Good Practice for TV Archives Management (GPTAM): Introduction

Authored by: The News, Documentary and TV Committee of the Association of Moving Image Archivists, Spring 2025

The **Good Practice for TV Archives Management** grid is a practical tool designed to help organizations assess the preservation status of their television collections and determine their next steps toward sustainable archival management. Created by the Association of Moving Image Archivists' News, Documentary, and TV Committee, this grid provides a structured, adaptable framework for evaluating four key functional areas:

- **Collection Description**
- **Physical Storage**
- **Legal/Administrative Documentation**
- **Preservation**

Each area is mapped across five levels, from **Level 0 (Initial Situation)** to **Level 4 (Sustainable)**, helping organizations to identify where they currently stand and what improvements they can aim for in a given area.

Why is this important?

Effective archival management of television collections is essential to the long-term value, accessibility, and impact of broadcast media. Well-managed archives support programming, legal compliance, institutional memory, and public trust, helping avert the loss of irreplaceable materials.

The Value of Knowing What You Have: Effective archives management gives you accurate knowledge of your holdings. Without solid documentation and description, valuable footage may remain inaccessible, underutilized, or lost entirely. Descriptive metadata, file inventories, and rights information empower stations to reuse or monetize their content, respond to legal requests, and plan preservation efforts more efficiently. You can't use what you can't find.

Celebrating Your Station's Legacy: When stations invest in sustainable archival practices, they gain the ability to share their legacy through anniversaries, retrospectives, community outreach,

and digital platforms. These moments strengthen audience loyalty and reinforce the station's role as a trusted community voice.

Historical, Cultural, and Institutional Value: TV archives document the people, places, and events that shape our communities and society. The historical and cultural significance of these records only grows over time. At the same time, the archives serve as a unique institutional asset, documenting the evolution of a station's voice, values, and impact.

Legal and Compliance Value: Proper documentation of ownership, rights, and broadcast history helps protect stations from liability and supports transparency. As media organizations face increasing scrutiny, well-maintained archives provide the evidence needed to support claims, resolve disputes, and manage risk.

How to use this grid

This is a guide that can be tailored to fit your organization's capacity, goals, and archival users' needs. You may find that your collection falls at different levels across different areas, or even within different collections within your organization. That's normal and expected. The goal is to use this tool to help set priorities and make informed decisions about first steps in your preservation efforts.

Remember: start where you are

Collections management can feel overwhelming. It's ok to be at level zero across the board. This grid can be used as a roadmap to help navigate the process, whether you're just beginning or working toward long-term sustainability.
This resource is part of a broader set of advocacy tools to support TV archives, helping institutions of all sizes strengthen their preservation practices and ensure the longevity of their collections.

What this grid doesn't cover

For more information on areas that aren't covered by this grid, view the **Further Resources** document below. This includes: format identification, digitization vendors/archival suppliers, digital asset management systems, grants, and technical recommendations.

Your feedback is invaluable! Please complete our brief survey here

Good Practice for TV Archives Management (GPTAM): Further Resources

- Preservation Self-Assessment Program (format reference list)
  - DV Rescue project for DVCam tapes
- AMIA Supplier Directory
- NDSA Levels of Digital Preservation
- Local TV Handbook
- **Future steps resources:**
  - AVP's DAM free resources
  - Collection Management System spreadsheet
  - SAA Archivist Toolkit (advocating for archives resources)
- **Grants resources:**
  - NEDCC Grant Opportunities List
  - CLIR
  - NEH
    - Preservation Assistance Grant
  - NHPRC
  - NEA
  - Save America's Treasures
  - IMLS
- **Digitization technical recommendations:**
  - IASA Technical Guidelines
  - FADGI Guidelines

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Functional areas	Level 0 - Initial Situation	Level 1 - Knowing Something [minimal effort]	Level 2 - Taking Action to Improve [person able to work on it]	Level 3 - Basics Addressed [got a grant, might send to vendor, etc.]	Level 4 - Sustainable [in really good shape]
Collection Description [identification of materials, where they came from]	Room full of stuff, may not know what anything is, there may be some label information	Have basic understanding of organization's holdings/content. Might have inherited a basic inventory of some kind. General understanding of types of items (box 1-5 is b-roll, box 6-10 is finalized programs), types of programming (music, sports, news, entertainment)	Identifying what each item is, filling out a spreadsheet (entering information like title and duration from the tape label, listing the format), documenting each item in a formalized way. Start finding people who can help identify items. Spot checking unlabeled tapes to identify the content if playback system is available.	Database going, good handle on item-level inventory, dates and titles, producer information.	All basic information (technical and descriptive metadata) is there, you know exactly what you have. Formalized finding aid, can be accessed by the public/researchers. Have a database that you can continue adding records if needed.
Physical Storage [climate and cleanliness of storage room - off-site storage, etc.]	Don't know where it is (or exists in multiple places).	Identified locations for items/collections, know the conditions of storage location (e.g. this is in room temperature area, damp basement, etc.)	Identified stable storage, taking some climate control steps, putting it on shelves. May still be in separate locations. Identifying risks (*moldy boxes, improperly stacked boxes, humidity, dusty/dirty, temp. fluctuation*) and starting plan for addressing storage issues. Triage for vinegar syndrome items, etc.	Implementing storage changes based on information identified in Level 2 (*putting tapes in better boxes if boxes are falling apart, tapes/films in cases/containers*)	Vault with fire suppression, temperature / RH control, items on shelves. Vinegar syndrome films have been separated / quarantined. A way to monitor the climate.
Legal/administrative documentation [ownership, copyright ownership, deed of gift]	Have no documentation and no idea where to find this information	Identifying who in the organization might have that information. Donor name written on the box, but documentation not with it currently. Researching to see where you may find a deed of gift or copyright information. Making the initial connection with rights/legal department at your organization.	Compiling what you've found (contracts, rights documents, deeds of gift, appearance releases) in one place. Understanding underlying rights (sports material, live arts or music performances). Identifying the hierarchy of ownership (other entities, entities that own your organization)	You've put together documents to identify rights holders. You've reached out to rights holders to sign documents. Have a good sense of what your rights situation is, and can start deeper dives.	Understanding of rights holder/rights situation for each item, and a way to associate the rights with each item. Knowing what you can share online. Being able to communicate what a producer can use.
Preservation [knowing what it is, what is at risk, migration status, etc]	You have no idea	Familiarizing yourself with what formats exist, using an existing format guide. Talking to someone at your station/organization who may help with format identification.	You have identified what formats you have. Identifying which of your formats are most / least at-risk. Creating a plan on rehousing, creating plan on digitization. Looking for grants.	Rehousing tapes, putting films on archival cores, putting films in cans. Starting to implement your digitization / migration plan (in-house and/or vendor).	Digitized, migrated, in a digital preservation system. Plan to continue migration as necessary. You continue to monitor. Everything is accessible. DAM in place.