

# A Rough Guide to Digital Preservation:

the challenges posed by an increasingly digital world

Andrew Fetherston

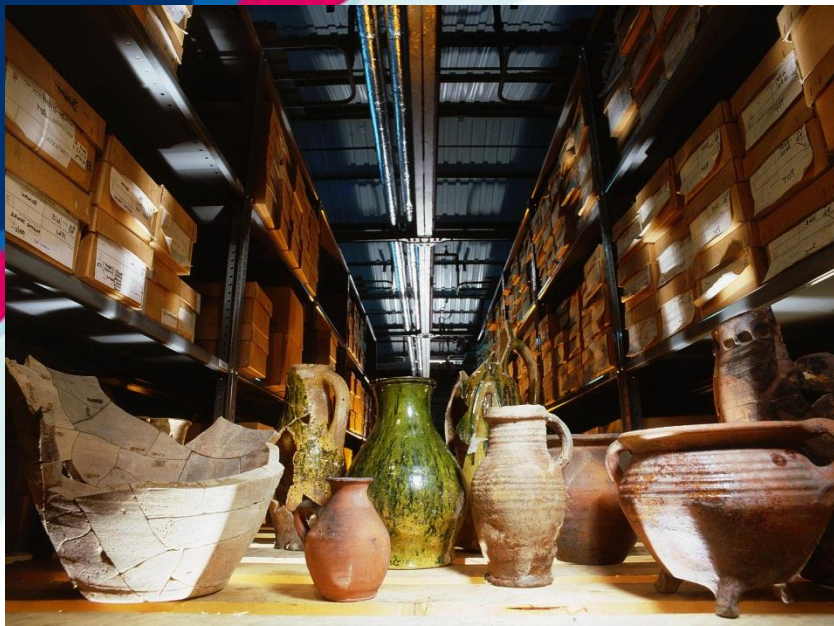
Digital Records Officer  
LAARC



# The London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre (LAARC)



Digital Preservation: What I Wish I Knew Before I Started, London 2012



Digital Preservation: What I Wish I Knew Before I Started, London 2012

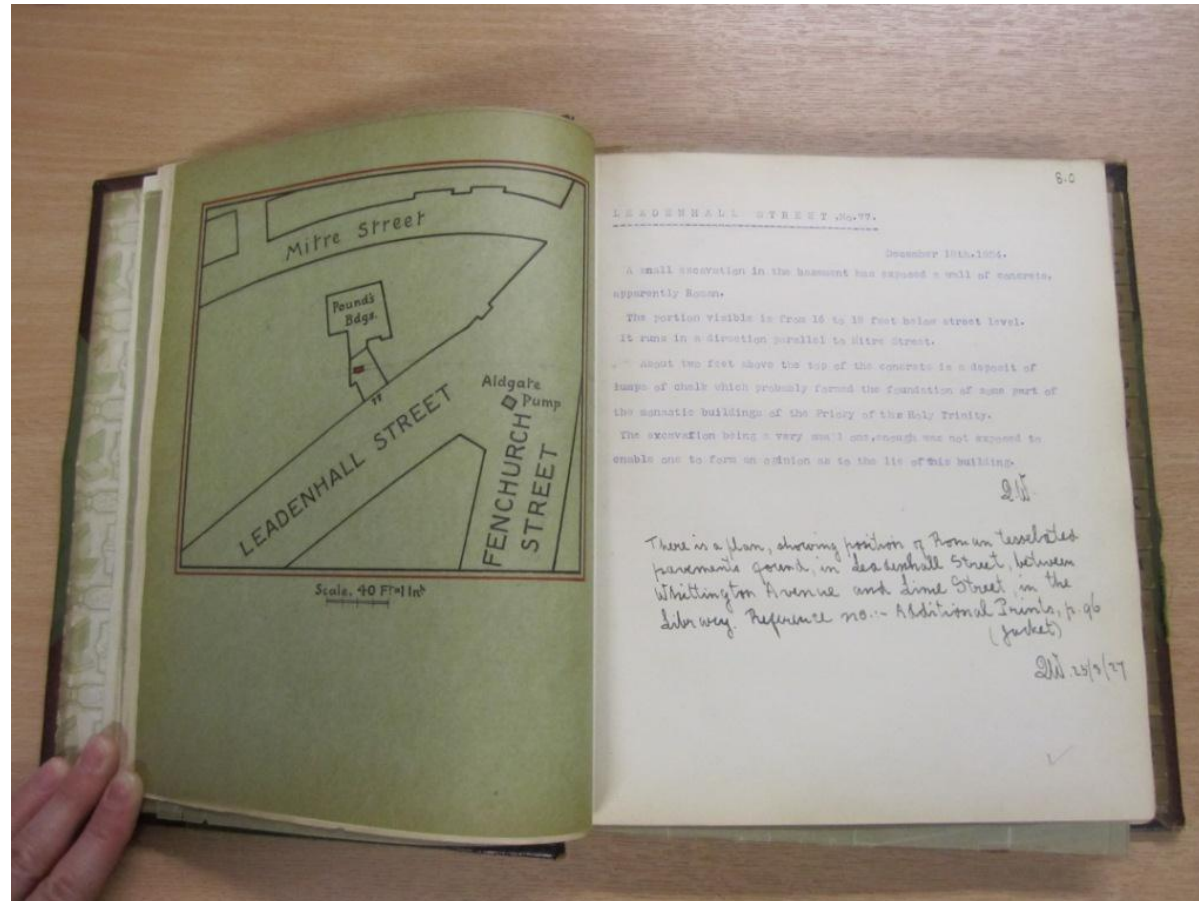


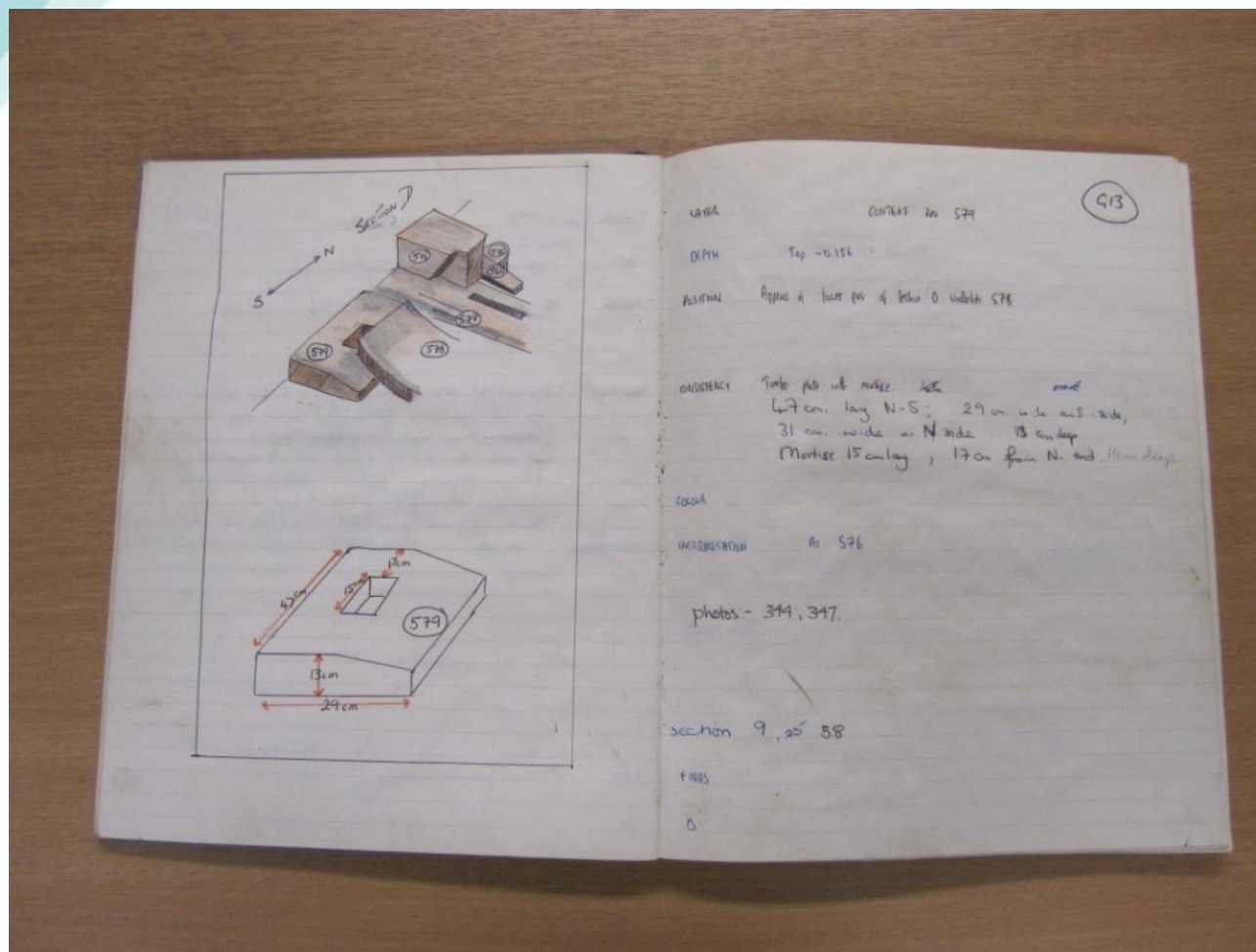
# The LAARC: facts & figures

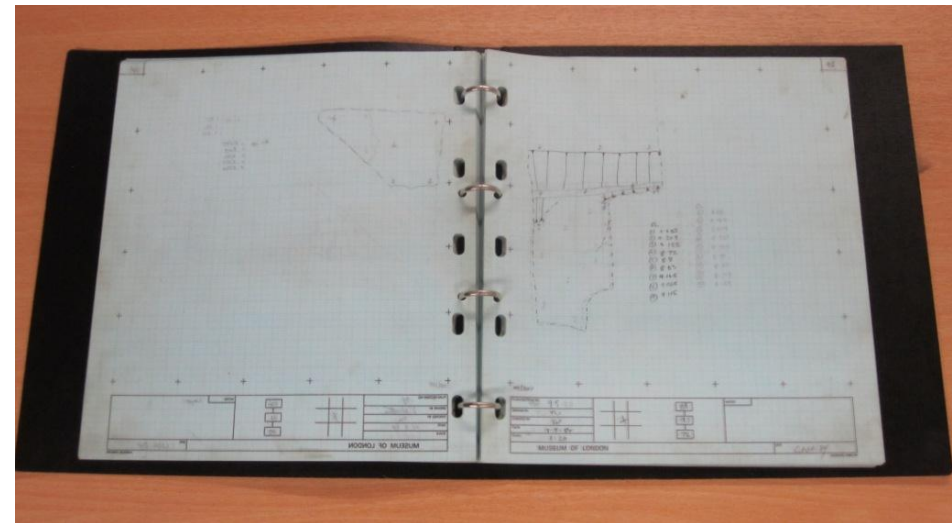
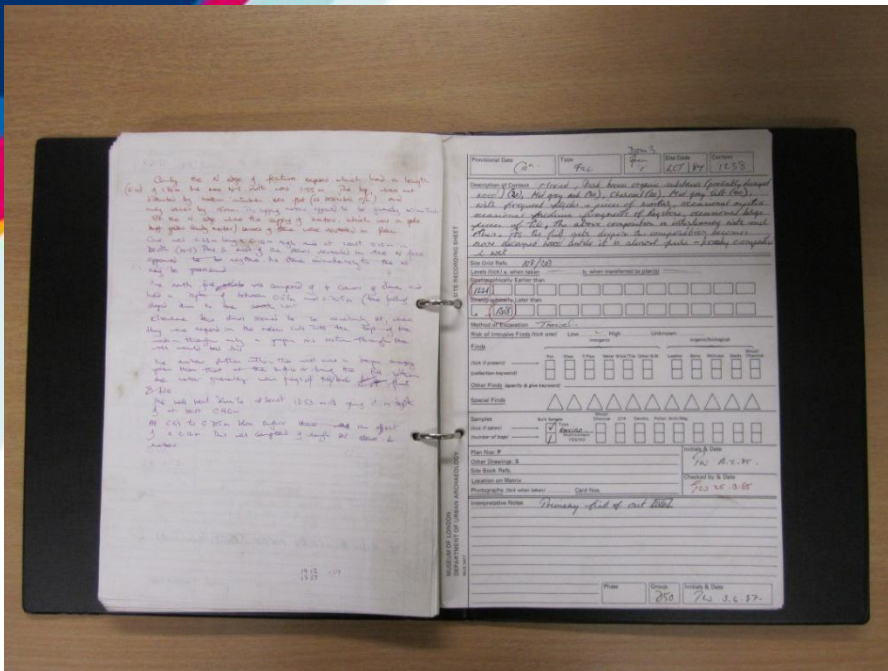
- **1993:** setting up of first independent archaeological archive and publication of *Standards for Deposition*
- **2002:** expansion and re-opening of the archaeological archive as the LAARC
- **2005:** appointment of first Digital Records Officer and development of a migration-based digital preservation system built upon the Open Archival Information System (OAIS) model
- **10:** kilometres of shelving in the LAARC
- **6,000:** number of archives stored in the LAARC
- **200+:** number of new archives received in 2011
- **372GB:** digital data held by the LAARC



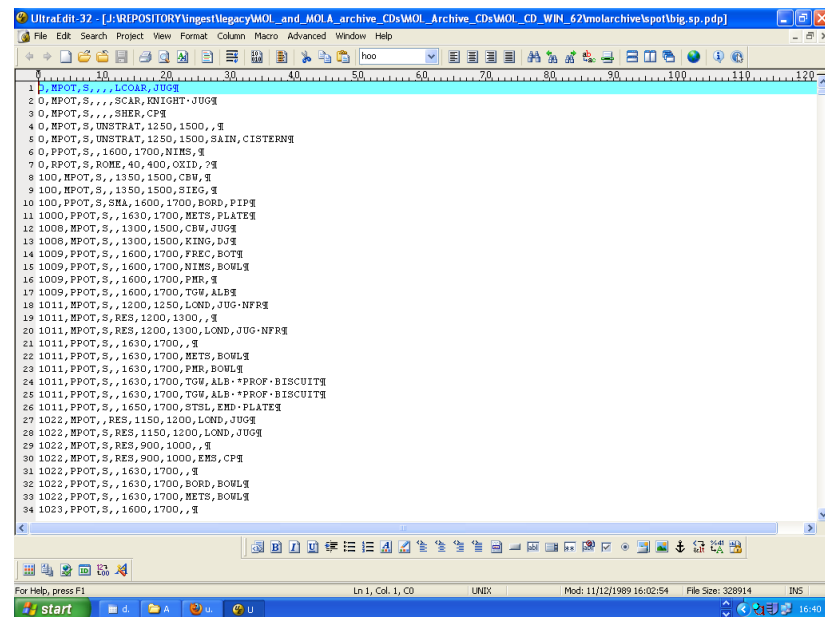
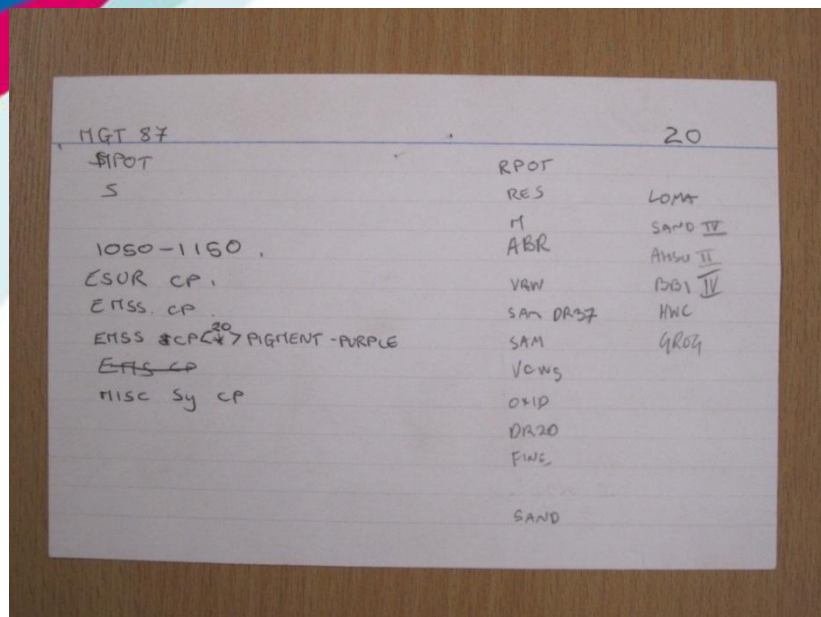
# The evolution of archaeological records













Microsoft Excel - OL-06707\_context\_reg01.xls

| A | B         | C                  | D    | E    | F       | G    | H          | I | J | K | L | M | N |
|---|-----------|--------------------|------|------|---------|------|------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Context   | Description Trench | Area | Plan | Section | Name | Date       |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 2 | 1 Layer   | 26                 | 4    |      | 1 SW    |      | 15/10/2007 |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 3 | 2 Layer   | 26                 | 4    |      | 1 SW    |      | 15/10/2007 |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 4 | 3 Layer   | 26                 | 4    |      | 1 SW    |      | 15/10/2007 |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 5 | 4 Layer   | 26                 | 4    |      | 1 SW    |      | 15/10/2007 |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 6 | 5 Layer   | 26                 | 4    |      | 1 SW    |      | 15/10/2007 |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 7 | 6 Layer   | 26                 | 4    |      | 1 SW    |      | 15/10/2007 |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 8 | 7 Natural | 26                 | 4    |      | 1 SW    |      | 15/10/2007 |   |   |   |   |   |   |



OL-06707\_dsf01.pdf - Adobe Acrobat Pro

The file you have opened complies with the PDF/A standard and has been opened read-only to prevent modification.

| Supervisor                            | Paul Thrale | Site Address | OLYMPIC REGENERATION - EAST LONDON, POCA TRENCH 26 | BID Code | OL-06707 |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|--------------|--|----------|----------|
| Type of Investigation                 | Select      | Existing     | nothing  | 137930   |          |
| Date Investigation Started (mm/yyyy)  | 09/2007     |              |  | 184230   |          |
| Date Investigation Finished (mm/yyyy) | 10/2007     |              |  |          |          |

Please complete parts 1, 2 and 3 below as applicable. Questions formatted in bold are mandatory. Please answer the mandatory questions even if the site was negative. If you wish to qualify any of your responses, please use the 'additional comment' box at the end of this form.

1. What type of natural was observed? Gravel

At what OD height in metres was the natural? 2.08m

If the natural is sloping then give the OD height of the

- i. lowest point m (enter a numerical value only)
- ii. highest point m (enter a numerical value only)
- iii. the slope details - enter slope direction and/or the grid refs of the highest and lowest points if possible

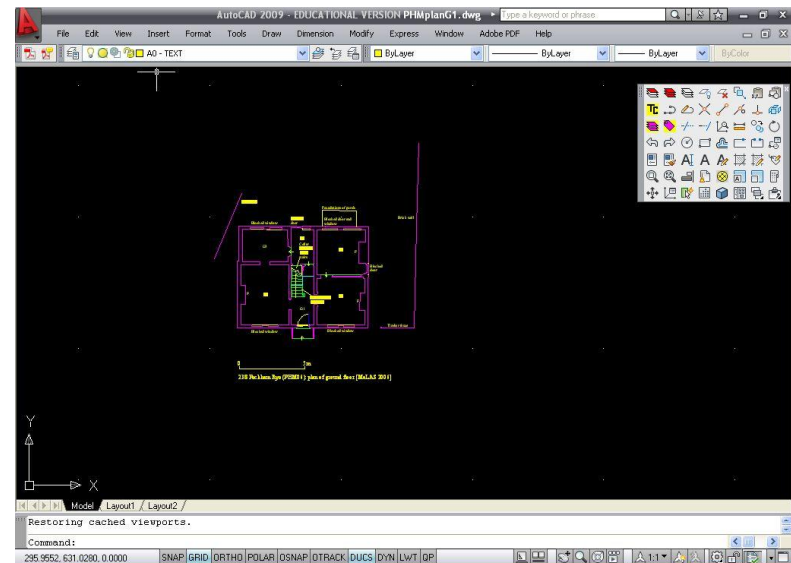
Had this been truncated? (if yes then tick box and press tab to specify) ☐

What was the OD height of the modern ground adjacent to the trench/edge of excavation? 7.23m (enter a numerical value only)

Please specify the type of modern ground: Existing tarmac/concrete ground surface

2. Are any archaeological remains likely to survive on the site and, if so, in what areas might they be found? unlikely to remain

If known, what was the OD height of the highest surviving archaeological remains? 2.08m (enter a numerical value only)



# The challenges of an increasingly digital world



- Training issues
- Ingest difficulties
- Access challenges
- Storage demands
- Obsolescence
- Monitoring of standards
- Organisational challenges
- Metadata



# 7 Practical Steps

- **Develop different skill sets**
- **There is no one solution for everyone**
- **Doing something is (usually) better than doing nothing**
- **Develop good relations with your I.T. dept**
- **ABA – always be advocating**
- **Collaboration is good**
- **Take time to smell the digital flowers!**



# The Digital Preservation Skills Cloud





- No one solution for everyone: different organisations will have different needs/priorities/user groups/resources.
- Standards and best practice should be used as guides, but may not reflect actual conditions and may be impractical to implement



- Doing something is better than nothing:  
don't get overawed by jargon and best practice if it is beyond current resources

document your procedures, keep  
original bit stream of record



- Develop good relations with your I.T. department
- to gain access to online tools and resources
- plan and maintain online dissemination
- manage storage requirements



- ABA – always be advocating
- make sure digital is always on the agenda and not forgotten
- ensure that preservation costs are factored in to any project



- Collaboration is extremely useful:  
lots of people dealing with same issues

[Digital Preservation Coalition](#)

[Open Planets Foundation](#)

[JISCMail](#)



# The Digital Flowers!

- Can be easy to focus on immediate workload – but it is important to take time out of your work schedule to:
- read project reports/findings
- test tools and resources
- attend conferences



# What you can do now

- Get involved – your thoughts and opinions matter
- Ask questions, try things out, comment and feedback on tools, processes, resources
- If a tool doesn't return the results you expected – feedback to the developers (that's the only way they will get better)



# Final thought

- Digital preservation is still a relatively new area – there are still answers and solutions waiting to be found – which make its an exciting and rewarding area to work in.





# Useful sources

- <http://www.dpconline.org/>
- <http://www.openplanetsfoundation.org/>
- <http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/>
- [http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/PRO  
NOM/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/PRO/NOM/)
- [http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/Coll  
ections-Research/LAARC/](http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/Collections-Research/LAARC/)

