



DEVELOPING A DIGITAL PRESERVATION POLICY

Digital preservation is the long term storage and care of digital files. A digital preservation policy sets the foundation for all the activities and decisions involved in this important task. This worksheet defines key questions to address when creating a Digital Preservation Policy.

Use the following questions as a guide while you create a Digital Preservation policy for your institution. The questions are designed to help you think through your institution's goals to form policy statements that work for you. All institutions have different needs, goals, and available resources related to digital preservation. Choose the questions that best fit the needs of your institution as you work toward creating a Digital Preservation policy.

Why is digital preservation part of your institution?

Compose a general statement about the importance of digital preservation to the overall goals of your department or organization. This can be tied into your mission and collection development statements.

- Why is there a need for digital preservation of digital files at your institution?
- What responsibilities are you upholding by making sure files are digitally preserved?
- How does digital preservation tie in with your department or institution mission statement?
- The following statement is an example:
 - “The purpose of digital preservation at our institution is to provide long term storage, care and access to digital content across time and changing technologies. Our aim of responsible preservation ties into our departmental mission of preserving and sharing our tribe’s history.”

What digital materials will you preserve long-term?

Define the scope of your digital preservation policy. Discuss the types of materials included in your digital preservation process. Your Collection Development policy may be helpful in this section. Define content types and formats or how digital materials are accepted or created. Add any exclusions - items that will NOT be preserved - to this section.

- What digital materials will be a part of your digital preservation plan?
- How do you determine what digital files are preserved for the long term?
- What digital materials will NOT be a part of your digital preservation plan?
- In what ways are digital files created or accepted? For example: through digitization of analog content, through donations of digital files, created by your department, etc.

Who will be responsible for long term digital preservation in your institution?

Define who will be involved in digital preservation and at which stage(s) in the process. Discuss the involvement of more than one person and likely multiple departments. In this section, write roles and job titles, rather than naming individual people.

- Who will be in charge of digital preservation planning? For example: archivist, media specialist, program manager, etc.
- Are multiple departments and people involved in digital preservation planning?
- Who will be involved in technology support for digital preservation?
- Who will be involved with day-to-day operations that involve digital preservation?
- Is anyone else involved in digital preservation? For example: donors, community members, library users, etc.

What standards and specifications do you follow?

Define the standards you are following, the file types and metadata schemes you are using, etc. This information is important to keep updated as changes occur.

- What quality standards do you follow for all types of digital files (audio, video, images, text, etc.)?
- What file types do you use for digital files? For example: Preservation TIFF and Access JPEG for images, Preservation WAV and Access MP3 for audio files, etc.
- What metadata standard do you use? For example: Dublin Core, PREMIS, METS etc.
- How do you document preservation metadata? For example: spreadsheets, entering in a database, embedding in files.
- How do you research and update standards and specifications? How often will they be updated?

How do you ensure long term storage of digital materials at your institution?

Define the specific objectives in your institution related to digital preservation storage. This section should address storage media, replacing media, how your multiple backups fit together, and justification for digital preservation storage. This section of technical information can be combined with “integrity” and “access” sections below.

- What storage media do you use? Explain types of media and your storage management process. For example: RAID hard drive, Network Attached Storage, Hosted storage through a trusted vendor, etc.
- Why do you use certain storage media?
- Who is responsible for setup and maintenance of storage media?
 - Why are multiple backups necessary?
 - How does your process for backing up work? What is the schedule for when backups get transferred and refreshed?
- When do you need to replace storage media?

How do you ensure the continued integrity of digital materials at your institution?

Define the specific objectives and strategies in your institution related to the integrity of digital files. This section should address keeping files unchanged and stable over time through management, security, and technology.

- How do you maintain fixity of digital files? List the process and tools used. For example: using the open source program Fixity to verify checksums once per month, using
- How do you manage security of digital files? What staff should have access to files and what permissions should they have to edit, move, and delete files?
- How are security measures enforced through policies and actions? For example: password protected storage, giving access to only certain personnel, training for all staff with access privileges, etc.
- What technology do you use to maintain integrity of files? What virus scan software do you use and when do you run scans? Do you use write blockers when accessioning new digital collections?

How do you ensure the continued access of digital materials at your institution?

Define the specific objectives and strategies in your institution related to retaining access of digital files, internally among staff in your institution. This section should address metadata, file formats, and tiered versions of files.

- How do you describe and document information about digital collections? What metadata standard do you use? For example: Dublin Core, PREMIS, METS, etc.
 - You can add metadata information to this section, or a standalone section, if not already covered in a Standards and Specifications question.

- What file types do you use for different formats and why?
- How and when do you migrate or convert file types?
- How will you instruct your donors about file types for digital donations?
- Do you have different versions of your files? For example: a version for long term preservation, and a version for uploading to the internet. Specify what versions of files exist, and then which of those versions will be backed up in your preservation plan.

How does digital preservation fit into your overall disaster plan or emergency preparedness plan?

Define the steps that should happen during and in response to natural and human-made disasters that affect digital storage. This might be a section in your digital preservation policy, or you might reference out to a different policy or plan.

- What are all the types of natural disaster, human error, or media failure that could occur?
- What precautions do you take to make sure digital files are protected and prepared for disasters?
- Do you have a system of notification in place?
- How will you check if data is lost after a disaster event?
- If data is lost, how will you recover from backups? What is the procedure for verifying fixity after recovery?

How will you educate your organization and keep updated on best practices of digital preservation in the field?

Define how you will educate yourself and staff about digital preservation processes, software, and up-to-date practices Think about courses, conferences, and other professional development activities.

- How will you educate others in your institution about the importance of digital preservation?
- How will you and your staff keep up with developments in digital preservation technology and research in the field?
- Will you or your staff seek specific training in digital preservation?
- Is there any funding for travel to attend conferences or workshops about digital preservation?

How and when will you review and update your digital preservation policy?

Describe what you will do to keep your policy relevant to your institution's needs and changing technology.

- When will your policy be reviewed next?
- Who will do the review?
- Who is involved in the approval process for updating a policy?

What other sources can you supply for your audience to learn about digital preservation?

Include further resources for understanding digital preservation and its importance. These resources can be helpful if your Digital Preservation policy is for an audience outside your department or even for internal staff who are unfamiliar with digital preservation. Include a short glossary, to help people understand your policy.

- What resources (online or print) would be helpful to your audience in learning about digital preservation?
- What terms might your audience need explained?