Strategies for Audiovisual Digitization Projects

Low-Cost, DIY, and Community-Based Approaches to Audiovisual Digitization

Wednesday, June 21, 2017

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We know the why, what we want is the how!
We know the *why*, what we want is the *how*!
We know the **why**, what we want is the **how**!
We know the why, what we want is the how!
Lauren Algee
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http://www.dclibrary.org/labs/memorlab
Origin Story

• Public demand for digitization, but we want to do more than provide scanners

• Partnership between Special Collections (digital preservation & archives expertise) and DCPL Labs (digital education and tools)

• National Digital Stewardship Resident Jaime Mears - June 2015 to May 2016
  • (blog at jaimemears.wordpress.com)

• Result: Memory Lab digitization lab, resources, and classes
The Place – Digitization Lab

- VHS
- VHS-C
- DV
- MiniDV
- Audiocassette
- 3.5" Floppy disk
- Photo/document/slide/negative scanning

1712
lab hours used by the public since opening February 2016
The Resources

Libguides.dclibrary.org/MemoryLab
The Programs

Classes
• Digital Preservation 101
• Digital estate planning
• Digital archiving and social media

Events
• Home Movie Day
• DC Zinefest
• Preservation workshops
Staffing and Sustainability

• Labs staff manage appointments, troubleshoot equipment, teach classes
• Memory Lab working group
• 65 DCPL staff have participated in digital preservation professional development over 2 years
We’re growing!

• At DCPL: More and mobile Memory Labs
• Going national!
  • 2 year IMLS National Leadership Grant
  • Training, mentorship, and seed money for 7 public libraries across the U.S.
  • Application period for in the fall
  • Expand and improve the Memory Lab model
Tactics for Community-Engaged Video Preservation

A brief intro to the XFR Collective

by Rachel Mattson
archivist/historian
core XFR collective member since 2014

DLF Webinar on Low-Cost, DIY, and Community-Based Approaches to Audiovisual Digitization
June 2017
XFR Collective is a non-profit organization that partners with artists, activists, individuals, and groups to lower the barriers to preserving at-risk audiovisual media – especially unseen, unheard, or marginalized works – by providing low-cost digitization services and fostering a community of support for archiving and access through education, research, and cultural engagement.
Why the Internet Archive?

The act of digitization or data recovery itself is not preservation, but only the first step in a responsible plan. Once an artist’s work recorded from obsolete media—be it a VHS tape or a floppy disk—these bits must now be inscribed on a new storage medium. The spinning disk of a hard drive is a tenuous and temporary data carrier. If artists left “XFR STN” with nothing more than their recovered materials stored on a portable hard drive, we would truly be doing them a disservice. We would fail to meet digital preservation best practices by storing culturally and personally valuable content on an unstable carrier, and not providing any sort of redundancy or duplication. However, it would not be feasible or sustainable over the long-term for the New Museum to take on the responsibility of storing the terabytes of data that will be produced as a result of “XFR STN.” As a solution, the New Museum has partnered with the Internet Archive to make all materials recovered as part of the exhibition available to the public. Subscribing to the dictum that Lots of Copies Keeps Stuff Safe,¹ we embrace the notion that distribution itself is a preservation strategy.

The full document is available at:
xfrcollective.files.wordpress.com/2016/07/xfrstn_broadside.pdf
XFR Collective’s pop-up video transfer stations
MIX: Queer Experimental Film Festival, 2015 & 2017
The Baltimore Museum of Art/Mid-Atlantic Regional Moving Image Archive, 2017
What is a catalog?

A set of systematically arranged descriptions of materials.
Illustration by XFR Collective member Mary Kidd

The new transfer rack at METRO
Horizontal mentorship & skill-sharing
Troubleshooting, tinkering, & repair
Some resources & tools that we rely upon in our work

AMIA Open Source Committee, Workflows for A/V Archiving
https://github.com/amiaopensource/open-workflows

Ashley Blewer’s Minimum Viable Station document
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1oJvr8zCMK4A97GF9xYOM0uijDqyNStuwjtZ23yMRkGw/edit

Ethan Gates’s Cable Bible
https://amiaopensource.github.io/cable-bible/

vRecord, open-source digital video capture software
https://github.com/amiaopensource/vrecord/blob/master/CONTRIBUTING.md

Texas Commission on the Arts, Videotape Identification & Assessment Guide

Internet Archive (visit our landing page!):  
https://archive.org/details/xfrcollective
Some resources & tools that we have created

XFR Workflows
https://github.com/XFRCollective/WorkflowDocumentation

XFR-METRO partnership zine
https://xfrcollective.wordpress.com/metro-xfr-rack-zine/

How to build a (preservation-oriented) A/V transfer station from scratch
https://xfrcollective.wordpress.com/2017/06/06/project-update-xfr-metro-partnership/

Re: Hi-8 Video
https://xfrcollective.wordpress.com/2017/03/18/%f0%9f%91%8b%f0%9f%8f%bb-8-%f0%9f%93%bc/

Cataloging and File Management workshop for the Asian American Oral History Collective
https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/16LtCx4WQYYSi tfo9HxRslVCW2T8RG0sSoqGkbrlghU/edit#slide=id.g10b1 8693ea_1_423
Find us online.

**email**: xfrcollective[at]gmail.com

**website**: xfrcollective.wordpress.com

**twitter**: @xfr_collective

**github**: github.com/XFRCollective

And/or feel free to reach out to me directly

**Email**: rachmattson[at]gmail.com

**Twitter**: captain_maybe
the Mad Information Scientist in: Recover Analog and Digital Data!

DOROTHEA SALO
an iSchool adventure in 5 action-packed minutes!
When we left the last episode...

MAD INFORMATION SCIENTIST
LIS 668, Digital Curation

School of Library and Information Studies
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Spring 2015

Dorothea Salo (please call me “Dorothea”)  
Office address: 4261 Helen C. White Hall  
Course link page: http://pinboard.in/u:dsalo/t:668

Salo@wisc.edu, 608-265-4733  
Office Hours: by appointment

Course Objectives

➤ Assess, plan for, manage, and execute a small-scale data-management or digital-preservation project.
➤ Assess digital or to-be-digitized data for preservability; make yes-or-no accessioning decisions.
➤ Appropriately manage intellectual-property issues related to data management and digital archiving.
➤ Understand (and where relevant, apply) technological, economic, and social models of digital preservation and sustainability.
➤ Understand forms, formats, and lifecycles of digital data across a wide breadth of contexts.
➤ Evaluate software and hardware tools relevant across the data lifecycle.
➤ Construct a current-awareness strategy; assimilate substantial amounts of relevant writing.
➤ Self-sufficiently acquire technical knowledge.

This course is designed to assess student progress in the following SLIS program-level outcomes: 1b, 2a, 2b, 3a, 3b, 3d, 4a, and 4b.

Course Policies

I wish to fully include persons with disabilities in this course. Please let me know within two weeks if you require accommodation. I will try to maintain the confidentiality of this information.

Academic Honesty: I follow the academic standards for cheating and plagiarism set forth by the University of Wisconsin.

Attendance: It is assumed that all assignments are due on the date specified. In the rare case of an unexpected emergency, I will make every effort to accommodate any reasonable request, but such accommodations must be discussed in advance.
A/V digitization...
80/20
we can't tackle everything
They said I was...
Hi! My name is RADD! I Recover Analog and Digital Data.

I help train SLIS students to digitize, recover, and preserve information from various media.

Interested in how to get started? Get a media-recovery problem that I can help with?

Contact Dimitrios Salo at salo@wisc.edu or 608-265-4733.

but we built it!
And they came!
But what about our distance students?
But what about **SMALL COLLECTIONS in SMALL ORGANIZATIONS?**
Fear not, professionals! The MAD INFORMATION SCIENTIST has a plan...
PROUD and PRAUDA are made possible by

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Low-Cost, DIY, and Community-Based Approaches to Audiovisual Digitization

Pamela Vadakan
CALIFORNIA LIGHT AND SOUND.ORG

Over a hundred years of California's audiovisual history available for free.
Why now?
Essential Preservation Steps

Inventory
Describe
Digitize
Quality Assurance
Preserve
Access and Outreach
Essential Preservation Steps

Inventory (and assess value)

- What do you have?
- What will you have?
- Where is it?
- Assess as you inventory
  - Consider value – historical significance and potential use
  - Consider physical condition and threat of obsolescence
- Partial inventory is a good start
- Inventory is the basis of a catalog
- Use an excel spreadsheet!
Essential Preservation Steps

Describe (keep it simple)

*Do NOT attempt playback for identification!
  Gather what you can from the recording itself
*Enhance description after digitization

Minimal fields
• Title
• Date
• Generation (duplicate vs. original)
• Format – for budget
• Maximum size/length/duration (include total number reels/tapes) – for budget

• Creator(s)
• Description – labels/paperwork/other clues as to content
• Copyright status
• General notes – condition (red flags) and assessment (prioritize)
• Location
Essential Preservation Steps

Inventory and Describe: Free tool

AV Compass
http://www.avcompass.bavc.org

- Free, easy to use, online form
- Exports data into a CSV file (readable as a spreadsheet)
- Site includes fun tutorial videos
Good vendors bring

- less “real time” staff cost
- expertise and professional, clean, calibrated equipment
- established preservation quality procedures and standards
- guidance on file naming conventions, destination formats
- 1:1 and/or batch transfer options

Don’t be afraid to ask the vendor questions. You’re building a relationship!
Essential Preservation Steps

Quality Assurance

Basic checks

• technical specifications
• image quality at beginning, middle and end (at least 10% of running time)
• metadata
• run checksums
• confirm image and sound quality are adequate for patron use
• confirm content corresponds to descriptive metadata
Essential Preservation Steps

Quality Assurance

Tips

• It takes practice to learn how to differentiate original analog look/sound/feel from digital look/sound/feel and how to determine if artifacts could have been introduced during the transfer process (in your best estimation).

• Consider intern or student help (for first and/or second pair of eyes and ears).

• Use free tools to help automate the process.
Essential Preservation Steps

Quality Assurance: Free tools

**md5tool** – generates and checks checksums
[https://github.com/cavpp/md5tool](https://github.com/cavpp/md5tool)

**verifymedia** – checks technical specs of files
[https://github.com/cavpp/cavppers/blob/master/verifymedia](https://github.com/cavpp/cavppers/blob/master/verifymedia)

**QCTools** - helps analyze and understand digitized video files through analytics and filtering
[https://github.com/bavc/qctools](https://github.com/bavc/qctools)

**AV Artifact Atlas** – helps identify errors and anomalies – inherent or introduced - in analog and digital video
[https://bavc.github.io/avaa](https://bavc.github.io/avaa)
Thanks!

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pamelajean@berkeley.edu

californialightandsound.org

calpreservation.org/projects/audiovisual-preservation
Moderated Discussion
Moderated Discussion

• What open source tools and low cost equipment would you recommend to ensure a high standard of digitization and quality control?
Moderated Discussion

• What strategies and infrastructure do you use to provide digital storage and file management?
Moderated Discussion

• How do you approach and engage your institution or community with your work?
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