

Members Interest
N/A

Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Joint Archive Committee 7 February 2019

Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service: Volunteers

Recommendation(s)

- 1a) That the Joint Archive Committee approves the revision to the Digital Preservation Policy.
- b) The Joint Committee approves development of a business case to identify corporate funding to procure a digital preservation system.
- c) The Joint Committee supports the Archive Service joining the Dorset led local authority digital preservation consortium.

Report of Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities (Staffordshire County Council) and Director of Housing and Community Services (Stoke on Trent City Council)

Reasons for Recommendations

Background

2. Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service (SSoTAS) developed its first Digital Preservation Policy in 2007. The Archive Service is committed to preserving digital archives as part of its role as a Place of Deposit and an accredited Archive Service. To maintain its Archive Service Accreditation, the service must demonstrate its ability to preserve digital records.

3. The last review of the policy was on 2013 in preparation for Archive Service Accreditation assessment. The report from the assessment noted:
Born- digital holdings are very small; they are held on a separate server. Good relations exist with Council officers and with the records management and information governance teams, but the transfer of born-digital content from councils to archives remains under-developed.

This policy review sets new aims to address this feedback and ensure digital preservation work develops within the service.

Regional digital preservation work

4. In June 2016 a new regional archive network, Archives West Midlands (AWM), was launched as a charitable organisation. Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service is one of sixteen members which includes other local authority archives in the region, three universities, a cathedral and a charitable archive. The Commissioner for Culture, Communities and Rural chairs the board of trustees and the Head of Archives and Heritage is also a trustee.

5. AWM has delivered two regional projects to support its members to develop digital preservation in their own service and develop a mutually supportive network. AWM received £1,710 of funding from The National Archives in 2016/2017 to establish the level of digital preservation readiness amongst its members. This confirmed the need for:

- Practical training, templates for policies, and guidance.
- Investment to increase capacity.
- Testing digital preservation systems and investing in a platform to provide secure public access to digital records.

6. As a result of a second application for funding AWM received over £7,000 from The National Archives which it match-funded from its own budget. This project started in 2018 and seconded two archivists from Birmingham and Worcestershire Archive Service to develop policy templates and guidance on accessioning digital archives. One of the templates was for a digital preservation policy and this has been adopted in the 2019 review of the Archive Service policy (see Appendix 2).

7. The 2018 review of the Archive Service Accreditation standard includes more stretching requirements around preservation of digital archives. There is a requirement for services to self-assess against the National Stewardship Digital Alliance (NDSA) levels of digital preservation¹. AWM has pledged to support its members to achieve level one of this standard.

Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service Policy and work to date

8. Self-assessment of SSoTAS against the NDSA levels has been completed using a traffic light system in each section with cells colour coded:

- Red = Fail
- Amber = Incomplete
- Green = Pass

The full table is shown at Appendix 3.

9. SSoTAS is not compliant with level one of the NDSA Levels of Digital Preservation. Out of nine elements the service is fully compliant with four, partially compliant with three and not compliant with one. Key actions have been identified to enable the service to achieve level one:

- An immediate full audit of all media and digital holdings across the whole service would enable full compliance with storage and geographic location.
- The Service can address some issues in partial and non-compliances through the review of its terms of deposit and staff training in use of tools to generate checksums. This would enable the collection of fixity information.
- The opportunity to influence the creation of digital files is more difficult. This depends on the service becoming more proactive in taking digital archives especially from its parent authorities. The service is currently looking at taking SCC minutes in digital format which will be an opportunity to demonstrate the service is ready and able to cope with digital archives.

¹ National Digital Stewardship Alliance Levels of Digital Preservation <http://www.digitalpreservation.gov:8081/ndsactivities/levels.html>

- The service made good progress from 2008-2011 but this has stalled with role changes within the service. This needs to be addressed or there is a risk that the service will be unable to take significant deposits of digital archives (including both councils) and it will not comply with Archive Service Accreditation.
- The Service has struggled to maintain access to its secure server space as each time an upgrade takes place across the network staff access has to be re-established. Similarly public access is lost each time changes are made to the public computer network. A separate digital preservation system would enable the service to maintain access to digital collections.

10. SoSSAS revised Digital Preservation Policy adopts the principles and statements of the Archive West Midlands Policy. It includes commitments to:

- Develop an action plan for the Service to meet level one of the National Digital Stewardship Alliance Levels of Digital Preservation.
- Continue the region-wide investigation of both proprietary and open-source digital preservation systems. This will allow an assessment to establish which system suits the needs of the service in practical terms and is financially viable for the long-term

11. The revised Policy identifies roles and responsibilities across the service to take work forward. It cross-references other relevant policies within the Service. The Policy also commits to proactively collecting digital archives from major depositors. Priority will be given to the two parent authorities and establishing key digital records for transfer such as council minutes.

Digital Preservation Systems

12. The regional AWM work has tested open source and commercial digital preservation systems (Archivematica and Preservica). Both provide the ability to process and store digital archives securely. They also enable the automation of some processes. To date SSoTAS has managed records manually and repeated work to restore access to its digital storage. This is unsustainable as staffing resources reduce and it risks loss of access to digital archives.

13. Consultation with Staffordshire ICT has helped to establish a preference for a commercial out of the box solution (Preservica) rather than open source. This is because ICT staffing resource is not available to customise a solution.

14. An opportunity has arisen to join a local authority consortium to acquire Preservica. The consortium is led by Dorset Archives and includes Dorset, West Sussex & Wiltshire & Swindon. Three more services, Kent, Berkshire and Oxfordshire are due to join from April. The costs of the system of £4,769 per annum including 1TB of storage. As more members join the consortium the price reduces. SSoTAS would need to indicate its ability to join in February 2019. The cost could be shared between both authorities.

15. As part of an options appraisal for the Staffordshire History Centre and assessment of archive storage has been carried out across the service. This has also looked at the opportunities around digital storage and proactive collection of digital archives. A comparison of physical and digital storage for the Joint Archives Committee Minutes is given below.

Collection	Storage	Cost
JAC physical minutes 1997-2014	0.003m ³	£2.24 p/a cost including retrieval
JAC digital minutes 1999-2014	39.1MB=0.0000391TB	39.1MB cost £0.18 (based on Preservica)

These figures have been checked by Staffordshire ICT and finance.

Conclusion

16. It is recommended that the revised Digital Preservation Policy is approved by the Joint Archives committee. The Service should also develop an action plan to ensure it can meet the NDSA levels of digital preservation. This will assist the Service when it is reviewed under Archive Service Accreditation.

17. It is recommended a business case is developed in both authorities to seek corporate funding to enable the procurement of a digital preservation solution. This will enable the service to automate processes for accessioning digital archives and provide secure storage as well as public access.

18. Roles and responsibilities identified in the policy should be supported with internal and external training opportunities. The Service should continue to work with Archives West Midlands to harness the benefits of regional collaboration.

Appendix 1

Equalities implications:

Not applicable.

Legal implications:

Digital records need to be securely stored and preserved to ensure they remain authentic and trustworthy and provide evidence of decision making.

Resource and Value for money implications:

To progress digital preservation work there is a requirement for additional resources. There is also an opportunity to provide value for money around storage by proactively collecting digital archives.

Risk implications:

There is a risk of loss of digital archives as current storage does not provide reliable access. There are also risks that that the Archive Service is not able to meet Archive Service Accreditation when it is next reviewed and unable to fulfil its core function to both authorities.

Climate Change implications:

Not applicable.

Health Impact Assessment screening:

Not applicable.

Report author:

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List of Background Papers

Papers

Contact/Directorate/ext number

Appendix 2: Digital Preservation Policy 2019

Appendix 3: Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service NDSA Levels