Computer Media Identification Guide

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*This document aims to assist archivists and cataloguers at the CCA in the identification of computer media that they may come across while surveying or processing Collection material. This guide is in no way complete, but aims to cover the most common and likely media formats*.

# Magnetic Disks

## 8-inch floppy disk

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| [[1]](#endnote-1) | [[2]](#endnote-2)  *(largest)* |

* **Dates of common use:** 1971 – late 1970s/early 1980s
* **Capacity:** 80 KB – 1.2 MB
* **Notes:** Be careful with handling and storage, as these disks bend and fold easily.

## 5.25-inch floppy disk

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| [[3]](#endnote-3) | [[4]](#endnote-4) |

* **Dates of common use:** 1976 – early 1990s
* **Capacity:**110 KB – 1.2 MB
* **Notes:** Be careful with handling and storage, as these disks bend and fold easily.

## 3.5-inch floppy disk

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| --- |
| [[5]](#endnote-5) |

* **Dates of common use:** 1982 – mid 2000s
* **Capacity:** 360 KB – 1.44 MB
* **Notes:** Check to ensure metal shutter is covering magnetic tape.

## Iomega Zip disk

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| --- |
| [[6]](#endnote-6) |

* **Dates of common use:** 1994 – 2003
* **Capacity:** 100MB, 250 MB, or 750 MB
* **Notes:** Formatted for PC or Mac (typically printed on label).

# Hard Disk Cartridges

## Iomega Jaz disk

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| [[7]](#endnote-7) | [[8]](#endnote-8) |

* **Dates of common use:** 1995 – 2002
* **Capacity:** 1GB or 2GB
* **Notes:** Formatted for PC or Mac (typically printed on label).

## SyQuest 5.25-inch disk

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| --- | --- |
| [[9]](#endnote-9) | [[10]](#endnote-10) |

* **Dates of common use:** 1988 – 1998
* **Capacity:** 44 MB, 88 MB, or 200 MB
* **Notes:** Most commonly used with Apple Macintosh computers.

# Tape

## Digital Linear Tape (DLT)

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| --- |
| Digital Linear Tape [[11]](#endnote-11) |

* **Dates of common use:** 1984 – late 2000s
* **Capacity:** 94 MB – 320 GB
* **Notes:** Also referred to as CompacTape or Super DLT.

## Digital Data Storage (DDS)/Digital Audio Tape (DAT)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Digital Data Storage [[12]](#endnote-12) | DAT 160 comparison with DDS (front) [[13]](#endnote-13) |

* **Dates of common use:** 1989 – late 2000s
* **Capacity:** 1.3 GB (DDS-1) – 160 GB (DAT 320)
* **Notes:** Cartridge measures approximately 5.5 cm x 7.5 cm x 1 cm. Uses 4mm or 8mm tape.

## Linear Tape-Open (LTO)

|  |
| --- |
| Linear Tape-Open [[14]](#endnote-14) |

* **Dates of common use:** 2000 -- current
* **Capacity:** 100 GB – 2.5 TB
* **Notes:** Cartridge measures approximately 10 cm x 10 cm x 2 cm. Current generation is LTO-6. Uses ½ in. tape.

# Solid State Media

## Flash media (CompactFlash/SD/miniSD/microSD/Memory Stick/Memory Stick Duo)

|  |
| --- |
| [[15]](#endnote-15) |

* **Dates of common use:** mid 1990s -- current
* **Capacity:** various
* **Notes:** Typically used with portable devices, such as cameras, phones, tablets, and gaming systems.

## USB flash drive

|  |
| --- |
| http://www.obsoletemedia.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/USB-memory-stick.png [[16]](#endnote-16) |

* **Dates of common use:** 2000 -- current
* **Capacity:** 8 MB – 128 GB or more
* **Notes:** Many form factors.

# Hard Drives

## Internal Hard Drives

|  |
| --- |
| http://justanotherlanguage.org/sites/default/files/pata_hard_disk_pile.jpg [[17]](#endnote-17) |

* **Dates of common use:** 1980s -- current
* **Capacity:** various
* **Notes:** Most commonly in 2.5” or 3.5” form factors.

## External Hard Drives

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| [[18]](#endnote-18) | [[19]](#endnote-19) |

* **Dates of common use:** 1990s -- current
* **Capacity:** various
* **Notes:** Many form factors. Typically connect to computers via USB, firewire, or similar interface.

# Optical Media

## CDs/DVDs

|  |
| --- |
| [[20]](#endnote-20) |

* **Dates of common use:** 1990s -- current
* **Capacity:** 600 MB – 4.7 GB
* **Notes:** Be careful with handling, as disks can be easily scratched.

1. **Image Credits**:

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2. Museum of Obsolete Media, <http://www.obsoletemedia.org/> [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
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7. Museum of Obsolete Media [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. CC BY 2.0, Alessandra Cimatti, <https://flic.kr/p/bgS4bM> [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. CC BY-NC-ND 2.0, Trish Thornton, <https://flic.kr/p/sku9BJ> [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Museum of Obsolete Media [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. CC BY-SA 2.0, Tnarlk Innael, <https://flic.kr/p/63k93c> [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Museum of Obsolete Media [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. <http://justanotherlanguage.org/content/tutorial_pata_hard_disk> [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
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