Saving Stuff: Converting Cassettes to Digital

What to bring:
- A cassette tape
- A blank CD-R
- OR a media storage device such as a USB drive (also known as a flash or thumb drive) or portable hard drive

Why so much processing time?
When we record from the record, the only sound recorded is the sound of the record. When we record cassette tapes, not only is the sound of the tape recorded, but also what is know as "tape hiss." We record a bit of the sound of the mechanism as well. The tape hiss becomes all too obvious when burned to a CD. Each track has to be processed in Audacity to remove the sound of the buttons being pushed (start and stop), and to remove the tape hiss.

How much to bring:
- A CD-R holds 72-74 minutes of music.

How long does it take?
The conversion is in real time. Expect to stay as long as it takes to play through your cassette tape, plus an extra 30-60 minutes of processing time.

What if I need help?
Stop by the Digital Media Center during staffed hours. Staffed hours are listed on the DMC calendar online: www.athenslibrary.org/athens/services/dmc/calendar.

If you have any questions, please send us a message through our Contact Us form: www.athenslibrary.org/athens/services/dmc/dmc-cu or call us at 706-613-3650.

Things to know:
- This is a long process, and the resulting CD, even after processing, will never sound as clear as a remastered, professional CD. Tapes lose quality with age and repeated plays, and any transfer from one media to another will result in some loss of quality. Conversion is recommended for tapes that are irreplacable: family interviews, live musical performances, or indie bands who never made it to CD. We're not discouraging you from converting your commercial tapes, just be aware that you may be less than pleased with the final results.
- This demonstartion uses Audacity. Audacity is a freeware music editing program which can installed on either Macs or PCs. Download it at http://audacityteam.org
- Tools used in Audacity are the Select tool, delete key, and noise removal (under the Effects menu).
- Export your audio files in WAV format to burn to a CD, and as MP3 for portable media players such as iPods.
- In order to export as a MP3 for Audacity, you will be prompted to install an additional piece of software for encoding MP3s.
- You may want to use Audacity to divide long family interviews into multiple tracks for ease of listening later.