

Analogue cassette recorders

Analogue recorders are fast going out of fashion in many places. It's increasingly difficult to buy good quality ones, the best quality recorders are more expensive than digital recorders, which make better recordings and are easier to get data off. In their favour, they are easy to transcribe from, and in many parts of the world a lot of people still have tape players, so your consultants may find tapes easier to play. Also they are easier to get data off if you have a partial break-down. You can splice tapes back together, for example, but if a CD or MD breaks you will lose all of the data on it. The media are cheap, which is good, and widely available (although increasingly less so).

Against them is the problem that you have to digitise the recordings if you want to do much with them, such as making spectrograms from the recordings, editing them by playing segments in real time to make talking books or dictionaries, copying them onto CD, etc. Tapes can also become demagnetised over time, they need to be kept out of the heat, and they can warp. Power fluctuations influence the speed of the tape and the pitch of the recording. So, I strongly recommend starting with a digital recorder in the first place.