



Playback Memory Lab

User Guide and Agreement

About Playback Memory Lab

Playback Memory Lab is a free, do-it-yourself space for making high-quality digitized personal archive collections. Using professional-grade equipment, library users can digitize multiple formats, including slides, negatives, photographic prints, documents, VHS tapes, audiocassettes, and 8mm/Super 8 film.

Playback Memory Lab Contacts

- Visit the website: sonomalibrary.org/playback
- Email the Memory Lab team: playback@sonomalibrary.org
- Make a Memory Lab appointment: sonoma-library.org/pml

General Guidelines

- **Lab Use** – Memory Lab users must read and agree to the Playback Memory Lab User Agreement and make an appointment prior to each use of the equipment. By clicking “Register” on the calendar event, the Lab User agrees to follow the terms and conditions in this User Agreement.
- **User Liability** – The individual who registers for the Playback Memory Lab is financially responsible for any damages or misuse of equipment, even if a group is working on a project together. The registered user needs to be onsite during the appointment and will be considered the main Memory Lab user.
- **Library Card**: The main Memory Lab user must have a Sonoma County Library general card account.
- **Age of User** – The main Memory Lab user must be age 18 or older.
- **Length of Lab Visit** – The Lab is limited to 1 station per day (VHS or Scanner), 1 appointment per week, per library card holder. Appointments are up to 3 hours long, starting promptly at 1pm.
- **Late Policy** – Reservations will be canceled for users who are more than 15 minutes late.
- Transfer of **Copyrighted Materials** using the Playback Memory Lab is prohibited. By law, individuals cannot transfer copyrighted material unless: 1) user obtained permission from the copyright holder, or 2) the transfer is for fair use purposes.
- Transfer of **Obscene Materials**, or content that is otherwise inappropriate for the library environment, is prohibited.
- Use of the Playback Memory Lab is subject to the Lab Policies listed here, the Sonoma County Library **Safe Library Use Policy**, the Library Internet Access Policy, as well as any other applicable Library policies and procedures. Failure to abide by all applicable policies and procedures will result in suspension or loss of Memory Lab use privileges.
- **Liability Limitation** – The Playback Memory Lab and the Sonoma County Library are not responsible for any losses, damages, obligations or liabilities directly or indirectly related to the use of its equipment and information resources.
- **Food and Beverages** – Food and drink are NOT allowed in the Playback Memory Lab area. Food and drink can damage our media equipment as well as attract pests that can damage personal materials.
- **Saving Files** – Users are responsible for saving their work on a personal, external memory source. Please bring a USB or external hard drive or be prepared to access a personal Cloud storage account, in order to save your files. All Playback Memory Lab computers are reset, and all files deleted after each lab user logs off the computer. Files should be completely saved prior to the end of the appointment.
- **Storage of Personal Items** – Hard drives or other personal items needed for saving or transferring files cannot be stored at the library. Materials brought to the Playback Memory Lab for scanning must remain with the user at all times.
- **Staff Assistance** – The Playback Memory Lab is a Do-It-Yourself space. Staff will provide basic information about the lab resources, and users will be able to consult step-by-step guides at each workstation.

Appointment Guidelines and Procedures

To use the Playback Memory Lab

To use the Memory Lab, users must

- Make an appointment. Playback appointments can be made at the Sonoma County Library website Events Calendar.
- Agree to the terms in the User Agreement at the time of registering for an appointment.
- Provide a personal storage device.

Before the appointment

Getting items ready for the Memory Lab

- **Locate.** Find everything you want to digitize. This may include photo albums, file folders, carousels of slides, CDs of photographs, and more.
- **Organize.** Sort your material into groups that make sense to you. For example: Years, Holidays, or Stages of Life.
- **Prioritize.** Remember, making digital copies of your valued items is important, but it is also time-consuming. Do you need all the photos of the beach that you took on vacation? Determine which items are most important to you. These may be things requested by friends or family, or simply the thing you love most.

Check the Condition

- Items with mold are not eligible to be digitized in the lab. Also, nothing damaged, twisted, or dirty. Nothing with a smell, particularly items with vinegar smell. See Inspecting Materials section below.

Plan Your Time

- Each item scanned can take up to 5 minutes depending on the settings selected; see manual for resolution and file format recommendations. Multiple appointments may be needed to complete projects.
- For every 1 minute of video, it will take 1.5x to digitize it. Capture happens in real time, and then the file must be encoded, described, and saved to your hard drive to ensure it will last. We recommend digitizing no more than 2 hours of video during one lab session.
- Audiocassette tapes digitize in real time. Ex. 60-minute tape: 60 minutes + 15-20 minutes to export and review.
- 8mm/Super 8 film digitizes frame-by-frame without sound. Ex. 1 minute of film takes 10 minutes to digitize + 15-20 minutes to load film, transfer and review.

Consider File Storage and Organization

- Decide where you will store your digital files. This can be an external hard drive, 8GB (or higher) USB “thumb” drive, or a personal Cloud storage account.
- Decide how you will organize your files. Will you place all the images from 1980 into the same folder? All Halloween images together?

Inspecting Materials

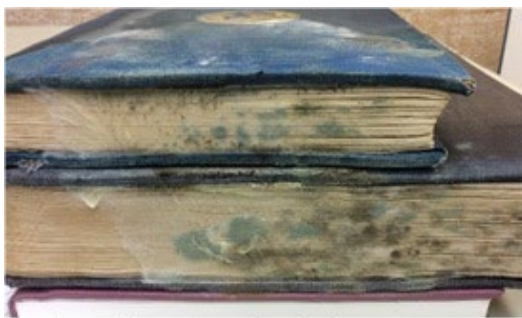
All material brought into the Playback Memory Lab needs to be inspected by staff before it can be placed in any of the equipment. Staff will look for several key issues, and depending on the issue, the material may be ineligible for digitization in the lab.

Photographs and Documents

Evidence of pests, rodents, or mold contamination is ineligible for digitization in the lab.

Moldy material, active or inactive, has spores that can spread. Mold can form on nearly any porous surface – letters, photographs, books, or posters. Evidence of water damage, however, is not an immediate disqualifier for use in the lab.

If past water damage is present, but the material exhibits no other signs of mold or mildew, the material can be digitized in the lab. If a user has one moldy item, all the items must be carefully inspected for mold as mold can spread.



Active mold growing on books after a water event.



Inactive mold is dry and powdery

1

The following are all signs of mold:

- the presence of fuzzy growth, in nearly any hue
- stringy, white filaments stretching across porous surfaces
- strange spots or stains

Mildew will often accompany mold. The signs of mildew include:

- “Old book smell” – this odor is often caused by mildew, even if the mildew has been removed
- a thin haze, a patch of spots, or a powdery flaking layer, normally white, black, or grey on the surface of the book or paper

¹ For more on mold, see NEDCC’s Preservation Leaflets, Emergency Management, Section 3.8.

Film – Slides, Negatives, 8mm, Super 8

Inspecting film follows a sort of hybrid approach from the steps above. The material must be inspected for mold, mildew, and water damage as in photographs, but also checked for vinegar syndrome. Most negatives and film that come to the lab will be acetate film, which will take on a vinegary smell as it breaks down. Once again, as soon as the material is removed from its container, smell it and the container for vinegar. If it is slightly vinegary, the material may be digitized. If it is a potent smell, it may not be used in the lab.

Note: You should wear nitrile gloves when inspecting film.

8mm and Super 8 film can be spliced, or have leader attached at the beginning, but may prove to be more hands-on during digitization, as the splicing may not feed properly through the wolverine device.

Film without leader may be too short to be fully digitized from the first frame. A film leader is a length of film attached to the head or tail of a film to assist in threading the film. Lab users can choose to add leader ahead of their appointment or choose to digitize the film as is and miss the initial frames.



8mm film



8mm film with leader

Nitrate film cannot be digitized at Playback Memory Lab, nor brought to library property. It is rare, but very old negatives and film can be nitrate. If film smells strongly of mothballs and is from before 1951, it is likely nitrate film. Nitrate film is highly flammable and is classified as hazardous material. Nitrate film should be handled with extreme care and be kept cool and dry. Check film edges to see if they say “SAFETY” – if so, the film is not nitrate film; 8mm and Super 8 was never made on nitrate.

VHS and Audiocassette Tapes

Magnetic tape is the tape contained in VHS and audiocassette tapes. This material has its own requirements for inspection. You must inspect the tapes for three things: mold, sticky shed syndrome, and physical damage and deterioration.

Mold on magnetic tapes

Inspect the box that the tape is housed in for mold and water damage. If you find either of these things, the tape is most likely contaminated and will not be allowed for use in the lab.

Sticky Shed Syndrome

When the material is removed from its container, smell it and the container. If you detect a smell that can be described as "waxy," "dirty socks," or "astringent/pungent," the binder of the tape—the stuff holding the magnetic particles together—is most likely breaking down. This process is called hydrolysis, or sticky shed, and any tape with a strong odor like this cannot be digitized in the lab because the tape will leave magnetic particles as it breaks down, damaging the tape head and the tape. Sticky shed may cause squeaking during playback.

Damaged magnetic tapes

Any form of damage to the external plastic housing of the tape, or to the magnetic tape itself makes the tape ineligible for digitization in the lab. Broken tape is not allowed in the VCR, and VHS tapes with broken housing are not allowed either. An audiocassette with twisted tape, a damaged cassette shell, or missing the felt pad cannot be digitized in the lab.



Mold as white powdery threads on tape



Mold deposits



Sticky shed

1. Inspect the VHS tape on its hub through the video cassette windows. Look for crystalline deposits and mold on the outside edge of the tape (above middle).
2. Open the VHS cassette access door and inspect the hinges and tape for white powdery mold (above left), intense creases, tears, or visible sticky shed (above right). Sticky shed can be treated, but the tape needs to be sent to a vendor.
3. Inspect the tape housing for breakage—a broken tape housing means poor handling and also likely means damaged tape, which can damage the player. If the housing is damaged, the tape may not be digitized in the lab.

PLAYBACK MEMORY LAB USER AGREEMENT

By clicking "Register" on the calendar event, the Lab User agrees to follow the terms and conditions in this User Agreement.

Date: _____

I, _____ (name), have read the Playback Memory Lab User Guide, and agree to follow all rules, policies, procedures, and restrictions relating to use of it, including, but not limited to, the rules stated herein, the Sonoma County Library Safe Library Use Policy, the Library Internet Use Policy, and all other applicable Library policies and procedures. I understand that these rules, policies, procedures, and restrictions may change at any time without notice and that I will make myself aware of all changes or modifications of said rules, policies, procedures, and restrictions.

I understand and agree that I am financially responsible for any and all damage done to Playback Memory Lab equipment, materials, or facilities resulting in my misuse or failure to follow all rules, policies, procedures, and restrictions relating to use of it. I understand that I am responsible for and agree to pay the repair and replacement costs of the equipment, materials, or facilities resulting from such actions.

I understand that use of the Playback Memory Lab equipment is permissive and at the discretion of the Library. At any time and for any reason, disclosed or non-disclosed, the Library may deny me access to the Playback Memory Lab.

I am aware that use of the Playback Memory Lab is voluntary and may expose me and others to injury, or injury to property. I expressly assume these risks. I agree that by executing this agreement, I shall defend, indemnify, and hold harmless the Sonoma County Library, its officers, officials, employees, and volunteers from and against any and all claims, proceedings, damages, losses, suits including attorney fees and costs, actions, or liabilities for injury or death of any person, or for loss or damage to property, or any other claim in connection with the use of the Playback Memory Lab, including the equipment, tools, and materials therein. On behalf of myself, my personal representatives, heirs, next of kin, successors and assigns, I forever waive, release, and discharge the Sonoma County Library from any and all liability for my death, disability, personal injury, property damage, property theft or claims of any nature which may hereafter accrue to me, and my estate, as a direct or indirect result of my use of the Playback Memory Lab.

Full Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Library Card Number: _____

E-Mail Address _____