

## The Death of Videotape

The handwriting is officially on the wall. Actually, it has been for some time now, but this past October, Sony announced it would discontinue its half-inch videotape recorders, including Digital Betacam, HD-Cam and HDCam-SR videotape machines.



Additional information can be found [here](#):

So what does this mean for archives? Sony will stop selling these videotape recorders sometime around March 2016. Left over inventory of Sony tape decks will likely continue to be sold for the foreseeable future but when those decks run out, no additional decks will be manufactured. Sony offers a seven year window of technical support on discontinued products, with support ending for half-inch decks in 2023. This means those formats will still be viable in the near future, but if you are an archive who relies on a videotape based format for archiving, you must consider migrating to a file-based format. For example, many archives with older videotape collections have migrated or are migrating to Digital Betacam as a way to preserve this content. Many archives with film are transferring to high-definition, and have been migrating to HDCam or HDCam SR as a way to create copies of their films. Very soon, these formats will join the ranks of “endangered” or “extinct” broadcast formats, such as Betacam/Betacam SP, 1” videotape, and U-Matic.





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*The SONY DVW-500P, one of the half-inch video tape decks to be discounted.*

formats, the Betacam SP line, in 2001 to make way for newer formats such as Digital Betacam and the (then emerging) high-definition formats. Now, the market has changed. With the continued migration to tapeless/file based content acquisition and editing, there simply isn't as much of a market for tape based formats as there used to be. As videotape rides off into the sunset, it is important to formulate a plan of action that prevents content trapped on these formats from fading away.

Some “prosumer” videotape decks and formats are still being manufactured, such as the DVCPro and DV-Cam formats, but no one knows for how long. While equipment and parts should remain readily available for the Sony ½” videotape formats, it’s not hard to see that these formats can’t be relied upon for long-term preservation.

In the past, it was common for manufacturers, like Sony, to discontinue one product line to increase sales of a newer product line. For example, Sony discontinued one of their most successful

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