**Digital Preservation Policy Version**: 1.0
**Last Amendment**: 22/11/2019
**File name**: CC_DigitalPreservationPolicy_Final
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**Approved By**: Digital Archival Management Project Board
**Date Approved**: 07/02/2020
**Next Review**: 2022
**Availability**: Public

## University of Bristol's Cultural Collections Digital Preservation Policy

### 1.    Introduction

1.1    Cultural Collections at the University of Bristol collects and preserves archival materials to support the University and wider communities in accessing and unlocking the potential of these unique collections. Through preserving and providing access to digital collections it aligns with the University's Strategic Plan, to 'revamp our digital infrastructure to make it more resilient, scalable, flexible and secure' meeting the University's dual ambitions to become a truly civic university and 'to provide a welcoming, well-maintained and inclusive campus that provides the infrastructure, both physical and digital, that our staff and students need to succeed individually and to flourish as a community'.

1.2    The Digital Preservation Policy covers the Cultural Collections of the University of Bristol, namely the collaboration between the University of Bristol Library Special Collections, and the Theatre Collection. These organisations are planning to co-locate to a Cultural Collections Centre in a New University Library, and a Cultural Collections Transition Board will be set up for this purpose.

1.3    The University recognises that both archive services are increasingly being asked to care for collections which have been digitised or created in digital form which carry a high risk of becoming obsolete, lost, corrupt or unreadable, if not managed and preserved. In order to counter these risks, and to ensure the longevity, accessibility and reuse of these culturally significant resources, the University must be proactive in the management of its digital collections. In 2018 the University procured a digital archival management system to assist in this activity.

### 2.    Purpose

2.1    The purpose of this policy is to provide a statement on the University of Bristol's commitment and approach to preserving digital material within Cultural Collections.

2.2    Significant risks are attached to losing access to unique digital collections; risks for communities, individuals and the University. A failure to carry out digital preservation does not just risk the loss of valuable data but guarantees it.

### 3.    Scope

3.1    The scope of the University of Bristol's Cultural Collections Digital Preservation Policy covers born digital and digitised cultural collections acquired or created and accessioned by Special Collections or the Theatre Collection.

3.2    Out of scope for the policy are:

- Records produced in the course of University business which have not been accessioned by Special Collections or Theatre Collection

- Research data and research records which have not been accessioned by Special Collections or Theatre Collection

- Materials for which other services and agencies have assumed preservation responsibility

## 4.    Principles

4.1    ***We will ensure organisational viability*** - The University understands the importance of prioritising digital preservation activity to ensure that its digital collections are safe. We will seek only to undertake digital preservation actions when these can be adequately resourced.

4.2    ***We will operate from a legal and ethical basis*** - Our digital preservation activities comply   with all relevant legal and regulatory requirements. Legal rights and responsibilities relating to acquiring, preserving, storing and providing access to digital content are clearly defined and managed. We are guided by the ethical codes of practice of relevant professional bodies (e.g. ARA, CILIP, and Museum Association).

4.3    ***We will endeavour to maintain authenticity of content -*** We will engineer a "digital strong room" by preserving chain of custody data to record each stage of the content lifecycle, documenting provenance and integrity of content and the appropriate creation and use of metadata.

4.4    ***We will seek to undertake continuous improvement*** - By undertaking maturity modelling at regular intervals, monitoring and implementing national and international developments and technologies, seeking archival accreditation and providing ongoing staff development.  Knowledge and best practice from this work will be shared more widely to increase capacity across the institution.

4.5    ***We will collaborate widely*** - The organisation engages with and contributes to the wider digital preservation community in order to advance its own capabilities and those of the community as a whole, e.g. institutional membership of the Digital Preservation Coalition (DPC).

4.6    ***We will work to documented procedures*** - We will document processes for all key operations within the digital archive e.g. acquisition, transfer and ingest, disposition (which includes disposal or transfer to the archive), loan, bitstream preservation, migration, emulation, metadata and cataloguing.

4.7    ***We will work to recognised standards -*** We recognise the importance of standards in digital preservation to facilitate the preservation, access, sharing and discovery of digital materials. We will employ relevant standards and models as far as possible and monitor emerging standards, with the aim of adopting those that are appropriate and useful. We will also work with other parts of the University of Bristol to ensure that best practices are adopted for materials that are to be accessioned and fall under this policy.

4.8    ***We will provide access to digital collections*** - We will ensure discoverability and provide appropriate levels and methods of access, taking all reasonable measures to ensure that no community is disadvantaged.

## 5.    Roles and responsibilities

5.1    Implementation of the policy

To be carried out by staff in Special Collections and the Theatre Collection with the support of the Digital Archivist.

5.2    Review of the policy

The policy review will be led by the Digital Archivist every 3 years or sooner if required.

5.3    Oversight of the policy

This policy will be overseen by the Digital Archival Management Project Board until July 2020 when oversight will be transferred to the Cultural Collections Transition Board.

## 6.    Stakeholders

6.1    Digital preservation services are being provided by Cultural Collections for the University of Bristol and its associated community of internal and external users.

6.2    Internal stakeholders include:
- Senior management of the University
- University of Bristol staff and students in academic or professional services

departments who may contribute materials to the University Archive
- IT services who facilitate the availability of IT systems
- Colleagues in the Library, Theatre Collection, the Historical Photographs of China Project, and others who will be working on these materials

6.3    External Stakeholders include:

- Commercial service providers
- Funders of research and heritage projects
- Legislative bodies
- Peer organisations
- Donors and prospective donors
- National and international collection users
- Prospective students and members of university staff

## 7.    Sustainability

7.1     The University of Bristol has provided core funding to support systems to enable the long-term preservation of digital materials. Effective preservation also requires ongoing resources; including appropriate staffing, skills development and digitisation capabilities.

7.2     Cultural Collections identify the content it wishes to preserve and where appropriate funding or resources are available will apply digital preservation standards according to this policy.

## 8.    Related Policies

This policy should be read in relation to several other policies at the University of Bristol. The key policies are:

8.1     University of Bristol

- Records retention policy http://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/secretary/documents/information-governance/records-management-and-retention-policy.pdf

- Digital preservation for business records policy http://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/secretary/documents/information-governance/records-management-and-retention-policy.pdf

- Research data management policy http://www.bristol.ac.uk/research/environment/governance/research-data-policy/

8.2     University of Bristol Theatre Collection

- Theatre Collection: Collection Care Policy https://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/theatrecollection/documents/Theatre%20Collection%20Care%20&%20Conservation%20Policy%202012-2017.pdf

- Theatre Collection: Collection Development Policy http://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/theatrecollection/documents/theatre-pages/TC%20Collections%20Development%20Policy.pdf

8.3     University of Bristol Special Collections

- Special Collections Development Policy (to follow)

- Archives Transfer Procedure https://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/library/documents/special-collections/archives-transfer-procedure.pdf

## Glossary

**Accessioning** - Taking legal and physical custody of a group of records or other materials and formally documenting their receipt. The term may also refer to the process of documenting the transfer of records or materials in a register, database, or other log of the repository's holdings.

**Acquisition** - Materials received by a repository as a unit; an accession.

**Appraisal** - In an archival context, appraisal is the process of determining whether records and other

materials have permanent (archival) value. Appraisal may be done at the collection, creator, series, file, or item level. Appraisal can take place prior to donation and prior to physical transfer, at or after accessioning.

**Archives** - Records identified for permanent preservation for their historical value

**Bitstream preservation** - A term used to denote a very basic level of preservation of a digital resource as it was submitted (literally preservation of the bits forming a digital resource). It may include maintaining onsite and offsite backup copies, virus checking, fixity-checking, and periodic refreshment to new storage media. Bit preservation is not digital preservation but it does provide one building block for the more complete set of digital preservation practices and processes that ensure the survival of digital content and its usability, display, context and interpretation over time.

**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. This term has been used to differentiate them from 1) digital materials which have been created as a result of converting analogue originals; and 2) digital materials, which may have originated from a digital source but have been printed to paper, e.g. some electronic records.

**Cataloguing** - 1. The process of providing access to materials by creating formal descriptions to represent the materials and then organizing those descriptions through headings that will connect user queries with relevant materials. m 2. The process of providing such access, plus additional work to prepare the materials for use, such as labeling, marking, and maintenance of authority files.

**Content lifecycle** - The stages that a content object progresses through from its creation to disposal (deletion).

**Digital Preservation** - Refers to the series of managed activities necessary to ensure continued access to digital materials for as long as necessary. Digital preservation is defined very broadly for the purposes of this policy and refers to all of the actions required to maintain access to digital materials beyond the limits of media failure or technological and organisational change. Those materials may be records created during day-to-day business; "born-digital" materials created for a specific purpose; or the products of digitisation projects.

**Digitised** - The process of creating digital files by scanning or otherwise converting analogue materials. The resulting digital copy, or digital surrogate, would then be classed as digital material and then subject to the same broad challenges involved in preserving access to it, as "born digital" materials.

**Disposition** - Materials' final destruction or transfer to an archive as determined by their appraisal.

**Emulation** - A means of overcoming technological obsolescence of hardware and software by developing techniques for imitating obsolete systems on future generations of computers

**Ingest** - The process of turning a Submission Information Package (SIP) into an Archival Information Package (AIP), i.e. putting data into a digital archive (OAIS term).

**Loan** - The temporary transfer of materials from one party to another.

**Metadata** - Information which describes significant aspects of a resource. The emphasis in     this policy is on what metadata are required to manage and preserve digital materials over   time and which will assist in ensuring essential contextual, historical, and technical information are preserved along with the digital object. The PREMIS Data Dictionary for Preservation Metadata has become a key de facto standard in digital preservation.

**Migration** - A means of overcoming technological obsolescence by transferring digital resources from one hardware/software generation to the next. The purpose of migration is to preserve the intellectual content of digital objects and to retain the ability for clients to retrieve, display, and otherwise use them in the face of constantly changing technology.

Migration differs from the refreshing of storage media in that it is not always possible to make an exact digital copy or replicate original features and appearance and still maintain the compatibility of the resource with the new generation of technology.

**Provenance** - 1. The origin or source of something. - 2. Information regarding the origins, custody, and ownership of an item or collection. Provenance is a fundamental principle of archives, referring to the individual, family, or organization that created or received the items in a collection. The principle of provenance or the respect des fonds dictates that records of different origins (provenance) be kept separate to preserve their context.

**Records -** documentation created and maintained by institutions and individuals as evidence of their functions and activities.

**Transfer** - The process of moving records as part of their scheduled disposition, especially from an office to a records centre, or from a records centre to an archive.

**Abbreviations**

ARA - Archives and Records Association

CILIP - The library and information association.

DPC - Digital Preservation Coalition.