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Videotapes not created equal

Foreign-made tapes can be dubbed for students.

By **JONATHAN HOUGHTON**
Staff Reporter

Students wondering why videotapes they bought in another country won't work in American videocassette recorders might look to Kay Schupbach for help.

Schupbach runs a videotape conversion service at UNL, a service she said most students probably don't know exists.

With the help of a specially equipped VCR, she dubs videos from virtually any country onto a tape that works on American VCRs.

She said the service is helpful for foreign students, who might unknowingly bring tapes from their home country and expect them to play on American VCRs.

Students who want to send their home movies to their parents in other countries might also find the service beneficial.

"I've watched one student's baby grow up," she said. "The student and her husband's in-laws live in Germany and France, where the VCRs have dif-

ferent operating systems."

Schupbach said she has converted several home movies for the students to send to their parents.

VCRs around the world can run on any of six different operating systems, she said, which can cause confusion at times. She said North American countries' VCRs run on a different broadcast system than VCRs in Europe.

To convert videotapes, Schupbach has to use a VCR that can play videos from each country. She then uses a simple dubbing process to convert the material from a foreign tape onto an American tape.

But while such a VCR is available for about \$1,300, Schupbach said the fee she charges for converting videos is closer to a student's price range — \$7.50 for converting an hour-long videotape, and \$5.00 for each additional hour.

Her fees can vary depending on whether students supply their own blank tape.

"We'd like to provide it free," she said, "but we have to pay for upkeep of the machine. Student fees pay for a lot of it."

Schupbach said her service gets around 10 or 15 requests for tape conversion per month, mostly from foreign

students. She said she is usually able to return videos to students in about three days.

Schupbach has run the service since 1994, when Nebraska Union Director Daryl Swanson approached her about the possibility of Schupbach moving from her job in the union's recreation room.

"He asked if I'd like to do something in the rec room besides hand out pool balls," Schupbach said.

But her new job hasn't been as simple as she had hoped.

Last semester, Schupbach had to temporarily shut down her service when the mechanism that held tapes inside the VCR broke. The manufacturer could not find the necessary part for her for six months. During that time, Schupbach said she received several requests from students that she was unable to fill.

Fortunately, a local video service helped Schupbach by loaning her the necessary equipment until she could get her own unit repaired.

Before beginning this job, Schupbach had never had any technical training. Even now, she said, she didn't consider herself an electronics expert.

"I'm still wondering how to get that 12:00 off my VCR."

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