Can I check out VHS tapes? Will the Library convert VHS tapes?

Our VHS collection is kept in the Media office, so you will need to get in touch with us to check out one of these videos. Email us at mediastaff-group@umbc.edu or complete a Media Booking Form to access or check out VHS.

The Department of Information Technology (DoIT) has announced that as of June 1, 2017 VHS players will no longer be available for classroom use. The AOK Library would like to address some of the questions and concerns that have been raised by this change.

Access to VHS Players

The AOK Library will continue to provide access to VHS players. We have individual viewing stations and a 25-person screening room equipped with a VHS player.

VHS Tapes in the Library Collection

We are actively working with faculty members to identify materials in VHS format that are needed for instruction. Whenever possible, we are working with departments to purchase materials in an updated format. We are also working with faculty to identify appropriate replacement materials and we will continue to keep some VHS materials in the collection.

Converting VHS Tapes

Converting VHS tapes to another format is generally a violation of the United States Copyright Code. There are two exemptions in the Code that allow for conversions under very specific circumstances.

Section 108

Section 108 of the Copyright Code governs copyright law as it applies to libraries and archives. Section 108 provides that reproducing a VHS to DVD without the prior permission of the rights-holder does not qualify as a lawful reproduction unless the duplication is carried out solely for the purpose of replacement of a VHS tape that is damaged, deteriorating, lost, or stolen, or if the existing format in which the work is stored has become obsolete (a VHS tape is generally not considered to be obsolete). As an additional requirement, the VHS tape must not be available commercially in any other format.

Section 108 only applies to materials in the Library collection. Currently the AOK Library does not convert materials in its collection but we will help faculty members to identify available material in updated formats or research possible replacement materials.

Section 107

If you cannot meet the Section 108 conditions, the reproduction of the VHS film, or a portion thereof, to another format may constitute Fair Use under Section 107 of the Copyright code. Factors that would affect the fair use determination include:

- The portion of the tape that is to be dubbed
- If the material is available to purchase
- Ability to obtain permission from copyright holder

If the material is not commercially available and can be evidenced to be difficult to obtain permission, and if only a portion of the tape is being copied, these factors would weigh in favor of fair use.

For more information about Fair Use, please visit:

- Measuring Fair Use: The Four Factors
- Fair Use Evaluator

11/12/14, written by Jodi Hoover, reviewed by UMBC University Counsel

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