

Condition Assessment – Brief Overview and Initial Steps

Condition Assessments

Condition Assessment: Preservation and care of archival materials rely on the stability, safe handling, storing, and archival practices in place.

- ✓ Regular assessments **MUST** be undertaken and documented for all preservation metadata.
- ✓ All tapes should be visually inspected before they are played. This is necessary to identify tapes that could be damaged if played and those that could damage the playback equipment.



Condition Assessment – Tape – First Steps

Examine analog media and look for signs of damage, deterioration, and degradation:

problem	identification	steps to take
stick-shed syndrome	visual signs of tape separation, vinegar smell, squealing	options: baking tape or using dehydration equipment to remove moisture
vinegar syndrome	acid or vinegar smell, visual signs of shrinkage or brittle condition	transfer tape as soon as possible
detached leader	visual sign of missing or detached leader tape	re-spool and add leader to the tape (be sure to not lose data by cutting)
mold or fungus	white powdery substance on tape or housing	store and refer to specialist
bent or wrinkled tape	visual signs of bent or broken/wrinkled tape	carefully re-spool tape firmly and tight, exercise tape and store



Condition Assessment – Film – First Steps

Examine analog media and look for signs of damage, deterioration, and degradation:

description	diagnosis
flakes or shards of film are present in the container.	film is brittle and should not be handled. Consult a professional.
film is covered in white residue, may be stuck together and impossible to unwind.	film was wet at some point in the past and has mold. Consult a professional.
film has appearance of "spokes" in the roll.	due to advanced vinegar syndrome, the film has lost flexibility and does not lie flat in a roll, causing spoking.
film is magenta.	this is a film that has experienced color fading. The cyan and yellow dye layers have faded, leaving magenta as the dominant color.
when turned against the light, there is a silvery sheen to the emulsion side of the film.	the film is silvering out. The silver in the film is now exhibiting a metallic sheen that makes duplication more difficult.



Condition Assessment – Analog Equipment

Examine all analog playback equipment **BEFORE** mounting or loading media. Faulty playback equipment **CAN** destroy materials with **FIRST** play.

description	diagnosis
dirty heads or rollers	ALWAYS clean all playback equipment before and after use
playback speeds	the correct playback speed must be determined as well as variable pitch control
signal issues	check signal chain and adjust to replicate the 'unaltered' version of the original
squealing or rubbing	generally cleaning or adjusting connections will help this issue, refer to a specialist or experienced analog playback archivist for additional measures
when turned against the light, there is a silvery sheen to the emulsion side of the film.	the film is silvering out. The silver in the film is now exhibiting a metallic sheen that makes duplication more difficult.
missing mixers or converters/cords	refer to guides and schematics for proper wiring

Condition Assessment – Analog Equipment

Examine all analog playback equipment **BEFORE** mounting or loading media. Faulty playback equipment **CAN** destroy materials with **FIRST** play.



Reel-to-reel roller



Reel-to-reel heads

Dirty rollers and heads



VCR heads



Dirty Stylus

Conservation Actions - Brief Overview and Initial Steps

Conservation Actions

Conservation: The protection of the original analog materials. The component of preservation which comprises processes/actions needed to **ensure** the continued **physical survival** without further degradation.

Conservation Actions – First Steps

- 1. Documentation:** Preservation act essential to maintaining the history of the analog media and ANY copies that are created from the original. Additionally, all handling, playback, re-housing, storage, and preservation actions **MUST** be documented for each handling of the analog materials.
 - Condition
 - Storage
 - Brands with make and model of carrier/tape/film
 - Technical information
 - Preservation/technical/administrative metadata
- 2. Maintaining and Improving Intellectual Description :** Document all descriptive metadata which travels with the original materials but also you **MUST** research and document additional information which is based on expanded metadata schemas or information about the original materials.
 - Document all notes/labels/enclosers found with the materials
 - Document history and detailed information about the materials (history, brand history, playback history, handling)

Conservation Actions – First Steps

3. **Handling and Housing:** Research all risks to the analog materials which are in the collection and that will be migrated or preserved. Add all information to the metadata. Ensure proper techniques and re-housing materials are on-hand before proceeding.
 - Issues can arise from mis-handling analog materials and complete destruction can occur
 - Address EACH risk determined in the Risk Assessment process, document and provide detailed notes about each process/condition/preservation action

4. **Preservation Planning and Budgeting:** Long-term preservation and conservation of analog materials rely heavily on the project costs and budgetary planning of each archive. If the materials cannot be maintained or stored properly, additional resources must be applied.
 - Grant funding opportunities
 - Budgetary request from organizational structures
 - Collaborative partnerships with archives with larger budgets