# Video Data Bank Digitization Project

The Project

In August of 2014, Video Data Bank received funding from our host institution, the School of the Art Institute in Chicago, to expand our existing digitization facilities. Our goal for this project is the complete digitization of over 6,500 titles in our video art collection, early artist interviews from our On Art and Artists series, and the Videofreex Archive, which consists of over 1,500 raw tapes and edits on mostly ½" open reel. VDB remains committed to preservation for access to ensure our audiences receive the best quality of video art available. Purchasing additional equipment has allowed us to enlarge our in-house resources and build additional stations in order to digitize more efficiently. We digitize to 10-bit Uncompressed 4:2:2 and save all files to multiple storage devices, including redundant hard drives and LTO. During the scope of the initiative to date, we have digitized over 1100 titles (over 65 terabytes) and completed the Video Art collection, the On Art and Artists collection, and we continue our work on the Videofreex Archive.

Tech Room 1 station - setup prior to project, although we have moved some equipment. In here we digitize with AJA IO HD and use Final Cut Pro on a legacy machine.


Tech Room 2 stations- Two digitization stations, with separate monitors and scopes. Includes Sony VO-9850 and VO-7600 U-Matic decks.
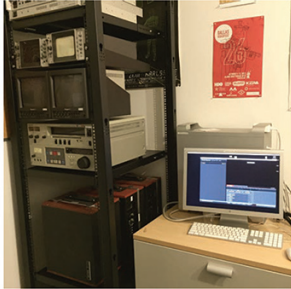
Additional equipment in Tech room 2. We digitize with Blackmagic Decklink 4K Extreme cards and use the proprietary Media Express software.
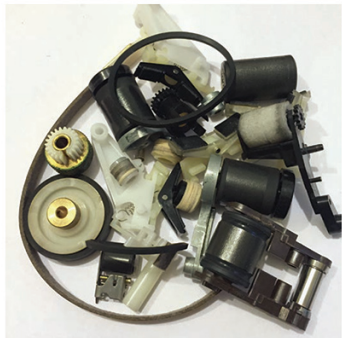
Equipment

In order to increase our efficiency, VDB purchased additional decks, time base correctors, monitors, and scopes. Our notable decks include additional U-Matic decks (Sony VO-9850) and ½" Open reel decks (Sony AV-3600 and AV-3650). We also purchased our first Digital Betacam deck, Sony DVW-A500. Through the School of the Art Institute, we received additional computers and software suites. An important aspect of our equipment acquisition practice is redundancy, which enables us to replace parts between decks. We worked with a local engineer, Gary Chang of GACC, for repair and maintenance of our old and "new" decks. Most decks, including the U-Matics, only required cleaning and maintenance, such as replacing the parts that deteriorate quickly: pinch rollers, belts, and brakes. The open reel decks, however, required more invasive procedures.
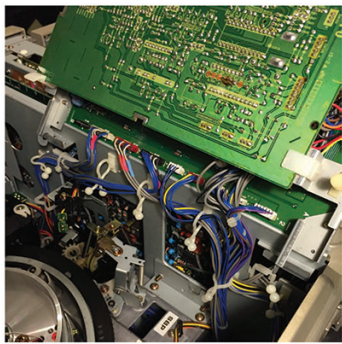
On one of the U-MaticSP VO-9850 decks, a circuit board fried and we had to replace it with another from our "parts" deck. Hurray redundancy!

Gary Chang from GACC working on a Sony AV-3600 1/2" open reel deck. Here he's using an Hitachi Oscilloscope to measure the video outputs.

For tapes with sticky shed (hydrolysis) we clean then bake them in Nesco Gardenmaster Food Dehydrator. We seen the best results baking for ~40 hours at 135°F.

We removed old, often dry and hardened, grease and oil from Sony AV-3600/50 1/2" open reel decks and replaced them with synthetic grease and new oil.
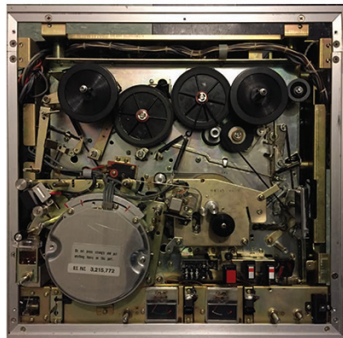

Over time, brakes wear down and pinch rollers become smooth and lose their grip. Gary replaced many of each during his visits. Also, note the broken skew gear from an AV-3600 on the left that was exchanged - the gear is crucial for tape tension through the tape path.

Inside of a cleaned and repaired AV-3600. Along with replacing grease and oil, we used Rubber Renew to refresh the belts, wheels, and pinch roller.

About VDB

The Video Data Bank (VDB) is a leading resource in the United States for video by and about contemporary artists. The VDB Collection includes the work of more than 550 artists and 6,000 video art titles. The VDB makes its Collection available to museums, galleries, educational institutions, libraries, cultural institutions and other exhibitors through a national and international distribution service.

Collections

Video Art

The VDB Collection includes seminal works that, seen as a whole, describe the development of video as an art form originating in the late 1960's and continuing to the present. The Collection features video created by artists from an aesthetic, political or personal point of view, made available through a far-reaching and comprehensive distribution program. Featured artists include early video pioneers such as Vito Acconci, Suzanne Lacy, Bruce Nauman and Martha Rosler, to the latest works by contemporary artists including Rosa Barba, Sadie Benning, Paul Chan, Harun Farocki, and Walid Raad.

On Art and Artists

The On Art and Artists collection represents 40 years of producing and acquiring interviews with contemporary artists, architects, theorists, and critics. The collection features interviews produced by the Video Data Bank, and by co-founders Lyn Blumenthal and Kate Horsfield, as well as by other individual producers and producing organizations, including Artists Television Network, Long Beach Museum of Art, and the University of Colorado visiting artist program. The collection includes a number of titles relating to the artists' process, including experimental documentaries and profiles.

On Art and Artists tapes, including raw camera footage and edited masters.

Louise Nevelson Interview, 1974.

Keith Smith Interview, 1976.

Videofreex

Videofreex, one of the first video collectives, was founded in 1969 by David Cort, Mary Curtis Ratcliff and Parry Teasdale, after David and Parry met each other, video cameras in hand, at the Woodstock Music Festival. The group soon grew to ten full-time members--including Chuck Kennedy, Nancy Cain, Skip Blumberg, Davidson Gigliotti, Carol Vontobel, Bart Friedman and Ann Woodward--and produced tapes, installations and multimedia events. Their innovative programming ranged from artists' tapes and performances to behind-the-scenes coverage of national politics and alternate culture. The archive chronicles the counter-cultural movement of the 1960s and '70s. During the decade that the Freex were together, this pioneer video group amassed an archive of 1,500+ raw tapes and edits.
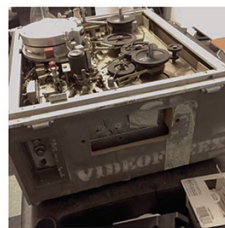
Original Videofreex Sony CV-2200 deck.

Videofreex 1/2" open reel collection.

Still from Nothing Doing at the Loony

Kristin MacDonough