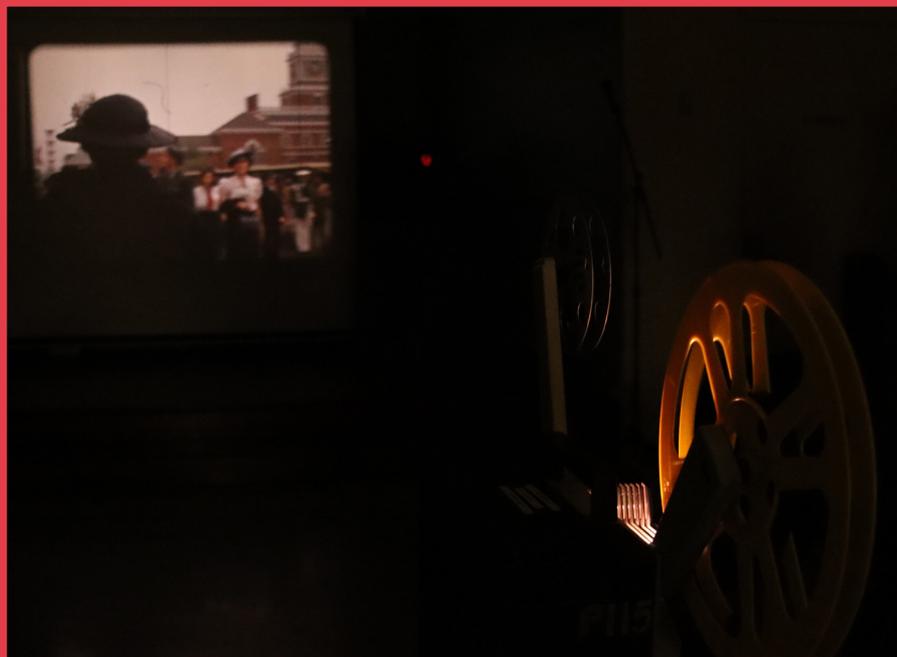




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QUEENS MEMORY

THE MEMORY KEEPER'S GUIDE TO HOME MOVIES

QueensMemory.org



you may come across include small-gauge analog film (e.g., 16mm, 8mm, Super-8) analog video (e.g., VHS, Hi-8) and now digital video (e.g., Mini-DV, DSLRs, cellphones).

Transferring older home movies to digital files and working with movies made digitally offers more options for sharing and screening your family films. We still face trade-offs as memory keepers entering the world of digital technology: the pace of change means we must check and move them more often. The biggest strength of digital is the ease with which we can make new copies, so part of our plan can be to enlist more people connected to the home movies in the task of safeguarding them. Working together makes this easier and more fun!

Finally, for some older technologies, you'll likely need to ask for help from a vendor or an audiovisual archivist to transfer them to digital. The good news is that simple steps suggested in this guide can give all eras of home movies a longer life!



Photo by Leo Sano.

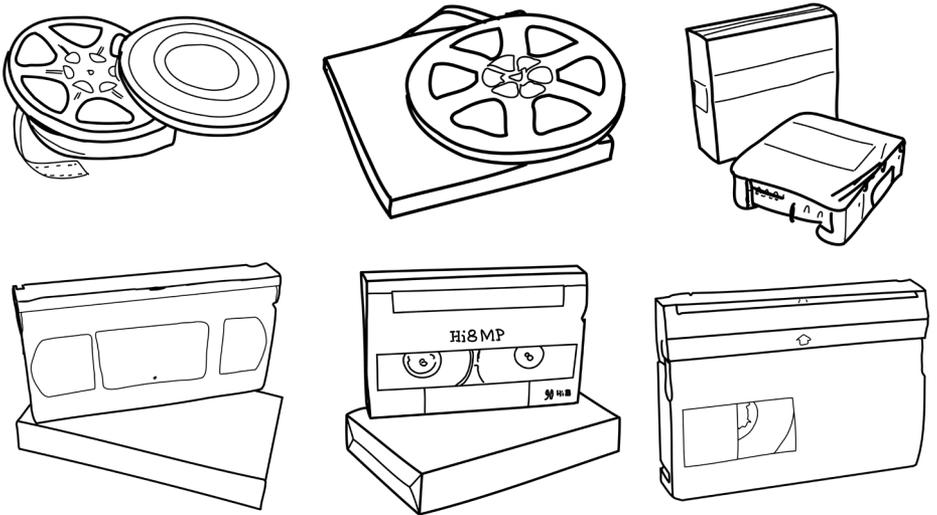
**STEP
1**

CONSIDER YOUR GOALS

The answers to these questions will help you make a plan.

- What home movies do you know you already want to save? What formats are they on and do you recognize them?
- Who can you ask to join you? Do they know when or how the movies were made? Can they help with transferring them to digital or managing the digital versions?
- How do you want to watch these home movies?
- How will you want to share and store the home movies?

A SELECTED VISUAL GUIDE TO HOME MOVIE FORMATS



Illustrations courtesy of Archives of Tomorrow



Photo by Aimai Reporter.

**STEP
2**

GATHER ALL MATERIALS TO BE PRESERVED

- Identify all the places where your home movies are stored. Note how they have been kept. All home movies are best stored in dry, cool, dark rooms that maintain similar conditions throughout the year. Film and video should not be stacked so they weigh on each other and should be ventilated rather than sealed in plastic bags.
- While you're on this search, take note of any information on the containers, canisters, and tape boxes which may help you understand their content later. If you find the cameras used to create them, hold onto them! Especially for video, the camera may also act as your best means of playing them now.
- Check for materials on computers, laptops, cameras, phones, social media, CDs, DVDs, and flash drives.
- Ask others who care about these materials if they have related items they can contribute to the project.
- Find a space with adequate light, ventilation, and easy-to-clean surfaces to place gathered materials in preparation for the next step.

STEP
3

INSPECT AND PRIORITIZE MEDIA

Once you've gathered everything, you can begin to prioritize items to transfer, throw away, or send to a vendor. Aside from digital files on devices you can connect to your computer, you won't be able to easily prioritize by watching home movies first. Instead you should focus on prioritizing the formats and items most in danger of being lost.

INSPECTING HOME MOVIES:

- Analog film is human-readable, which means you can see how images look by unwinding a reel and learn clues about the content by looking at different frames.
- Analog video and digital video images are both readable only by machines, but tape containers all have their own way of opening to reveal the magnetic tape inside and you can observe if it looks dirty or worn.
- If film gives off a strong vinegar odor, isolate the reels with the smell, as they are impacted by “vinegar syndrome” or acetic acid decay, which can spread to the other films.
- Both film and video are vulnerable to mold, as are you! **Be careful about your own exposure to mold first and foremost.** At the first signs of mold on the outside of containers or the home movies themselves, remove those items and place them in plastic bags. Plastic bags are not good for film and video under normal conditions, but in the short term, help seal in the mold while you decide whether you want to send them to a vendor or dispose of them.

PRIORITIZING HOME MOVIES

- If inspection reveals any items to be in poor condition, do your best to judge how important that movie is to you and either prioritize its transfer or plan to dispose of it.
- Formats have different lengths they can be trusted to hold their information. The general rule is analog film kept in consistent cool, dry, dark areas lasts the longest, then analog video, then digital video, and the shortest shelf life is digital files. Digital files are useful because you can make copies and check them with less wear and tear, but they quickly become obsolete and need to be migrated into new forms.
- Plan to transfer as many of the videos and digital files first and to store film safely if you need more time.



Photo by Leo Sano.

**STEP
4**

TRANSFERRING HOME MOVIES

- Transfer all of the digital files from your devices onto your computer. Transferring analog film and all forms of video requires different degrees of equipment and knowledge, with the process often taking as long as each movie lasts. If you have the camera that created home movies, it may help in transferring.
- Queens Memory maintains a page of resources for doing your own transferring of home movies, as well as how to find the best help: <https://queensmemory.org/resources/>

- All of your home movies will eventually end up as files, which you want to organize with a mind for the future and for different people to understand.
- Name your files in a consistent and descriptive way. Consider a numbering system that will make file names sort into an order you want them within a folder. Include the date, location, person, event, or other keywords. This will help you find movies quickly when looking at a big list of file names and ensure the most important information about them does not get lost. Some examples of good file names are “1996-01-03_Claudia_Birthday” or “Rome_2019_001.”

**STEP
5**

COPY & BACKUP YOUR FILES

- Follow the 3-2-1 rule: Keep 3 copies of each file, save them in 2 different storage media (ex: in a cloud storage folder and on an external hard drive), and keep 1 set of copies offsite. You can keep your most important information safe from fires and floods by storing it in a couple places.)
- “What is the cloud?” Services like Google Drive and Dropbox maintain servers all over the world that store the files we upload. When someone stores a file “in the cloud” it just means they are using one of these services instead of saving it to the hard drive on their own computer at home.
- Make new copies every 5 years! Technology changes quickly and this will ensure that your copies remain accessible.



STEP
6

SHARE YOUR WORK

Great job! You've created your own digital collection of home movies and other materials that are important to you and the people you care about. Here are steps you can take moving forward::

- Invite others who care about these pictures to contribute to the collection.
- Make a reminder in your calendar to open your files a few times a year to make sure your software is still working and the files are where they should be.
- Make sure any cloud storage services you use are accessible and subscription payments are renewing properly
- Replace external hard drives every 5-7 years
- Consider donating a digital copy of your movies to your local public library or historical society. If you'd like to archive your movies with Queens Memory, you can share them at: queenslib.org/DocumentQueens

QUEENS MEMORY

The Queens Memory team is here to help you be the best memory keeper you can be. We provide training and materials for those wishing to create oral history interviews, photographs, or other records of their neighborhoods, families, and communities. Come to meet us at one of our free programs or workshops to learn more about Queens rich history and how you can be part of preserving it.

Home Movie Day events happen every year in October and remain one of the best resources for free inspection and projection of your family films. The Center for Home Movies (<https://centerforhomemovies.org>) lists the date and participating locations all over the world. Queens Memory and Queens Public Library branches host one with other NYC community partners. Any of the events can help you get started with the inspection and prioritization of home movies based on condition.

PLEASE BE IN TOUCH!

QueensMemory@queenslibrary.org
or leave a voice message at **718-990-8532**.

Queens Memory is the community archiving program of Queens Public Library and Queens College, CUNY. This publication was created by Robin Margolis and built on previous work in the series by students and other faculty of Queens College's Graduate School of Library and Information Studies (Digital Preservation, Fall 2022): Claudia Acosta, Josselyn Atahualpa, Sarah Barlow-Ochshorn, Paulette Bellins, David Kambhu, and James Lowry.



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