Global Grants 2025 - Individual Grantee Reports

Amirah Jaafar Mad Ariff

Position: Head of Support and System Solution Section of Production operations Centre

Organisation: Radio Television Malaysia (RTM)

Activity: Future-proofing media asset management (MAM)

Location: NHK, Japan

Date: 9 - 10 June 2025

Amirah visiting NHK's Newsline Asia 24 studio located within the NHK Broadcasting Center in Shibuya, Tokyo. Credit: Amirah Jaafar Mad Ariff

Objectives

From this experience, I aimed to gain practical insights into advanced archiving workflows, long-term preservation, and other related initiatives utilising the latest technology. These are areas where I see strong potential for improvement within my organisation.

The visit served as an important knowledge transfer opportunity - I was able to observe the best practices, including a demonstration of NHK's in-house developed AI colouring software, and learned about on-premises machine learning models through in-depth discussion with their archive team. This provided crucial benchmarking, allowing me to assess how similar challenges are tackled in a high-performing global organisation.

It also opened doors for networking and strategic partnerships, as I engaged directly with NHK's archive team, laying the foundation for potential future collaborations.

Beyond the technical knowledge, I was deeply inspired by NHK's culture of discipline, creativity, and innovation - elements that fuelled my own professional development. The experience also offered a meaningful cultural exchange, giving me a broader understanding of how national broadcasters preserve identity through technology. Ultimately, the visit helped align my vision with global standards

Supported by the Grace Wyndham Goldie [BBC] Trust Fund

and brought new ideas I hope to adapt locally - reinforcing the value of continuous learning and international engagement.

Experience

My visit to NHK Japan successfully fulfilled the key objectives I set out, offering in-depth exposure to best practices in media archiving, content restoration, and monetisation. The experience broadened my understanding of how public broadcasters like NHK future-proof their archival systems while creating value from legacy content.

Day 1 focused on NHK's archive infrastructure, which covers audio, video, news, and photo materials. NHK uses three levels of storage: a main and backup system using on-premises LTO tape, and an additional cloud-based backup in low-resolution. RTM's own system, which uses ALTO servers, shares a similar architecture - reaffirming that our infrastructure is on par with global standards.

In terms of restoration and preservation, NHK demonstrated its AI colouring technology used to preserve old black-and-white materials. While AI plays a major role, human intervention remains crucial. NHK validates colouring accuracy by consulting original costume designers and directors from the era. For example, for a 1963 program, they referenced original tapes and feedback to ensure colour authenticity - a process that is detailed and time-intensive, but essential for cultural accuracy.

Day 2 covered content monetisation strategies. NHK emphasised the value of archived content through a case study on the 40th anniversary of "The Checkers," a popular 1980s idol group. NHK performed 4K digital remastering and collaborated with the recording company (holding music rights) to roll out content across 5 channels: television broadcast, special screenings, on-demand streaming, fan events, and Blu-ray sales. This multi-platform strategy generated revenue for both NHK and its partners. Basic versions were aired freely, while enhanced content was offered through a paid OTT platform.

NHK offers a paid OTT service called *NHK On Demand (NOD)*. It features a catch-up service for two weeks, as well as a wide selection of previous popular programs, including dramas and documentaries. In providing this service, NHK reaches out to its audiences to share its broadcasting cultural assets. NOD subscriptions are available on a program or monthly basis.

Amirah with the team at NHK Archives. Credit: NHK

This visit not only gave me valuable benchmarking and knowledge transfer, but also new ideas for how RTM might approach archive monetisation and preservation with more creativity and collaboration. I also appreciated NHK's openness, and our exchange of practices was mutually enriching. I shared how RTM manages its digital archives and the challenges we face - which sparked relevant discussions and interest.

From a broader perspective, the visit contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially: SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation & Infrastructure) through adoption of AI and LTO storage. SDG

11 (Sustainable Cities & Communities) via cultural content preservation. SDG 17 (Partnerships) through international collaboration potential. This experience will undoubtedly influence how I approach my work moving forward and will support RTM's long-term vision for sustainable and modern media archiving.

Conclusion

The most rewarding part of this visit was seeing how NHK combines technological excellence with cultural responsibility - particularly through their use of AI for content restoration, strategic multi-platform monetisation of archives, and thoughtful preservation practices. These insights were not only inspiring but directly applicable to my current work at RTM.

In the short term, I plan to initiate a pilot project exploring monetisation opportunities for RTM's archived content. I also intend to share NHK's methods in restoration, archive management, and public engagement - especially their use of museum and theatre spaces to foster media literacy and cultural appreciation.

In the long term, this experience will help drive RTM's transformation towards a more modern, sustainable, and globally aligned archive system - in line with the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 9 (Innovation), SDG 11 (Cultural Preservation), and SDG 17 (Partnerships).

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the entire NHK team for their warm hospitality and generosity in sharing their expertise. Special appreciation goes to: Mr. Okawara Hokuto, Mr. Tanaka Kiyotaka, Mr. Yamagishi Seinoshin, Mr. Nishibe Hiroki, Ms. Matsuo Kikue, Mr. Nagahata Yasushige, Ms. Unno Yukiko and Ms. Takahashi Satoko. A truly special and sincere thank you to Ms. Yoshida Yuki, who not only welcomed me personally but also ensured every aspect of the visit was smooth, insightful, and memorable. Her exceptional coordination, warmth, and professionalism made this entire experience truly meaningful.

Taking notes with staff at NHK Archives. Credit: NHK

Supported by the Grace Wyndham Goldie [BBC] Trust Fund