

# OXFORDSHIRE HISTORY CENTRE

## POLICY DOCUMENT PD001

### Digital Materials Policy

#### 1. Service responsibilities

- a) Oxfordshire History Centre (OHC) acquires, cares for and gives public access to archival and local studies collections relating to the county of Oxfordshire.
- b) To fulfil our statutory duties and, to provide a professional standard of service, we must increasingly accommodate council's, government's and society's shift from analogue to digital, and must reflect that change in our collections.
- c) OHC collections include the following kinds of digital assets: video files, audio files, image files of historic photographs or manuscript documents, and a variety of text files of publications or archival records.
- d) Public appetite for content served digitally, and at a time and place convenient to them, continues to grow and to shape how the History Service is delivered. OHC must continue to reflect the changing public need, while striving to establish the most sustainable methods for digital delivery.
- e) Reasonable public demand for information content requires our ability to retrieve electronic files quickly and easily.

#### 2. Storage of digital assets

- a) Digital collections should, by default, be stored on GCloud-approved digital storage.
  - *Note: Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) has contracted with Preservica from 1st April 2015 to provide GCloud-approved digital storage to OHC.*
- b) GCloud storage suppliers should use the Open Archival Information System (OAIS) Reference Model (ISO 14721) for the management of digital assets.
- c) GCloud storage should, for most effective use, exploit the digital preservation tools developed by the National Archives – the PRONOM technical registry of file formats, and the DROID file format identification tool.
- d) GCloud storage should be able to:
  - i. Store digital assets securely, providing control over users and roles, preventing inappropriate access, and offering the ability to retain digital files in their original quality in perpetuity.
  - ii. Synchronise directly with our CALM archive cataloguing system, containing the relevant metadata for OHC's Archive collections.

- iii. Store metadata alongside other digital files (non-Archive collections), allowing us to link our digital assets with their respective catalogue descriptions, and so enable effective searching.
- e) GCloud storage should offer 'active preservation' of all the digital assets it stores – in other words to protect against obsolescence by providing the ability to migrate vulnerable file formats to more stable and sustainable ones.
- f) Digital collections should not be stored on Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) network drives, except when that storage is being used in a temporary fashion: either as a staging area for ingest into GCloud-approved storage, or a scratch area for digitisation work which is currently in progress. OCC network storage should be used for administrative files only.
- g) Digital collections should not be stored on portable hard media, except where those media amount to duplicate copies of material already in GCloud storage, or act as staging areas for upload to GCloud storage.

### **3. Deposits and donations**

- a) Digital files and collections are deposited or donated by a variety of individuals, societies or organisations. These files are increasingly replacing traditional paper versions of record series (e.g. minutes of meetings). The GCloud system must be able to store securely and facilitate access to such data, to complement hard-copy holdings.
- b) The quantity, regularity and size of digital material being transferred from external sources for archival storage is difficult to predict and may increase significantly once depositors are aware that the History Centre has a robust system in place
- c) The file formats in which the History Centre receives such records will need to be specified in advance with potential depositors to ensure such access requirements are sustainable
- d) Appropriate metadata must accompany all deposits or donations. A Digital Deposit form must be completed by anyone depositing or donating such records

### **4. Preservation and access**

- a) Digitisation is the preferred method for creating surrogates of original material which can be used to satisfy demand for the most popular categories of local and family history content (e.g. photographs, parish registers, wills, maps).
- b) Digitisation can be achieved through partnership work with key stakeholders, such as Oxfordshire Family History Society, through commercial contracts (where project funding is available), or through piecemeal digitisation by staff and volunteers.

- *Note: Digitisation projects from 1999 onwards, together with piecemeal digitisation by staff and volunteers since that time, have generated over 15 terabytes of digital material. Recent projects, following the establishment of Oxfordshire History Centre in 2011, have generated digital images of key archival manuscript sources, such as parish registers, wills, tithe maps and district valuation records.*
- c) The creation of digital surrogates through digitisation should aim to:
- i. Improve the preservation of vulnerable hard copy originals through a reduction in physical handling.
  - ii. Create master preservation digital copies for GCloud storage.
  - iii. Create working digital copies which can be used to widen public access to off-site and remote users, increasing the impact OHC collections can make on potential users, particularly focusing on those sources for which there is a popular (e.g. family history) demand.
- d) Wider public access to digital content for remote users should include online solutions with commercial partners to achieve the greatest impact.
- *Note: OHC has existing agreements for online provision with these commercial partners - photographs (House of Images, Oxford University Images), wills and probate records (Find My Past).*
- e) Public access to GCloud storage should:
- i. Focus primarily on visitors to OHC, allowing them on-site access to high quality digital copies on GCloud storage, as if calling up original documents from the strongrooms.
  - ii. Respect limitations imposed by law – where access to some digital assets is restricted for licensing, data protection or copyright reasons.
  - iii. Widen off-site access by making appropriate use of OCC's network of public PCs in Libraries to allow selective and sustainable access to OHC assets on GCloud storage. (Off-site access should also respect any legal limitations and take account of the availability of support and advice to navigate and interpret the content).

## 5. Future growth

- a) We expect onward growth in our digital assets, whether project-created or born-digital publications or records, but the exact amount will depend on the rate at which new material is donated, deposited or published. An estimate of 1-2TB per annum is a likely minimum.
- b) Work with partners will also determine the rate of growth and type of data generated, and the successful completion of any potential project could see a spike in growth in a given year.
- c) The potential deposit or transfer of born-digital records, particularly from OCC's own departments and services, could mark a significant increase in required storage capacity.

## 6. Standards

- a) For the purposes of both digital storage and the creation of digital surrogates, OHC should maintain a fluency with and up to date knowledge of digital media and file formats:
  - i. *The National Archives digital preservation guidance note 1: selecting file formats for long-term preservation (2008)*
  - ii. *The National Archives digital preservation guidance note 4: graphics file formats (2008)*
  - iii. *The National Archives digital preservation guidance note 5: image compression (2008)*
- b) OHC should resort to The National Archives for information on the latest standards, trends, emerging technologies and vulnerabilities:
  - i. General guidance on digital preservation (The National Archives website) - [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/information-management/manage-information/preserving-digital-records](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/information-management/manage-information/preserving-digital-records).
  - ii. Latest guidance on cloud storage provision in the UK - *The National Archives guidance on cloud storage and digital preservation: how cloud storage can address the needs of public archives in the UK* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., March 2015).

Mark Lawrence, History Centre Manager (Local Studies)

Mark Priddey, History Centre Manager (Archives)

April 2015

Review date: April 2016