tenderness in the face of (the magnetic media) crisis

...& other archival dilemmas
(1) magnetic media crisis
“It is now widely recognized that audio and video holdings must be digitally preserved within an estimated fifteen to twenty year time window if they are to be available to future generations of researchers.”

- Indiana University Media Preservation Task Force, “Meeting the Challenge of Media Preservation” (2011)
An Intern Saved a Museum by Finding This Revolutionary War Treasure in the Attic

The obvious lesson: never throw anything away

Software solves the mystery of a 2,500 year-old poem by Sappho


smithsonianmag.com/history/found-attic-rare-document-revolutionary-war-saved-museum-brink-financial-ruin-180957411/
e.g:

but not:
Now, a videotape recorder that goes anywhere you go.

He’s filming that tiny thing—“Barrow’s in Fea’s Min.” with the new portable, battery-operated Sharp Slim Cam. It’s a compact, lightweight, all-in-one, 8 mm camcorder that records both picture and sound. It costs only $399.95. It’s easy to operate (it comes with a simple instruction book). And it’s lightweight, compact and easy to use. (There’s a 4 1/2-ounce single-load battery that comes with it.)

The Slim Cam is a compact 8 mm camcorder. It’s easy to use and easy to carry. It’s lightweight, compact and easy to use. (There’s a 4 1/2-ounce single-load battery that comes with it.)

The VHS Camcorder Just Got Into Shape.

The Sharp Slim Cam is the world’s smallest, lightest, full-size VHS camcorder. It’s easy to use and easy to carry. (There’s a 4 1/2-ounce single-load battery that comes with it.)

For more information, call 1-800-331-9109.
Tape Structure

- Backcoat
  - Carbon Black
- Substrate
  - Mylar/PET
- Magnetic coating
  - Most vulnerable component
Videotape Formats
degralescence
★ large numbers
★ obsolescence
★ degradation
★ high research value
★ short time window
Mike Casey’s “evolution of obsolescence”:

- New equipment manufacture ends
- New machines no longer available for purchase
- Lack of knowledgeable equipment technicians, tools, & calibration tapes
- Replacement parts become unavailable
- Used machines no longer available for purchase
- Playback expertise ends

Examples of degradation (from AV Artifact Atlas)

https://bavc.github.io/avaa/
The new Library of Congress Packard Campus in Culpeper Virginia. This is the room used for the copying and storage of video or magnetic media. Also the SAMMA machine or the systems for the automated migration of media assets.
(2) tenderness or, the margins
Photographs documenting the use of portapak video by Portable Channel, a community media center founded in Rochester, New York, in 1972.
digitalcommons.brockport.edu/pc_photographs/
public access TV

Dyke TV (1993-2005)

Potato Wolf’s “Nightmare Theater” (late ‘70s/early ‘80s)

https://archive.org/details/XFR_2013-10-15_1A_09

https://archive.org/details/xfr-jubela
“personal digital archiving” labs
THE COMMUNITY CURATION PROGRAM

Bridging the divide between African American generations with digital technology

African American families have a rich history of storytelling that informs, inspires, and imparts each generation with a sense of place and purpose. The Museum’s Community Curation Program combines this tradition with technology to preserve our past and share our stories.

The Community Curation Program (CCP) is a new initiative supported by the Robert Ford Center for African American Art. The program’s goal is to bridge the generation gap among African American communities by bringing access to online services that support the digital sharing of stories by and for the community.

Community Curation in Baltimore

Join us for our inaugural Community Curation Program in Baltimore, November 3.

- Bring your photographs, films, and video memories for digitizing by the Museum’s DigiTeam
- Upload your digitized stories to our new online platform and share your history
- Participate in free, public programs and workshops led by our Museum staff

12:30 - 2:00 p.m.: Personal Digital Archiving - Keeping Track of All Your Bits and Bytes
Presenters: Walter Forsberg, Media Archivist, Jasmyn Castro and Blake McDowell, Media Conservation and Digitization Services at the Museum
Managing digital files across multiple computers, devices, and online platforms can be a gargantuan challenge. Led by the museum’s digital media and archival staff, this informal workshop and discussion will walk attendees through some best practices of digital file management and organization. Topics will include file-naming strategies, folder and directory structures, digital photo basics, Facebook backups, and website archiving approaches.

2:00 - 3:30 p.m.: The Community Curation Platform - Our Shared Digital History
Presenter: Adam Martin, Chief Digital Officer at the Museum

nmaahc.si.edu/explore/initiatives/family-history-center/community-curation-program
pop-ups

Community Archiving Workshop @ Portland Inst. of Contemporary Art, 2015.

XFR STN @ New Museum, 2013.

Mid-Atlantic Regional Moving Image Archive @ Baltimore Museum of Art, 2017.
PDA workshops

Labs

¾ inch audio
DV
Beta
VHS
audiocassette
U-matic

xfr rack @ Metropolitan New York Library Council (METRO)

Pop-ups
XFR Collective

XFR Collective is a non-profit organization that partners with artists, activists, individuals, and groups to lower the barriers to preserving at-risk media.

https://archive.org/details/xfrcollective
La MaMa
Experimental Theatre Club
La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club, founded in 1961.

Ellen Stewart, with performers at La MaMa, 1966 (photo: H. Gloaguen, UIN: OBJ.1966.0226)
“80% of what is now considered American theater originated at La MaMa.”

--Tony award-winner Harvey Fierstein
80,000+ unique items (from 1962 - present):
programs, posters, correspondence
photographs
costumes, masks, puppets, props
films, videos
born-digital
&&&
Ozzie Rodriguez, Archives Director
La MaMa’s ½ inch open reel video collection

256 unique reels documenting 170 productions staged between 1970-1978
Video Space Calculator

This tool is intended to give an indication of the amount of space a given video format will take up on disk. The actual space taken up may differ slightly due to embedded audio, differing frame sizes and aspect ratios, and inter-frame compression / pulldown.

**Format**: Uncompressed 720 10-bit

**Resolution**: 1280x720

**Frame rate**: 23.98

**Video length**: 256 hours

**Total space**: 69.46 TB

https://www.digitalrebellion.com/webapps/videocalc
magnetic media crisis
Post-custodial archival strategies
“The...image quality [of the Portapak] was atrocious, not so much black and white as a spectrum of milky greenish gray that broke up into streaks and splotches of camera burn when the lens passed across a light source. Yet somehow the novelty of making something that looked like bad television inflamed the imaginations of a few people at the time, including us…”

-- Gary Indiana, I Can Give You Anything but Love (2015)
Clips.


A few references, and some further reading.


Mid-Atlantic Regional Moving Image Archive, “Queer Interiors XFR STN” [marmia.org/2017/03/08/queer-interiors-xfr-stn/](http://marmia.org/2017/03/08/queer-interiors-xfr-stn/)


Maximum Preservation Zine, [issuu.com/dcpl9/docs/maximumpreservation2.ebook](https://issuu.com/dcpl9/docs/maximumpreservation2.ebook)

“In and Around Collaborative Projects, Inc: Artists' Cable TV”, arthaps.com/show/in-and-around-collaborative-projects-inc-artists-cable-tv_1


catalog.lamama.org

xfrcollective.wordpress.org