Claims

We claim:

1. A method of backing up media content files stored on a digital video recorder (DVR), the method comprising:

storing a plurality of media content files on a first storage medium of the digital video recorder;

assigning a value for archival to each of the media content files based on characteristics of the media content files;

selecting only a portion of the media content files to be backed up based upon the values of the media content files such that the media content files having the highest values are prioritized for backup;

transmitting the selected portion of the media content files from the entertainment device to another device through a communication link

to be stored on a second storage medium of the other device for backup.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

transmitting a request to the other device to retrieve the portion of the media content files;

receiving the portion of the media content files from the other device; and

restoring the portion of the media content files on the first storage medium.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the values of the media content files are based upon user inputs.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein the values of the media content files are based upon metadata received from a content provider, the metadata specifying the value of the at least one of the media content files.

5. The method of claim 1 wherein the values of the media content files are based upon a frequency of viewing of the plurality of media content files.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein assigning the value comprises:

searching an electronic programming guide to locate other occurrences of a television program associated with at least one of the media content files; and

selecting the at least one of the media content files for backup responsive to locating no other occurrences of the television program in the electronic programming guide.

7. A digital video recorder comprising:

a communication interface operable to receive television programming from a television distribution network;

a network interface communicatively coupled to another digital video recorder through a communication network;

a storage medium operable to store a plurality of media content files associated with a plurality of television programs that have been recorded by the digital video recorder; and

a controller operable to:

assign a value for archival to each of the media content files based on characteristics of the television programs;

select only a portion of the media content files for backup on another digital video recorder based on the values of the media content files such that the media content files having the highest values are prioritized for backup; and

initiate transmission of the portion of the media content files from the first entertainment device to the other digital video recorder through the network interface.

8. The digital video recorder of claim 7, wherein the processor receives metadata, from a content provider, the metadata specifying the value of the at least one of the media content files.

9. The digital video recorder of claim 7, wherein the processor assigns the value of the media content files based on a frequency of viewing of the plurality of media content files.

10. The digital video recorder of claim 9, wherein the processor is operable to search an electronic programming guide to locate other occurrences of a television program associated with the at least one of the media content files and select the at least one of the media content files for backup responsive to locating no other occurrences of the television program in the electronic programming guide.

11. A system for backing up media files stored on a plurality of digital video recorders, the system comprising:

a first digital video recorder comprising:

a first network interface communicatively coupled to a communication network;

a first storage medium operable to store a first plurality of media content files representing television programs recorded by the first digital video recorder;

a first processor;

a second digital video recorder including:

a second network interface communicatively coupled to the communication network;

a second storage medium operable to store a second plurality of media content files representing television programs recorded by the second digital video recorder; and

a second processor; and

a management server operable to receive data from the first and second digital video recorders specifying the first and second pluralities of media content files and to determine based upon the received data whether one of the first and the second digital video recorders should transfer content to the other for backup.

12. The system of claim 11 wherein the management server is further configured to monitor lists of programs recorded by each of the plurality of digital video recorders, to identify redundancies between the programs recorded by each of the plurality of digital video recorders, and to direct one of the digital video recorders to transfer a copy of a program to another digital video recorder for backup if insufficient redundancies are identified.

13. The system of claim 12 wherein the management server is further configured to identify one of the plurality of digital video recorders having excess storage capacity, and to direct copying of the program to the digital video recorder having excess storage capacity.

We claim:

1. A method of backing up media content files stored on a digital video recorder (DVR), the method comprising:

storing a plurality of media content files on a first storage medium of the digital video recorder, wherein each of the media content files is associated with a television program recorded by the digital video recorder;

assigning an archival value to each of the media content files based on characteristics of the associated television program;

automatically selecting only a portion of the media content files to be backed up based upon the archival values of the media content files such that the media content files having the highest archival values are prioritized for backup

transmitting the selected portion of the media content files from the digital video recorder to another digital video recorder through a communication link for backup storage on a second storage medium of the other digital video recorder.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

transmitting a request to the other digital video recorder to retrieve the portion of the media content files stored on the second storage medium;

receiving the portion of the media content files from the other digital video recorder; and

restoring the portion of the media content files on the first storage medium.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the assigning comprises determining a frequency that the associated television program is broadcast, and assigning lower archival values to programs with higher broadcast frequencies.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the archival value is higher for a program that is recorded as a single instance than for a program that is recorded with a recurring timer.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein the archival value is based at least in part on a frequency of viewing of the plurality of media content files.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein selecting a portion of the media content files further comprises selecting at least one unviewed media content file for backup.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the assigning comprises:

searching an electronic programming guide to locate other occurrences of the television program associated with the at least one of the media content files; and

increasing the archival value for the media content file responsive to locating no other occurrences of the television program in the electronic programming guide.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein selecting the portion of the media content files further comprises: selecting at least one media content file that has been protected by a user of the entertainment device.

9. A digital video recorder comprising:

a communication interface operable to receive television programming from a television distribution network;

a network interface communicatively coupled to a communication network;

a storage medium operable to store a plurality of media content files associated with a plurality of television programs that have been recorded by the digital video recorder;

and a controller operable to:

assign an archival to each of the media content files based on characteristics of the associated television programs;

automatically select only a portion of the media content files for backup on another digital video recorder based on the archival values of the media content files such that the media content files having the highest values are prioritized for backup;

and initiate transmission of the portion of the media content files from the digital video recorder for backup storage on a second digital video recorder via the network interface.

10. The digital video recorder of claim 9, wherein:

the processor is further operable to initiate transmission of a message to the second digital video recorder through the network interface, the message requesting to retrieve the portion of the media content files from the second digital video recorder;

the network interface is operable to receive the portion of the media content files from the second digital video recorder; and

the processor is operable to coordinate restoration of the portion of the media content files received from the second digital video recorder on the storage medium.

11. The digital video recorder of claim 9, wherein the network interface is operable to receive a second portion of media content files from the second digital video recorder and the processor is operable to coordinate storage of the second portion of the media content files onto the storage medium.

12. The digital video recorder of claim 9, wherein the archival value is assigned based upon a frequency that the associated television program is broadcast, such that lower archival values are assigned to programs with higher broadcast frequencies.

13. The digital video recorder of claim 12, wherein the processor receives metadata, from a content provider, the metadata specifying the archival value of the at least one of the media content files.

14. The digital video recorder of claim 9, wherein the processor is operable to receive user input specifying the archival value for the at least one of the media content files.

15. The digital video recorder of claim 9, wherein the archival values are based on a frequency of viewing of the associated television programs.

16. The digital video recorder of claim 9, wherein the processor selects at least one of the media content files for backup that is unviewed by a user.

17. The digital video recorder of claim 9, wherein the processor is operable to search an electronic programming guide to locate other occurrences of a television program associated with the at least one of the media content files and to assign the archival value responsive to locating no other occurrences of the television program in the electronic programming guide.