

# A STARTER'S GUIDE TO VIDEO DIGITIZATION

Video digitization may seem overwhelming to many people. A station has many different components and each of them has its own characteristics. A video digitization station can run from simple to extremely complex. Moreover, when embarking in a digitization plan, there's much more to consider than just transforming those electric signals to ones and zeros. Here is a basic set of questions you may want to answer before starting a video digitization project and useful resources that can help you make the right decisions for you or your organization.

## #1 WHAT DO I HAVE?



- **Which formats?** There are many! Some of the most popular ones: VHS, MiniDV, Betacam. Not sure? Check the resources for help.
- **How much?** Figuring out the total number of items and duration can help you plan.
- **What is it?** Are the tapes labeled? Is there a list? It's a good idea to create an inventory of the tapes in a spreadsheet as a first step.

## #2 HOW DO I PLAY IT?

- **Can you play the tape?** Different formats have different playback devices. A camera is often just as good as a deck.
- **What type of signal?** Some videotapes record analog video, but many record digital video too. No need to re-digitize digital video!
- **How do I connect this?** You want to make sure you have the right connectors for your playback device and your A/D converter.



## #3 HOW DO I GET THE VIDEO IN THE COMPUTER?



- **What do I need?** (1) hardware, analog to digital converter or A/D (pronounced A-to-D), and (2) capture software.
- **Which signal types are there?** Be sure to understand what type of signal your playback device is sending out, both video and audio.
- **Which hardware and software is best?** Most capture software is hardware dependent. Budget, but also media type, will be the two biggest factors in selecting a device.



## #4 HOW DO I MONITOR WHAT I'M DIGITIZING?

- **How does it sound?** Playback devices often have “meters” that show sound levels and headphone outputs. Best case scenario, run the audio through a mixer so you can also adjust audio levels.
- **What does it look like?** Send the video signal to a monitor before sending it to the computer so you can see the picture.
- **How does it look?** Use objective measurements to assess the video signal, not your eye. Waveform monitors and vectorscopes are the best way to do this, if you have access to them.

## # 5 HOW DO I CREATE A VIDEO FILE?

- **Which file format do I choose?** Two factors to consider when selecting a format are: data storage and use of the material.
- **What other factors affect file size?** Consider technical factors such as sampling rate, bit depth and chroma sub-sampling.
- **How do I name the files?** File naming is important to properly ID the content in your files. Linking info from your inventory is recommended.

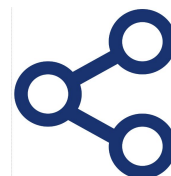


## #6 HOW DO I CHECK MY WORK?

- **How do I make sure the picture isn't clipping?** "Clipping" refers to the loss of picture information outside of broadcast range. QCTools is great for checking files to find values outside of broadcast range.
- **How do I make sure I created the right files?** You can check files to make sure their technical specifications are correct using MediaInfo.

## #7 HOW DO I SHARE?

- **How do I create files to share in other platforms?** You can create “derivatives”, i.e. compressed, lower-quality files from preservation masters to publish content and protect your masters.
- **Am I allowed to publish this content?** Privacy and copyright issues must be considered before publishing content. Some works may be also defined as “orphans”.



## RESOURCES:

Visit [https://github.com/amiaopensource/apex\\_video\\_kit\\_docs](https://github.com/amiaopensource/apex_video_kit_docs) to get more detailed information, written resources and recommended tools that will help you plan your digitization efforts.