



**PLAN**

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## STARTING POINTS FOR PRESERVATION

### **Scenario 1:**

*You have two boxes of 8mm film in your closet. The content on these 8mm films documents your life in a way that illuminates what your hometown and community were like in the 1950s or 1960s. The content is not only a relevant historical record, it is also a beautiful personal record. You want to give digitized copies of these films to each of your children and grandchildren so that they have the content for use in the future, but you are stuck because you have no idea how make such digital copies.*

### **Scenario 2:**

*What about a shelf of audio recordings sitting in the back room at your place of work? You and your boss want to do something with these recordings because they are taking up space. You are afraid to throw the tapes away because they might document company history. You want to digitize the tapes, but you are not sure where to find the funding to do this. You are not sure if your company will pay for it.*

### **Scenario 3:**

*A friend just passed away and left you to be the default caretaker of a few boxes of videotapes. Since the videotapes are not labeled well, you are not sure as to the nature of their content. You would like to view the content before you decide whether or not these tapes are worth hanging onto.*

### **Scenario 4:**

*You work at a theatre company with a sizable collection of old videotapes and films. The company wants to create an exhibit for its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary as well as a new research library and digital archive. You are in charge of making it happen, but you do not know the first thing about digital libraries...*

### **Scenario 5:**

*A film collector has content from the 1960s that would be perfect for the documentary you are making. The collector says you can use the content if you can figure out how to digitize it and help her with digital preservation.*

### **Scenario 6:**

*You went to film school and you are trying to create a portfolio to put online to show people your work. In doing so, you would like to make sure you have your films on a good hard drive and can keep up with the content into the long-term.*

Any of the above situations and countless more can be a fantastic jumping-off point or catalyst for initiating a preservation project. This “Plan” Guide will emphasize the importance of

thinking about preservation and folding it into your pre-existing projects (like creating documentaries, websites or digital archives).

This **Plan Guide** will give you instruction in how to use AV Compass to create an inventory and in how to use that inventory to construct and articulate a plan for preserving your audiovisual materials.

Your primary consideration is the content that you have as well as what is endangering that content, be it format obsolescence, poor storage conditions or a lack of time to sit down and take care of it.

You cannot effectively preserve your media if:

- 1.) You are unsure of what you have (formats, content)
- 2.) You know what you have but do not know what to do with it
- 3.) You know what you would like to do but you are unsure of how to go about doing it
- 4.) You lack funding or time to take care of a preservation project right now

## MEANS AND SUPPORT

Acknowledging the effort you are going to have to put forward is important. Remember: you won't preserve your materials by snapping your fingers.

If you are undertaking a large project, you will probably have to search for funding and collaborators to support your endeavors. Help and collaborators can come in the form of preservationists, vendors, archives or programs that can help you do things you might not be able to manage on your own. Preservation will likely cost you money too, especially if you want to undertake a project in a smart and sustainable way with satisfactory results. If you choose to go for it full-force, the investment of your time and funds can be well worth it.

You might be one person with a collection of old audio materials or a film student looking to preserve his/her work. In this case, the scope of your efforts might be smaller and more focused.

If you are not willing to give of your time or money for preservation, ask yourself once more – *why are you here?* You probably have at least some vested interest in preserving your materials or bolstering your preservation education or you would not have visited a site or resource like this one.

This guide will outline what steps you can take and what you can aspire to, but ultimately saving your audiovisual media will come down to your motivation, means, collection size and the scope of your preservation aspirations.

All of it can be made much easier and more digestible with *a plan*.

## **FORMULATING A PRESERVATION PLAN**

Take your goal and combine it with your means (the money and the effort that you are willing to put forward). Now you are ready to formulate your plan. A plan is an outline for the course of action that you will take to preserve your materials. A plan is something you can articulate in order to actually get your project completed.

If you are stuck trying to think about what your goals are, here are some questions you can ask yourself.

On a fundamental level:

- 1.) Why do I want to preserve my media?
- 2.) What happens if I am no longer able to view my media?
- 3.) What happens if I salvage it?

Some additional questions:

- 1.) Where do I sit within the basic steps of preservation? (Remember the steps we outlined during the Learn Section?)
- 2.) How much have I done? How much am I doing?
- 3.) What would I like to be doing better?
- 4.) How can preservation be an action that I naturally fold into my other projects and endeavors?

With regard to the basic steps for preservation, here are some areas where you can focus your attention.

## **HOW CREATING INVENTORY CAN HELP**

Counting and cataloging your materials does not have to cost you money. If you want to get a basic headcount, AV Compass is here for you. You can use this resource or any number of free resources on the web. The purpose of creating an inventory is to have an overview of your collection – to know what materials you are working with -- even if you never end-up doing anything with it. Creating an inventory is helpful because you can come back to it at a later time and know what you have.

Your inventory will be indispensable to any communication you have about your preservation project.

- You can give it to a vendor to get a rate for digitization

- You can give it to an archive so they can make a determination if they might be able to take what you have (or at least begin preliminary discussions)
- It can ultimately serve as a kind of packing list
- You can give it to a potential funder so they can see very clearly what they are giving you money to preserve. You might be able to include your inventory in grant applications.
- If you are serious enough to do an inventory, it will help other people to take you seriously. Taking the time to create an inventory can move you from the “Oh, I should do something about these tapes” phase to actually beginning to do something about those tapes

## **HOW COLLABORATORS CAN HELP**

If you are looking to find out more about your content and formats, this is where finding a pertinent collaborator can come in handy. Depending on where the collection hails from, a friend or family member might be able to answer questions about the content (maybe they were there when it was produced and can offer pertinent details). If you are working with an artist or filmmaker, try involving them in the identification and inventory process. People often enjoy talking about their personal and artistic histories for the purpose of preserving them.

With regard to format identification and proper storage of materials in your home or work, experienced archivists and archival students can answer questions about formats and are familiar with proper procedures for handling old media. They are particularly good people to reach out to if you need extra hands with a larger project. If you are in any way intimidated by the prospect of preserving and archiving your collection, you should feel encouraged to ask anybody you know to help you out.

The Preserve PDF Guide contains hints for initiating and maintaining a successful collaboration with the preservationist who digitizes your materials.

The idea behind AV Compass is to make the inventory process far less daunting. Hop over to our “Create an Inventory” Guide to explore making an inventory with AV Compass.

## **STORING YOUR MATERIALS OR DONATING THEM TO AN ARCHIVE**

If you take the time to create an inventory, it might be fairly easy for you to consider proper storage.

Are your materials being properly stored? Are they in an attic or basement? Are they all in proper cases? Is there dust everywhere?

Ensuring that your materials are properly stored is especially important if you lack the means to have them digitized or reformatted in the near future. You want to make sure your materials are in the best, most playable condition until you have time and money to reformat them properly. Clearing a space in your home or place of work to properly house the materials can be a perfectly viable goal. See more about storage in our “Preserve Guide.”

If you do not want to keep your collection yourself, you might be able to donate it to an archive. Some archives will take collections that fall within their respective collecting policies. The trick behind donating your collection to a repository is to find one that collects the type of format(s) and content that you have, which can be far easier said than done. It requires research, communication and follow-up on your part. Having a proper inventory can help immensely in this regard. An archivist can look at your inventory and right away tell if your collection fits within their archive’s collecting parameters. See our “Preserve” Guide for more information about working with an archive.

See Also:

[Donating Your Personal or Family Records to a Repository](#)

Society of American Archivists

## **REFORMATTING OR DIGITIZING YOUR COLLECTION**

If your content exists on obsolete formats (and you want to ensure that you can access that content into the long-term), you will absolutely want to consider migrating the content from the obsolete format to something more easily playable/retrievable today. At this present moment, this means digitizing your materials so that they can be accessed with a computer (taking your analog materials and creating digital files from them). You can digitize your materials yourself, but the process requires a little bit of technical know-how and working equipment. If you are coming at your preservation project from outside the film editorial or post-production fields, odds are you will need some help – and there are a handful of options. There are digitization centers the country and world over, many of them offering specialized digitization programs. The key, again, is finding the right place and the right program for what you are trying to do with your materials. If you look at the “Preserve” Guide, you will find helpful information on what to strive for in collaborating with a preservationist or vendor.

Digitizing content from obsolete formats can be a perfectly viable and wonderful preservation goal.

## **CURATION AND SETTING PRIORITIES**

Due to limited funding and the size of your collection, you might have to make a choice about what materials to save. Think of your collection like the clothes in your closet. When your

closet becomes full, you might have to get rid of some things. You make judgments about what you think will continue to be relevant to your daily wardrobe and you get rid of what is merely taking up space. Sometimes you just do not have the capacity to use or properly care for everything you have. Your needs change over time and you try to accommodate for that change.

When you are unsure of the content that exists on your older formats and you lack equipment that can play the older formats back, setting priorities and deciding what materials to spend money on can be a huge challenge. Because playback machines can be expensive and difficult to service if they break, vendors tend to be necessarily stingy with allowing people to come in and watch or listen to their old magnetic media.

You should consider anything that might be important to you (that you lack the equipment to play back) a priority. There is great incentive for taking the time to come up with a preservation plan – time is running out.

## **FUNDING YOUR PRESERVATION PROJECT**

Funding is also of concern to preservation projects. Here are a few more questions to ask yourself:

- 1.) Where is the funding coming from in these efforts?
  - a. Am I paying for this preservation project personally? (Paying a preservation project yourself is much easier for smaller projects, but much harder for large-scale projects)
  - b. Is my family paying?
  - c. Is the funding coming from my place of work?
  - d. Am I applying for a grant?

Regardless of where the money is coming from, it is crucial to know where you want the money to go. You should understand what you need money for and what you are willing to spend money on. Are you going to pay for digitization services? Will you be pay for off-site storage? Are you trying to build your own digital archive with top-of-the-line hard drives and the like? This will dictate where you look for funding as well as what you ask for when you ask for that funding. You are more likely to give someone money when you know what he/she will be spending that money on.

More than being able to articulate what you need the money for, it helps to think about and articulate what will happen if you fail to preserve your collection. What knowledge and insight will the world (or your community) miss out on if steps are not taken to ensure the longevity of the materials? If you have narrative or storytelling skills, the time to bring them out is when you apply for funding. Who will your collection serve if it *does* get preserved? Available grants

tend to be geared towards archives and libraries, but there are also grants and programs out there that are geared towards helping individuals to preserve their collections. The key is to do your research.

## CONSIDERING COPYRIGHT

Another hefty consideration in embarking on a preservation project, depending on your goals, is copyright. Consider the following questions:

- 1.) Are you the rights holder to your materials?
- 2.) If you are not the rights holder to your materials, do you have permission from the rights holder to use or preserve this material?
- 3.) Is your collection commercial in nature? Is there copyrighted music in it? Is there other copyrighted artwork in it?
- 4.) Does your collection consist mostly home movies and amateur films?

Unless you produced the work yourself or the person who produced the work gave you the rights, it is a good idea to do a little investigating into the copyright status before you have the content preserved and especially before you try to exhibit the content or put it online.

## HELPFUL COPYRIGHT RESOURCES

### [Copyright & Fair Use](#)

Stanford University Libraries

### [Permission Guidelines](#)

California Audiovisual Preservation Project

\*\*While this document is aimed at advising participants in the CAVPP, the information is helpful in understanding copyright considerations.

### [Fair Use Statement](#)

Dance Heritage Coalition

\*\*While this document is aimed at advising institutions with audiovisual collections documenting dance performances, the information is helpful in understanding copyright considerations.

### [Orphan Works: Statement of Best Practices](#)

Society of American Archivists

## ADDITIONAL TIPS

No matter your preservation aspirations, it is important to be able to articulate your plan. Being able to articulate your preservation goals can help you appeal to all manner of collaborators who can help make your project happen. It can also help you to rally financial support around your project.

Creating an inventory will help you to state what you have – and what you most need help with. It will give you a foundation for explaining your priorities – it can serve as a simple reference for what materials are most in need of attention. Knowing what your objectives are will help any potential collaborators know a.) If they want to collaborate with you and b.) How they can help you.

Be conscientious of how what you want intersects with what other people are doing or offering. If you are looking for help cataloging your collection of amateur-recorded records, a vendor who specializes in digitizing 1” open-reel videotape will not be of much help to you. If you have a collection of videotapes documenting a country music festival, you will not be able to donate them to a punk archive. A funder that supports the building of digital archives is not going to be interested in your project to make a found footage film. Knowing what you want will help you determine who you approach for help. Use your inventory as the foundation for articulating your plan.

If you find yourself stuck, try giving yourself a deadline. Imagine an hourglass with time running out. Pay attention to what is already going on in your life and what preserving your collection can help you to achieve. Anniversaries and other creative projects involving the use of your old media can be incredibly helpful in mobilizing you.

Use the questionnaire at the end of this guide to get a jump-start in articulating your goals.

# **CAN YOU ARTICULATE YOUR PRESERVATION PLAN?**

- 1.) What are you trying to preserve? What formats? How much of each?**
- 2.) What is the content?**
- 3.) Why are you trying to preserve this content?**
- 4.) What are you ultimately hoping to do with the content?**
- 5.) What do you need help with in preserving this content?**
- 6.) What are your priority items?**
- 7.) When is your deadline for finishing this preservation project?**
- 8.) What is the storage history of the materials?**
- 9.) Does this project have funding behind it?**
- 10.) Who is involved in the project? What are their roles?**
- 11.) How much of your time can you have devote?**
- 12.) What will be lost if you do not take preservation actions?**
- 13.) How does this material benefit you or the public?**
- 14.) How will you continue to maintain preservation into the future?**

