

St. Helens Archive Service

Digitisation Policy

1. Introduction

St Helens Archive Service aims to preserve its collections and provide appropriate access by developing policies and practices consistent with national standards. Original documents have their own intrinsic value, and although a digital surrogate is not a replacement for original material, digitisation helps to protect archival documents as well as improving their accessibility.

This policy explains the approach taken by St Helens Archive Service in the creation of digital surrogate copies of Archives material.

2. Why digitisation occurs

- 2.1. To preserve unique originals (especially frequently accessed materials or those that are fragile due to their format, condition or damage) from wear and tear for public access.
- 2.2. Protect high value originals from accidental damage or theft.
- 2.3. To increase access and ease of use as well as encouraging sustainability and a more diverse audience to interact with Archives by facilitating new ways of engaging with collections
- 2.4. Use material more efficiently and flexibly within St Helens Archive Service including to raise the profile of the service and support future income generation
- 2.5. Foster a better understanding of the collections through collaboration with stakeholders, local schools, communities and with other organisations holding relevant collections (such as MALG: Merseyside Archives Liaison Group).

3. Risks

- 3.1. Lack of physical contact by users with original material can reduce their understanding of the context in which they were created
- 3.2. Remote access results in reduced support from Archive staff
- 3.3. Promoting material online can lead to unrealistic expectations of the availability and depth of resources online
- 3.4. Staff resources and financial implications for digitisation processes

- 3.5. Increased copyright infringement and greater potential for unauthorised access and the possible intentional or unintentional manipulation of documents

4. Digitisation activities

- 4.1. St Helens Archive Service currently undertakes the following digitisation activities:
- In-house digitisation to meet customer orders
 - In-house digitisation for use in promotional and educational material
 - In-house digitisation to create surrogate copies
 - Planned in-house or external digitisation projects
- 4.2. Intellectual property rights and views of the depositors and owners of the collections will always be considered and respected.
- 4.3. St Helens Archive Service aims to digitise only once and preserve the digitised material as high-quality digital surrogates. This saves staff resources of repeat digitisation and most importantly does not risk damage to the item(s) from repeating processes.
- 4.4. Items for digitisation will be examined to ensure they can be safely handled. In the case of larger projects, whether in-house or with commercial partners, a representative sample of the collections selected for scanning may need to be surveyed by a Conservator.
- 4.5. In-house digitisation equipment includes an A4 Epson Perfection V800 scanner (for paper, photographs, negatives and slides) and an A3 Plustek OpticSlim 1180 scanner (for paper and photographs). Larger format digitisation can be done using scanners in St. Helens Council Planning Department or externally.
- 4.6. Digital surrogates will be made available in the Search Room and online (where appropriate) for public access.
- 4.7. Digitisation will be carried out by Archive Service staff supported by volunteers who have been fully trained in the use of relevant equipment and software.
- 4.8. Images are captured as TIFF files, with a surrogate JPEG created for access. Master files are stored on a backed up networked drive on St Helens Council server.
- 4.9. St Helens Archive will ensure established technical standards, best practice and processes for digital capture, processing, storage, preservation and access are embedded in all projects and shared with partners. Quality assurance on work done by partners will be embedded in contracts/agreements. Expert advice will be sought as necessary.

5. Access

- 5.1. Digitisation increases the scope to provide customers with copies of Archives and allows the Archive Service to use images of Archives in displays, promotional and educational material.

- 5.2. Digitised images that are free from copyright/depositor/data or other restrictions will be made freely available as low resolution jpegs via St Helens Archive Service Calmview site and / or St Helens Community Archive website.
- 5.3. Digitised images and catalogued born-digital records are available via a non-networked computer in the St Helens Archive Service Search Room.
- 5.4. St Helens Archive will use appropriate analytics to monitor the use of online digital collections by the public, to help assess their value and impact and inform future digitisation planning.

6. Review

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