Community Archiving Workshop

Webinar 2: Inspection and Inventory

Southwest Region IMLS + NEH Cohorts

Inspection and Inventory

April 28, 2021

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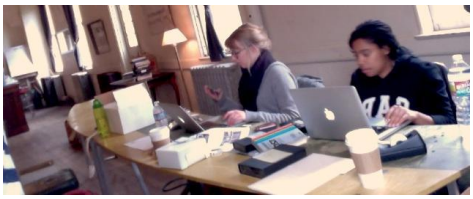
A detailed inventory of a thoroughly inspected audiovisual collection is a key component in preservation planning. Inspection and inventory helps you identify the greatest physical risks in your collection, some of the most valuable content, and allows you to begin to prioritize your collection for digitization. In this session, participants learn the how and why of creating a simple inventory for their collections even without a cataloging system.

#cawesome

Today we are going to practice inspecting media and creating an inventory, as well as learn to identify magnetic media formats and their risk factors. A detailed inventory of a thoroughly inspected audiovisual collection is a key component in preservation planning. It can help you identify the greatest physical risks in your collection, some of the most valuable content, and allows you to begin to prioritize assets in your collection for digitization. By conducting an inspection and creating an inventory, you will gain greater physical and intellectual control of your collection.

Why Inventory?



Object ID check the doc with list of available numbers	old / alternate catalog number or other numbering system	Medium	Format	number of assets	Title	Title Type	Location Number
2015.0082		film	Film: 16mm		John J. Hooker	annotated title	A00001
2015.0083		film	Film: 16mm		John J. Hooker	annotated title	A00002
2015.0086		film	Film: 16mm		Snodgrass - Excerpts from Campaign Film	annotated title	A00003
2015.0084		film	Film: 16mm		U.S.S. Nashville	annotated title	A00004
2015.0085		film	Film: 16mm		Experiments in Hope	annotated title	A00005
2015.0087		film	Film: 16mm		Slaughterhouse	annotated title	A00006

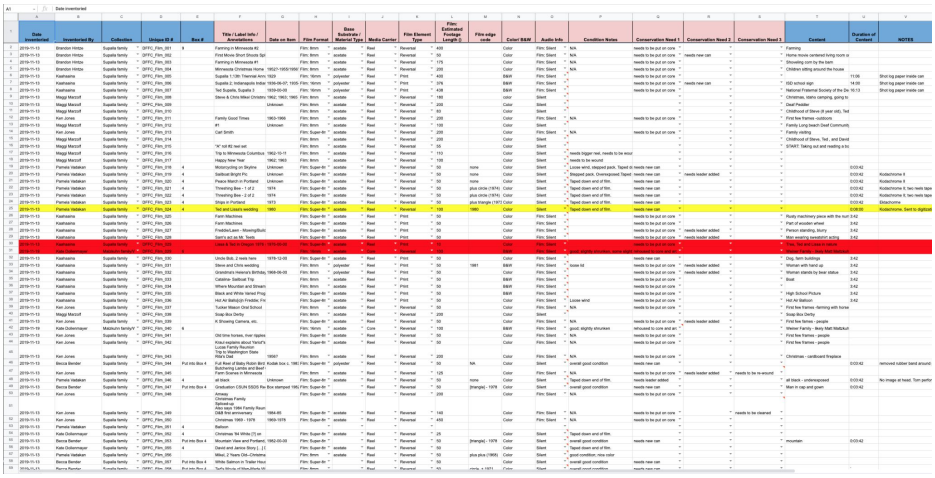
To know what you have and where it is.

Assess the condition of the collection.

Create data about the collection that supports preservation planning, storage planning, and budgeting.

That is archivist speak for:
Knowing what you have and where it is.
Assessing the physical condition of the recordings in your collection.
Creating data through the inventory, which allows you to plan for preservation.
Importantly, it will also give you a rough estimate of how many hours of media you might be considering and what sorts of digital storage will be needed once preservation digitization is underway.

A great time to make an inventory



	Date Inventoried	Inventoried By	Collection	Unique ID #	Box #	Title / Label Info / Annotations	Date on Item	Film Format	Base Substrate / Material Type	Media Carrier	Film Element Type	Film Estimated Footage Length (')	Film-edge audio	Color/ B&W	Audio Info	Condition Notes	Conservation Need 1	Conservation Need 2	Conservation Need 3	Content	Duration of Content	NOTES
2	2019-11-13	Brandon Hintze	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_001	9	Farming in Minnesota #2	Film: 8mm	acetate	Reel	Reversal	400		Color	Film: Silent	N/A		needs to be put on core			Farming		
3	2019-11-13	Brandon Hintze	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_002		First Movie Short Shoots Sp2	Film: 8mm	acetate	Reel	Reversal	50		Color	Film: Silent	N/A		needs to be put on core	needs new can		Home movie centered hung room sc		
4	2019-11-13	Brandon Hintze	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_003		Farming in Minnesota #1	Film: 8mm	acetate	Reel	Reversal	175		Color	Film: Silent	N/A		needs to be put on core			Showeling corn by the barn		
5	2019-11-13	Brandon Hintze	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_004		Minnesota Christmas Home 1952?-1955?/1950	Film: 8mm	acetate	Reel	Reversal	200		Color	Film: Silent	N/A		needs to be put on core			Children sitting around the house		
6	2019-11-13	Kashasha	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_005		Supalla 1 13th Thermal Ann 1929	Film: 16mm	polyester	Reel	Print	400		B&W	Film: Silent			needs to be put on core				11:00	Shot top paper inside can
7	2019-11-13	Kashasha	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_006		Supalla 2, Indianapolis Indian 1935-06-07, 1935-	Film: 16mm	polyester	Reel	Print	375		B&W	Film: Silent			needs to be put on core	needs new can		ISD school ego	14:00	Shot top paper inside can
8	2019-11-13	Kashasha	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_007		Ted Supalla, Supalla 3 1939-05-00	Film: 16mm	polyester	Reel	Print	400		B&W	Film: Silent			needs to be put on core			National Fraternal Society of the De 16:13		Shot top paper inside can
9	2019-11-13	Maggi Marzoff	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_008		Steve & Chris Mike Christmas 1962, 1963, 1965	Film: 8mm	acetate	Reel	Reversal	190		color	Silent						Christmas, trains, camping, going to		
10	2019-11-13	Maggi Marzoff	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_009		Unknown.	Film: 8mm	acetate	Reel	Reversal	200		Color	Silent						Deaf Peddler		
11	2019-11-13	Maggi Marzoff	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_010			Film: 8mm	acetate	Reel	Reversal	50		Color	Silent						Childhood of Steve (8 year old), Ted		
12	2019-11-13	Ken Jones	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_011		Family Good Times 1963-1969	Film: 8mm	acetate	Reel	Reversal	200		Color	Film: Silent	N/A		needs to be put on core			First few frames- outdoors		
13	2019-11-13	Maggi Marzoff	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_012		#1	Unknown	Film: 8mm	acetate	Reel	100		Color	Silent						Family Long beach Deaf Community		
14	2019-11-13	Ken Jones	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_013		Carl Smith		Film: Super-8	acetate	Reel	200		Color	Film: Silent	N/A		needs to be put on core			Family visiting		
15	2019-11-13	Maggi Marzoff	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_014				Film: 8mm	acetate	Reel	200		Color	Silent						Childhood of Steve, Ted , and David		
16	2019-11-13	Maggi Marzoff	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_015		"K" kid 80 reel set		Film: 8mm	acetate	Reel	55		Color	Silent						START: Taking out and reading a loc		
17	2019-11-13	Maggi Marzoff	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_016		Trip to Minnesota Columbus 1962-10-11		Film: 8mm	acetate	Reel	110		Color	Silent		needs bigger reel, needs to be wou						
18	2019-11-13	Maggi Marzoff	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_017		Happy New Year 1962, 1963		Film: 8mm	acetate	Reel	100		Color	Silent		needs to be wound						
19	2019-11-13	Pamela Valakan	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_018	4	Motorcycling on Skyline	Unknown	Film: Super-8	acetate	Reel	50	none	Color	Silent		Loose wind, stepped pack. Taped do needs new can					0:03:42	
20	2019-11-13	Pamela Valakan	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_019	4	Sailboat Bright Pic	Unknown	Film: Super-8	acetate	Reel	50	none	Color	Silent		Stepped pack. Overexposed. Taped needs new can		needs leader added			0:03:42	Kodachrome II
21	2019-11-13	Pamela Valakan	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_020	4	Peace March in Portland	Unknown	Film: Super-8	acetate	Reel	50	none	Color	Silent		Taped down end of film.	needs new can				0:03:42	Kodachrome II
22	2019-11-13	Pamela Valakan	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_021	4	Threshing Bee - 1 of 2	1974	Film: Super-8	acetate	Reel	50	plus circle (1974)	Color	Silent		Taped down end of film.	needs new can				0:03:42	Kodachrome II, two reels tape
23	2019-11-13	Pamela Valakan	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_022	4	Threshing Bee - 2 of 2	1974	Film: Super-8	acetate	Reel	50	plus circle (1974)	Color	Silent		Taped down end of film.	needs new can				0:03:42	Kodachrome II, two reels tape
24	2019-11-13	Pamela Valakan	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_023	4	Ships in Portland	1973	Film: Super-8	acetate	Reel	50	plus triangle (1973)	Color	Silent		Taped down end of film.	needs new can				0:03:42	Ektachrome
25	2019-11-13	Pamela Valakan	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_024	4	Ted and Loleta's wedding	1980	Film: Super-8	acetate	Reel	100	1980	Color	Silent		Taped down end of film.	needs new can				0:08:00	Kodachrome. Sent to digitizat
26	2019-11-13	Kashasha	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_025		Farm Machines		Film: Super-8	acetate	Reel	Print	50		Color	Film: Silent		needs to be put on core			Rusty machinery piece with the rust 3:42		
27	2019-11-13	Kashasha	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_026		Farm Machines		Film: Super-8	acetate	Reel	Print	50		Color	Film: Silent		needs to be put on core			Part of wooden wheel	3:42	
28	2019-11-13	Kashasha	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_027		Freddie/Lawn - Mowing/Bulls		Film: Super-8	acetate	Reel	Print	50		Color	Film: Silent		needs to be put on core	needs leader added		Person standing, blurry	3:42	
29	2019-11-13	Kashasha	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_028		Barry at ca 18 Tools		Film: Super-8	acetate	Reel	Print	50		Color	Film: Silent		needs to be put on core	needs leader added		Man wearing sweatshirt acting	3:42	
30	2019-11-13	Kashasha	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_029		Lewis & Sam In Oregon 1975 - 1979-09-06		Film: Super-8	acetate	Reel	Print	50		Color	Film: Silent		needs to be put on core			Fine, but slot case is loose		
31	2019-11-13	Kate Dollenmayer	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_030	3			Film: 8mm	acetate	Reel	Reversal	50		Color	Film: Silent		needs to be put on core			Vincent Family - Mary Beth Dobson		
32	2019-11-13	Kashasha	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_030		Uncle Bob, 2 reels here 1976-12-00	Film: Super-8	acetate	Reel	Print	50		Color	Film: Silent		needs new can				Dog, farm buildings	3:42	
33	2019-11-13	Kashasha	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_031		Steve and Chris wedding	Film: 8mm	polyester	Reel	Print	50	1981	B&W	Film: Silent	Loose lid	needs to be put on core	needs leader added			Woman with hand up	3:42	
34	2019-11-13	Kashasha	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_032		Grandma's Hanna's Birthday 1968-09-00	Film: 8mm	polyester	Reel	Print	50		Color	Film: Silent		needs to be put on core	needs leader added			Woman stands by beer status	3:42	
35	2019-11-13	Kashasha	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_033		Catalina- Sailboat Trip	Film: 8mm	acetate	Reel	Print	50		B&W	Film: Silent		needs to be put on core				Boat	3:42	
36	2019-11-13	Kashasha	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_034		Where Mountain and Stream	Film: 8mm	acetate	Reel	Print	50		B&W	Film: Silent		needs to be put on core					3:42	
37	2019-11-13	Kashasha	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_035		Black and White Varied Prog	Film: Super-8	acetate	Reel	Print	50		B&W	Film: Silent		needs to be put on core				High School Picture	3:42	
38	2019-11-13	Kashasha	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_036		Hot Air Balloon Freddie, Fin	Film: Super-8	acetate	Reel	Print	50		Color	Film: Silent	Loose wind	needs to be put on core				Hot Air Balloon	3:42	
39	2019-11-13	Ken Jones	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_037		Tucker Manor Grad School	Film: 8mm	acetate	Reel	Reversal	50		Color	Film: Silent	N/A	needs to be put on core				First few frames- farming with horse		
40	2019-11-13	Maggi Marzoff	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_038		Soap Box Derby	Film: 8mm	acetate	Reel	Reversal	200		Color	Silent						Soap Box Derby		
41	2019-11-13	Ken Jones	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_039		X Showing Camera, etc.	Film: 8mm	acetate	Reel	Reversal	50		Color	Film: Silent	N/A	needs to be put on core	needs leader added			First few frames - people		
42	2019-11-19	Kate Dollenmayer	Maldoyan family	OFFC_Film_040	5		Film: 16mm	acetate	Core	Reversal	100		B&W	Film: Silent	good, slightly shrunken	rehoused to core and an				Weaver Family - Mary Mae/Bud		
43	2019-11-13	Ken Jones	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_041		Old time horses, river ripples	Film: Super-8	acetate	Reel	Reversal	50		Color	Film: Silent	N/A	needs to be put on core				First few frames - people		
44	2019-11-13	Ken Jones	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_042		Knut explains about "Ninal's Ranch" Ninal's Ranch Trip to Washington State	Film: Super-8	acetate	Reel	Reversal	50		Color	Film: Silent	N/A	needs to be put on core				First few frames - people		
45	2019-11-13	Ken Jones	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_043		Ninal's Dad 1956?	Film: 8mm	acetate	Reel	Reversal	200		Color	Film: Silent	N/A	needs to be put on core				Christmas - cardboard fireplace		
46	2019-11-13	Becca Bender	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_044	Put into Box 4	Full Reel of Baby Robin Bird Rustle box c. 1961	Film: Super-8	polyester	Reel	Reversal	50	NA	Color	Silent	overall good condition	needs new can					0:03:42	removed rubber band around
47	2019-11-13	Ken Jones	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_045		Blubbering Lambs and Beef - Ninal's Farms in Minnesota	Film: 8mm	acetate	Reel	Reversal	125		Color	Film: Silent	N/A	needs to be put on core	needs leader added	needs to be re-wound				
48	2019-11-13	Pamela Valakan	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_046	4	all black	Unknown	Film: Super-8	acetate	Reel	50	none	Color	Silent	Taped down end of film.	needs leader added				all black - underexposed	0:03:42	No image at head. Torn perfor
49	2019-11-13	Becca Bender	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_047	Put into Box 4	Graduation CSUN SSDS Rai Box stamped 196	Film: Super-8		Reel	Reversal	50	[triangle] - 1970	Color	Silent	overall good condition	needs new can				Man in cap and gown	0:03:42	
50	2019-11-13	Ken Jones	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_048		Airway Christmas Family Gathering (Also says 1984 Family Reun	Film: Super-8	acetate	Reel	Reversal	200		Color	Film: Silent	N/A	needs to be put on core						
51	2019-11-13	Ken Jones	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_049		D&B first anniversary 1984-85	Film: Super-8	acetate	Reel	Reversal	140		Color	Film: Silent	N/A	needs to be put on core		needs to be cleaned				
52	2019-11-13	Ken Jones	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_050		Christmas 1969 - 1979 1969-1979	Film: Super-8	acetate	Reel	Reversal	450		Color	Film: Silent	N/A	needs to be put on core						
53	2019-11-13	Pamela Valakan	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_051	4	Balloon																
54	2019-11-13	Kate Dollenmayer	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_052	4	Christmas '84 White [?] on	Film: Super-8	acetate	Reel	Reversal	25		Color	Silent	Taped down end of film.							
55	2019-11-13	Becca Bender	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_053	Put into Box 4	Mountain View and Portland, 1962-02-00	Film: Super-8		Reel	Reversal	50	[triangle] - 1970	Color	Silent	overall good condition	needs new can				mountain	0:03:42	
56	2019-11-13	Kate Dollenmayer	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_055	4	David and Janice Story [...]	Film: Super-8	acetate	Reel	Reversal	50		Color	Silent	Taped down end of film.							
57	2019-11-13	Pamela Valakan	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_056		Misc. 2 Years Old--Christme	Film: 8mm	acetate	Reel	Reversal	50	plus plus (1968)	Color	Silent	good condition, nine color							
58	2019-11-13	Becca Bender	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_057	Put into Box 4	White Salmon in Trailer Hous	Film: Super-8		Reel	Reversal	50		Color	Silent	overall good condition	needs new can						
59	2019-11-13	Becca Bender	Supalla family	OFFC_Film_058	Put into Box 4	Sally Minute of Man,Mike Ul	Film: 8mm		Reel	Reversal	100	circle - c. 1971	Color	Silent	overall good condition	needs new can						

We are going to practice today, using a very basic inventory template. In the next webinar you will learn more about the kinds of information you might want to capture from both your physical assets and the digital files produced through preservation. This is your “metadata”- the data about your data! You will work directly with your mentor to determine the fields you want in your inventory spreadsheet so that you can gather the kind of data that serves your collection best.

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1APBUTPVa3qkj371GrxvENQZNK0OvAgtFYN2G61C2zZQ/edit?usp=sharing

2. Magnetic Media

Magnetic media late 1950s - late 2000s

Magnetic tape is a way to capture audio and visual time based information. It was in wide distribution from the 1950s through the early 2000s. Magnetic tape is stored either on a reel of tape, or in a cassette, which is really just two reels enclosed inside a carrier.

Early video formats were not in a cassette- they were on reels (like film) like this 2” open reel video here. The equipment and the reels of tape were very large and expensive.

These early formats were used by government, for tv broadcast, and professional commercial use.

In the 1960s, tape formats became smaller, portable and less expensive and were adopted for home use, like this half-inch open reel format.

Shigeko Kubota in her studio. © Tom Haar, 1972.

Amateur filmmakers, experimental filmmakers, documentary makers, and media activists often used these more accessible video formats, similar to the way smaller gauge film was more accessible and became widely used.
https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-shigeko-kubota-pioneered-video-personal-medium

However, there are many formats of magnetic media! This is because the competitive commercial nature, in which magnetic media evolved, led the the development of many competing formats, which were continually abandoned as new technology emerged. This means that there are many recordings out there on formats like you see here, but fewer and fewer machines to play them on.

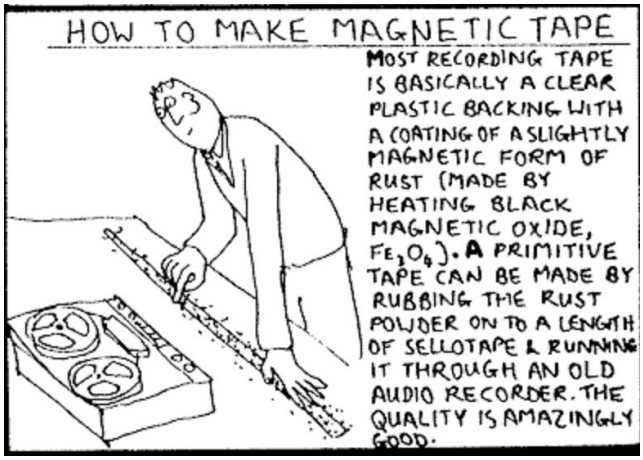
A really great resource, if you're ever struggling to identify a videotape, is the Videotape Identification and Assessment Guide, which was produced by the Texas Commission on the Arts in 2004. I will upload this guide as a resource to our Toolkit, with the recording of today's webinar.

Common Video Cassette formats include VHS and ¾” U-matic

Fortunately, most video formats are easy to identify, because the name of the format is on the tape, or the case.

Kits contain a variety of magnetic media formats

We put a few different magnetic media samples into your kit for us to practice working with.

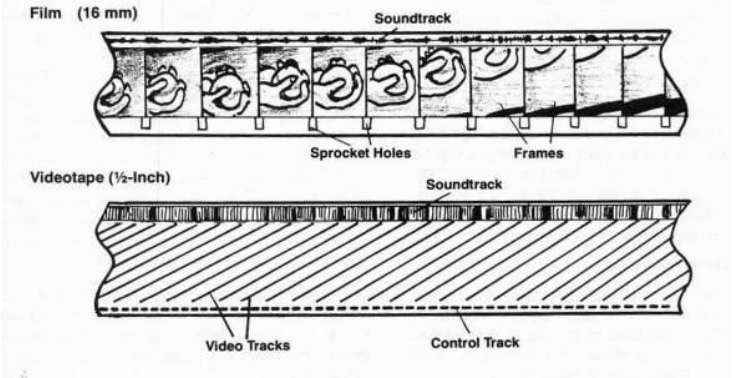


https://www.secretlifeofmachines.com/secret_life_of_the_video.shtml

One of the biggest differences between film and magnetic media is that magnetic media is not photochemical-- you can't see the information with your eye. It is oxide on a plastic base. This means you need a machine to see the images and play it back. Photo credit: the secret life of machines

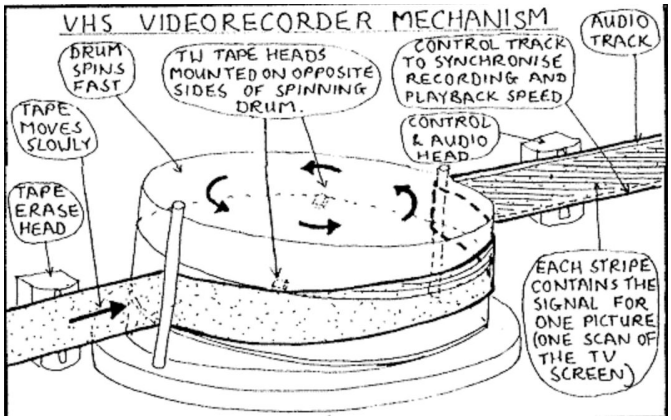
https://www.exploratorium.edu/ronh/SLOM/0205-The_Video_Recorder.html

Information on videotape



Video signal - Audio signal - Control track

Even though you can’t see them with the naked eye, much like film, videotape carries three elements: a video signal, audio signals, and a control track to keep the two synced.

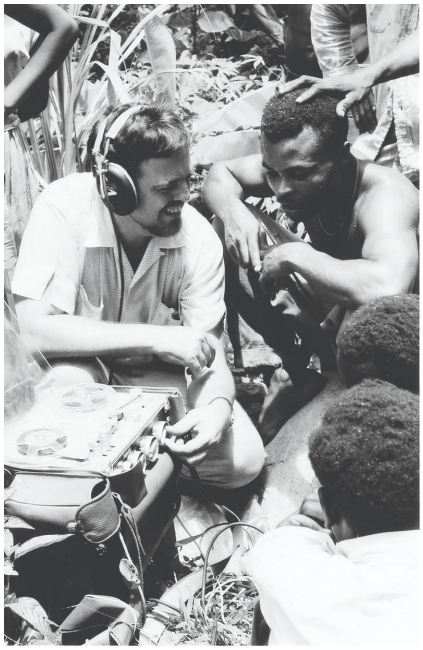


Magnetic media captures the image using electronic pulses which can only be perceived using playback equipment which can read those pulses. Magnetic media requires a specific deck for almost every format to play it back.

Audio Tape formats

Open reel ¼” audio tape

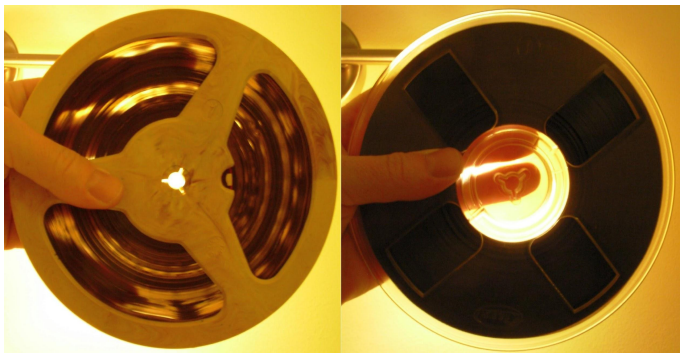
Similarly, audio only tape also started out on open reels, like this ¼” open reel audio tape and playback deck.



Which, similar to video tape, became a tool for mediamakers and for home use as it became more accessible.

Audio tape bases

*Paper *Acetate *Polyester

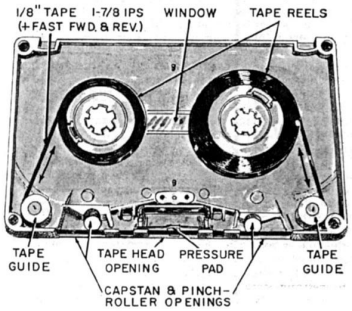


Acetate Polyester

There are three different bases for audio tape. Paper (which it's unlikely you will come across) and acetate and polyester. It's important to know how to identify acetate vs. polyester because tapes with an acetate base are more prone to deterioration than polyester and need to be treated for conservation differently. You can use the light test on audio tape to determine whether the base is polyester or acetate. Strangely, the light test is reversed for audio tape. If the light shines through it, it is likely to be acetate. If the light does not shine through, it is likely to be polyester.

Audio tape formats

Compact Cassette (1960s – 2000s)



Starting in the 1960s compact cassette formats became popular. Compact cassettes and micro cassettes are also reel-to-reel, but they're contained within a protective carrier, like the plastic case on the audiotapes we're probably all most familiar with.

Audio tape Formats

8 track audio tape

8 track tape was another popular cassette format.

Audiotape formats

- **Digital:**

DAT(Digital Audio Tape; 1987 – 2000s)

Digital Audio Tape, known as “DAT” tape,is a crossover format, as it is digital data captured on a magnetic tape.

Special Cases:
Digital Signal on Tape

DAT(Digital Audio Tape; 1987 – 2000s)
Hi-8, Digibeta, etc.

So, it’s important to note that not all magnetic media is fully analog. Several formats have a digital signal on metal particle tape that are different from the oxide particles on other magnetic media. Similar to DAT are formats like Hi-8 (which has a digital audio track) and DigiBeta (Digital Betacam) which has a digital video signal recorded to tape.

D2 Tapes

Another hybrid format: D2 tapes are large cassettes that store uncompressed digital media on a metal particle tape. There are other “D” formats, but these are not common.

Magnetic Media: Risk Factors

- **Binder hydrolysis (AKA “sticky shed’)**

https://www.adventdigitizing.com/blog/bake-me-a-tape-2

One of the main risk factors with magnetic media is sticky shed or binder hydrolysis - this causes the binder (which holds the recording components together) to shed off the plastic backing. If a tape with sticky-shed syndrome is played, the reels will make screeching or squeaking sounds, the image will begin to break apart if its a video and the tape will leave particles on the guides and heads of the deck.

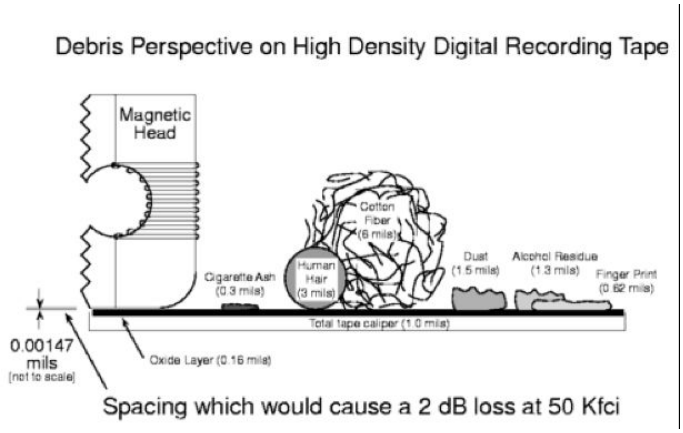
Magnetic Media: Risk Factors

- **Physical breaking of tape and cassette.**

Tapes and cassette casing can both physically break.
On the left is a photograph of a broken case, which leaves the reel inside it exposed to damage and debris.
On the right you can look through the window of the cassette and see that the tape itself has broken apart inside it.

Magnetic Media: Risk Factors

- **Dust & debris**



Dust and debris present huge challenges to preserving magnetic tape, because even tiny particles can come between the tape and the head of the playback machine, resulting in a loss of image.

Magnetic Media: Risk Factors

- Temperature and humidity

Magnetic tapes that have been exposed to extreme and fluctuating temperatures and humidity levels are at increased risk of all kinds of problems. Proper storage is incredibly important for your audiovisual collection and we will share resources and make recommendations for your collection.

Obsolescence of Playback Equipment

The biggest risk factor with magnetic media is obsolescence of the technology needed to play it back. Unlike film, which you can see with the naked eye, recordings on magnetic media can only be perceived using playback equipment which can read those pulses. No one is making playback machines for most of these formats anymore, I cannot stress enough how dire the situation for magnetic media is. There are very few engineers left who can fix a broken video deck and the only place to get replacement parts is by salvaging them.

In 2012, the Library of Congress National Recording Preservation Plan reported that "Many endangered analog formats must be digitized within the next 15 or 20 years before further degradation makes preservation efforts all but impossible."

Library of Congress, "Library of Congress National Recording Preservation Plan", (National Recording Preservation Board of the Library of Congress, Council on Library and Information Resources: December 2012),

http://www.loc.gov/programs/static/national-recording-preservation-plan/publications-and-reports/documents/NRPPLANCLIRpdfpub156.pdf

Magnetic Media: Inspection and Assessment

So, let’s get started on inspecting our magnetic media so we can save it!

Inventory / Visual Inspection

Workflow for Magnetic Media

- Visually inspect each asset
- Identify format, brand, length of tape
- Document condition notes: signs of dust, dirt, mold, poor wind, or broken cases
- Document annotations: Title, artist, date, location, recording environment.
- Remove/ slide record inhibit tabs
- Return to storage in correct orientation

So, here is what we are looking for when we inspect magnetic media

Visually assessing Magnetic Media

- Check physical container for damage
- Clean dusty/ dirty cases during inspection

We will look for broken cases and cassettes. We can also take this opportunity to wipe down the cases if they are dusty or dirty.

During inspection, note any odors.

A vinegar odor can mean acetic acid decay (for acetate based film or acetate-based magnetic media)
A waxy or “crayon” odor is a sign of plastic decay in magnetic formats, especially u-matic.

DO NOT ACTIVELY SMELL ANY ASSET. OVER TIME, THIS POSES A HEALTH RISK.

When you open the case, WITHOUT SNIFFING AT IT, note if you smell anything. Decay often smells like wax or crayons. Some people note a “dirty socks” smell. Vinegar syndrome does not occur in most magnetic media, which is made of polyester. Remember, vinegar syndrome only occurs on acetate stock. Open reel magnetic audio tape however, can be made of acetate and can get vinegar syndrome. Please do not actively smell tapes-- this can pose a health hazard.

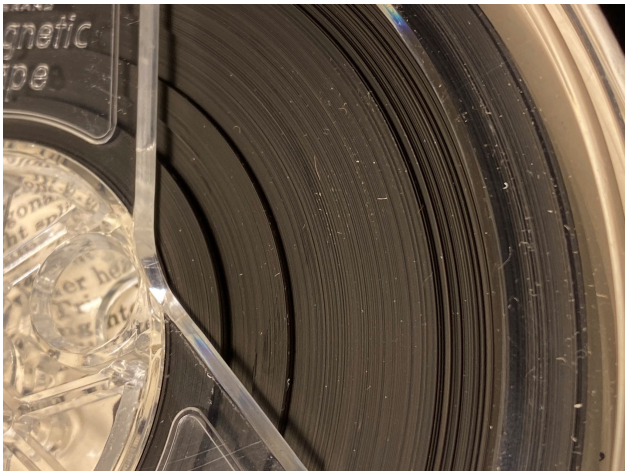
Mold or Crystallization?

Check for patterned black, brown, or mustard colored contamination and for fuzzy or thread-like growths

Mold and chemical crystallization can look similar. If you think you see something, use your loupe to magnify it.

Poor wind or “tape pack”

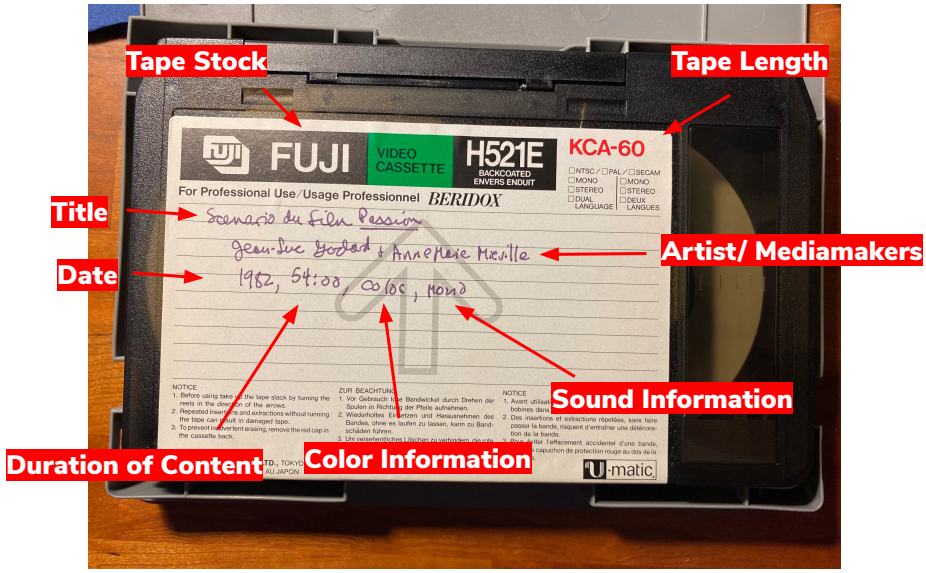
Stepped pack, popped strands, poor wind, not rewound.



Just like with film, we want to see a good, flat wind. This is often called a “tape pack” for magnetic media. This shows examples of both what is called “stepped pack” and “popped strands”.

Most cassettes have a tab that inhibits recording over the material on the tape. For U-matic and VHS, the tab should be “popped” or removed. For some formats, the inhibit tab will slide left or right to inhibit recording over the tape.

Capture information from labels



Inventory / Visual Inspection Workflow for Film

- Visually inspect each reel. If possible, pull out a few feet of film past the leader to inspect with a lupe.
- Note format, carrier (reel or core), gauge, sound type, base type.
- Document condition: signs of dust, dirt, mold, poor wind, perf tears.
- Document annotations: Title, artist, date, location, recording environment.
- Wrap or splice leader around the outside of the film
- Note if the film needs to be re-wound onto a core.
- If completing a full inspection, hand-wind the film, repair splices and perfs, add leader, wind onto a core, and place in a new archival can.

An inspection allows you to do preservation planning an prioritization of archival activities.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Inventory / Visual Inspection Workflow for Optical Media

- Visually inspect each case and disc. Touch only the edges
- Identify format, brand
- Document condition: signs of dust, dirt, scratching
- Document annotations: Title, artist, date, location, recording environment.
- Return to storage in correct orientation. Replace the case if necessary.

An inspection allows you to do preservation planning an prioritization of archival activities.

Thank you!


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