

Identifying Top Quality CD and DVD Media for Archiving

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Will your medical or bank records stored on CD or DVD still be retrievable 10 or 20 years from now? The answer depends on how well this type of media are cared for and on specific manufacturing processes used, according to a study by researchers at the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST).

Knowing that CDs and DVDs will work reliably for a certain number of years is critical to government agencies, hospitals, banks and other organizations that store massive amounts of vital data on optical discs.

As part of a long-term project with the Library of Congress (LOC), NIST researchers tested how well recordable optical disks made with different manufacturing processes held up when exposed to high temperatures, humidity and light levels. They found that some disks performed better than others and that excessive exposure to any of these conditions can accelerate the deterioration. Crucially however, they found that some disks can be expected to reliably store data for decades.

The question is how can those high-quality media be identified for archival applications. To address this issue, NIST, along with the DVD Association (DVDA) and several government agencies, has formed the Government Information Preservation Working Group. This group is working with the optical disk industry to set requirements for archival quality CD and DVD recordable media and to specify to the industry the minimum number of years that recordable CDs and DVDs need to last to meet their requirements. NIST researchers also are developing a test that media manufacturers can use to determine whether the CDs and DVDs

meet the criteria for archival use. Other federal agencies as well as industry organizations are invited to join this effort and can contact the group.

Source: NIST

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