

Archives

OF

American

Art

GUIDELINES FOR PROCESSING COLLECTIONS WITH AUDIOVISUAL MATERIAL

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INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

The following chapters were originally written as part of a workflow development and processing project at the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution from 2012-2015, with funding from the Council on Library and Information Resources “Hidden Collections” grant program. More information about that project is available on AAA’s website (<https://www.aaa.si.edu/inside-the-archives/uncovering-hidden-audiovisual-media-documenting-postmodern-art>), including links to the finding aids for the project collections.

Since the original guidelines were shared in 2015, there have been updates to standards and tools on many fronts – at the archives, the Smithsonian Institution, and in the wider profession – compelling the revisions in the current document. The most obvious update is the migration to ArchivesSpace from Archivist’s Toolkit, reflected in this document’s revised chapter on description. Additional changes to practices in each stage of the processing workflow are found throughout this document. Further updates to the description guidelines are anticipated when EAD3 is adopted at the Smithsonian Institution.

The guidelines were written to help archivists with arrangement and description of archival collections containing sound recordings and moving image materials in obsolete analog formats. They supplement AAA’s general collections processing manual with audiovisual-specific guidelines, including tools for assessment of AV in collections (Chapter 1), strategies for processing AV to different levels (Chapter 2), guidelines for re-housing media objects and seating them in collection containers (Chapter 3), archival arrangement (Chapter 4), describing media in finding aids according to DACS and EAD2002 (Chapter 5), and resources for identifying obsolete audiovisual formats (Chapter 6).

Each of these chapters was written for local use at the Archives of American Art, but it is hoped that they will be useful to other repositories. Users of these guidelines elsewhere should expect to adapt them to local processing policies, storage practices, descriptive practices, and procedures for research access.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

These guidelines advise against certain common default practices for arranging and describing audiovisual material, such as including detailed technical specifications in archival description, arranging all the audiovisual material in a mixed media collection by format, and describing audiovisual media at the item level. Instead, these guidelines support the goal of conveying an understanding the AV material in the context of the collection as efficiently as possible. Practically speaking, that means that description must provide enough information to enable:

1. intellectual access (users should know what the content of a recording is, how it relates to other collection records, and to agents and activities involved in its creation and use), and
2. physical access (users should know how to access the content of the records)

Although there are times when detailed, granular description may be warranted, following the general principles of archival description outlined in the [new DACS principles](#), such enhancements to description should be based on demonstrated user needs or the requirements of the repository. Technical specifications about the media objects themselves are not typically needed by users for intellectual or physical access. Requiring such details to be included in description as a default creates unnecessary bottlenecks for processing archivists. The same could be said of item-level description of media in finding aids. Description of media in the aggregate may suffice to make AV records available for research, and more granular intellectual access can be added as internal or external demand warrants, whether in the finding aid itself, or in linked item-level records, or some other means of access.

As for the common practice of creating format-specific series as a default, DACS principles clearly state that archival arrangement and description should convey evidence of relationships among records, creators, and activities impacting records. To meet this standard, the intellectual arrangement should reflect the activities that produced the records or resulted in their pre-custodial accumulation, which may or may not result in materials of the same format being arranged and described together. Records that belong together intellectually but resist physical co-location due to format considerations can still have their relationships expressed in their intellectual arrangement and description. See [Chapter 4, AV Arrangement Guidelines](#) for more on AAA's preferred approach to archival arrangement of AV material in mixed media collections.

To meet the second requirement of physical access, archives that collect and hold audiovisual material should have procedures in place for providing reference access to their holdings as far as they can. When AV formats fall outside the repository's in-house capacity for playing or copying media due to the common challenges of format obsolescence and condition issues, repositories should still be prepared to describe the records as best they can, and to respond to requests for access. Ideally, this means internal users – processing archivists, reference archivists, curators – understand the repository's capacity and procedures and can work together to provide intellectual and physical access, and to articulate potential restrictions, delays, and costs when requests are made.

The guidelines in this document reflect AAA's approach to making clear what external users can expect when requesting access to AV, while providing enough information to internal users for them to be able to provide a definitive response to specific requests. Whatever the situation, the ideal finding aid will contain accurate and actionable information about audiovisual materials in collections sufficient to support intellectual and physical access by both internal and external users.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

When beginning a processing project involving audiovisual material at the Archives of American Art, processing archivists should be aware of the following sources of information about audiovisual materials found in collections. Instructions for using each of these resources are found at S:\Collections Processing Dept\Audiovisual.

1. THE AV SURVEY DATABASE: ALL AUDIO, VIDEO, AND FILM

The AV Survey is our comprehensive inventory of AV material found in collections, found at S:\MeganM\AVSurvey\AVSurveyDatabase.accdb. Follow instructions for generating an “**AV Survey Collection Report**” to see the AV in your collection.

Contact the AV Archivist if you find AV in a collection that is not in the AV Survey database. New accessions may not have been entered yet, and AV may have been missed in older accessions.

2. THE FILM INSPECTION DATABASE: ALL MOTION PICTURE FILM

If there is film in your collection, it’s likely that the film will not be in the containers you pull to process the collection. All of AAA’s motion picture film is now stored in cold or frozen storage, for both processed and unprocessed collections. You will know there is film in your collection if you see the remote storage location in the collection record, which will note the number of reels. You should also find a removal slip in the collection stating that film has been removed to cold storage.

You must still describe the film in your finding aid, and you can consult the film inspection database at S:\Motion Picture Film Project\Film Inspections.accdb to do so. For most collections, each reel of film should have a record in the Film Inspection database, with information about the reel, links to photographs of original housing, date estimates, and labels and titles found. See instructions for using this data for description in S:\Collections Processing Dept\Audiovisual.

If you find film in the collection that has not been put in cold storage yet, let the AV Archivist know so that it can be inspected and re-housed while you are processing. Film cans will need to be barcoded and treated as top-level collection containers, and you will need to assign container numbers for each reel. See Chapter 5 for specific instructions for [AV-specific Top Containers](#).

3. THE DCD AND SI-DAMS: ALL DIGITIZED AV

Any audiovisual material that has been digitized after 2008 will have a descriptive item record in AAA’s DCD, and the digital surrogates should be stored in the SI DAMS. Search your collection to see if there are digitized items here: <http://aaastaff.si.edu/index.cfm?fuseaction=Items.ListCollections>. Instructions for searching the DCD and accessing the digital surrogates in the DAMS are found at S:\Collections Processing Dept\Audiovisual.

CHAPTER 1: AV ASSESSMENT RATINGS

INTRODUCTION

In assessing the pre-processed state of a collection, and the level of work required to process it, archivists may find it useful to assess the audiovisual material separately, as the work required by AV material may be different from the rest of the collection.

In the course of AAA's "Hidden Collections" project on AV processing, three factors emerged that affected the rate of processing for AV the most:

1. the quality of existing housing and whether or not media needs to be re-housed,
2. the quality of media labels and documentation, which determines how much media needs to be played to describe its content and context, and
3. the complexity of the AV material and the quality of the existing arrangement, which determines how much analysis is needed to arrange the material within the collection.

The following ratings system was developed to help processing archivists assess these three aspects of the pre-processed state of AV-rich collections, and to estimate resources needed to process AV portions of collections. The cases used as examples below are not meant to be exhaustive, but describe typical situations found in the Archives of American Art's AV-rich collections to help archivists gauge what they encounter when beginning a processing project. For collections acquired after 2015, the AV survey will contain ratings for each of these three factors in the AV Survey.

If ratings in these three areas are low, the archivist could consider proposing a higher level of processing for the AV portion of the collection, and should plan to spend more time with it to ensure the arrangement and description of AV is useful to researchers. However, it's important to realize that higher processing levels and more time spent on AV often does not result in slower processing rates overall. This is because AAA tracks processing rates by linear foot, and AV material is bulky, so a linear foot of AV represents fewer individual items to process than a linear foot of paper records.

1.1 AV HOUSING RATING

An assessment of the extent of re-housing work needed to process the AV material in a collection; includes housing of individual pieces of media, and the use of special collection containers for media that cannot be stored in regular collection boxes. For more information on re-housing, see [Chapter 3: AV Re-housing and Storage](#).

1. Poor: large AV portion with most material needing re-housing and/or special collection containers

2. Fair: large AV portion with more than half of materials needing re-housing and/or special collection containers
3. Good: Few AV items needing rehousing or special collection containers
4. Very good: small AV portion; re-housing needs are not a significant factor in processing time
5. Excellent: AV portion does not need any re-housing or special collection containers'

1.2 AV DOCUMENTATION RATING

An assessment of the quality of individual media labels and related paper documentation such as transcripts, inventories, logs, tear sheets, shot lists, etc., to determine how much playback of media will be required to describe media content. Note that media with cryptic or unreliable labels often require just as much effort, if not more, as unlabeled media.

1. Poor:
 - large AV portions where AV media is unlabeled and there is no corresponding documentation to help identify it, so it needs to be played to be identified and described
 - OR documentation exists but relationship between the media and paper records is poorly understood and requires playback and analysis to describe how they are related
 - OR labeling by creator is not useful for description, or is found to be unreliable, so content needs to be verified
2. Fair:
 - large AV portions where about half of the media is labeled or documented, half is not
 - OR most items poorly labeled and undocumented but form obvious series, so playing a sample portion of each group is sufficient to describe
3. Good:
 - large AV portions where a few AV items are poorly labeled and/or described in documentation, so some playback is needed to describe
4. Very good:
 - small AV portion; needed interventions will not add significantly to processing time
5. Excellent:
 - labeling and documentation is thorough and complete
 - OR, AV digitized and already described at the item level, item records can be consulted for description

1.3 AV ARRANGEMENT RATING

An assessment of the complexity of the AV portion of a collection and the adequacy of its existing arrangement. The higher the complexity, or the worse the existing arrangement, the more analysis will be required during processing.

Typical complex AV portions include most production collections, containing raw footage and various edits and versions, or a large AV portion with few apparent groupings, where many individual recordings need to be analyzed before integrating with existing series or creating an AV series.

Typical simple AV portions are clear series of items, like episodes of a show, or interviews with identified subjects around a single topic or for a single project, or scattered items that are easily identified and integrated with existing series.

1. Poor
 - large AV portions with high complexity and poor existing arrangement; i.e., from complex media productions or projects, possibly with multiple versions in multiple formats, with no apparent logical existing arrangement
 - OR, large AV portions with few apparent groupings; i.e. miscellaneous recordings
2. Fair:
 - large AV portions with some complex and some simple groups of media, but little or no existing arrangement
 - OR, appears to have a meaningful existing arrangement, but analysis is required to verify
3. Good:
 - large and simple AV portion requiring only straightforward arrangement
 - OR, small and complex AV portion with some analysis needed to arrange
4. Very good:
 - small AV portion, easily integrated or arranged; AV will not add significantly to processing time.
5. Excellent: Existing arrangement is clearly satisfactory

CHAPTER 2: AV LEVELS OF PROCESSING

INTRODUCTION

When preparing to process a collection, archivists at AAA begin by determining what level of processing will be performed. We define levels of processing as preliminary (tasks completed upon accession), minimal (the standard now for all but specially-funded processing projects, or collections we anticipate fully digitizing), intermediate (only undertaken with special funding), and full (typically undertaken when a collection is to be fully digitized).

To help archivists process the AV portions of their collections, the following benchmarks were created describing what is expected of archivists at each level and suggesting strategies for dealing with AV-specific processing issues. Four areas of processing are addressed for each level: a) re-housing, b) arrangement, d) description, and d) dealing with unlabeled AV media at each level. Archivists can always consider going beyond the strategies listed below for a certain level, particularly if the value of the AV in a collection seems to merit special attention. They should use their judgment as to the effort involved and benefit to the researcher.

2.1 PRELIMINARY PROCESSING

Upon accession, the location, extent, and general content of audiovisual materials in a collection is noted by the collector, and the AV archivist surveys the audiovisual material. AV material is not played at this stage, but it is re-housed.

- A. **Re-housing:** Magnetic and grooved-disc media should be re-housed during preliminary processing if it is missing, dirty, deteriorated, or unresponsive. For film, detailed inspection and re-housing should be completed upon accession. Items needing re-housing upon accession are noted in the AV Survey database, and housing actions taken at this stage are also noted there.
- B. **Arrangement:** No physical arrangement is changed, but groups of related media are identified in the AV survey if possible, and general information collected for each group
- C. **Description:** A content genre and general description is recorded in AV survey database for each group of related media as well as:
 - i. Media format and condition of the media and its housing,
 - ii. format characteristics like recording speed and size, if known
 - iii. known dates,
 - iv. an assessment of the uniqueness of the media, and
 - v. an assessment of its likely rights status (recorded as “donor type”)
- D. **Dealing with unlabeled media:** unlabeled media is not played during preliminary processing to identify. It is surveyed as a group, collecting data about format only.

2.2 MINIMAL PROCESSING

- A. **Re-housing:** Not required at this level. Notify AV Archivist if media appears to be in danger of damage or deterioration due to substandard or missing housing. You may also use your judgment as to whether you have time to re-house AV media yourself during processing, or ask the AV Archivist for assistance if there is extensive re-housing work needed.
- B. **Arrangement:** keep arrangement interventions to a minimum.
- i. grouping related media is often sufficient, without verifying specific content or sequence of media items;
 - ii. if media is found grouped with paper records or records in other formats, leave the arrangement as-is;
 - iii. if media has been separated due to format from paper records it has an obvious relation to, that relationship should be expressed in the finding aid.
 - iv. Duplicates and originals can be filed together without verifying or identifying which is which.
 - v. Consider sorting at a more granular level if there is a media series that is well-labeled, with easily identified items, such as a series of interviews.
- C. **Description** should likewise aim for efficiency, and you can often save time by describing obvious series of media in groups, although there are still times to consider listing items when minimally processing. See [Chapter 5](#) for more detailed description guidelines.
- i. If logical groupings of AV media are found, a single component might provide an adequate description for the group. Use a formal title of the group if one exists (e.g. “Artists in New York” Radio Series), or devise a title using a genre term such as “Annual meetings” or “Television news clips about [artist or gallery name].” Significant individual subjects, if known, can be referenced in a series- or file-level scope and content note.
 - ii. Consider describing AV at the item level when minimally processing IF the individual items are well-labeled, and items have important access points for researchers; e.g. names of important figures, exhibition titles or locations, or titles of media artworks. Use headings or subseries groupings to minimize repetition in item-level description.
 - iii. If any detailed documentation of AV content exists in the collection, such as transcripts, shot lists, or logs describing content, refer researchers to this documentation rather than describing any detailed content of the media itself in the finding aid. When using this approach, make sure researchers can match the paper documentation to the media items; for instance, if logs refer to tapes by tape number, include tape numbers in your description of the media components.
 - iv. Consult the DCD items for the collection to see if any of the AV media has been digitized and described.

- v. If arranging the AV and its documentation together physically would require significant work, leave it physically separate and cross reference related materials the finding aid.
- vi. Do not undertake detailed analysis of media and its documentation if the relationship is not clear; simply note the apparent relationship.
- vii. If physical media is labeled with lots of detail, it is not necessary to include all detail in the finding aid. This goes for all levels of processing. If you feel label information would be helpful to researchers, it can be noted in a series- or item-level scope note.
- viii. EAD/AV description guidelines must be followed for all elements identified as required in AAA's guidelines for describing AV in EAD. See [Chapter 5](#) for full details. Among these required elements are:
 - a. A "Conditions Governing Access" note at the appropriate level
 - b. Series-level scope and content notes that include description of media content
 - c. Component-level "Extents" with quantity and specific format of AV (and for film, the gauge).

D. Dealing with unlabeled media:

- i. Playing unlabeled media to identify is not required at this level, but if you have one or two things, or a group of homogenous things that you don't know where to arrange or what to call, the AV archivist can assist.
- ii. For film, consult the film inspection database for descriptive information such as edge code/dates, duration, and content description.
- iii. If AV material other than film is unlabeled and has no accompanying documentation, it can be described as "unidentified" sound recordings, video recordings, and/or motion picture film when minimally processing.

If a large quantity of AV media is unlabeled, and there is no related documentation describing its content in the collection, consider these strategies to provide some access:

- iv. Sometimes AV material will appear to be from an obvious series based on the appearance of a set of tapes or containers being all the same. If any of the media can be grouped this way, play a small sample of the media and try to assign at least a genre term (i.e. "Interviews" or "Lectures") and estimated date to the group.
- v. If the media has no obvious groups like this, you can create a series for the unidentified media. Avoid the more general "Audiovisual material" as a series title. Use "Sound recordings," "video recordings," and/or "motion picture film" instead, as appropriate. File-level titles within such a series can include the word "unidentified" with the general format terms again, but be sure to include the

quantity and type of each specific physical format (i.e. sound cassettes, videocassettes (VHS), film reels, etc.) in the physical description for each component.

- vi. If unlabeled media is found with paper records but the relationship is unclear, it is better to leave it with those records to preserve a possible relationship; the presence of AV can be noted in a general physical description note for the paper component

2.3 INTERMEDIATE PROCESSING

- A. **Re-housing:** re-house any AV items found in dirty, deteriorated, unresponsive, or non-existent housing. Be sure to photocopy original containers before discarding to preserve any information on them, including both handwritten information and printed information related to the tape or film stock. See AV Re-housing Instructions in [Chapter 3](#) for more information.
- B. **Arrangement:**
 - i. Group related media wherever logical, but at the intermediate level, items should also be logically arranged at a more granular level within groups;
 - ii. For AV items that span multiple tapes or reels, their sequence, or the relationship of duplicates to originals, may be unclear from existing labels. As long as the media is arranged together, the sequence and original/duplicate relationship does not need to be verified when processing to an intermediate level.
- C. **Description:**
 - i. Description of groupings of media is still encouraged at this level, either as a group of related media, or as part of a mixed-media component, but with intermediate processing, a more granular listing of content under group headings is encouraged.
 - ii. Whether describing groups or items, assign unit titles that clearly identify the content of recordings, whether by work, genre, subject, location, project, or whatever heading best describes the component.
 - iii. If a recording has a label that adds to the description, consider transcribing that label in the physical description element at the intermediate or full level. Lengthy, detailed labels should not be transcribed in their entirety but can be noted in a scope note if information seems useful for researchers. See [Chapter 5](#) description guidelines for more information.
 - iv. Consider playing a sample of any large group of AV with similar content to provide improved description of the series, even if it is labeled and can be described without playback. You can learn a lot about a recording by listening to or viewing just a minute or two.

D. Dealing with unlabeled media:

- i. Play sound and video items with no identification or ambiguous labels in order to accurately arrange and describe, unless they are unstable or in a format that cannot be played in-house. Media should be inspected before it is played. See the AV Archivist for help.
- ii. For film, consult the film inspection database for descriptive information such as edge code/dates, duration, and content description.

2.4 FULL PROCESSING

A. Re-housing: re-house any AV items found in substandard housing. Be sure to photocopy original containers before discarding to preserve any information on them, including both handwritten information and printed information related to the tape or film stock. See [Chapter 3](#) on AV re-housing for more information.

B. Arrangement:

- i. Group any series of related media wherever logical, but at the full level, items should also be arranged at a more granular level within groups;
- ii. Confirm the sequence of pieces of media in multi-piece AV items if it is unclear from labeling.

C. Description:

- i. Consider playing any recording whose description would benefit from it at the full level, even if it is labeled, unless it is unstable or in a format that cannot be played in-house. You should not plan to listen to or view the entirety of everything in a collection, but a minute or two of playback and add much to your understanding of a recording. Strive for fullness and clarity in your description.
- ii. For film, consult the film inspection database for descriptive information such as edge code/dates, duration, and content description.
- iii. If it is unclear whether something is a copy and you are able to play it, confirm that duplicates are copies by playing the tapes or examining the film. Identify originals and duplicates in the physical description.
- iv. It is common for components for each intellectual item to be created at the full level; use cross references, <physfacet> notes, or <scopecontent> notes to clarify content and enhance access. Grouping items under file grouping headings is still encouraged to clarify content and relationships between items, but a more granular description, when more information is known, is appropriate at the full level.
- v. If there are multiple items on a single tape, describe each intellectual item in a separate component in the finding aid.

- vi. If a recording has extensive, detailed labeling that adds to the description, transcribing media labels in the physical description element, or summarizing in an item-level scope note, is encouraged at the intermediate or full level. Extensive labeling should not be transcribed in its entirety, but can be referred to in a scope note if useful for research.

D. Dealing with unlabeled media:

- i. Always play sound and video items with no identification or ambiguous labels at the full level in order to accurately identify and describe, unless they are unstable or in a format that cannot be played in-house. Media should be inspected before it is played. See the AV Archivist for help.
- ii. For film, consult the film inspection database for descriptive information such as edge code/dates, duration, and content description.
- iii. You can consider in-house digitization of AV during processing if you are uncertain about the content of a tape, if items are stable and we have equipment to play them. Digitization will make the identification and description process more efficient, particularly when comparing content that might be duplicated in the collection, determining if there are multiple items on a piece of media, or clarifying ambiguous labels.

CHAPTER 3: AV RE-HOUSING AND STORAGE

INTRODUCTION

When considering re-housing audiovisual media, it's important to realize that re-housing does not equal preservation, although it can be an aspect of a preservation strategy. Audiovisual content on analog media must be copied to a more stable medium and the copy must be managed in a preservation environment for AV media to be considered preserved. Housing still has a role to play in stewardship of audiovisual material, but at AAA we do not re-house audiovisual material as a default. Re-housing of AV tapes, reels, and discs is necessary when:

- Original housing is missing
- Original housing is dirty and can't be cleaned, or has mold
- Original housing is made of acidic paper or other deteriorating material
- Original housing is broken or otherwise unsupportive to the media

Beginning in 2018, necessary re-housing of newly accessioned audiovisual materials in collections is done upon accession. For collections acquired prior to 2018, all motion picture film has been re-housed and stored in off-site cold storage, but other types of media are likely to be found by processing archivists in the housing they had at the time of the accession.

For AV materials that meet the above conditions for re-housing, archivists need to consider re-housing AV material during processing as a stabilizing measure. Archivists doing *minimal* processing are not expected to re-house AV media unless housing is missing, although archivists may always use their judgment as to whether they can afford the time required to re-house media if existing housing is missing, dirty, deteriorating, or unsupportive. Archivists doing *full or intermediate level processing* should plan to re-house audiovisual material that meets the above criteria as part of their processing work.

This chapter outlines the basic measures for providing adequate housing for AV media. **Supplies** mentioned in this document are all available in the AV processing room (2264) or the large processing room. Please help yourselves or ask for help.

3.1 RE-HOUSING

IN GENERAL:

- Remove any acidic or damaged housing as you would for any other record.
- Original housing is sufficient if it is clean, does not have acid stains, mold, or discoloration and provides structural support to the media.

- When replacing housing, unless the original housing is completely blank, photocopy old housing on acid-free paper and keep the copy of the original container in its entirety with the media object. Be sure to photocopy printed information on the original media housing that relates to the media such as brand, footage length, tape thickness, etc. This information is important to retain for preservation and reformatting purposes.
- Photocopies of original housing can be placed in collection folders along with rehoused media. You can also affix a **pocket envelope** to the new media housing with double-sided tape and put the photocopy in the pocket.
- Four-flaps made from acid-free folder paper are *not* adequate housing for most media because it is not supportive. Media on reels or in cassettes can still be crushed. Four-flaps will only work for flat media – i.e. grooved discs.

MAGNETIC MEDIA:

- Put audio reels, cassettes, and VHS videocassettes in **new plastic containers** if the original housing is missing, acidic, broken, or unsupportive. If original housing is clean, unbroken, and doesn't show signs of being acidic, leave the tape in its original housing. **Recycled plastic containers** are available for U-matic videocassettes.
- for open reel tapes, add hold-down tape to loose ends; use **white paper tape** or **silver tape**
- Plastic video containers that are dirty can be cleaned and retained. Replacement containers are not available for ½" video reels (Usually square, hinged plastic cases), various Beta-type video, Hi8/Video8, MiniDVs, HDCam, and other video cassettes, so original containers should be used. Clean using **diluted alcohol** and **lint-free cloths** if necessary.

MOTION PICTURE FILM:

Beginning in 2018, motion picture film will be inspected, leadered, wound on cores, and housed in vented plastic film cans upon accession by the AV archivist, and stored remotely in cold storage. During inspection, film will be AD tested and will be frozen if acid deterioration is found to be advanced. Film acquired before 2018 has been re-housed in stored of-site in cold storage, so processing archivists are unlikely to find film in collections. If film is found in a collection that was missed by the film re-housing project, please bring it to the attention of the AV archivist.

Technically, all films in archival storage should be on **cores** (plastic hubs in the center of the reel with no reel sides/flanges), with **leader** at the head and tail, in **plastic vented cans**, and stored flat. If film is on a reel and is becoming at all damaged by the flanges of the reel where they touch the edge of the film, it should be wound onto a core and stored flat regardless of size.

Although these tasks should no longer need to be accomplished during processing at AAA as of this writing, for the record, the following actions are considered basic stabilization tasks that can be done by any archivist with film in their collections:

- Film found in airtight (difficult to open) or rusted metal cans or cardboard boxes should be re-housed in **plastic, vented cans**. Clean metal cans with loosely fitting lids are acceptable to retain.
- If replacing film cans, be careful not to let films wound on cores with loose winds unravel. Place the new can over the film in its original can, and flip it over to transfer the film to the new can with its wind intact.
- Photocopy original housing if it has any labeling on it and keep photocopy with film reel.
- If end of film is loose, tape it down with **white paper tape**. Do not pull the end to tighten the wind – this can scratch the emulsion and damage the images on the film.
- Film with odor (usually vinegar) can be stored with **molecular sieves** to absorb some of the acids and help prevent the off-gassing from damaging other materials in the container.

GROOVED DISCS:

- Many old discs have glass bases underneath the lacquer surface of the record and are very fragile. Glass-based discs should be encapsulated in a four-flap and stored between two pieces of **acid-free cardboard**, tied with **cloth tape**, and should be stored vertically, or if flat, should not have anything stored on top of them.
- Contemporary vinyl records are more durable and don't require encapsulation. You can tell if a record is vinyl if it is somewhat flexible. Glass or aluminum-based discs are inflexible, and glass discs are generally much heavier than aluminum.
- **Sleeves are available for 10" and 12" diameter discs**. Sleeves of other sizes can be made out of **folder-weight paper**, using the 4-flap method. See the AV Archivist for help identifying and re-housing grooved disc materials.

CDS AND DVDS:

- **Tyvek or polypropylene sleeves** are adequate housing for CDs and DVDs. If already housed in a jewel-case, this is also adequate.

3.2 SEATING IN COLLECTION CONTAINERS

IN GENERAL:

If there is cool or cold storage available for magnetic media (tape) or film, separating media to improve its climate and extend its life is desirable. At AAA, we have moved our film to cold storage for this reason, but we do not have cool storage available for magnetic media. Without a compelling reason to separate magnetic media to improve its climate, there is little reason to remove these materials from regular collection boxes, unless they do not fit in standard boxes.

Typically, most AV media can be physically arranged in boxes and folders like any other type of documentation. Special collection containers can be considered for large-sized media objects, or for large volumes of smaller-sized media objects. Typical storage alternatives in these cases include:

- Sols (oversized flat boxes) for one, or a few, large grooved discs (records); such items should be described the same way oversized materials are described.
- Shoeboxes can be used when there are a large number of small media such as sound cassettes, micro-cassettes, or small videocassettes; in these cases, the shoeboxes can either be considered the top containers, and labeled and barcoded as such, or they can be stored in the larger collection container, with the shoebox treated as a “folder” within the main collection container.
- Some studio formats of audio and video exist in wide-gauge reels such as ½”, 1”, or 2” audio and video with container sizes exceeding the height or width of linear foot boxes. These formats are not common in AAA’s collections, but when found, they need to be stored vertically and can be treated as an individual container in the collection. See [AV-Specific Container Types](#) for codes to use in your description.

MAGNETIC MEDIA:

- All sound reels, sound cassettes, videocassettes, and video reels should be stored vertically, not flat. It does not matter which edge they rest on.
- If working with small media in folders, use pocket folders with sides to keep media from falling out when removing folders from the box.

MOTION PICTURE FILM:

- All motion picture film at AAA is stored flat in collection boxes in off-site cold storage following inspection and re-housing. For description purposes, each film can should be

treated as an individual container and its container number should use a prefix of “FC,” for film can, in its instance.

GROOVED DISCS:

- Small numbers of discs 12” in diameter or larger should be stored flat in sols, without anything on top of them.
- Discs can be filed vertically in folders when they fit.
- Large numbers of large discs should be stored vertically in special containers. Let the AV archivist know if you need such containers.

CDS AND DVDS

- In small number, best stored vertically in folders and not stacked.
- Large numbers can be stored in specially-sized shoeboxes or sleeves

3.3 AUDIOVISUAL RE-HOUSING SUPPLIES USED AT THE ARCHIVES OF AMERICAN ART

Cases, cans, and boxes:

- Polypropylene audio cassette cases
- Vented polypropylene 5” and 7” audio reel cases
- Vented polypropylene VHS videocassette cases
- Vented polypropylene 16mm film cans for reels sized by footage: 200’, 400’, 800’, etc.
- Polystyrene reels and cases for 8mm and super 8 mm film
- Sleeves for phonograph records, 7”, 10”, and 12” diameter
- Tyvek CD/DVD sleeves
- Polypropylene CD/DVD sleeves
- Acid-free 10.5” diameter audio reel boxes with hub
- Acid-free solander boxes (flat boxes)
- Acid-free “hat” boxes, 11” x 11” x 7”
- Acid-free “pizza” boxes for single 1600 or 2000’ 16mm film reels

Tape, paper, and tissue:

- White paper tape
- Silver tape
- Cotton cloth tape
- Buffered tissue paper approved for use with film-based photographs
- Acid-free cardboard
- Folder-weight acid-free paper

Supplies for cleaning:

- Diluted alcohol
- Lint-free paper cloths
- Micro-fiber cloths

Supplies for more detailed re-housing:

- 16mm film cores
- 16mm, 8mm, and super8mm plastic leader
- ¼" audio reel leader
- Splicing tape for audio reels and cassettes
- Tape splicer for 16mm, 8mm, super 8mm film
- Double-sided tape
- Acid-free pocket envelopes

CHAPTER 4: AV ARRANGEMENT GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

Because every archival collection is unique, it is impractical to prescribe rules for the intellectual arrangement of archival audiovisual materials that will address all collections. In general, at AAA we do not create an “audiovisual media” series as a default. It is our preference to arrange AV media where their intellectual content and the context of their creation places them most logically, whether with other AV materials or with records in other formats.

This document is designed to help archivists make arrangement decisions for mixed-media collections using general principles and strategies, and to give examples of typical audiovisual and/or mixed media collections found at the Archives of American Art.

For instructions addressing physical arrangement of AV in containers, see [Chapter 3](#) on AV Re-housing and Storage.

4.1 AV AND RELATED DOCUMENTATION

When audiovisual media exists in mixed-media archival collections, it is often related intellectually to other records found in the collection. The relationship between the audiovisual records and other records should be maintained and expressed in the arrangement.

- AV recordings found with related records in any form should generally be left in their original arrangement, similar to photographs found in project files, for instance.
- If documentation is found in a collection that describes the content of AV recordings, such as transcripts, shot lists, or inventories; or records that describe their creation or use, such as lab records, production notes, project proposals, printed programs, etc.; the arrangement of the collection should maintain the relationship between the recordings and the records.
- If AV material and its related documentation are physically separated prior to processing, they can be left separate, particularly if the collection is being minimally processed, or if the physical format of any of the records makes physically filing them together impractical.
- When related documentation is physically arranged separately from the audiovisual material, the relationship between the media and its related documentation should be clearly expressed in the finding aid, and the media itself should be arranged and described in a way that facilitates using the documentation to access the media. For example, if you have a paper or electronic inventory of videotapes that uses a numbering system, arrange the videos numerically and include tape numbers in the description of the tapes.

4.2 INTEGRATING AV WITHIN MIXED-MEDIA SERIES

Audiovisual materials are typically found in or can be arranged in one of the conventional series used at AAA, which are listed below. If the series described below do not exist in the collection, do not create one exclusively for the AV content. Instead, find another appropriate existing series or see "[When to create an AV series](#)" below.

When including AV material in series such as "Writings," "Printed Material," or "Photographs," where the conventional series title specifically names the type of material present, include an additional form term in the series title so that it reflects the presence of the AV material. For instance, "Writings and Lectures," "Printed and Broadcast Material," or "Photographs and Moving Images."

Typical series used at the Archives of American Art, and the types of AV recordings that often can be arranged with them, include:

1. Biographical material:

- Interviews with the main creator (unless there are enough to constitute their own series);
- recordings of memorial services;
- Third-party film or video documentaries about the main creator (not production collections, however; for documentaries with raw footage, outtakes, rough edits, etc. see "[Arranging AV production materials.](#)")

2. Correspondence:

- this is rare, but occasionally recorded personal "letters" are found in collections
- audiovisual materials enclosed in correspondence should be kept with correspondence

3. Writings:

- Lectures by the main creator (Use "Writings and Lectures" as a series title)
- Recordings created in the course of research for a writing project, usually interviews; however, if there are a large number of interviews they would probably be easier to describe as their own series.

4. Exhibition files:

- moving images created specifically to document exhibition installations
- recordings gathered or created by a curator in the process of creating an exhibition
- documentation of openings
- press coverage of an exhibition
- media made to promote an exhibition
- media shown in the exhibition, unless an artwork series would be more appropriate

An isolated recording related to an exhibition can be incorporated into an existing exhibition file series, even if there is no other documentation for that exhibition. This principle also applies to Project Files, Artist Files, and Research Files.

5. Project files:

- Recordings made in the course of a project, or made to document or publicize a project

- An existing project file series can be a logical place to arrange an isolated recording made by an artist if it relates to a specific project or artwork.

6. Artist files:

- Recordings found in artist files should be left in artist files
- An existing artist files series can be a logical place to arrange an isolated recording or two that relate to specific artists, but are unrelated to any other documentation in a collection.

7. Teaching Files:

- Lectures or demonstrations of technique by the main creator
- Recordings of classes, crits, class discussions
- other types of academic recordings such as panel discussions
- student projects

8. Printed Material:

- Any commercially distributed media, such as a “published” sound recording, video, or film can be arranged with printed material. Such recordings are similar to printed material in that they are not unique and are likely to exist elsewhere. Typically such media will have mass-produced packaging for commercial distribution. If you are uncertain, check the title in WorldCat.
- If AV material gets integrated into your Printed Material series, the series title should be changed to reflect the inclusion of AV; use “Printed Material and Published (general format)” aka:
 - Printed Material and Published Sound Recordings
 - Printed Material and Published Video Recordings
 - Printed Material and Published Motion Picture Films
- Television or radio news coverage taped off the air by a gallery or artist for their own records is similar to “clippings” from printed news sources. In this case, a suitable series title might be “Printed and Broadcast Material.” Do not use this approach for a TV or Radio series created by the main creator for which we have original recordings. See below under “[When to create an AV series.](#)”

9. Personal Business Records: Rarely used for AV. One example of when this series was used for AV material was for Super 8 mm film reels that documented the construction of an artist’s studio, filed with invoices and correspondence related to the project.

10. Photographs: When either video or motion picture film contains documentation similar to the photographs found in the Photographs series, the AV content can be arranged with those photographs as additional visual documentation. Series title should be adjusted to include the AV portion, e.g. “Photographs and Moving Image Material”

- Moving images of artwork or exhibition installations (or, include with exhibition files if such a series exists)
- home movies arranged with personal or family photographs
- footage of an artist working or technical demonstrations can be arranged with studio photographs

11. Artwork:

- When the recording or film is itself a creative work, or a component of a creative work, whether by the main creator or someone else, it can be arranged in an Artwork series. A component of a creative work would be a recording that formed part of a sculpture or installation.
- AV documentation of kinetic, generative, or performance art could also be arranged in an artwork series. Depending on what else is found in the collection, such documentation could also be arranged in a photographs series with photographs of artwork, a project or exhibition file series, or if there is enough of such material, in its own series.

4.3 WHEN TO CREATE AN AV SERIES

Although we do not group all audiovisual material together in an audiovisual series as a default arrangement, there are times when it is entirely appropriate to have an all- or mostly-AV series.

Even in these cases, do not use the series title “Audiovisual material.” Use the word “unidentified” with the general material designation, i.e. “Unidentified Sound Recordings,” “Unidentified Video Recordings,” or “Unidentified Motion Picture Film,” or a combination of material terms if appropriate.

1. Large group of AV with related content

In some cases, the collection may contain a large volume of AV material related to a single project, or may be all the same genre. If such a series is found, include the name of the project and/or genre of recording in the series title. Typical all- or mostly-AV series found in the collections of the Archives of American Art include:

- Interviews (Be specific with the series title if they document a single project or subject)
- Lectures (Include formal titles, creators, and/or subject matter include that information in the series title if found)
- Panel discussions (Include event series, location, and/or host institution or organization information in the series title if found)
- Radio or Television series (include the formal title of the series in the series title, as well as the genre term “radio series” or “television series,” e.g. “Art Scene Radio Series;” or use the more general term, “Broadcast Material,” if a variety of radio and TV material is found)
- Documentary production elements (i.e. raw footage, rough edits, etc.) from a media project; use the formal title of the completed work in the series title along with a form term. If there is no formal title, use the terms used by the creator to refer to the project, or devise a title conveying the subject of the production, and include either a general material designation of the finished work (sound recording, video recording, and/or motion picture film) or a genre term (e.g. “documentary”)

It is also acceptable to combine multiple such groups of media into a single series, for example, “Interviews and Lectures.” Be sure to devise a series title that accurately describes the series content, and use subseries if each sub-group requires detailed description.

2. AV unrelated to each other or other records

An AV series is also appropriate when there is a significant quantity of AV material that is miscellaneous, unrelated to each other or to other documentation in the collection. Integrating such material with existing series should not be forced or illogical. Do not use the term miscellaneous in your description; instead, use the general material designations “video recordings,” “sound recordings,” and/or “motion picture film” as appropriate.

3. Unidentified AV

And finally, under certain circumstances, unidentified audiovisual material may form its own series. Use this rationale only when necessary due to:

- Media being unlabeled and unplayable due to format or condition
- Media is unrelated to other records in the collection in its found arrangement
- Media is unplayable due to format or condition

Archivists should consider playing media to identify it if possible. If working on a minimal processing project, archivists can consider not playing unidentified media, regardless of format. Regardless of level of processing, the AV Archivist is available to assist with playback and identification.

Again, do not use the term miscellaneous in your description, but use the general material designations with the word “unidentified.” See [Chapter 2, AV Levels of Processing](#), for more detail on how to handle unlabeled AV media.

4.4 ARRANGING AV PRODUCTION MATERIALS

Collections containing production elements for media productions, sometimes referred to as outtakes collections, are challenging to arrange because of their volume and complexity. At AAA, production collections are typically for film and/or video documentary productions. Sometimes the main creator of such a collection is the filmmaker, and sometimes artists or their foundations have acquired the production materials of works created about artists by a third party.

Different copies and generations of production materials in such a collection may be important to keep for different secondary uses, and archivists should never assume that material that is duplicated can be discarded. Desirable elements for a restoration project would be different from desirable elements for a

new media production slated for theatrical release, which would be different from what users working on a web-based project would want, and different again from desirable elements strictly for research purposes.

Often providing research access to the material is a simple matter of serving an access copy of the finished product. However, researchers may want to view outtakes (material that was shot and not used in the finished program). Outtakes can be of high research value because, since they were shot for the production but not used in the final work, their content is unlikely to exist anywhere else. Source material gathered for the production from other sources (sometimes called “archival footage” within the collection documentation) can also be valuable, unique content.

For this reason, it is important to arrange and describe such collections in a way that clearly expresses what material exists from each stage of production, to provide at least some description of what the content is, and to identify the formats accurately. Some familiarity with the production process is necessary to arrange and describe production materials. Film and video production handbooks such as *The Filmmaker’s Handbook* by Edward Pincus and Steven Ascher, or *Independent Filmmaking* by Lenny Lipton can be helpful for understanding and identifying what is found in such collections. A [glossary of production terms](#) can also be helpful in deciphering terminology creators used to label elements found in a collection.

Often the artifacts of production found in archival collections will fall into basic categories for each stage of production, i.e. shooting, editing, finishing, and distribution, and sorting material into these categories can be a straightforward approach to arrangement. Typical materials found from these stages are:

Shooting	Unedited camera footage, Unedited sound recordings
Editing	Work print, Outtakes (for film), Rough Edits (for video)
Finishing	Artifacts of this stage of production often have technical names, such as “Fine Grain Master Positive,” “A+B Roll,” etc. The copy from which distribution copies are made could also be called “Dub Master” or “Archival Master.” There can be multiple finished versions for different distribution outlets.
Distribution	Projection Print, Answer Print, Distribution Print (for film); for video, distribution copies are often in consumer formats.

Archivists should avoid arranging production material by format, since artifacts from each stage of the production may exist in different formats, and different stages, with quite different content, can be found in the same format. For instance, a finished documentary will contain different content from the original camera footage that was shot for it, and so these two types of media should be arranged and described separately even if they are in the same format. On the other hand, multiple copies of the finished documentary found in different formats should be described in a single component with multiple physical descriptions, because it is the same intellectual content.

Paper or electronic documentation of the production process, if found, can be extremely helpful in understanding the content of the collection, both for the archivist and the researcher, and should always be retained. See section [4.1, AV and related documentation](#), above.

Several collections containing film and video documentary production materials in the Archives of American Art's collections have been processed and have finding aids available for reference:

- [The Murals of Aztlán film production records](#)
- [The Judith Wechsler papers](#)
- [Audiovisual material related to the documentary Beatrice Wood: Mama of Dada](#)
- [The King W. Vidor papers](#)

Several artists' collections also contain production materials from documentaries made by third parties and collected by the artist, their heirs, or artist foundations. See the following finding aids for reference:

- [Hans Hoffmann papers](#)
- [Philip Pearlstien papers](#)
- [Jacques Lipchitz papers and Bruce Bassett papers concerning Jacques Lipchitz](#)
- [Hughie Lee-Smith papers](#)

See the AV archivist for help identifying and arranging production elements in a collection.

4.5 MULTIPLE COPIES, DUPLICATES AND ORIGINALS

It is not unusual to find duplication among AV recordings and films in collections. It is in the physical arrangement stage of processing that archivists must decide what to do with them. AAA's policy is as follows:

Copies made by AAA: discard if item has been digitized recently (check the DCD for a record), and keep if not.

Analog and optical disc access copies (usually sound cassettes and VHS videocassettes) can still be useful for reference, and because of AV deterioration, these copies may be in better condition than the original. For this reason, AAA keeps old analog reference copies until the item is digitized. If the item has been digitized by AAA more recently, the older analog access copy should be discarded. Digital reference copies found on optical disc should be ingested following the born digital workflow.

Copies that came with the collection: typically kept, but can be weeded in some cases.

Sometimes multiple copies made by the creator exist in the collection, and for various reasons. They could have been made for production purposes, to share a recording with others, or for their own personal access to recordings in obsolete formats. Whatever the reason, it is often desirable to keep

most copies of media that come with the original collection, unless there is a very large number of duplicate content, in which case an appraisal may allow for weeding of some copies.

Multiple published copies: keep 2 copies.

If there are multiple distribution copies of a published recording or film, the best two should be retained and the remainder discarded, returned to the donor, or donated to the library. Consult with the registrar regarding disposition of weeded copies, and see the AV Archivist if you'd like guidance determining which are the best copies.

Arrangement

Copies that are being kept should generally be arranged together and described as a single intellectual component with multiple physical copies described in the extent/s for that component. If the original is a format that needs to be housed separately, keep the access copy in the main collection container and describe the original like any other oversized item, but still describe them as a single intellectual component.

See the AV archivist for help identifying originals, duplicates, and production elements. See Chapter 5 on AV Description, in the [section on physical description](#), for more detail on how to describe multiple copies.

CHAPTER 5: AV DESCRIPTION IN ARCHIVESPACE

INTRODUCTION

These guidelines are designed to help processing archivists describe audiovisual records in finding aids using [EAD2002](#) and [DACS](#) standards in [ArchivesSpace](#), which is the current set of standards and tools used for archival description at the Smithsonian Institution. Basic guidelines for AV description in finding aids are integrated into AAA's general processing manual. The goal of these more detailed guidelines is to answer as many of the potential questions that arise during processing due to the variety and complexity of audiovisual materials and mixed media collections. For many collections, only a small portion of these guidelines will be applicable.

AAA's current practice is to create item records for audiovisual recordings when they are digitized, and file-level records describing surrogates. See "AAA Item Descriptive Cataloging Guidelines (AV)" on [S:\Cataloging](#) for more information.

ORGANIZATION OF THE GUIDELINES IN THIS DOCUMENT

Guidance in this chapter is organized in three parts: collection-level description, series-level description, and folder/item-level description. Each part has sections for any element that may be involved in audiovisual description, with the notes typically used at that level grouped together. Elements requiring some description of audiovisual materials are listed as "required," and elements that could be used for audiovisual description under certain circumstances, are listed as "optional" at the beginning of each section.

5.1 COLLECTION-LEVEL DESCRIPTION

REQUIRED COLLECTION-LEVEL ELEMENTS FOR AV DESCRIPTION

- Abstract / Scope and Content
- Conditions Governing Access
- Existence and Location of Copies (when applicable)

OPTIONAL COLLECTION-LEVEL ELEMENTS FOR AV DESCRIPTION

- Conditions Governing Reproduction and Use
- Existence and Location of Originals
- Processing Note
- Sponsor Note

ABSTRACT/SCOPE AND CONTENT

Include the audiovisual materials in the collection description in both the **abstract** and **scope and content** note. Use formal titles, form and genre terms, subjects, dates, creators, or geographical information as appropriate to describe the type of recording, its content, or the context of its creation.

Use the general material designation (i.e. sound recordings, video recordings, motion picture film or some combination of these terms) to refer to audiovisual materials in the collection abstract and scope and content note, rather than specific format terms (e.g. sound cassette, or videocassette (VHS)), which should only be used in the physical description at the file/item level of description.

If the entire collection, or an entire series in the collection, consists of a certain type of audiovisual content, use an appropriate form/genre term to describe the material in the abstract and scope and content note. Examples of common forms and genres of audiovisual content sometimes found in large quantities in collections of the Archives of American Art include interviews, lectures, panel discussions, radio programs, television programs, and home movies.

Example 1: *The Museum of Contemporary Art Interviews measure 8 linear feet and contain video interviews with artists, curators, and an art collector, conducted by the staff of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago between 1979 and 1986.*

Example 2: *The State of the Arts video recordings measure 2.4 linear feet and consist of video interviews, studio footage, footage of gallery installations, and three sets of handwritten notes, all created during the production of a pilot episode for a broadcast television documentary series on contemporary art in 1979.*

If the collection contains some AV but is *not* mostly or all AV, include at least a form/genre term or the general material designation (i.e. video recordings, sound recordings, motion picture film) in the abstract and first paragraph of the scope and content note, among the other types of material found in the collection.

If the collection-level scope and content note includes additional paragraphs beyond the first paragraph (also the abstract), more specific details about the intellectual content or context of creation of the audiovisual records can be included there. However, a series-level scope and content note is the preferred place for more detailed description of audiovisual materials.

Example of abstract/first paragraph of scope note: *The exhibition records of the Contemporary Study Wing of the Finch College Museum of Art measure 20.4 linear feet and date from 1943 to 1975, with the bulk of records dating from the period its galleries were in operation, from 1964 to 1975. Over two-thirds of the collection consists of exhibition files, which contain a wide range of documentation including artist files, checklists, correspondence, writings, photographs, interviews, numerous films and videos, artist statements, printed materials, and other records. Also found within the collection are administrative records of the museum, artist files, and papers of the Contemporary Wing's director and curator, Elayne Varian, which were produced outside of her work at Finch College.*

Example of detailed paragraph in scope note: *Video artworks, recordings of performances, or components of multimedia artworks are found by artists Vito Acconci, Kathy Dillon, Douglas Davis, Dan Graham, Les Levine, Bruce Nauman, Michael Netter, Eric Siegel, and Robert Whitman. A film of the Art in Process: The Visual Development of a Structure (1966) exhibition is found, and video recordings of artists Lynda Benglis, Michael Singer, and Sam Wiener form as part of the documentation for the Projected Art: Artists at Work (1971) exhibition.*

CONDITIONS GOVERNING ACCESS NOTE

If there are *any* audiovisual materials in the collection that have not been digitized, include the following statement in a **Conditions governing access** note:

Archival audiovisual recordings must be digitized for research access. Researchers may access digitized audiovisual materials in the Archives' Washington, D.C. or New York, N.Y. Research Centers by appointment.

If *all* of the audiovisual materials in the collection have been digitized, include the following statement in a **Conditions governing access** note:

Researchers may access digitized audiovisual materials in the Archives' Washington, D.C. or New York, N.Y. Research Centers by appointment.

If AV material is concentrated in certain series or consists of one or two items, use this note at the series or file/item level in addition to the collection level.

To determine if AV material in a collection has been digitized, consult AAA's CIS/DCD at <http://aaastaff.si.edu/index.cfm?fuseaction=Items.ListCollections>. The DCD should be consulted rather than the public website to be sure you are seeing all digitized content, since restricted items or items in process may be suppressed from the public site. Item records may also be a good source of description for your finding aid. For AV-rich collections with many item records, the item metadata can be exported from the CIS/DCD and uploaded into ASpace using a spreadsheet template. See the AV Archivist for help with this.

CONDITIONS GOVERNING REPRODUCTION AND USE NOTE

Occasionally donors will retain copyright or otherwise impose reproduction restrictions specifically on audiovisual materials in collections. If this is the case, as of this writing it will be noted in the 540 field of the MARC record. Include any such statements in a collection-level **Conditions Governing Reproduction and Use** note in ArchivesSpace.

Example 1: *Copyright for video recordings retained by SUNY at Albany. Authorization to publish, quote or reproduce requires written permission from Jack Finch, SUNY Albany, 1400 Washington Ave., Albany, N.Y. 12222.*

Example 2: *Authorization to quote or reproduce the sound recordings requires written permission from the donor.*

Although it is not unusual for audiovisual recordings to have third-party rights holders associated with them, we do not make any blanket statements regarding special copyright considerations for audiovisual material in our finding aids unless the intellectual property for the AV was specifically treated differently by the donor. Otherwise, AV in collections falls under the same terms of use of other copyrighted material in the collection.

If AV material is concentrated in certain series or consists of one or two items, use this note at the series or file/item level in addition to the collection level.

EXISTENCE AND LOCATION OF COPIES NOTE

Include an **Existence and Location of Copies** note at the collection level if any of the audiovisual materials in your collection have been digitized at the time of processing. Use the words “all” or “some” rather than specific numbers.

Example 1: *All of the sound recordings in this collection were digitized for research access in 2009-2010 and are available at the Archives of American Art offices.*

Example 2: *Some of the video and sound recordings in this collection have been copied for research access and digital copies are available in the Archives of American Art offices.*

If AV material is concentrated in certain series, use this note at the series level in addition to the collection level.

If there are AV items in the collection that have not been digitized, do not mention this in the finding aid. We do not have a routine for updating finding aids when we produce access copies, so any such note could soon become out of date and misleading to researchers. Simply include a conditions governing access note as above. Collections with some but not all digitized should have both notes.

To determine if AV material in a collection has been digitized, consult AAA's CIS/DCD at <http://aaastaff.si.edu/index.cfm?fuseaction=Items.ListCollections>. The DCD should be consulted rather than the public website to be sure you are seeing all digitized content, since restricted items or items in process may be suppressed from the public site. Item records may also be a good source of description for your finding aid. For AV-rich collections with many item records, the item metadata can be exported from the CIS/DCD and uploaded into ASpace using a spreadsheet template. See the AV Archivist for help with this.

Analog reference copies will not typically have item records, and should not be described in the collection-level **Existence and location of copies** note. They should be described in the extent of the file or item they duplicate, and in a note at the component level. See [File/item-level description, Extent](#) for details.

EXISTENCE AND LOCATION OF ORIGINALS

If a significant amount of audiovisual material exists in the collection only in duplicate form, and the location of originals is known, provide information about the existence, location, and availability of originals in an **Existence and Location of Originals** note. This note is rarely used at AAA, and if this information is provided in the Separated Materials note; it is not necessary to repeat it here.

Example: Videocassettes of Travis' travels to Africa, Greece, and Italy, are copies; original film reels were transferred to the Smithsonian's Human Studies Film Archives.

If only a small number AV records are found in duplicate-only form, it can be noted in the [Physical Detail](#) area of the Extent at the component level.

PROCESSING NOTE

If audiovisual materials in the collection have been digitized, preserved, deaccessioned, or other significant actions taken on them, include a statement about this action in the **Processing Note**. As of this writing, significant actions are usually noted in a 583 in the collection SIRIS record. Always include the year of the action and provide the name/s of funders associated with the particular action they funded.

Example 1 (From the Hildreth Meiere papers): *Nine reels of motion picture film were reformatted for research access in 2006, 2012 and 2015. The remaining 84 reels of film were digitized in 2015, funded by the The Regina A. Quick Center for the Arts at St. Bonaventure University through a generous grant from the Ruth Dayton Foundation.*

Example 2 (From the Seymour Lipton papers): *Sound recordings were digitized for preservation in 2009 and 2013. Motion picture film was inspected and re-housed as part of the film assessment and re-housing project in 2016 and 2017. One badly deteriorated duplicate film was discarded at that time.*

SPONSOR NOTE

If audiovisual material in the collection was reformatted or processed with special funding, include a statement acknowledging the funding source in the **Sponsor Note**, found in the Finding Aid Data section of ArchivesSpace.

Example: *Funding for the digitization of 84 reels of motion picture film in the collection was provided by The Regina A. Quick Center for the Arts at St. Bonaventure University through a generous grant from the Ruth Dayton Foundation.*

5.2 SERIES-LEVEL DESCRIPTION

REQUIRED SERIES-LEVEL ELEMENTS FOR AV DESCRIPTION

- Scope and Content

OPTIONAL SERIES-LEVEL ELEMENTS FOR AV DESCRIPTION

- Title (when referring to AV material)
- Arrangement note
- Conditions Governing Access
- Conditions Governing Reproduction and Use
- Existence and location of copies note

SCOPE AND CONTENT

If AV material is found in a series, your series-level **Scope and Content** note must describe it using some combination of form and genre terms, general material designations, and any other specific details that warrant attention, as you would for any other type of material. Such details might include creator, formal titles, names, subjects or locations found in the content, or description of activities that resulted in the production of audiovisual materials.

As with all other narrative notes and titles in the finding aid, do not use specific format terms in the series-level scope and content note to refer to audiovisual materials; reserve such terms for the file-level physical description. Instead, use the general material designation terms: Sound Recording, Video Recording, Motion Picture Film, and/or Moving Images (when series contains both film and video).

If the entire collection, or an entire series in the collection, consists of a certain type of audiovisual content, use an appropriate form/genre term to describe the material in the abstract and scope and content note. Examples of common forms and genres of audiovisual content sometimes found in large quantities in collections of the Archives of American Art include interviews, lectures, panel discussions, radio programs, television programs, and home movies.

Example: *This series contains 124 interviews with artists conducted by Colette Roberts, as well as scattered lectures, broadcast recordings, and other sound recordings created and collected by Roberts.*

TITLE

If the series is entirely composed of AV material, use one of the following for a **Series Title**, listed here in order of preference:

- a. the formal title of the series if there is one, along with a form/genre term to clarify if needed; i.e. *“Artscene” Radio Series*
- b. the form/genre of the series, if the series contains one or two types of recordings; i.e. *Interviews*, or *Interviews and Lectures*
- c. the “general material designation(s)” for the type of media found; i.e., *Sound Recordings*, *Video Recordings*, and/or *Motion Picture Films*. *Moving Images* can also be used for series containing both film and video. Use one or more of these terms when the series contains a variety of content. Avoid using “Audiovisual Material.”

If AV material is included in one of AAA’s conventional series with other types of records, and the conventional series title seems to contradict or hide the presence of the AV material, add form or genre terms if necessary for the series title to be accurate. For example, if recorded lectures are arranged with a Writings series, change the series title to *Writings and Lectures*. See [Chapter 4, AV Arrangement Guidelines](#) for typical placement of AV materials in conventional AAA series.

ARRANGEMENT NOTE

If there are a large number of audiovisual recordings in the series, make reference to their archival arrangement in a series-level **Arrangement** note.

Example: *Interviews are arranged in rough alphabetical order by interviewee. Cross-references are provided for subjects occurring out of order on the physical tapes.*

Example: *Episodes are arranged chronologically by broadcast date.*

The arrangement note can also be used to refer to related material in another series, whether audiovisual or paper documentation.

Example: *See editing notes in Series 1 for the filmmaker’s original documentation of the content of each group of edited work print. Outtakes not included in work print are found in series 5.*

CONDITIONS GOVERNING ACCESS NOTE

If there is a concentration of AV material in a series, and any of them have not been digitized, include the following statement in a **Conditions governing access** note:

Archival audiovisual recordings must be digitized for research access. Researchers may access digitized audiovisual materials in the Archives' Washington, D.C. or New York, N.Y. Research Centers by appointment.

If *all* of the audiovisual materials in the series have been digitized, include the following statement in a **Conditions governing access** note at the series level:

Researchers may access digitized audiovisual materials in the Archives' Washington, D.C. or New York, N.Y. Research Centers by appointment.

If AV material is found throughout the collection, do not use this note for every series. Instead, use only the collection-level **Conditions governing access** note. Conversely, if AV consists of one or two items, use this note at the file/item level in addition to the collection level.

To determine if AV material in a collection has been digitized, consult AAA's CIS/DCD at <http://aaastaff.si.edu/index.cfm?fuseaction=Items.ListCollections>. The DCD should be consulted rather than the public website to be sure you are seeing all digitized content, since restricted items or items in process may be suppressed from the public site. Item records may also be a good source of description for your finding aid. For AV-rich collections with many item records, the item metadata can be exported from the CIS/DCD and uploaded into ASpace using a spreadsheet template. See the AV Archivist for help with this.

CONDITIONS GOVERNING REPRODUCTION AND USE NOTE

Occasionally donors will retain copyright or otherwise impose restrictions specifically on audiovisual materials in collections. If there is such a restriction on AV material and that material is concentrated in a single series, include a **Conditions Governing Reproduction and Use** note at the series level.

Example 1: *Copyright for video recordings retained by SUNY at Albany. Authorization to publish, quote or reproduce requires written permission from Jack Finch, SUNY Albany, 1400 Washington Ave., Albany, N.Y. 12222.*

Example 2: *Authorization to quote or reproduce the sound recordings requires written permission from the donor.*

Although it is not unusual for audiovisual recordings to have third-party rights holders associated with them, we do not make any blanket statements regarding special copyright considerations for audiovisual material in our finding aids unless the intellectual property for the AV was specifically

treated differently by the donor as noted in the deed. Otherwise, AV in collections falls under the same terms of use of other copyrighted material in the collection.

If AV material is found throughout the collection, do not use this note for every series. Instead, use only the collection-level **Conditions Governing Reproduction and Use** note. Conversely, if AV consists of one or two items, use this note at the file/item level in addition to the collection level.

EXISTENCE AND LOCATION OF COPIES

If a series contains a large amount of AV and most or all have been digitized for research access or preserved, enter a note in a series-level **Existence and Location of Copies** note.

Example: *All of the sound recordings have been digitized for research access.*

If there are not access copies, either for a single item or series of AV material, do not make mention of this in the finding aid. We will not update the finding aids when we produce access copies, so any such note could soon become out of date and misleading to researchers.

5.3 FILE/ITEM-LEVEL DESCRIPTION

REQUIRED FILE-LEVEL ELEMENTS USED FOR AUDIOVISUAL DESCRIPTION

- Level
- Title
- Extent (required)
 - Portion (required)
 - Number (required)
 - Type (required)
 - dimensions (required for film gauge, otherwise optional)
- Instance
- Scope and content note (only required to note presence of transcript)

OPTIONAL FILE-LEVEL ELEMENTS USED FOR AUDIOVISUAL DESCRIPTION

- Conditions Governing Access
- Conditions Governing Reproduction and Use
- Extent, optional sub-elements:
 - Physical detail
 - Dimensions (optional for anything but film gauge, which is required)
- Existence and location of copies note
- Physical description note
- Scope and content note

LEVEL

Required for all descriptive components, below the series level, the **level** attribute can be file, item, or subseries.

AV items are defined as *intellectual* items rather than physical items. Intellectual items may be comprised of multiple pieces of media, or multiple duplicate copies of the same content, often in different audiovisual formats. When describing such multi-piece items at the item level, use a single component of description, and express the extent and format in the physical description. See under Extent for more examples.

Describing audiovisual material in the aggregate is appropriate whenever such description provides sufficient intellectual and physical access to the group of media. Especially when minimally processing, grouping homogenous or closely related recordings together is preferable to a repetitive list of items.

When a collection contains a clear series of discrete media items, such as a collection of multiple interviews, lectures, events, or broadcast episodes, it is helpful to researchers and reference staff to list each item in its own descriptive component, choosing “item” for the level rather than “file.” In such cases, a file-level grouping or subseries can still be useful to clarify the nature or identity of the group at a higher level in the hierarchy.

Example of file-level grouping:

Video Recordings of Annual Meetings, 1992-1995 (level = “file”)
6 videocassettes (VHS)

Example of item-level list with grouping heading:

Interviews with Artists (level = “series” “subseries” or “file”)
Bob Blackburn (level = “item”)
David Bradford (level = “item”)
Nancy Cox (level = “item”)

It is better to avoid using multiple item titles in a single component just because there are multiple tapes in a folder, or multiple items on a tape. If multiple items are found on a single tape or in a single folder, it is often easiest to understand their description if each item has a separate item-level component. If describing multiple items found in a single folder, use box/folder/item instances, repeating the box and folder instances for the sequence of items. See [Appendix 5B: 3 Approaches to an AV Group](#) for examples of these different cases.

TITLE

For folder and item **title**, you can describe media singly or in groups, depending on the arrangement, level of processing, and the content of the material. You can use a formal title if one exists, or you can devise a title from some combination of the creator name, subject, genre, location, or some other logical descriptor.

A NOTE ON UNLABELED OR POORLY LABELED MEDIA

Avoid transcribing ambiguous media labels as a unit title, and never use a specific format term as a unit title. The title should convey what the intellectual content of the recording is, rather than what might be written on its case. If you don't understand what a label means, it's likely that researchers won't either.

It is better to devise a title using form/genre terms if the type of content is known, and if not, consider playing the media to describe it adequately. If you are unable to play the media and can't decipher its content from labeling or documentation, use the word "unidentified" with the general material designation as a title.

Examples: Unidentified (Sound or Video) Recording
 Unidentified Motion Picture Film
 Unidentified Moving Images

If an archival label is not a suitable unit title but you would like to include it in the description, add it into the [Physical Detail](#) sub-element of the Extent.

See the AV Archivist for help describing unlabeled or poorly labeled media.

EXTENT (REQUIRED)

Audiovisual materials described in finding aids must include an **extent** at the file/item level. The extent should include at a minimum the quantity and specific format/s of media objects that make up the item or file. It is preferable to use the extent form to enter the metadata in the structured sub-elements provided by Aspace, but it is also possible to enter these details as an unstructured text string in a [physical description note](#) in some cases.

Click on "Add Extent" and use the structured sub-elements as follows.

PORTION (REQUIRED)

If you are describing the entire archival object in a single extent, choose "Whole" for **Portion**.

If you use multiple extents, choose “Part” under **Portion** for each extent.

You will need to use multiple extents for an archival object when the unit being described contains multiple formats of media, or when you want to use specific sub-elements to include details about some but not all of the media being described.

In all of the following examples, the Portion for each extent in italics would be “Part.” Occasions when you may need to describe multiple extents include:

- When the unit being described is comprised of media in multiple formats

Example: Interviews with Robert Irwin, 1967

1 sound tape reel

2 sound cassettes

- When you want to add description in physical detail or dimensions that does not apply to all the media in the unit being described, for instance, when one is an original recording and the other is a copy.

Example: John Steuart Curry Home Movies, circa 1939

3 film reels, 8mm, original

1 videocassette (VHS), copy

- When describing different types of production elements under a single heading

Example: Jacques Lipchitz Documentary, 1981

2 film reels, 16mm, final edit

8 film reels, 16mm, outtakes

In the above examples, the gauge of film would be entered into the [dimensions](#) field, and the type of element or copy would be entered into the [physical detail](#) field.

NUMBER (REQUIRED)

Enter the quantity of pieces of media for the unit being described.

You can only count a single type of media in each physical description. If there are multiple types of media present in the unit being described, use multiple physical descriptions.

A NOTE ON EXTENT FRAGMENTS

Occasionally, a single tape or reel will contain multiple items, or fractions of multiple items. This guideline spells out how to express their physical description and extent. The general rule is:

1. In the extent of each item, include all tapes or reels on which any part of the item is found.

For example, if 3 tapes contain 2 items and one of the tapes has the end of one item and the beginning of the other, both items would have an extent of 2 sound cassettes.

2. In order to explain the discrepancy this creates between the quantity expressed in the finding aid and the number of physical tapes in the collection, create a scope and content note for the item or file that
 - a. expresses the extent and the fraction, and
 - b. references the other item found on the tape as it is identified in the finding aid.

Example of extent fragments:

Interview with Bob Blackburn

2 sound cassettes

Interview is on 3 sides of 2 sound cassettes; second side of tape 2 contains beginning of Interview with Romare Bearden

Interview with Romare Bearden

2 sound cassettes

Interview is on 3 sides of 2 sound cassettes; beginning is found on second side of Bob Blackburn interview tape 2.

TYPE (REQUIRED)

For **Type**, choose the specific format from the dropdown list. See [Appendix 5A: Audiovisual Extent Types](#) for the list of acceptable terms. See [Chapter 6](#) for resources for identifying formats.

PHYSICAL DETAIL (OPTIONAL)

The **Physical Detail** sub-element can be used to record any detail about the item's appearance, sound or image quality, or generation. If you have multiple notes to add to a single field, separate them with a semi-colon.

- Color or black and white, silent or sound

These aspects of media recordings are often a part of item-level catalog records, but we don't typically include them in finding aids. If you want to include this information, **physical detail** is the place for it.

- Duplicates (and Originals)

If there are duplicates, you can create separate physical descriptions for each copy and note which is original and which a duplicate in the **physical detail** section of the extent. Only note copies that have physical media, not digital files.

If the duplicate is an old access copy made at AAA, you'll also add an [Existence and location of copies](#) note at the component level.

If the objects are duplicates of the same generation, for instance two VHS distribution copies of a film, or two vinyl records of the same title, use a single extent and write "Duplicates" in **physical detail**.

Sometimes we have duplicates that have no corresponding original recording in the collection. The most obvious examples are recordings with content that pre-dates the existing media format, like a VHS video containing 1950s home movies, or a CD with 1970s interviews. Make a note of this in "physical detail" or, if it describes an entire series, note it in the series scope and content note.

This type of duplicate is considered an "archival original" because it is the only copy we have, but since we cannot verify its faithfulness to the original, it can be useful to note its status for researchers. If the extent of such duplicate recordings is significant, and the location of the originals is known, use an [Existence and Location of Originals](#) note at the collection or series level.

Examples:

Duplicate

Original

Copy of motion picture film original

Cassette is a copy made from an original sound tape reel. Location of original is unknown.

- Quality of recording

If material has been digitized and has serious sound or video quality issues, it can be noted in Physical Detail.

Examples:

Poor sound quality

Sound is distorted at the beginning of the recording

Poor video quality

- Media labels

Use physical detail to transcribe labels on the media if you think they add to the description, or may be important to understanding its content, or the context of its creation or use. Indicate where the text is taken from in your note.

Examples:

Handwritten note on original box: "Iceberg"

Handwritten note on original cassette: "Telephone conversation for article"

- Type of production element

This is particularly relevant for production collections, when you have multiple versions or types of elements that are artifacts of the production process. Although there are many terms used to describe parts of film or video productions, typical types of elements found at AAA include:

Examples:

Camera original

soundtrack

work print

outtakes

sound on film

composite print

optical soundtrack

This piece of description can also be put in a Unit Title for a component if you are listing multiple media parts of a production, as long as a more descriptive title for the production is also included, or is included at a higher level.

DIMENSIONS (REQUIRED FOR MOTION PICTURE FILM)

When describing motion picture film, the gauge of the film is required metadata, to be entered in the **dimensions** field (usually 16mm, 8mm, or Super8mm).

You can also use the dimensions field to record other dimensions like duration, diameter (for a sound tape reel, e.g. 7 inch or 3 inch) or footage length (for film, e.g. 1200 feet). Apart from duration, which is often unknown to the processing archivist, such details are not very helpful to researchers. Use sparingly.

If you do list them, spell out the dimension label ("inch" not "in." or ') and separate by a semi-colon and a space and list gauge first if multiple dimensions are included.

Examples:

8mm

Super8mm

Duration 2 hours, 35 minutes

Duration circa 90 minutes

16mm; circa 11 minutes

Be aware that the tape stock length (such as a 90 minute sound cassette or a 30 minute videocassette) is different from the known duration of the recording on the tape. Do not record tape stock lengths as duration in the finding aid.

INSTANCES

To record the physical location of the material, click on “add container instance.”

TYPE

Choose “Audio” for any sound recording, “Moving Images” for any video recording *or* motion picture film, and “Mixed materials” if AV is found with other types of materials, or if sound and moving image are being described together.

TOP CONTAINER

Follow instructions in the general processing manual for creating and using top containers. Most sound and video recordings will be housed along with other materials in regular collection containers. AV media that needs to be stored in special housing such as flat boxes (sols) should be described the way we describe material stored in OV folders. Film and oversized sound and video reels are treated as individual top containers.

AV-SPECIFIC TOP CONTAINER TYPES

When films and oversized sound and video reels are described, they must be treated as top containers and individually barcoded. In such cases, in the Top Container field, click on the down arrow and choose “create.” Choose “Box” from the drop-down menu for the container type, and in the indicator field, use the next sequential number after all oversized containers are numbered, with a prefix designating the type of container it is. Prefixes for this type of material are:

- FC for any film can
- SAV for audio or video reels whose containers are 10.5” to 12” square
- LAV for audio or video reels whose containers are 14”-15” square

Such sizes can occur for ¼” audio reels, as well as ½”, 1”, or 2” audio or video reels.

When AV instances use top containers such as these, leave the child and grandchild type and indicator blank.

CHILD TYPE AND INDICATOR, GRANDCHILD TYPE AND INDICATOR

When AV material is housed in regular collection containers, use the collection box as the top container, and a folder or item as the child type.

- Use the types *Box/Folder* for scattered AV items in a series with paper and other materials present, or when each intellectual AV component has its own folder, or spans multiple folders.
- Use *Box/folder/item* for describing AV items in a folder in multiple, separate components.
- Also use *Box/folder/item* for special boxes used within collection boxes, such as when cassette tapes are stored in shoeboxes inside larger collection boxes. In that case, the shoebox can be numbered and treated as a folder, and the cassettes within it treated as items. Be sure the physical tapes or reels can be clearly linked to the items being described, and add labeled dividers if not.
- *Box/item* may be best for series of all AV material that span an entire box or multiple boxes. You may still use folders to maintain physical order within the box, recording all item titles and item numbers within it on the physical folder. If you do not use folders, label the physical item's enclosure or case with its box and item number.

See [Appendix 5B, 3 Approaches to an AV Group](#), for examples of each of these cases.

CONDITIONS GOVERNING ACCESS NOTE

If only one or two AV items exist in the collection, and any of them have not been digitized, include the following statement in a **Conditions governing access** note at the file/item level:

Archival audiovisual recordings must be digitized for research access. Researchers may access digitized audiovisual materials in the Archives' Washington, D.C. or New York, N.Y. Research Centers by appointment.

If the audiovisual material has been digitized, include the following statement in a **Conditions governing access** note at the file/item level:

Researchers may access digitized audiovisual materials in the Archives' Washington, D.C. or New York, N.Y. Research Centers by appointment.

If there is more than one or two AV items, use this note at the series and/or collection-level as appropriate.

To determine if AV material in a collection has been digitized, consult AAA's CIS/DCD at <http://aaastaff.si.edu/index.cfm?fuseaction=Items.ListCollections>. The DCD should be consulted rather than the public website to be sure you are seeing all digitized content, since restricted items or items in

process may be suppressed from the public site. Item records may also be a good source of description for your finding aid. For AV-rich collections with many item records, the item metadata can be exported from the CIS/DCD and uploaded into ASpace using a spreadsheet template. See the AV Archivist for help with this.

CONDITIONS GOVERNING REPRODUCTION AND USE NOTE

Occasionally donors will retain copyright or otherwise impose reproduction restrictions specifically on audiovisual materials in collections. If there is such a restriction on AV material and only one or two AV items exist in the collection, include a **Conditions Governing Reproduction and Use** note at the file/item level.

Example 1: *Copyright for video recordings retained by SUNY at Albany. Authorization to publish, quote or reproduce requires written permission from Jack Finch, SUNY Albany, 1400 Washington Ave., Albany, N.Y. 12222.*

Example 2: *Authorization to quote or reproduce the sound recordings requires written permission from the donor.*

Although it is not unusual for audiovisual recordings to have third-party rights holders associated with them, we do not make any blanket statements regarding special copyright considerations for audiovisual material in our finding aids unless the intellectual property for the AV was specifically treated differently by the donor as noted in the deed. Otherwise, AV in collections falls under the same terms of use of other copyrighted material in the collection.

If AV material is found throughout the collection, use only the collection-level **Conditions Governing Reproduction and Use** note. Conversely, if a larger amount of AV is concentrated in a single series, use this note at the series-level in addition to the collection level.

EXISTENCE AND LOCATION OF COPIES

A folder/item-level **Existence and Location of copies** note can be used to distinguish when a duplicate of a recording is an access copy made by the Archives, rather than a vintage copy donated with the collection. The physical access copy should also have its own Extent, with a note in the “physical detail” field that it is a duplicate.

Examples:

Videocassette (VHS) is access copy.

Access copy available on 3 sound cassettes.

We will not update finding aids as items are digitized, but existing copies found in the collection during processing should be noted here. **If there is both a digital and analog access copy at the time of processing, the analog access copy can be discarded.**

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION NOTE

Use a **Physical Description** note, instead of the structured extent fields, to describe the AV extent when the unit being described is comprised of AV and non-AV material, such as video or sound recordings with paper or printed material.

Examples:

Includes 1 videocassette (VHS).

Includes 2 sound cassettes.

The other type/s of records found can be described here as well if not apparent from other parts of the description. For example: “Includes 2 sound cassettes and printed material.”

A physical description note can also be used in place of the structured extent fields to summarize the physical description of a complex audiovisual component in a single, unstructured text string. This approach may be appropriate for media productions where a single component might have dozens of pieces of media associated with the component, and the archivist is minimally processing.

Example: *Includes 4 film reels (16mm workprint), 4 soundtrack film reels (16mm full-coat mag), 2 original sound tape reels, and duplicates on 6 videocassettes (3 U-matic, 3 VHS).*

In most cases, at whatever level of processing, describing the quantity and format of AV material in the structured [extent](#) elements is preferred.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

Use a **Scope and Content** note at the component level for any added description of the content of recordings described in the component, such as:

- Transcripts (required) or other related paper records

Examples:

Includes transcript

Paper note found with original box

Film lab records found in film can

- Unexpected content found in a recording, such as fragments that are partially taped over

Example: *Reel begins with a 70 minute fragment of a circa 1977 interview with Robert Irwin.*

- Content that does not match the label on the media

Example: *Original label on reel reads "Josh Young, tape #2, side 1," but there is no recording of Josh Young on the reel.*

- Blanks or unrelated content, particularly at the beginning of a recording.

Examples:

First 37 minutes of recording is popular music.

Interview begins 10 minutes into recording.

- When sequence of multiple pieces of media needs to be explained.

Example: *Sequence of original recordings unclear, but appears to be cassette marked "afternoon tape" first, cassette marked "eve one" second, and reel marked "tape at house" third.*

- Use a scope note when creating a dummy component for a cross reference, such as when a separate recording is found on the same physical tape.

Example:

In the component that refers to the physical tape, note the additional recording:

Reel also includes circa 43 minute interview with Bruce Conner, October 1974, on side 2 beginning around 46 minutes into tape; also found is a brief fragment of an interview with Paul Karlstrom

In the cross reference, create a dummy component with the subject of the additional recording as a unit title (in this example, Bruce Connor), and note the physical location in a scope and content note:

See Joan Brown, Box 1 item 11

- Type of media artwork

For collections containing media that is an artwork or part of an artwork, it may help researchers to specify exactly what the media object is and how it relates to the artwork.

Examples:

Multi-channel closed circuit video performance.

Recorded artifact of interactive video and sound installation.

Sound recording from multi-channel video and sound installation.

APPENDIX 5A: AUDIOVISUAL EXTENT TYPES

The following extent types are available to use in the Smithsonian's Archivist's Toolkit database, in the dropdown list of the Physical Description popup window. Please do not use other AV terms you might find in the dropdown list, as they have been deprecated. The following terms are based on IASA Cataloging Rules for extent types, with modifications requested by Smithsonian AV archivists.

To designate format in unit titles at the series, folder, or item level, use one or more of the three "general material designations":

- Sound recordings
- Video recordings
- Motion picture films
- Moving image material (when describing film and video together)

For the physical description at the folder/item level, choose from the following "specific material designations:"

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| ● sound cassettes | ● videocassettes (Betamax) |
| ● sound cassettes (DAT) | ● videocassettes (Video 8) |
| ● sound cassettes (microcassette) | ● videocassettes (Hi8) |
| ● sound tape reels | ● videocassettes (Digital Betacam) |
| ● sound tape reels (NAGRA SN) | ● videocassettes (MiniDV) |
| ● sound wire reels | ● videocassettes (D-1) |
| ● sound discs | ● videocassettes (D-2) |
| ● sound discs (lacquer) | ● videocassettes (HDCAM) |
| ● sound discs (vinyl) | ● videocassettes (DVCAM) |
| ● sound discs (aluminum) | ● videocassettes (DVCPPro) |
| ● sound discs (CD) | ● videocartridges |
| ● sound discs (Minidisc) | ● videodiscs |
| ● sound cartridges | ● videodiscs (DVD) |
| ● sound cartridges (Fidelipac) | ● videodiscs (Blue Ray) |
| ● sound cartridges (8 track) | ● videodiscs (laser) |
| ● sound cylinders | ● videoreels (2 inch) |
| ● sound track film reels | ● videoreels (1 inch) |
| ● videocassettes | ● videoreels (1/2 inch) |
| ● videocassettes (VHS) | ● film reels |
| ● videocassettes (VHS-C) | ○ put gauge in "dimensions" |
| ● videocassettes (S-VHS) | ● film cartridges |
| ● videocassettes (U-matic) | ● film cassettes |
| ● videocassettes (Betacam) | ● film loops |
| ● videocassettes (BetacamSP) | |

APPENDIX 5B: THREE APPROACHES TO AN AV GROUP

Below are examples of three different ways to handle the container list for the same group of AV recordings. The first is the most minimal, with all items described in one group and multiple extents, and a scope note to bring out some details. The 2nd uses the box/folder/item instance approach, with more detailed notes and dates at the item level. The 3rd uses a box/item instance, and should only be used when creating an item-level box inventory for an entire box.

Having the item-level instance may be important down the road for linking digital AV surrogates to finding aids, so using either box/folder/item or box/item is recommended for collections where online access to the AV recordings is anticipated.

1. Group described as a single component, with 3 physical descriptions, and 1 scope/content note:

Processing archivists should not feel obligated to use the item instance, or even to include all the item-level labeling found on recordings in their description. A component-level scope note for a grouping with key access points can save time when entering data. In this case, the instance is box/folder.

Box folder

6	20-24	Interviews with Graffiti Writers, 1972-1974 <i>2 sound tape reels</i> <i>7 sound cassettes</i> <i>1 sound disc (CD)</i> Includes interviews with Tracy, Chi-Chi, Martinez, Lonnie, Phase 2, T-168, Cat, Cliff, Zest, and Cyde Pel
---	-------	---

2. Items listed individually, with box/folder/item instance:

Box	folder	item	
6			Interviews with Graffiti Writers
6	20		"Graffiti Tapes," undated <i>2 sound tape reels</i>
6	21		"Meeting in studio with Tracy, Chi-Chi," undated <i>1 Sound cassette ; label reads "First side transfer from reel 2"</i>
6	22	1	"Martinez Graffiti," 1973 December 20 <i>2 Sound cassettes ; 1 and 2 of 3; 3 not found</i>
6	22	2	"Lonnie, T-168, Spring 1973," 1973 <i>1 Sound cassette</i>
6	22	3	"Phase 2,T-168, Cat, use 1," 1974 March

			<i>1 Sound cassette</i>
6	23		"Jack in studio with graffiti writers.," 1974 <i>1 Sound disc (CD) ; label reads "Cut from the film Wild Style, which follows"</i>
6	24	1	"Lonnie," 1972 <i>1 Sound cassette</i>
6	24	2	"Tracy, Chi-Chi, Cliff, Zest, Clyde Pel in Studio," 1974 April 19 <i>1 Sound cassette</i>

3. Same as example 2, above, but using a box/item instance method:

Use this method only when an entire box is being described at the item level. If mixed with folder-level description within the same box, all AV components should have folder numbers, too, as in examples 2 or 3 above. In this example, physical folders are still recommended to maintain order in the box, and multiple headings and item numbers should be written on the physical folder when there are multiple items in a folder. If housing small AV objects in shoeboxes, the shoebox may be treated either as a top container or as a folder within a larger collection box.

Box	item	
6		Interviews with Graffiti Writers
6	1	"Graffiti Tapes," undated <i>2 sound tape reels</i>
6	2	"Meeting in studio with Tracy, Chi-Chi," undated <i>1 Sound cassette ; label reads "First side transfer from reel 2"</i>
6	3	"Martinez Graffiti," 1973 December 20 <i>2 Sound cassettes ; 1 and 2 of 3; 3 not found</i>
6	4	"Lonnie, T-168, Spring 1973," 1973 <i>1 Sound cassette</i>
6	5	"Phase 2,T-168, Cat, use 1," 1974 March <i>1 Sound cassette</i>
6	6	"Jack in studio with graffiti writers.," 1974 <i>1 Sound disc (CD) ; label reads "Cut from the film Wild Style, which follows"</i>
6	7	"Lonnie," 1972 <i>1 Sound cassette</i>
6	8	"Tracy, Chi-Chi, Cliff, Zest, Clyde Pel in Studio," 1974 April 19 <i>1 Sound cassette</i>

CHAPTER 6: IDENTIFYING AND DATING AUDIOVISUAL FORMATS

The following resources are helpful for identifying analog audiovisual formats, and also for determining a ballpark date for undated media.

ALL FORMATS

- The University of Illinois Preservation Self-Assessment Program (PSAP) Collection ID Guide is the most comprehensive illustrated guide: <https://psap.library.illinois.edu/collection-id-guide/#audiovisual>
- The Museum of Obsolete Media is a good place to find information about rare formats: <http://www.obsoletemedia.org/>

VIDEO

- Texas Commission on the Arts Video Identification and Assessment Guide includes videotape formats introduced between 1956 and 1999: <http://www.arts.texas.gov/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/video.pdf>
- Video Preservation Website, Video Format Identification Guide to videotape formats introduced between 1956 and 1995, so is slightly less complete but is in a more handy, web-based document: http://videopreservation.conservation-us.org/vid_id/index.html
- The National Archives' online Archival Formats manual has a page on identifying video: <http://www.archives.gov/preservation/formats/video-identify-formats.html>

AUDIO

- The Indiana University "Format Characteristics" manual for audio recordings is a lengthy but comprehensive document on archival sound recordings with more details than the PSAP guide. Use the table of contents to find dates for each of the general formats: http://www.dlib.indiana.edu/projects/sounddirections/facet/facet_formats.pdf
- The National Archives' online Archival Formats manual has a page on identifying audio: <http://www.archives.gov/preservation/formats/audio-identify-formats.html>

MOTION PICTURE FILM

- The National Archives' Archival Formats manual has a page on identifying motion picture film: <http://www.archives.gov/preservation/formats/motion-picture-film-identify-formats.html>
- Little Film.org has visual aids and dates for small-gauge film (8-16mm): <http://www.littlefilm.org/>
- Film can be dated by looking for edge code (usually plus signs, circles, squares, and triangles at the edge of the film) that correspond to the date of manufacture. If you find an edge code on a reel of film, you can look the dates up on the edge code chart and know a proximate date of the film's content: <http://www.filmforever.org/Edgecodes.pdf>