

Hampshire Record Office

Digital Preservation Policy

* See glossary at end of policy for explanations

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Digital preservation issues are critical to many aspects of the work of Hampshire Archives and Local Studies (HALS) and Wessex Film and Sound Archive (WFSA) at Hampshire Record Office (HRO). HRO exists to preserve and provide access to records relating to the history of the county and its inhabitants.
- 1.2 The bulk of HRO's holdings has so far been received in traditional formats, such as paper or parchment. However, an increasing quantity is now being received in electronic format, and access is being provided to the holdings of WFSA in digital format. Digital copies of hard copy originals are also being created for preservation or access reasons, or deposited with HRO in place of the original.
- 1.3 This digital heritage is at risk of being lost to posterity. Contributing factors include the rapid obsolescence of hardware, software and storage media, issues relating to resources, responsibility and methods for maintenance and preservation, and the lack of appropriate legislation.
- 1.4 Best practice is developing in the area of digital preservation, so this policy can only provide recommendations based on current thinking, and will be reviewed regularly in the light of new research.
- 1.5 This is a key strategic issue for the archives sector as a whole. *Archives Unlocked*, the vision of our sector lead, The National Archives, identifies technological change as one of the three key drivers for change. The document states: 'Digital technology has fundamentally changed what it means to be an archive. Archivists can help the IT and knowledge management communities by bringing professional archival practice to the digital world.' The sense of urgency is conveyed: 'The digital challenge for archives today is one of pace... Today's digital archivists must rapidly develop new archival practices,

with and for each new generation of technology.'

- 1.6 Digital Preservation has been identified as the priority workstream by Archives First, a collaborative network of 11 local authority archive services of which Hampshire Record Office is one. Archives First has been progressing this workstream with support from The National Archives.

2. Aim

- 2.1. To address the risk of losing digital materials, HALS has developed a digital preservation policy. This will ensure preservation of digital material held at HRO, whether received from the Records Management Service as part of Hampshire County Council's electronic corporate memory, deposited or donated by organisations or individuals, or created as digital surrogates. It will also ensure that digital material can be made available to customers, both internal and external, now and in the future.
- 2.2 There are significant costs of delivering archives services, including preserving and providing access to digital records. This policy provides the framework within which we will operate, but always subject to available resources. Applying the policy will therefore entail prioritising, assessing the resources required, and seeking means to supply those resources, such as grants or other financial contributions, and volunteer input.

3. Types and sources of digital material

- 3.1 We will receive at HRO and preserve digital material in a range of formats from a variety of sources, including:
 - Material received internally as part of the HCC archive, for example databases, CAD (computer-aided design) files, the outputs from the corporate electronic document and records management system (EDRMS)
 - Material received externally, as e-accessions, from many and varied sources, including other local authorities, other official organisations, groups, and individuals, e.g. digital photographs of listed buildings, parish plans, digital surrogates
 - Audio-visual material held in WFSA, and also received from sources as above, for example electronic social care records which might include video or audio recordings, or VR (virtual reality) footage from public enquiries.
- 3.2 We will preserve copies of documents created in-house for use in and beyond HRO as surrogates and for outreach purposes.

4 Preservation and migration

- 4.1 We will ensure that HALS's key records are stored and maintained in a manner suitable for long-term preservation. We will also advise other departments of HCC on appropriate methods for the creation and preservation of their records in digital formats including Internet, intranet, and audio and video formats. We will also advise on the legal admissibility of scanning and storage of data in digital format.
- 4.2 The County Council's EDRMS may provide opportunities for digital preservation, the feasibility of which will be investigated.
- 4.3 We will aim to become involved as early as possible in advising projects which will result in output in electronic format. We will encourage them to adhere to standards that promote open systems and interoperability of data, and we will select the most useful records for preservation.
- 4.4 We will encourage good practice and provide advice to owners of archives on the care of their digital documents, whether or not they form part of the holdings of HRO or WFSA.
- 4.5 We will aspire to an automated digital preservation system. Until then, we will perform migration and other preservation actions manually.
- 4.6 We will review and if necessary migrate born-digital and digital surrogates to new storage media and accessible, ideally open-source, versions of software.

5 Storage

- 5.1 Increasing storage capacity and decreasing costs does not mean that we should keep everything. This is because storage costs, though reducing, are not insignificant, and it is also important to be able to retrieve appropriate information in a timely manner from a lean and efficient archive. Information may be required to answer a Freedom of Information enquiry or an historical enquiry, and a digital archive should be able to retrieve the information required to meet its legal requirements and as part of its customer service. Certain categories of record should not be retained longer than is necessary under Data Protection legislation.
- 5.2 As a minimum, we will preserve three copies of a born-digital item, and two copies of a digital surrogate on different storage media in different locations. We will ensure that one of the three copies of a born-digital item is the original and its bit-stream.*
- 5.3 We may store second copies of born-digital items and digital surrogates on locally-managed mass storage. Access copies of born-

digital and digital surrogates will be available for public access via appropriate means.

6. Access and use

- 6.1 For images, we will recommend: TIFFs for the original version for a master copy; high resolution JPEGs as a second copy for high quality reproduction; and low resolution JPEGs for access copies.
- 6.2 For other documents, we will accept Microsoft formats, facilitating upgrades or changes within the context of work on other HCC files.
- 6.3 We will also suggest Adobe Acrobat PDFs, especially for preserving text-based material and digital publications.
- 6.4 We will not recommend proprietary software, e.g. family history programs, for long-term preservation, because the information value does not warrant the expenditure to monitor and migrate a large number of very specific programs for which only a limited number of examples may be held at HRO. Family history programs also provide the means to reproduce the results of research in original sources, rather than the original sources themselves. The results could be rendered in an alternative format if necessary.
- 6.5 We will seek to provide online access, potentially via our collections management system, for images of documents or born-digital accessions where a catalogue record exists in the collections management system. Some 15,000 document images are currently accessible in this way, but storage constraints restrict further expansion of this provision. We will aspire to acquire or develop an access system but in the short-term we will provide access to digital material on CD or DVD. We will ensure that the data carried on these CDs and DVDs is available beyond the lifetime of the CD/DVD (expected to be five years).
- 6.6 We will make regular checks of CDs and DVDs for outward signs of deterioration. For born-digital material, we will seek to check data using checksums* to detect signs of corruption and deterioration. The checksum will also cover security, to ensure, and demonstrate, that data has not been tampered with.

7. Emergencies

- 7.1 We will maintain an IT disaster plan which will be regularly updated and tested. We will take reasonable measures to ensure that no such disaster occurs. Appropriate staff will be trained in the actions to be taken in the event of a disaster.

- 7.2 We will ensure security of digital data through the provision of more than one copy on more than one storage medium. We will ensure these copies are checked, maintained and migrated as appropriate.
- 7.3 We will store separate copies of digital data on separate sites, and HALS copies and IT managed storage will cover this.

Glossary

Bit-stream: series of 0s and 1s, usually refers to original digital item

Checksum: logarithm used to check that digital item has not become corrupted

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Name / Governance Group	Date Approved	Next review date
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v1.2	November 2014	Heather Needham	Revised
v1.3	December 2017	Heather Needham and Caroline Edwards	Revised; agreed by Record Office Management Team
v1.4	1 March 2019		Reviewed and agreed by Record Office Management Team
v1.5	2 March 2021	Heather Needham	Reviewed and minor amendments made to 4.1, 6.3, 6.5 and glossary, including lifetime of CD/DVD. Signed off by Caroline Edwards, Head of Archives and Records