

New emulation tool unlocks a world of knowledge from old CD-ROMs



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Yale University Library has launched a new online tool which enables users to access outdated CD-ROMs on current computer systems. Using the Yale Library Emulation Viewer, library users no longer need to check out a physical item and track down the required—and now obsolete—hardware to view it. Instead, they can click and view the contents of the disc from a link in the item's catalog record.

The Emulation Viewer is the latest offering of the library's digital preservation team and its Emulation-as-a-Service Infrastructure (EaaSI) program, funded by the Andrew W. Mellon and the Alfred P. Sloan Foundations. Emulation refers to the process of recreating obsolete computer hardware with software. Emulation allows users to run old operating systems and applications that would otherwise be incompatible with modern computers—and it is one of the key emerging technologies for long-term preservation of born-digital and digitized collections.

Now, students and other researchers at Yale can travel back to a world of interfaces such as Microsoft Windows '98, seeing content exactly as they would have in the '80s and '90s when CD-ROMs were routinely used for conference proceeding, datasets, image collections, and textbook supplements. In the Emulation Viewer, users can navigate the information on the disc, and even enable secondary software, such as PowerPoint or Quicktime, to access the contents of the CD-ROM.

So far, about 150 of the library's more than 5,000 CD-ROMs have been uploaded to the viewer and the work is ongoing. At current funding and staffing levels, setting up all the discs in the system will take about three years.

Learn more about the [Yale Library Emulation Viewer](#) [1], and view a list of [CD-ROMs now available in the viewer](#). [2]

Read more about [digital preservation at Yale Library](#) [3].

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Links

[1] <https://guides.library.yale.edu/emulation-view>

[2] <https://guides.library.yale.edu/emulation-view/cd-roms>

[3] <https://guides.library.yale.edu/digitalpreservation>