

Digital Preservation Policy

1. Introduction

1.1 Mission

The University of Kent's Special Collections and Archives department act as stewards for the University's unique and distinctive collections. It is committed to the ongoing preservation and accessibility of physical and digital collections for the benefit of scholarship and society. Informed by institutional strategy, Special Collections and Archives manages Kent's collections in a strategic way to maximise their use, value and legacy.

1.2 Definitions

Digital preservation is a proactive process that ensures the continued preservation and access of both born-digital and digitised objects¹ for future use.

Digitisation is the process of converting information from a paper or analogue source media into a digital file for storage, accessibility and preservation. There may also be instances where digital files (sometimes stored on physical media) require reformatting due to obsolescence of technology or physical degradation (such as the audio carriers and formats MiniDisc and DAT).

For the purposes of this policy, 'digital objects' encompasses both the content of the digital asset (the bits and bytes) along with any embedded or descriptive metadata or component.

1.3 Purpose

Digital objects are fragile and are susceptible to alteration, corruption, deletion, technological and format obsolescence. To protect against these risks, action may be needed to ensure digital objects remain authentic, accessible and useable in the long term.

As more digital collections are created and accessioned, digital preservation is a core activity within the department of Special Collections and Archives in Information Services. We seek to protect these deposits with the same diligence we would our physical collections. We follow best practice and demonstrate high quality and sustainable digital preservation services. To support this we will engage with relevant organisations and the wider community of practitioners in this area.

¹ <http://www.ala.org/alcts/resources/preserv/defdigpres0408>

This Digital Preservation Policy demonstrates Information Services commitment to digital preservation. It details Special Collections and Archives approach to preserving our digital collections, and aims to define the principles by which digital preservation activities will occur.

In conjunction with the Digital Preservation Strategy, this policy will:

- communicate and define the objectives, responsibilities, and actions that will help protect our digital objects in the long-term and mitigate risk
- provide a framework for Special Collections and Archives to effectively manage the digital objects in our care in line with agreed standards at all stages of their lifecycle
- raise awareness of the need for long-term preservation of digital objects under the care of Special Collections and Archives

Adherence to this policy will result in our collections remaining authentic, reliable, and useable², and will ensure that we are taking the steps to maintain our status as an accredited archives service³.

1.4 Organisational alignment

Special Collections and Archives collects and develops the University's holdings of rare, unique and distinctive collections and makes them widely available for education, research, and engagement across the University. It also promotes their use through collaboration with local, national and international communities. Digital preservation plays an important part in supporting the University's civic mission, by ensuring digital resources are discoverable, accessible and authentic.

1.5 Scope

This policy applies to digital objects deposited with, donated to, or created by Special Collections and Archives and held for the purpose of long-term preservation. This includes:

- Born-digital objects natively created in digital format (e.g. Microsoft Office document, email, Jpeg images, or HTML code from a website)
- Digitised materials created for the purposes of either preservation or access (digital surrogates created from the original non-digital format, e.g. electronic copy of a physically published book, 3D scan of an object, or scanned copy of an image)

² <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/information-management/digital-preservation-policies-guidance-draft-v4.2.pdf>

³ <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/archive-service-accreditation/what-is-archive-service-accreditation/>

2. Related policies

- IS Collection Management Strategy
- Special Collections and Archives Collections Management Policy
- Collection Development Strategy – Special Collections
- Digital Preservation Strategy

3. Key principles and objectives

Special Collections and Archives recognise that digital preservation is an ongoing set of actions which require planning and organisational commitment from the point of creation or accession. The standard developed by the DCC Curation Lifecycle Model⁴ and the OAIS Reference Model⁵ will be used to provide a structure to digital preservation activities. This will include:

1. How digital objects are created or received
2. How digital objects are appraised and selected
3. How digital objects are ingested in to the archive
4. The preservations actions taken to ensure long term access, preservation and integrity of digital objects
5. How digital objects are stored
6. How digital objects can be accessed, used and reused.

Detail of how we will approach these activities can be found in the Digital Preservation Strategy.

We will use the DPC Rapid Assessment Model⁶ and the NDSA Levels of Digital Preservation⁷ as benchmarking tools to ensure we continue to improve our digital preservation processes in line with best practice and our peers. Current assessments can be found on SharePoint : [Assessment models - All Documents \(kent.ac.uk\)](#)

4. Financial sustainability

IS will include planning for ongoing digital preservation through appropriate budgets. This includes costs for staffing, network and storage, membership to relevant organisations, and preservation equipment. Digital preservation resources are expected to include staff training, technical infrastructure, digital storage space, equipment, and media.

⁴ <http://www.dcc.ac.uk/sites/default/files/documents/publications/DCCLifecycle.pdf>

⁵ <https://public.ccsds.org/pubs/650x0m2.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.dpconline.org/digipres/dpc-ram>

⁷ <https://ndsa.org/publications/levels-of-digital-preservation/>

We will continue to monitor the growth of our digital archive and identify any potential additional costs in relation to technical requirements and infrastructure, and staff skills. Where additional funds are required that do not form part of the day-to-day preservation of digital objects, we will seek to obtain these through project planning or budget bids, or from external funding sources.

5. Risks

The risks to digital objects are subtle and varied⁸. We will monitor risks in a proactive way throughout their lifecycle to ensure we continue to develop our reputation in line with our status as a TNA Accredited Archive. Not monitoring these risks may have a significant impact and could result in, for example, loss of reputation, loss of corporate or cultural memory and additional costs for recreation or repair:

Specific risks associated with the digital objects under the care of Special Collections and Archives will be identified and monitored using a digital preservation risk assessment model⁹, as outlined in the Digital Preservation Strategy. This register will help us prioritise any digital preservation actions we take with our collections.

6. Roles and responsibilities

Implementation and use:

- The Special Collections and Archives Manager is responsible for implementing and communicating the policy.
- The Digital Archivist is responsible for the day-to-day adherence to the policy and for providing guidance on digital preservation issues.
- Special Collections and Archives shall demonstrate and promote best practice in digital preservation.
- IS Research Technologies Development Group will provide a forum for discussions related to future development of the policy.

Technical advice and support

- The IS IT Infrastructure team are responsible for overseeing the storage, backups and integrity of the systems on which digital objects are stored, and for providing technical support and advice.

⁸ <https://dpconline.org/handbook/institutional-strategies/risk-and-change-management>

⁹ https://wiki.dpconline.org/index.php?title=Digital_preservation_risks

Governance:

- IS Department Leadership Group are responsible for governance of the Digital Preservation Policy.

Review:

- The Special Collections and Archives Manager is responsible for the review and update of the policy.

7. Skills and training

We will ensure that digital preservation activities are carried out by staff with the appropriate skills. Staff are encouraged to attend training and relevant events offered by key organisations related to digital preservation and best practice where scheduling and budgets allow. We are active in the digital preservation and digital archiving professional communities and we will work with them in enhancing and progressing our practices.

8. Document review date

Digital Preservation is a changing landscape, and therefore this policy will be reviewed on a three year cycle and in alignment with The National Archives Accreditation requirements to ensure it reflects current thinking, technology, staffing and responsibilities.

Policy created: 19/01/2023

Policy reviewed: 19/01/2026

Appendix 1 - Glossary of terms

Accessible: continued, ongoing usability of a digital resource, retaining all qualities of authenticity, accuracy and functionality deemed to be essential for the purposes the digital material was created and/or acquired for.

[Digital Preservation Handbook](#)

Accession: to take intellectual and physical custody of materials, often under legal or policy authority.

[Dictionary of Archives Terminology](#)

Authentic: The digital material is what it purports to be. In the case of electronic records, it refers to the trustworthiness of the electronic record as a record. In the case of "born digital" and digitised materials, it refers to the fact that whatever is being cited is the same as it was when it was first created unless the accompanying metadata indicates any changes. Confidence in the authenticity of digital materials over time is particularly crucial owing to the ease with which alterations can be made. [Digital Preservation Handbook](#)

Born-digital: Digital materials which are not intended to have an analogue equivalent, either as the originating source or as a result of conversion to analogue form. [Digital Preservation Handbook](#)

Digital object: An object composed of a set of bit sequences. [Reference Model for an Open Archival Information System \(OAIS\)](#)

Discovery: The process of searching for and identifying potentially relevant materials. [Dictionary of Archives Terminology](#)

Format obsolescence: Formats evolve as users and developers identify and incorporate new functionality. New formats, or versions of formats, may introduce file format obsolescence as newer generations of software phase out support for older formats. When software does not provide for backwards compatibility with older file formats, data may become unusable. [Digital Preservation Handbook](#)

Ingest: To accept content or metadata into a repository or database. [Dictionary of Archives Terminology](#)

Integrity: The quality of being whole and unaltered through loss, tampering, or corruption. [Dictionary of Archives Terminology](#)

Long-term: A period of time long enough for there to be concern about the impacts of changing technologies, including support for new media and data formats, on the information being held in [a repository]. This period extends into the indefinite future. [Reference Model for an Open Archival Information System \(OAIS\)](#)

Metadata: Information which describes significant aspects of a resource. Metadata are required to successfully manage and preserve digital materials over time and to ensure essential contextual, historical, and technical information are preserved along with the digital object. [Digital Preservation Handbook](#)

Preservation: The professional discipline of protecting materials by minimizing chemical and physical deterioration and damage to minimize the loss of information and to extend the life of cultural property. [Dictionary of Archives Terminology](#)

Reliable: The quality of being dependable and worthy of trust; the quality of being consistent and undeviating. <https://dictionary.archivists.org/entry/reliability.html>

Useable: Being in an accessible location and usable condition. [International Council on Archives](#)