

Preservation Week "Moving Image Preservation 101"
April 28, 2015
Questions and Answers

Q: What are the most common pests to watch for?

I haven't heard of any in particular that like to eat film other than mold, and it depends on where you are located geographically, etc. But I have heard of silverfish being a problem, cockroaches maybe. It is also that these pests are many times found around these items due to where they are stored (basements, etc.) and then you have to deal with pest excrement, etc. I have not had too much experience with anything other than mold damaging film.

Q: Do you recommend any specific format for digitization of VHS?

The typical, realistic standard seems to be (amongst professional collecting orgs) uncompressed 10-bit 422 with an MOV or AVI wrapper. Even more realistically and for slightly smaller files, some places go with 8-bit uncompressed. Some argue that 10-bit is overkill for analog video, and then others argue that the extra 2-bits help with colorspace. Here is an article by George Blood that helps a bit explain more:

http://www.digitizationguidelines.gov/audio-visual/documents/IntrmMastVidFormatRecs_20111001.pdf

Q: How would you recommend managing large video files once you have them digitized in preservation formats? 100+GB of .mov...?

This is a difficult question to answer because it is based on many factors. I can tell you what I do personally and professionally. Here at UBalt we invested in an 18 TB RAID storage device, an extremely powerful computer workstation, and upload our preservation masters to the Internet Archive for backed up storage (through an agreement we have worked out with them one-on-one). For my personal home movies, I have purchased multiple solid state external hard drives (you can buy 1 TB for under \$200 these days) and back them up on those. Then I have one full copy at my mom's house, one with myself, and one with another relative so we have three geographically separate copies.

Q: How do we difference acetate film from polyester?

The majority of the time if you are dealing with 16mm and 8mm/S8mm, it will be acetate. The most accurate way to tell is by ripping the film (BUT DON'T DO THIS) because acetate will rip easily and polyester will not rip at all. Like I say in the parentheses, don't do this to your film UNLESS it is at the beginning of the film without any picture and many times with amateur film there may not be this space because film was so expensive. If you have these formats that date before 1980 though, I am going to guess that 98% of the time it will be acetate. There are supposedly ways to tell where you hold the entire reel up to light and if you can see light through it then it is polyester, if you cannot, it is acetate, but I have NOT found this to be true in my work. I would recommend that you assume you have acetate if you have these formats from pre 1980.

Q: We have videos in individual plastic containers. Should they be all taken out of them for storage?

Ideally they would be rehoused in inert plastic (polypropylene) containers and put on inert plastic cores. This is expensive and time consuming. More realistically, if you have limited funds, time, and expertise, focus on keeping the temperature and humidity down and consistent.

Q: Are there any advantages to 35 mm film to 8 mm film?

35mm film is physically larger so it provides a much better resolution/image quality. You can then also project it in a larger theater because it can be blown up more. 35mm film was the standard for the motion picture industry up until only a few years ago. However 35mm is much more expensive and always has been than 8mm.

Q: Do you use a particular metadata standard for your digitized video, and if so which one?

PBCore seems to be the standard for the profession. <http://pbcore.org/>

We are currently working on incorporating this into our workflow, although we follow more DublinCore at this point.

Q: What is the best way to clean for vinegar syndrome items?

Cleaning does not help with vinegar syndrome. Also if you have film that is suffering from vinegar syndrome and needs cleaning, I recommend contacting a professional as vinegar syndrome makes film shrink and become extremely brittle, so someone without much experience could further damage the films.