

St. Helens Archive Service

Digital Preservation Policy

1. Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to state and communicate the principles that guide the digital preservation activities of St Helens Archive Service to manage the long-term preservation and access to born digital records and digital surrogates of the historical resources in its care.

St Helens Archive Service exists to preserve and provide records relating to the history of the borough of St Helens and its communities. The majority of St Helens Archive Service collections have so far been received in traditional formats, such as paper or parchment. However, it is expected that more items will be deposited as born digital records, comprising digital images, sound recordings, moving images, word processed documents, financial spreadsheets, archaeological surveys etc. in the future and there is a requirement to preserve and provide future access to these records.

2. Terminology

- **Archives** are the record of everyday activities of organisations, businesses and individuals. Archives take many different forms, - handwritten, typed, printed, photographic or electronic and include audio visual material such as video and sound recordings. They are preserved permanently due to their evidential value.
- **Born Digital** records are created digitally, for example word processor, email or digital camera.
- **Digitised records** are digital copies made from an analogue original, for example a photograph of a parish register.

3. Aims

3.1. The objective of this policy is to ensure that the born-digital Archives remain authentic and accessible in the medium and long-term. Digital heritage is at risk due to the obsolescence of hardware, software and storage media, issues relating to resources, responsibility and methods for maintenance and preservation. St Helens Archive aims to ensure preserved digital records are actively managed, protected from data loss and can be located, accessed and trusted by stakeholders.

- 3.2. Born digital records, including surrogate copies, remain accessible in the long term. The data integrity and authenticity of born digital records be maintained throughout the lifecycle by following an active digital preservation programme.
- 3.3. Copyright and intellectual property rights will be managed ensuring public accessibility.
- 3.4. Digital preservation methods follow current and international standards and guidance.

4. Appraisal, Selection & Acquisition

- 4.1. Appraisal and selection of born digital records will follow the guidelines set out in the Collection Development Plan.
- 4.2. The file format should be carefully considered for its long-term sustainability. Potential depositors are given advice according to the depositor guidelines.

5. Storage

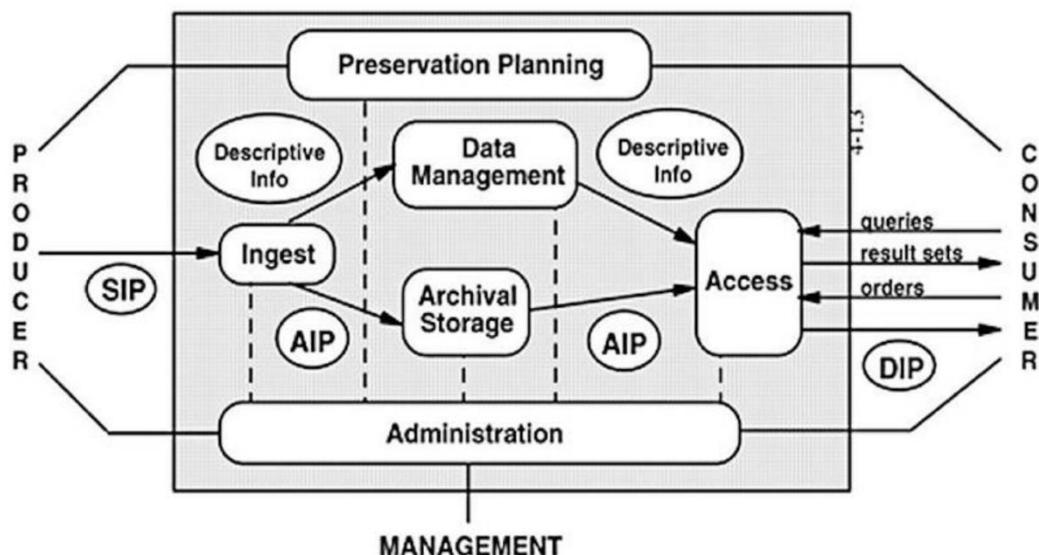
- 5.1. Current long-term storage methods include master files saved in a restricted folder located on the Archives Service corporate drive on the St Helens Council server. A back up copy is kept on the Library Service corporate drive on the St Helens Council server. Both are subject to back-up procedures as part of Business IT Services.
- 5.2. At least three copies of a born-digital record should exist. The original record, a preservation copy and one access copy. For digital surrogates, two copies should exist.
- 5.3. The access copy of a born digital record or digital surrogate will be available offline via a dedicated computer in the Archive Service Search Room or remotely as appropriate.

6. Preservation and Data Integrity

- 6.1. St Helens Archive Service hold an indexed number of items in offline physical storage (CD, DVD, USB hard drive). Electronic storage mediums should not be considered archival as obsolescence is inevitable. It is necessary to plan to migrate all currently held born-digital records onto shared drives.
- 6.2. St Helens Archive Service will ensure that records are stored and maintained in a manner suitable for their long-term preservation. St Helens Archive Service will review and if necessary, migrate born-digital records and digital surrogates.
- 6.3. A regular process for checking the data integrity of born digital and digital surrogates using checksums, as well as migrating data to open standards will need to be established.

7. Preservation Actions

Digital objects will be managed using the OAIS Reference Model, a conceptual framework for archiving digital material that is also an acknowledged international standard. The below areas describe the planning and action needed for every stage of caring for digital material outlined by OAIS.



7.1. Ingest

Ingest is the process of taking the digital material and corresponding metadata (known as a Submission Information Package or SIP) from a creator or depositor into a repository. St Helens Archive Service perform checks on the SIP, including verification of file types, validation of file content, integrity checks and normalisation of files as needed.

This digital file, along with created or enhanced metadata becomes known as an Archive Information Package or AIP, ready for long-term storage. Metadata is structured information about material and is fundamental to preserving and providing access to digital material. Metadata should include administrative metadata, technical metadata, provenance and rights.

The PREMIS Data Dictionary is the international standard for preservation metadata. Whilst St Helens Archive does not have the infrastructure needed to implement PREMIS at this time, it is a priority for the future.

7.2. Storage

Archival storage of AIPs includes duplicating digital content in both local and geographically removed systems. The maintenance of AIPs includes migrating to new formats as necessary, checking for file errors, implementing disaster recovery and providing access copies of digital material to users.

7.3. Data Management

Data Management involves the descriptive information associated with AIPs including metadata and collection catalogue information in order to aid with the availability and accessibility of digital collections.

7.4. Administration

Administration describes the regular operations of the Archive Service including negotiating donor agreements with producers, monitoring access control, and providing user services. The administration also includes the development of policies and standards and the communication with stakeholders.

7.5. Access

Access involves creating the opportunity for users to find relevant information about digital material in a repository and access the material. A Dissemination Information Package (DIP) is the version of the digital material that users interact with; this may be a surrogate copy, in a different format or have material redacted.

8. Training and development

- 8.1. Staff are encouraged and supported to undertake continuing professional development in digital management and preservation.
- 8.2. Many processes are new and are open to change following revised guidelines issued by The National Archives and the Digital Preservation Coalition. The very nature of digital preservation requires a fluid approach to training needs and whilst this policy outlines the commitment of St Helens Archive Service in delivering digital preservation, resource for continued training and development must be provisioned.
- 8.3. St Helens Archive Service will advise local groups and projects on best practice in the preservation of digital Archives.

9. Emergencies

- 9.1. St Helens Council Business IT Department maintain an IT disaster plan and take measures to ensure that no such disasters occur. Appropriate staff will be trained in the actions to be undertaken in the event of a disaster.
- 9.2. A Disaster Recovery Plan for digital records should be agreed with Business IT at St Helens Council.

10. Review

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