University of Sussex Library - Digital Preservation Policy

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1. Overview and Purpose

1.1. Background and context
- The University of Sussex Library holds eighty internationally acclaimed archival, manuscript and rare book collections, mostly relating to 20th and 21st century literary, political and social history within its Special Collections.
- The Special Collections hold a unique and growing collection of digital objects that users expect to be available online - this increase represents an opportunity to reach new audiences and to enable them to engage with collections.
- Digital objects need to be preserved indefinitely in the same way as paper documents.
- This policy document outlines the principles that guide the University of Sussex Library’s digital preservation activities.

1.2. Guiding principles

1.2.1. Retention
The Library acquires digital archives with the intention to retain them in perpetuity.

1.2.2. Access
The purpose of preserving digital archives is to facilitate their access and use for research, exhibition and for the public good.

1.2.3. Legislation
Relevant legislation such as the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 and the Data Protection Act (2018) mean that digital archives may need to be embargoed for specified periods after acquisition.

1.3. Aim of policy
- This publicly available document informs all Library stakeholders of our commitment to preserve and provide access to its digital archives.
- It ensures the appropriate preservation of digital archives, so they remain accessible in the long term and authentic by archival standards.
- The policy supports the decision making and reinforces accountability for digital preservation processes.
- It provides a framework to build appropriate systems and processes to preserve digital archives.
2. **Scope**

It applies to the digital collections held by the Library, including:

- Legacy digital archives either born digital or digital surrogates
- Deposits of private collections or organisational archives, which may be wholly digital, or in part
- Transferral of official University of Sussex digital records from University Schools, Departments and Professional Services according to the University of Sussex Records Management Policy
- Digitised content produced from Library Special Collections physical archival collections through internal or external digitisation projects
- Deposits of born digital or digitised research data from University of Sussex research projects that are covered by the Special Collections Collection Development Policy.
- Descriptive, technical and preservation metadata important to the management and discovery of resources

It does not apply to any digital archives of journals and databases purchased by the Library on behalf of the University of Sussex.

3. **Responsibilities**

3.1. **Library**

- The Library has responsibility for the preservation of its digital archives.
- The Library will design and implement the technical environment needed to administer digital assets
- The Library will liaise with third party service providers and University of Sussex IT Services in support of the technical environment and ensure that third parties comply with this policy
- The Library will define the scope of the digital archive collections and interact with depositors to transfer digital material into the collections.
- The Library will also ensure that digital preservation activities are carried out in line with key University of Sussex strategies and with professional archival standards
- The Library’s Digital Preservation Steering Group will make key decisions about future developments in digital preservation strategy
- The Library will collaborate with the two partners at The Keep – East Sussex County Council and Brighton and Hove Museums where appropriate when developing digital preservation systems

3.2. **IT Services**

IT Services have responsibility for supporting all on-campus hardware relating to digital preservation within the Library and any University software applications that the Library uses for digital preservation purposes
4. Policy

4.1. Consequences / impacts of non-compliance

- A principle challenge of digital preservation is to mitigate the effects of technological obsolescence on digitised and born digital archives
- The Library's born digital archives and collections are at risk of becoming unreadable and inaccessible due to bit rot, file format obsolescence and other recognised threats
- Digital items require appropriate software, operating systems and hardware to render their informational content which may not be available in the future
- Storage media such as external hard drives and other optical media are susceptible to damage and decay in the short term
- Existing technologies are at high risk of becoming obsolete within 5-10 years
- An increasing number of accessions will be received in digital form in the future meaning that the percentage of our collections that are digital will only increase
- Digital content will not be freely accessible online and would therefore be at risk of being forgotten

4.2. Policy elements

4.2.1. Integrity
The Library will:

- Ensure the integrity of digital records so that they remain unchanged.
- Store digital records in an appropriate repository.
- Employ systems to monitor the completeness of digital records
- Monitor digital records for intentional or unintentional changes
- Facilitate detection of changes to digital records and rectify them
- Employ standards compliant secure systems and transfer records using secure encrypted protocols

4.2.2. Reliability
The Library will ensure the reliability of digital objects by documenting contextual information about an object in its metadata, which will be saved, with it in the repository. We will make this metadata available to researchers accessing the object in order to evidence its reliability.

4.2.3. Provenance

- The Library will keep a permanent record of an item's provenance in the metadata of digital objects
- A standard submission process will be used to gain control of new digital archives
- The lifecycle of the record will be captured and stored in its metadata

4.2.4. Active management of digital objects

- Due to the rapid development of the digital preservation landscape, the Library will implement an iterative approach to developing digital preservation practices
- To ensure against technical obsolescence, the Library will migrate preservation software and hardware when necessary, or digitally preserve software and hardware if this is impractical
- The Library will carry out preservation activities manually or automatically according to a planned and fixed schedule
4.2.5. **Relationships – national and international**

The Library will maintain professional relationships with the wider digital preservation community in the UK and internationally to ensure preservation activities are informed by new research and current best practice.

4.2.6. **Standards**

The Library will:

- Use current digital preservation standards to guide digital preservation practices.
- Monitor the emergence of new standards and consider adopting them where appropriate and useful.
- In the absence of formal standards, draw on best practice guidelines where appropriate and useful.
- Apply Standards for digital preservation which reference and support The Keep’s TNA accreditation

4.2.7. **Access**

- The Library will facilitate access to collections with due regard to data protection legislation
- Free public access to digital objects will be provided online where possible, or in controlled conditions in The Keep reading room when appropriate.
- The Library will control access to certain digital objects to comply with the Data Protection Act (2018)

### 5. Legislation and good practice

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| Related internal policies, procedures, guidance: | • [University of Sussex Library Strategic Plan](#)  
• [Special Collections Collection Development Policy](#)  
• [The Mass Observation Archive Strategic Plan 2016-2021](#)  
• [The Keep policies](#)  
• [The University of Sussex Research Data Management Policy](#)  
• [University of Sussex Records Management Policy](#) |
| Policy owner: | Head of Collections & Academic Services, Curator of the Mass Observation Archive (Library) |
| Lead contact / author: | Adam Harwood, Research Data and Digital Preservation Technologist |