Digitisation Toolkit
Digitising audio and audio-visual material

You can digitise audio and audio-visual content (including audio recordings, video, and motion picture film collections) yourself, but as the resources required to do so tend to be more complex and expensive than to digitise image-based material, it will generally be more cost-effective to outsource to a vendor with expertise in this field. See *Additional Resources* at the bottom of this guide for some help to make the decision about whether to outsource or digitise in-house.

This guide outlines how to go about outsourcing the digitisation of audio and audio-visual materials in your collection to allow the content to be accessible. Following this guide will result in a digital product that meets the capture standards used by State Library of Queensland. Take into consideration your own organisation's needs and capacity when deciding on the file types that you need and the standard to which you digitise your video material and follow best practices whenever possible.

Take stock of your audio-visual material

Before you make a decision about digitising audio recordings, videotapes and cinematic film in your collection, consider:

Purpose: Are you digitising to make access copies to share the content or for preservation? State Library digitises for access and preservation at the same time.

Accessibility: How will you make the content more accessible to others once it's digitised?

Preservation: How will you preserve the files?

Content: Do you know what's in your collection and whether it's significant? Are there multiple copies of the same content? Which material is the master? Has the content been digitised elsewhere? Do you have information about when, where, by and of whom recordings were made? Do you have transcripts of any recordings?

Equipment: Do you or does the vendor have suitable professionally-serviced analogue playback equipment to ensure preservation and access long term? For example, do the playback machines, analogue to digital (A/D) converters, computer hardware etc. meet international best practices and standards for audio digitisation?

Condition: Can you play the tapes or films in your collection? Are any damaged or more at risk than others? Do they need special storage or handling, or might they need some conservation work before attempting to digitise them? Reliable vendors can assist in unblocking magnetic tape, cleaning and removing mould from collections and other similar conservation steps before digitising the material. Audio and audio-visual materials become increasingly fragile with age.

Digital media asset management and preservation planning: do you have a way to manage your digital media files? **The Open Archival Information System (OAIS)** provides information about how to ensure that digital content is properly preserved and accessible over time. Having archival storage, data management, preservation planning and access will provide proper custodianship of digital objects. Consider these issues before beginning digitisation. Some vendors are able to host and preserve your content for a fee if you don't have a way to do so.

Access: Do you have a record of the rights and permissions that apply to the material, including copyright, moral rights and cultural clearance where appropriate? Will these permissions cover the new use you want to make of the content by digitising and making it available online? Do any other special access conditions apply to the material?

Having your analogue collection reformatted

To help with locating a vendor to digitise your items, refer to our info guide *Digitising in-house or with vendors*. When you are making your digitisation request, be sure to:

- Specify the way that the digital files should be named, refer to our info guide *File Naming*
- Specify the file format, file compression format, bit rate, bit depth, sampling rate, audio channels; in addition, definition, frame rate and colour space for video that you will need and how they will be delivered to you
- If you are not sure what about specifications for vendors, ask!

As an example, if having a collection digitised, State Library would provide an external hard drive and request the following from the vendor for each recording:

- Original straight transfer (archival) – Uncompressed LPCM BWF 24 bit, 96 kHz according to **International Association of Sound and Audio-visual Archives** (IASA) specifications and includes:
- Digital files identified according to provided file naming
- Embedded metadata such as running speed, equipment used etc. (list to b provided to vendor) Fixity check – MD5 checksum file
- MP3 derivative for access purposes

Once you have your digital files, perform a quality control check on the content.

Preserving your digital content for the future

You should already be thinking about how to preserve and manage your digital files for the long term before embarking on your digitisation project. Digital files can be affected by a number of factors, including handling, storage conditions and technological obsolescence. Consider:

- Storage / media costs
- Data management including cataloguing, metadata, rights management
- Backing up, costs
- Checksum (formulas used to detect many data corruption errors and verify overall data integrity)
- Format obsolescence – converting / rewrapping / migrating files

Additional resources:

- *SLQ Digitisation Capture Standards*
  www.slq.qld.gov.au/about-us/corporate/policies/protocols-and-standards
- *Open Archival Information System (OAIS)*
  www.paradigm.ac.uk/workbook/introduction/oais.html
- *International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives (IASA)*
  www.iasa-web.org/
- *JISC Digital Media*
  www.jiscdigitalmedia.ac.uk/
- US Federal Agencies Digitization Guidelines Initiative
  www.digitizationguidelines.gov
- Sustainable Heritage Network, *Sound Directions: Best practices for audio preservation*
  www.sustainableheritagenetwork.org/

Need further information?

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