

Magnetic Tape Alert Project: mapping archives that are in danger



Today's knowledge of the linguistic and cultural diversity of humanity is widely based on magnetic tape recordings produced over the past 60 years. Magnetic audio and video tape formats are now obsolete. Spare parts supply and service is fading, replay equipment in operable condition is disappearing rapidly, and routine transfer of magnetic tape documents is estimated to end around 2025. The only way to preserve these sounds and images in the long term, and to keep them accessible for future generations, is their digitisation and transfer to safe digital repositories.

While many professional memory institutions have already secured their audiovisual holdings, or have planned to do so in time, a great part of audio and video recordings are still in their original state, kept in small academic or cultural institutions, or in private hands.

With the Magnetic Tape Alert Project, the Information for All Programme (IFAP) of [UNESCO](#), in cooperation with [IASA](#), the International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives, intends to alert stakeholders of the imminent threat of losing access to their audiovisual documents. Part of this is to conduct a survey of existing audiovisual documents on magnetic tape that are not yet digitally preserved. The survey focusses on unique recordings rather than copies.

The information obtained through the survey on collections at risk will serve as a basis for the planning of adequate solutions for the safeguarding of these irreplaceable original documents in the long-term.

Take the survey here: <http://www.mtap.iasa-web.org/>

Deadline 31 May 2020