarchiv approaches access and discovery within the European legal context. Their model, which transfers rights responsibility to the user through a formal access request process, balances risk management with a strong commitment to public access.

The meeting also provided a valuable opportunity to learn about the EUIPO Out-of-Commerce Works Portal.³ This platform allows cultural institutions to register works in

³ European Union Intellectual Property Office, *Out of Commerce Works Portal*, accessed July 12, 2025, <https://euiipo.europa.eu/out-of-commerce/>.

their collections, while offering rights holders the ability to assert ownership and request removal.

This legal and procedural clarity, supported by cooperation with the Ministry, reflects a broader cultural and institutional commitment to making audiovisual heritage accessible. For institutions outside of Europe, this offers a compelling example of how legal frameworks and discovery systems can work together to support inclusive access to film collections.

Reflections and Takeaways

Attending the IFLA AVMS mid-year meeting and conference in Berlin gave me the chance to reflect on both the international context of audiovisual resources and the challenges and opportunities within my own institution and local setting.

Supporting access to collections

One of the most notable aspects of the visit was the institutional culture of transparency and accountability embedded in the German archival and library systems. Public access to archival materials, especially audiovisual content, is not only a legal obligation but is regarded as a fundamental principle. A strong sense of historical consciousness directly shapes both institutional mandates and national legal frameworks. Professionals described access not as a privilege or a negotiated outcome, but as a civic right, deeply connected to Germany's postwar commitment to transparency, democratic participation, and critical reflection on its past.

I was particularly struck by the confidence and consistency with which access was discussed. Even in cases of uncertain ownership or copyright status, there is a legal infrastructure that supports consultation and use. This seems to yield a coherence across policy, professional practice, and institutional values.

By contrast, Canada's archival landscape is shaped by more complex tensions between access and protection, especially in relation to audiovisual materials. Efforts are ongoing to enhance transparency and expand access, particularly within academic and public institutions. However, these initiatives are often constrained by restrictive copyright legislation, fragmented systems, and limited resources.

These challenges are further compounded by the imperative to respond meaningfully to the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action](#) (particularly #67-70 regarding museums and archives),⁴ which underscore the need for institutions to address the legacy of systemic violence and cultural erasure experienced by First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples through more inclusive, respectful, and equitable archival practices. In this context, the question of who has access to archives and under what conditions remains a pressing issue. Access is not solely a technical or legal matter. It is also a fundamentally ethical and political one. Archives are not neutral repositories. They are

⁴ Indigenous Watchdog, "Museums and Archives (67–70)," accessed July 12, 2025, <https://www.indigenouswatchdog.org/subcategory/museums-and-archives/>.

sites of power, memory, and contestation. Across the world, archival practices need to be transparent, inclusive, and accountable.

This experience reaffirmed for me how archival infrastructures mirror broader societal values. The German model, though not without its complexities, provides a compelling example of how access can be embedded as a principle of civic responsibility. It is an approach that my Canadian colleagues and I can relate to as we continue our vital discussions and work around reconciliation, equity, and the stewardship of memory.

The value of in person meetings

In terms of professional growth and collaboration, the importance of in-person meetings cannot be overstated. After two years of working closely yet virtually with international colleagues, meeting face-to-face created a completely new dynamic. These encounters enabled us to connect not only through our areas of expertise but also on a personal level. Such relationships foster trust, mutual understanding, and more nuanced collaboration. The relationships established during this trip will not only enhance the efficiency and creativity of our current committee work but also lay the foundation for future collaborations that extend beyond the duration of our formal mandates.

Comparing Copyright

Lastly, one of my personal goals for the trip was to learn more about how European institutions manage access and copyright concerning audiovisual collections. I was particularly interested in their approaches to educational and public access. Hearing about concrete legal frameworks, such as the EUIPO's Out of Commerce Portal, and institutional strategies confirmed the importance of clear policy, robust infrastructure, and cross-sector collaboration to enable access while respecting copyright and ethical responsibilities.

In conclusion, this trip has provided invaluable insights into international models of archival access and governance, while also emphasizing the vital importance of in-person professional exchange. I return with renewed energy, a clearer perspective on how I can work to improve access to audiovisual heritage in Canada, and a commitment to fostering and maintaining international professional relationships based on mutual respect and shared goals.

Acknowledgments

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Sincere thanks to Anna Bohn, chair of the IFLA AVMS section, who planned, organized and coordinated the mid-year meeting. Anna, your passion and intelligence shine through everything you do. I am grateful for the opportunity to have met you in person and to learn more about you and your country. I want to thank my fellow attendees, both in person and online, for the insightful discussions and work sessions: Anna Bohn, Shali Zhang, Mirjana Nešić, Raffael Ammann, Monique Threath, Sven Strobel, and Michele MacKenzie. Special thanks to the institutions that offered visits, presentations, and conversations: ZLB, Filmmuseum Potsdam (Dr. Ralf Forster), Film University

Babelsberg Konrad Wolf (Katja Krause and Anke Wilkening), and the Federal Archives of Germany (Florian Höhensteiger and the Film Department team at the Federal Archives, led by Adelheid Heftberger).

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