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Electronic Media Group
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Layout by Amber Hares
(Original design by Jon Rosenthal, JonRosenthalDesign.com)
Typeset in Trade Gothic LT and Myriad Pro

American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works
Washington DC

The Electronic Media Review was published once every two years in print format by the Electronic Media Group (EMG), a specialty group of the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (AIC), until 2013 and published online only thereafter. The Electronic Media Review is distributed as a benefit to members of EMG who held membership during the year of the issue. Additional copies or back issues are available from AIC. All correspondence concerning subscriptions, membership, back issues, and address changes should be addressed to:

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The Electronic Media Review is a non-juried publication. Papers presented at the EMG session of the AIC Annual Meeting are selected by committee based on abstracts. After presentation, authors have the opportunity to revise their papers before submitting them for publication in The Electronic Media Review. There is no further selection review of these papers. Independent submissions are published at the discretion of the EMG Publications Committee. Authors are responsible for the content and accuracy of their submissions and for the methods and materials they present. Publication in The Electronic Media Review does not constitute official statements or endorsement by the EMG or by the AIC.
SUSTAINING PLAYBACK THROUGH TECHNOARCHEOLOGY: A VTR REFURBISHMENT PROJECT

MICHAEL ANGELETTI

ABSTRACT
To those archivists working with magnetic media, it is apparent that all analog tape formats face veritable extinction in the long term. Not only are the physical carriers at risk, but the machines used to play endangered tapes are also facing extinction.

Audiovisual archives may have access to legacy videotape machines, but no way of restoring them for use in video reformatting. Using a recently completed refurbishment project at the Stanford Media Preservation Lab as an example, this presentation will focus on how archivists can take steps to refurbish their old videotape machines, enabling them to handle the antique video in their collections, as well as consider acquisition of new collections containing valuable but at-risk videotape. Through detailing the process of refurbishing an EIAJ videotape machine (Sony AV-3650), attendees will gain insight into why these old machines are costly and problematic to repair and maintain. It will also cover basic processes related to the handling, treatment, and playback of this open reel video format still commonly found in archival media collections.

Based on examples from the project undertaken at the Stanford Media Preservation Lab, this presentation will highlight some of the pitfalls in finding parts
and repairing or making new parts, as well as the advantages of working with legacy equipment specialists.

Adding capability for in-house playback of these machines can have a direct effect on the way that money is allocated for video reformattng work in archives where there isn’t funding available for outsourcing to a vendor. Replicating the work examples from the session would require an in-house reformattng program; however, for those without a working video lab, this presentation will offer a valuable look into the challenges faced by media preservation vendors and other institutions.

The PowerPoint presentation and a link to the accompanying EIAJ videotape machine playback demonstration are available at http://purl.stanford.edu/nv468td2285.

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