

37a – Digitizing Legacy Audio and Video Recordings

Action Item Template Response

General Action Item Information

Lead Division/Office: Digital Library Program

Action Item Number: 37a

Action Item Short Name: Digitizing Legacy Audio and Video Recordings

Dependencies with other EP Action Items:

Implementation leader (name & email): jwd@indiana.edu

I. DESCRIBE YOUR PLANS FOR IMPLEMENTING THIS ACTION.

Indiana University has significant holdings of sound recordings, video recordings, and film across its campuses, in a variety of libraries, archives, and other departments. The recent Media Preservation Survey on the Bloomington campus shows that on that campus alone, IU has over 560,000 audio and video recordings and film reels or cores, 41% of which are either unique (one-of-a-kind) or rare (only in a few institutions). Large portions of these holdings are seriously endangered due to inadequate storage, media degradation, and format obsolescence. Media preservation experts now agree that analog audio and video assets must be digitized for long-term preservation. Digitization also brings expanded access for researchers and enables the repurposing of content to new uses.

Many archivists believe that there is a 15-20 year window of opportunity to digitize existing analog audio and video materials, less for some formats. After that, the combination of degradation and obsolescence will make digitization either impossible or prohibitively expensive. Currently, approximately 1% of audio and video holdings at IU Bloomington have been digitized, and at the current rate of progress of digitization efforts in various individual units, it will take several hundred years to complete the systematic digitization of these collections.

To ensure the continued availability of these materials, especially the unique and rare items, the following steps are recommended:

1. Establish a Media Preservation and Digitization Center on the IUB campus, as a centralized facility for assessment and digital conversion of audio and video materials, and for the conservation of film materials.
2. Hire a Media Preservation Specialist to oversee the Center and work with media content holders at IU to assess collections and develop plans for their digitization.
3. Conduct a Media Preservation Survey of IUPUI and the regional campuses, similar to that being completed for IUB (see http://research.indiana.edu/resources/media_preservation/).
4. Engage in a systematic digitization effort, focusing priority on items and collections that have high research and use value and are endangered from the standpoint of media degradation and/or obsolescence.
5. Place digitized items into a digital preservation repository (see 37d - Preservation Repository) and make them accessible (where possible) through a Web-based audio/video access system (see 37e - Discovery and Access).

Unlike for audio and video, digitization is not yet an established method for preservation of film. The best current approach to film preservation is appropriate treatment and storage of physical film cores/reels, but the facilities necessary for this are outside the scope of this Action. The Media Preservation and Digitization Center should have appropriate equipment and staff to create access-quality (not preservation quality) digital video files from film.

II. WHAT ARE THE POLICY AND PRACTICE IMPLICATIONS OF YOUR PLANS?

Because resources will no doubt be limited, a process will need to be put in place to establish priorities for digitization work supported by the Media Preservation and Digitization Center and funded by IU, possibly involving a steering or advisory committee. Prioritization should be driven by research value and preservation need.

Some external grant funding may be available for specific collections, but is not likely available for systematic digitization of all IU holdings or even all unique and rare IU holdings.

Partnerships with external commercial and noncommercial partners should also be explored.

III. IDENTIFY STAKEHOLDERS.

Stakeholders include:

- Libraries, archives, and other audio/video content holders from across the IU system, e.g. Cook Music Library, Archives of Traditional Music, IUPUI University Library, and many others
- Digital Library Program
- UITTS Enterprise Infrastructure: Video Infrastructure group
- UITTS Research Technologies: Research Storage group
- UITTS Learning Technologies: Media Design & Production
- Institute for Digital Arts and Humanities (IUB)
- IU faculty who use local audio, video, and film collections for their research and/or teaching