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Oxford Brookes University Library – Special Collections Digital Preservation Policy

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1 Introduction

Oxford Brookes University Library is the custodian of the special collections it houses and takes its responsibilities for the care and preservation of those collections very seriously. The majority of our special collections are in 'traditional' formats, predominantly paper-based, but we already hold some digital records and expect that born digital material will become a larger and more significant part of future deposits. We have also created digital surrogates of some of our collections to improve access to the collections and preserve the original records. This Digital Preservation Policy complements our Preservation Policy and sets out what the University Library will do to achieve its duty of preservation for digital records in its care – while maintaining and promoting access – both currently and in the future.

1.1 Principles and responsibilities

Oxford Brookes University Library is committed to maintaining its special collections, including digital records, in a usable condition to support the teaching and research of the University, and, as appropriate, to support and contribute to the wider research community. The Library believes that ensuring the preservation of its special collections plays an important part in fulfilling the following mission statements of the University, Directorate, and Library.

- Oxford Brookes University is committed to leading the intellectual, social and economic development of the communities it serves through teaching, research and creativity that achieve the highest standards.

- The Directorate of Learning Resources will support the University in the fulfilment of its mission through the provision of a comprehensive range of library and information services which facilitate learning, teaching and research, and which underpin the operation of the University.

- An important way in which the Library is supporting the University's strategy of 'enabling a student experience of the highest standard possible' is through the development and promotion of our special collections. It is the Library's intention that these collections will further strengthen the University's teaching and research efforts and also provide a valuable resource for the wider research community.

The Library also recognises the importance of preserving the corporate memory of the University (and its predecessors) through the permanent retention of certain records produced by the institution, as recommended by the University's Records Management Policy.

1.2 Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, Oxford Brookes University Library has adopted the following definitions:

1.2.1 born digital material
Material which was created in a digital format.

1.2.2 digitised material
Material which was created in an analogue format and has since been copied into a digital format e.g. by scanning or photographing the original.

1.2.3 metadata
"A set of data that describes and gives information about other data."[1]

1.2.4 core metadata
Metadata which can be extracted directly from the digital record. This can include elements such as file type, file size, date of creation etc. Also referred to as technical metadata.

1.2.5 descriptive metadata
Metadata which adds elements of description not included in the core metadata. This can include elements such as creator, description, identifier etc.

1.2.6 migration
Moving a digital record from one file format to another, often to combat obsolescence.

2 Strategic objectives for the preservation of digital records

Oxford Brookes University Library will ensure that the management of its special collections' digital records, their security, documentation and care are sufficient to meet the requirements of the collections and their users according to agreed priorities and responsibilities.

[1] Oxford English Dictionary online, www.oed.com

2.1 File formats

In order to ensure long term preservation of the digital records in our care we will migrate each digital record into a suitable preservation format. We will also create an access copy to be used by researchers (see 2.3 Access and use). The original file will be retained and can be returned to if any issues of authenticity arise.

A metadata file, compliant with the Metadata Encoding and Transmission Standard (METS), will be created and kept with each copy of the record. This will record core metadata extracted from the digital record and descriptive metadata, in line with the Dublin Core element set, which can be added by the Archivist.

Preservation and access file formats will be chosen based on "community best practices, availability of open-source normalization tools, and an analysis of the significant characteristics for each media type"[2].

New accessions will be accepted in line with the Special Collections' Acquisitions Policy. However, the Library does not have the facilities to accept all file formats into the archive, a list of accepted file formats and their corresponding preservation and access formats will be included in the Library's Digital Preservation Strategy. In some circumstances we may investigate ways to accept and preserve formats not specified on the list but this will be assessed on a case by case basis.

2.2 Storage

Digital records and their accompanying files will be stored in a secure folder on the LR Drive, which is backed-up regularly. Access to the digital records will be limited to a small number of Library and IT staff. Additional access copies will also be stored on the University's Research and Digital Asset Repository and/or a stand-alone PC in the reading room. See 2.3 below for further information on access.

Storage space on the LR Drive is limited and it is the intention that a purpose-built storage service will be acquired for the long-term storage of the processed digital records. The long-term storage facility will limit access to the digital records, therefore only fully processed digital records will be stored in the facility, while unprocessed digital records will be stored on the LR Drive until they are ready to be transferred.

2.3 Access and use

Access copies of digital records for which we own the copyright, or for which we have obtained the relevant permissions from the copyright owner(s), will be made available via RADAR, the University's Research and Digital Asset Repository. The RADAR record will have a link back to the relevant catalogue entry on the online Archive Catalogue.

Digital records for which Oxford Brookes does not own the copyright to, or has not obtained the necessary copyright permission, but which are open to the public, will be made available in the reading room in Headington Library, via a stand-alone PC to prevent unauthorised copying.

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[2] Archivematica, media type preservation plans, http://archivematica.org/wiki/index.php?title=Media_type_preservation_plans

The same restrictions on use will apply to digital records as records in traditional formats. Therefore some digital records will remain closed for a number of years (under the Data Protection Act or the wishes of the donor). These records will be processed in the same way as other digital records but no access copy will be made available to the public.

Where an electronic record is available, this will be noted on the Archive Catalogue and either a link to the record on RADAR or a note to say it is available to view in the reading room will be added.

2.4 Audit and risk management

Multiple copies of each digital record will be stored on a backed-up server in order to minimise the risk of data loss through bit rot and deterioration. Checksums will be generated for born digital records prior to processing. The checksum will be used to check for changes in the original record in the event of suspected deterioration of one of the original copies. Five-yearly spot checks will also be conducted on a range of file formats.

Preservation and access file formats for different file types will be reviewed at least every five years so that the University is using the most appropriate formats to ensure accessible, reliable digital records.

2.6 Budgeting

No separate Library revenue budget heading is identified for Special Collections digital preservation. Ongoing revenue needs are supported from appropriate Library budget headings e.g. Equipment. Budgetary needs for specific projects would need to be identified in advance and a case and application made to appropriate internal or external funding bodies.

2.7 Standards and guidance

The following standards and sources of guidance have been used in the development of this policy and the accompanying Preservation Strategy:

- ISO 14721:2003 Space data and information transfer systems – Open Archival Information Systems – reference model (OAIS)
- ISO 15836:2009 Information and Documentation – The Dublin Core metadata element set
- Metadata Encoding and Transmission Standard (METS), http://www.loc.gov/standards/mets/
- The National Archives, www.nationalarchives.gov.uk
- The Digital Preservation Coalition, www.dpconline.org

2.8 Policy review

Best practice in digital preservation tends to change more frequently than best practice for traditional formats, therefore this policy should be reviewed at least every three years.

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