

Abstract

Despite the short remaining time to rescue unique cultural and personal materials stored on many 20th- and early 21st-century audiovisual and digital storage media—experts estimate that 20 years remain to rescue unique video on VHS tapes—options for doing so are starkly limited. Building a rescue apparatus in-house requires significant expertise and expense and (since most of these collections are not large) is of limited continuing use. Outsourcing capture is extraordinarily expensive—a single floppy disk can cost upwards of \$100 to image—and therefore well beyond the resources of even well-funded academic libraries and archives, never mind public libraries, small archives, and local historical societies. Moreover, no established method exists to provide audiovisual digitization and digital-capture equipment (without which hands-on experience cannot be gained) to distance (online) students in LIS programs. The likeliest solution is well-documented, portable digitization and capture equipment kits, which might reside at professional touchpoints such as LIS schools and Digital Public Library of America Service Hubs and be shipped where needed.

Dorothea Salo, Faculty Associate at UW-Madison SLIS, will lead a project to build two portable, shippable information-rescue kits: PROUD (Portable Recovery of Unique Data) to rescue data on commonly-held obsolete digital-storage media such as floppy disks and Iomega ZIP disks, and PRAVDA (Portably Reformat A/V to Digital from Analog) to digitize common obsolescing 20th-century audio and video carriers such as VHS and audio cassette tapes. To maximize the nationwide impact of PROUD and PRAVDA, kit construction guidelines and advice, as well as workflow documentation, will be made publicly available for anyone wishing to build similar kits.

The kits will be sourced and built, and initial documentation completed, between December 1 2016 and August 2017. Usability tests and documentation improvements as well as outreach will be completed between August and November 2017.

PROUD and PRAVDA primarily address IMLS's strategic goal of “support[ing] exemplary stewardship of museum and library collections and promot[ing] the use of technology to facilitate discovery of knowledge and cultural heritage.” Secondly, increased online access to unique materials facilitated by the kits this project will create will also “promote museums and libraries as strong community anchors,” and increasing hands-on educational opportunities for LIS students and working professionals will “place the learner at the center.” The kits also hold potential for museums and libraries to help their communities rescue personal and family materials.