

Introducing the *Preserving E- Theses Resource Pack*



Digital**Preservation**Coalition

Introduction and Background

- Electronic submission of PhD theses has become the norm at many universities.
- Theses increasingly include a range of digital content.
- **Our big questions:**
 - How do we make sure this content remains accessible and usable over the long term?
 - Who is responsible for this work?

Open Book
Futures



DigitalPreservationCoalition

What did our research involve?

- Interviews with staff at five institutions;
- A survey distributed to staff working in higher education;
- A survey distributed to doctoral students;
- A focus group with doctoral students.



What did we learn?

- Students care ❤️
- However, lack of understanding about what that means in practice;
- An appetite for practical advice;
- Unsure about what guidance is available.



What did we learn?

- Barriers to student engagement with existing training include lack of awareness and lack of time;
- Priority topics;
- Who is best-placed to deliver and use these resources.



What did we learn?

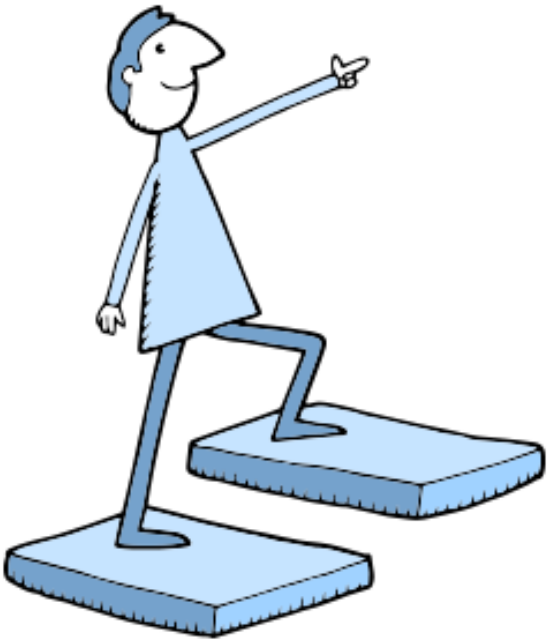
- Staff working directly with students to support the submission process are often less familiar with digital preservation;
- Everyone approaches this slightly differently!



Where did our findings lead us?

Our resources need to be:

- Concise, clear, and digestible;
- Practical (focused on the most important actions);
- Flexible and adaptable;
- Easy to integrate into existing training and guidance.




What did we create?

- *Preserving E-Theses Resource Pack:*
 - Includes several complementary components;
 - Helping raise awareness about digital preservation and e-theses;
 - Providing practical guidance on actions that can support long-term access and reuse;
 - Supporting staff who may not be specialists in digital preservation but play a crucial role in supporting students.



What did we create?

- Staff Orientation Guide
- Quick Guides:
 - Choosing File Formats
 - Copyright and Permissions
 - Link Rot (Using Links that Last)
 - Web Archiving

FUTURE PROOF YOUR THESIS QUICK GUIDE 

CHOOSING FILE FORMATS FOR LONG-TERM ACCESS
Use this quick guide to understand how your choice of file formats affects long-term access to your thesis.

IN A NUTSHELL: Your thesis may consist of a single document or may be made up of multiple different files and file types. Either way, the file formats you choose determine whether your thesis can be opened, understood, and reused, now and in the future. The wrong format can limit access or result in lost and irretrievable content over time. Choosing wisely now reduces the risk of your work becoming inaccessible or unusable.

THINGS TO KNOW

- **File formats aren't neutral.**
Different file formats shape how your work can be accessed. Some are more stable and widely supported than others.
- **Your files depend on software.**
If the right software isn't available—because it is no longer supported, has become obsolete, or requires an expensive license—your thesis may not open or work properly.
- **No file format is perfect.**
Every file format involves trade-offs—for example, between quality and file size, or between functionality and interoperability. The aim when choosing formats is to balance present needs with long-term accessibility.
- **PDFs preserve layout but limit flexibility.**
PDF is commonly used for thesis submission because it preserves layout and ensures the document looks the same across devices. In many instances, PDF is an appropriate choice and works well. However, PDF is less suitable for preserving underlying data, interactive elements, or content that may need to be reused in other formats later.
- **What matters in your work should guide your file format choices.**
Consider what is important about the information in your thesis. For example, layout may be important for a thesis chapter, interactivity may matter for a website, and quality could be important for an audio or video recording. Choosing the right file format helps ensure that what matters most is preserved for future users.
- **Converting files can change them.**
Exporting or migrating files to new formats may alter the layout, reduce quality, or remove features.
- **Some file formats are more sustainable than others.**
Formats are generally more stable if they can be freely opened and used across multiple software and programs, are well-documented, well-supported, and widely used.

What did we create?

- Future Proof Your Thesis: Five Principles to Support Long-Term Use
 1. Plan for change over time
 2. Prioritize what matters most
 3. Adopt multiple approaches to keeping your work accessible
 4. Document what you've done
 5. Make use of guidance and support from the start
- Staff Reference Guide

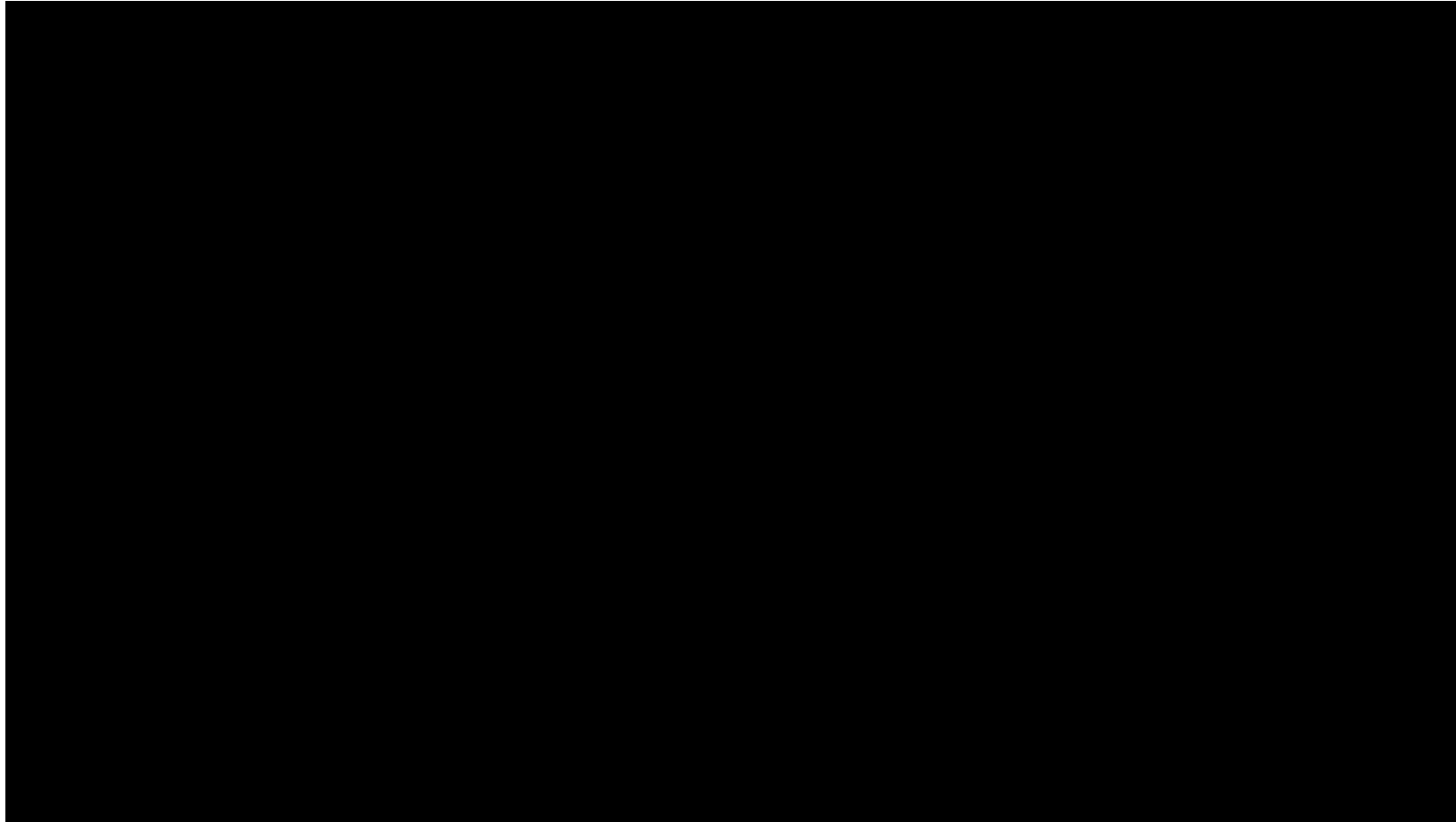


What can you do with it?

- Shared under a CC-BY-NC-SA license;
- We encourage users to:
 - Add links to institutional policies, guidance, and support services
 - Include locally relevant examples and frequently asked questions
 - Edit content to align with local procedures and requirements
 - Incorporate materials into existing training, workshops, and online guidance



Leila & Grace



Find the pack at:

<https://www.dpconline.org/digipres/prof-development/preserving-e-theses-resource>