



A woman demonstrated the Cartrivision videotape player, which was made available in retail stores in 1973.

Many new technologies are born with a bang: Virtual reality headsets! Renewable rockets! And old ones often die with a whimper. So it is for the videocassette recorder, or VCR.

The last-known company still manufacturing the technology, the Funai Corporation of Japan, said in a statement Thursday that it would stop making VCRs at the end of this month, mainly because of “difficulty acquiring parts.”

The Japanese newspaper Nikkei [reported](#) on the

impending demise earlier this month.

The news represented the death rattle of a technology that was considered revolutionary when it was introduced in the 1950s. It took several decades for VCRs to make their way into consumers’ homes, but in its heyday it was ubiquitous and dominant.

According to the company — which said in the statement, “We are the last manufacturer” of VCRs “in all of the world” — 750,000 units were sold worldwide in 2015, down from millions decades earlier.

In 1956, Ampex Electric and Manufacturing Company introduced what [its website calls](#) “the first practical videotape recorder.” Fred Pfof, an Ampex engineer, [described](#) demonstrating the technology to CBS executives for the first time. Unbeknown to them, he had recorded a keynote speech delivered by a vice president at the network.

“After I rewound the tape and pushed the play button for this group of executives, they saw the instantaneous replay of the speech. There were about 10 seconds of total silence until they suddenly realized just what they were seeing on the 20 video monitors located around the room. Pandemonium broke out with wild clapping and cheering for five full minutes. This was the first time in history that a large group (outside of Ampex) had ever seen a high-quality, instantaneous replay of any event.”

At the time, the machines cost \$50,000 apiece. But that did not stop orders from being placed for 100 of them in the week they debuted, according to Mr. Pfof. “This represented an amount almost as great as a year’s gross income for Ampex,” he wrote.

The first VCRs for homes were released in the 1960s, and they became widely available to consumers in the 1970s, when [Sony](#)’s Betamax and JVC’s VHS formats began to compete. VHS gained the upper hand the following decade, but Sony stopped producing Betamax cassette tapes only [in 2016](#).

By the 1980s, the VCR was catching on with ordinary Americans. [In June 1984](#), The New York Times wrote that analysts expected 15 million homes to have the machines by the end of the year, up from five million in 1982.



A Sony Videocassette player in 1970.

But only a decade after the technology became common in American households, the introduction of the DVD, in 1995, sounded the older technology's death knell.

[A Times article](#) in 1997, when DVD players were first released to consumers, did not disguise its excitement for a new horizon: "Sound the trumpets and roll the drums. The digital video disk, or DVD, is here." Within five years, sales of DVDs [had surpassed](#) those of video cassettes.

But less than a decade after DVDs began their reign, the shadow of streaming video loomed. [A 2011 headline in The Times](#) made the decline of the hardware explicit, as technology's circle of life continued its churn:

"Goodbye, DVD. Hello, Future."

r/w 41 Structural Analysis: "The Long, Final Goodbye of the VCR"

- 1. What do you think the research question was for this writer?**
- 2. Find and write the thesis, or main idea sentence of the entire piece.**
- 3. Create an outline that categorizes the article into sections. For example: Introduction (P1-3); Founding Fathers (P4-5); etc.**
- 4. What do the images and captions add to the piece?**
- 5. Find one quoted expert. How did the writer introduce the person? Copy down the introduction of the person. What writing technique is this called (hint hint, it starts with the letter “a”)?**
- 6. Look closely at the facts presented/paraphrased research compared to the number of quotes.**
 - a. About what percentage is research and what percentage is an expert’s quote?**

- b. Reread the quoted material. Why was it chosen to be quoted instead of paraphrased?**
- 7. Reread the hook. What technique was used?**
- 8. Reread the reverse hook. What technique was used?**
- 9. Locate two transitional words or phrases--one showing a chronological shift and one showing a change.**
- 10. Take notes of the main ideas; then, write a draft of an objective summary.**