STAFFORDSHIRE
ARCHIVES & HERITAGE

DIGITAL PRESERVATION POLICY

February 2019

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1   Staffordshire Archives and Heritage comprises Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service, the William Salt Library and the County Museum Service. The Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service is an Accredited Archive Service administered and funded by Staffordshire County Council and Stoke on Trent City Council under a joint agreement. The County Museum is an Accredited Museum funded by Staffordshire County Council and works in partnership with museums across the region to provide museum development support. The William Salt Library is a charitable library managed by the Archive Service on behalf of the Trustees.

1.2   The service operates two record offices, the William Salt Library, and three collection outstores. A significant proportion of the County Museum's collection is on long term loan and display at Shugborough Estate. The Archive Service provides services for Staffordshire County Council and Stoke on Trent City Council in relation to its legal documents and archives.

1.3   The vision for the Service is:
       Connecting people to the collected stories and heritage of Staffordshire, Stoke on Trent and beyond.

1.4   Staffordshire Archives and Heritage is a subscribed member of Archives West Midlands (AWM). AWM is a strategic partnership of and for archive services in the West Midlands region, which seeks to maximise the benefits of working together and to realise funding opportunities.

1.5   AWM is committed to seeking ways to develop a regional solution for digital preservation. It recognises that by working together its member services are in a stronger position to make progress. By seeking funding opportunities and pooling existing knowledge and resources, Archives West Midlands seeks to take significant steps towards helping to secure the digital heritage of the West Midlands. By working collaboratively as a region,

1.6   AWM aims to:
- Share knowledge and skills amongst services for the benefit of all members.
- Deliver greater efficiencies and savings by working together so member services can continue to meet their objectives, even with reduced resources.
- Maximise the expertise of staff in the region to ensure services get the best return on investment.
- Save time and resources by sharing information and creating joint standards, guidelines and templates to use internally and to disseminate to depositors.
- Work together to increase chances of attracting external funding and sponsorship.

As part of its commitment to advancing digital preservation activities in the West Midlands, AWM successfully obtained funding from The National Archives' Sustainability Fund to enable the preparation of this Digital Preservation Policy. The funding received also enabled the preparation of an Archives West Midlands' report on Accessioning Born-digital material.

As a member of Archives West Midlands, Staffordshire Archives and Heritage (SAH) has adopted this jointly prepared policy.

2. PRINCIPLE STATEMENT

2.1 We connect people to the memories of Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent, by engaging them with the collections we develop and preserve for current and future generations.

2.2 Our commitment to secure our documentary heritage remains the same regardless of the format in which records are received. The purpose of this policy is to state and communicate the principles that guide SAH's activities to preserve digital information resources.

2.3 Procedures and guidance will be developed in the future to address specific aspects around the implementation of this policy.

2.4 Digital materials pose extra challenges to repositories in terms of maintaining long-term access. Unlike paper-based records, digital material has only a short timeframe in which action can be taken to secure its accessibility. The volume, complexity and importance of data that is being produced digitally is growing on a huge scale and it is therefore imperative to act now to establish procedures for effectively dealing with digital material.

2.5 Although digital technology provides considerable opportunity for rapid and efficient access to information, there is a very real threat that digital materials are created in such a way that even short-term viability cannot be assured, therefore there is much less prospect of access by future generations. Threats of technological obsolescence and rapid physical deterioration of digital material means that there is a need for a very different approach to be taken in its management – one which is proactive, planned and reviewed at regular intervals.

2.6 There are a number of pressing reasons for action to be taken:
• Digital material will quickly become inaccessible. Loss of data will need to be justified to depositors and to other stakeholders with an interest in or need for access to the material.

- SAH has statutory obligations to provide access to Public Records. These obligations will remain the same regardless of the format Public Records are received in.
- If access to digital surrogates cannot be maintained beyond the short-term then it may be difficult to justify the initial, often substantial, investment in creating digital resources.
- Retrospective preservation of digital material can be prohibitively costly or, in a worst case scenario, impossible due to media deterioration. It is widely acknowledged that the most cost-effective means of ensuring continued access is to consider preservation implications as early as possible, preferably at the creation stage.
- Digital material has value. This may be in terms of the value of reproducing the material, or in terms of the value of its content for informational, democratic, identification, well-being and evidential purposes, especially where legal and regulatory compliance is implied.

3. SCOPE OF POLICY

3.1 This policy applies to all digital collection material *held for the purpose of long term preservation* by SAH. It also applies to any preservation metadata and persistent identifiers associated with such digital collections.
The information resources in digital form covered by this policy can be categorised as follows:
- Born digital resources, which have been created and managed electronically
- Made digital resources, which were originally created in non-digital form and have subsequently been converted to digital form for business, preservation or access purposes

3.2 To ensure that records are submitted in a suitable condition for acceptance into the archive, the following principles apply to the digital resources that will be collected and preserved under the terms of this policy:
- Appraisal and selection procedures for digital material must comply with SAH Collections Development Policy and Strategy.
- Digital material must be presented in file formats that are accepted and can be appropriately managed by the service. Preferred formats as advised by Staffordshire ICT include: Microsoft office, TIFF for image files, and PDF/A. Our approach is to update a list of acceptable formats for long term preservation of digital archives
- Material offered in non-preferred formats will be assessed on a case-by-case basis by archive staff and advice will be given where any deposits cannot be accepted.
- Minimum levels of descriptive and technical metadata must be supplied at the point of deposit as detailed in our digital records deposit form to ensure the efficient and appropriate long-term preservation of the material

4. POTENTIAL SOURCES OF DIGITAL ARCHIVES

4.1 The main potential source of digital material is that of the two parent authorities: Staffordshire County Council and Stoke on Trent City Council. Staffordshire County Council already has done some work to introduce an electronic document and records management system (EDRMS) lead by the Information Governance section. The EDRMS has been rolled out to a number of services and is a standard corporate system. The Archive Service will continue to maintain links with Information Governance to ensure that digital records held in this system are reviewed and appraised for permanent retention in the same way that it does with paper records.

4.2 The County Council routinely publishes information on its website (Staffordshire Web), Intranet and Extranet. The Archive Service participated in a Web Archiving Pilot in 2012. This enabled the Service to work with the National Archives to assess preservation techniques. It also revealed that the cost of continuing web archiving for Staffordshire would be prohibitive. Our preferred approach for web archives is to nominate sites for preservation by the British Library and continue to monitor the Internet Archive and National Archives UK Web Archive to ensure the local authority sites are captured.

4.3 Other sources of digital archives include deposits from external organisations such as:
* other local authorities
* the Diocese
* the Coroner
* Magistrate Courts
* Parish Councils
* Schools
* Businesses
* Local organisations and individuals.

These organisations will be creating documents in many different formats and different versions of proprietary software. The Archive Service will discuss the position regarding digital archives with the major depositors.

5. PRESERVATION OBJECTIVES

SAH is committed to preserving the archival version: the fullest, highest-quality available version of a digital resource, whenever possible; and the descriptive, structural, and administrative metadata associated with it. To enable the service to achieve this objective, SAH:
* Will seek to preserve the original bytestream of digital objects
* Will actively monitor collections for corruption and unauthorised changes

- Will continue to investigate and test the suitability of both open source and widely implemented proprietary software with excellent export formats, in order to procure the digital preservation system best suited to the service.
- Will continue to document, monitor and refresh its technical processes over time
- Will create and manage its digital collections in accordance with standards which are commonly adopted within the heritage sector and digital preservation community
- May undertake preservation activities, such as migration from one file format to another file format, to ensure that digital collections are accessible in current computing environments
- Will ensure that any preservation activities performed on digital collections are tested, evidenced-based, and recorded
- Will ensure that staff are provided with appropriate training around digital preservation activities to ensure they can fulfil the requirements of their job roles
- Will conduct regular risk assessments, auditing and feedback gathering to ensure any processes and systems adopted continue to be the most appropriate for the service
- Will seek to ensure management of its digital collections adheres to the same legislation that applies to all collections under its care, including:
  - Freedom of Information Act
  - Data Protection Act
  - Copyright Act.
- Will seek sufficient resources and support to ensure that its digital preservation activities are viable and sustainable for the long-term.

6. CONTEXT

This policy is designed to be read and to operate in conjunction with the following existing policies and documentation

- Collections Development Policy (Archives)
- Collections Development Policy (Museum)
- Collections Information Policy
- Terms of Deposit
- Preservation and Conservation Strategy
- Emergency Plan

7. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

7.1 Responsibility for the preservation of digital material lies primarily SAH staff, who develop and manage the collections, have responsibility for service policies

and are the primary point of contact for the creators and users of digital materials.

7.2 The implementation of this digital preservation policy will require working across teams within Staffordshire County Council (SCC) and Stoke on Trent City Council (SoTCC) and, on occasion, external partners. The following can therefore be considered stakeholders in this policy:

- SCC and SoTCC as record creators and all other contributing depositors, some of whom have statutory obligations. Record creators will be responsible for ensuring that digital resources are created and managed in accordance with this and other associated policies.
- The records creators and Collections Management and Development teams who are responsible for the creation and management of metadata associated with digital records.
- The Collections Management and Development teams who ensure that archival material is preserved and made available.
- The Archive and Heritage Management Team who must demonstrate that the organisation is fit for purpose in every respect, including the managing and preserving of its digital collections, archival or otherwise.
- SCC and SoTCC who require authentic and accurate information to be preserved and made available for open and democratic decision-making.
- Record users, who rely on correct and authentic information being kept and made available, and whose needs help determine what is important for preservation.
- Staff in associated departments within SCC and SoTCC with whom the service must collaborate to ensure the efficient implementation of this policy, including IT departments, Information Governance Unit, Records Management teams
- The National Archives who regulate our statutory duties under the Public Records Act.
- Other potential users.

7.3 Implementation of the policy:
- The Head of Archives and Heritage is responsible for the implementation and communication of this digital preservation policy, and for updating the strategy for implementation as required.
- The Archives Collections Management and Development team is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day implementation of this digital preservation policy.

8. IMPLEMENTATION AND STRATEGY

8.1 SAH may implement different preservation strategies over time, and for

different types of digital resource. These strategies will be selected according to the requirements of particular resources, current best practice, and an assessment of the resources required for implementation.

8.2 In order to make progress to achieve the minimum required NDSA Level One standard, SAH will continue to work with Archives West Midlands to investigate a regional approach to digital preservation activities. The next steps in implementing this policy are:

- To perform an audit of all collections, which will identify all digital material currently held by the service.

- To maintain the current Digital Archive Repository and update to ensure it records all digital content held by the service. The repository sits on the main County Council network and is regularly backed up with backup copies being rotated to ensure offsite storage. Information about file formats and software used, along with where and how data is stored, will help the service to assess risk. Assessing risk can help to highlight any specific threats to the continuity of digital resources.

- Develop an action plan for the Service to meet level one of the National Digital Stewardship Alliance Levels of Digital Preservation. This is a requirement for the Archives Accreditation Standard. An initial assessment has been completed for SAH at Appendix A.

- To 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

- To adopt a continuous process of risk assessment with regards to our digital collections, to ensure SAH is offering a proactive approach towards securing our digital heritage.

- To consult with major depositors of archives to establish what digital records they may have (or are creating) that should be permanently preserved.

9. MAKING DIGITAL ARCHIVES ACCESSIBLE

9.1 Access to digital archives should be controlled to ensure the integrity of the original digital record. It is essential that levels of access are set up to ensure the security of the material. This will work as follows:

- Access to the Digital Archive Repository will be restricted to named staff within SAH with permissions to add material but not to remove.
- Public access will also be set up for use within the reading rooms again by allowing read only access to certain permitted folders where the records are open for consultation.
- Plans will be made for online access when a solution has been procured.

9.2 Accessibility depends on the technical capability of the current systems and this will be closely monitored as software and hardware develops.

10. EMERGENCY RECOVERY

10.1 SAH already maintains an emergency plan for the traditional archival holdings held at its storage locations within the county. This plan includes the requirements for any digital records transferred to the Service.

10.2 Staffordshire ICT already has a backup procedure in place for the Storage Area Network where digital archives are currently held as follows:

- The servers are in a secure building.
- Two backup copies are taken onto Digital Linear Tape.
- One copy is stored onsite in the event of immediate need for recovery following a technical problem.
- A second back up copy is stored off site in a fire safe.

11. REVIEW DATE

This Policy will be reviewed at least every two years, or as required to take account of changing circumstances.