DIGITAL PRESERVATION FOR COMMUNITY ARCHIVES

JUST ONE THING

INTRODUCTION

This document works is designed for those at the beginning of their digital preservation journey who are unsure where to get started.

Digital Preservation can be complex, and there is no one size fits all process or workflow that works in all situations, but there are simple steps you can take to help safeguard your digital collections.

Working through the ten topics in this document will result in a basic digital preservation workflow which will enable you start preserving your digital content.

Each step contains 'Just One' practical task you can do with little time and no money that will help you understand more about the collections in your care and how they should be preserved.

The resource back at the end of the ten steps includes a series of templates and guidance notes to help you get started.

CONTENTS

CHOOSE / CREATE YOUR CONTENT

SELECT YOUR CONTENT

Whether you are just starting to think about creating a collection, or you already have digital content in your care, documenting what you are collecting will make it clear what you want to collect and where you will get the content from. This will be useful to point to if you are offered a collection that doesn't fit with the rest of the collections you hold. It will also help you to identify any gaps that you may want to fill. Including where your collections have come from will help with future processing work and give you somewhere to start if you want to collect more records in the future.

The most common way to document what you collect is by creating a collecting policy. A collecting policy aims to set out your principles and criteria for selecting and acquiring collections. A good policy doesn't need to be too lengthy or detailed, as long the statements in it are clear.

JUST ONE THING

Write a one paragraph collecting policy that states what you will and what you won't collect. Make it available to everyone who works with your collections to help you to streamline your collecting process and ensure you only collect the records that fit with your organisation's remit.

The collecting policy template in the resource pack will help you get started.

ORGANISE YOUR CONTENT

NAMING CONVENTIONS

Naming files is important, not only so you can find them again, but also so anyone accessing the records can easily find what they are looking for.

How you name your files will depend on the content you have, but in general, file names should be as short as possible while clearly identifying the record. You can also include dates in the file name if this is useful but use the same date format for very record (for example 28112012 or 28th Nov 2012).

.JUST ONE THING

Decide how you want to name your files and use this method to name every digital file you collect. Write down the method you have chosen and make everyone who will be naming records aware.

The naming conventions document in the resource pack contains advice about deciding on and implementing name and date conventions.
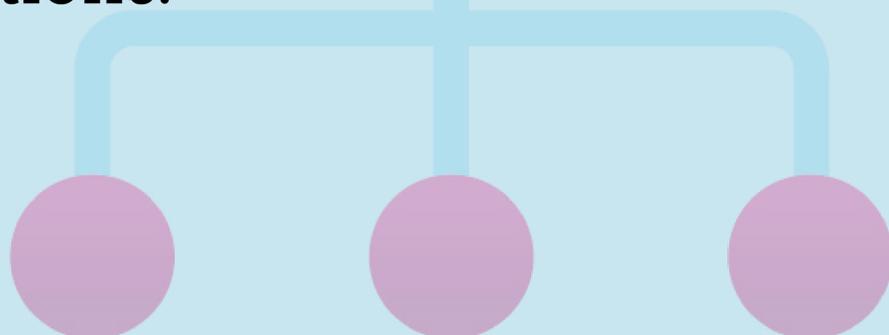
WHO DOES WHAT

HAVE CLEAR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

It's essential to have clear roles and responsibilities when working with digital content. By agreeing and documenting the roles and responsibilities within your community group, you can avoid duplicating work, enhance teamwork and effectiveness, and (perhaps most importantly) ensure that any critical activities are always addressed. Staff or volunteers will come and go, and it is important that key responsibilities are understood by all and passed on to someone who can continue to carry them out.

Community groups have historically been good at ensuring some of these key roles are addressed. In the digital age, there are new and critical responsibilities that should be addressed.

These include:
- Performing backups of digital collections
- Paying for website hosting
- Ensuring documentation is up to date
- Making sure cybersecurity is addressed

JUST ONE THING

Simply document your key tasks, and who is responsible for them. This is a powerful way of managing the effectiveness of your group over time.

The template in the resource pack will help you to do this.

UNDERSTAND YOUR CONTENT

WHAT DO YOU HAVE AND WHERE IS IT?

Knowing what records make up your collection and where they are is one of the most important steps you can take when working with digital records.

Having a list of the content you have and where you can find it will help you efficiently and effectively process your records and save you time. Making sure that everyone who works with your collections also has access to this information is an important step in preserving your content long term.

JUST ONE THING

Create a simple list that contains the title of the collection, what medium the collection is stored on (server, cloud, external hard drive, laptop etc) and the file path to direct you to the content.

This is the minimum required to allow you to start working on preserving your files. Ensure this list is available to everyone who will be working with your content.

A spreadsheet is an ideal format for capturing this information as it makes it easy to search and filter. This template will help you get started.

The template in the resource pack will help you to do this.

KEEP YOUR CONTENT

STORAGE REVIEW

All technology has a shelf life, and this includes the medium or devices that your content is stored on. For example, external hard drives tend to have around a five-year life span and cloud storage will only be accessible as long as the bill is paid.

Removable media, such as CDs and DVDs, can be easily lost or damaged. Hard disk drives can malfunction or break. Legacy storage media, such as floppy disks, may not be supported by contemporary computer environments.

JUST ONE THING

Check that your current storage media for all your content is still accessible and functioning properly. Bear in mind that storage media can sometimes fail suddenly and unexpectedly.

Replace or upgrade as needed to ensure your content stays accessible. Replacing storage before you have issues accessing content will save both time and money in the future. This includes making sure that payment for any cloud or off-site storage is up to date and those involved know what they need to do to keep it active.

Use the template in the resource paack to keep track of the storage you have and any changes you make.

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CONTROL YOUR CONTENT

EXIT STRATEGY

Having your digital collections locked into a particular system, app, service, or website can be a huge risk. Especially if that system or service is closed down, or you simply want to move it elsewhere.

A common example is the use of Facebook groups by community organizations. They are relatively easy to setup and engage an audience, but if digital photos and other information is collected on a Facebook group, it's very hard to extract that information so that it can be shared or preserved elsewhere.

It is therefore critical ensure that any software, system, or website that you use has a clear exit strategy that details how you will get your data back if you decide to stop using them.

JUST ONE THING

If you decide to use a system to manage, preserve, or provide access to your content, make sure you understand the process to get your information back.

This information should be included as part of any contract you sign. If it is not there, do not sign the contract and reassess your options.

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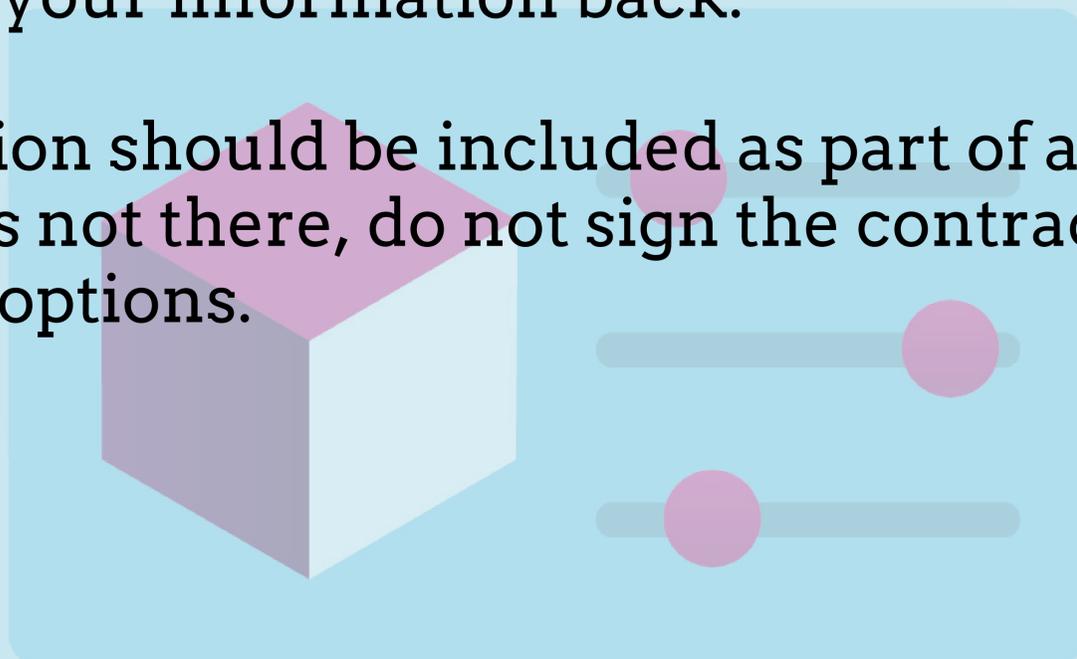
MAKE COPIES

JUST ONE COPY

A huge range of threats can endanger your digital collections and the work that's been put in to create them. Whether it's computer failure, fire or flood, or simply failing to continue to pay for a cloud storage account, it's important to not keep all your eggs in one basket. Making more than one copy of digital collections creates means your content is more likely to remain accessible.

JUST ONE THING

A great way to start is to back up your digital collections to an offsite location. There are a range of ways to do this. Backing up to several external hard drives that are kept at different locations and rotated monthly is a manual approach. Replicating your content to the cloud using a simple cloud provider account is a more automated alternative but may have a higher cost.

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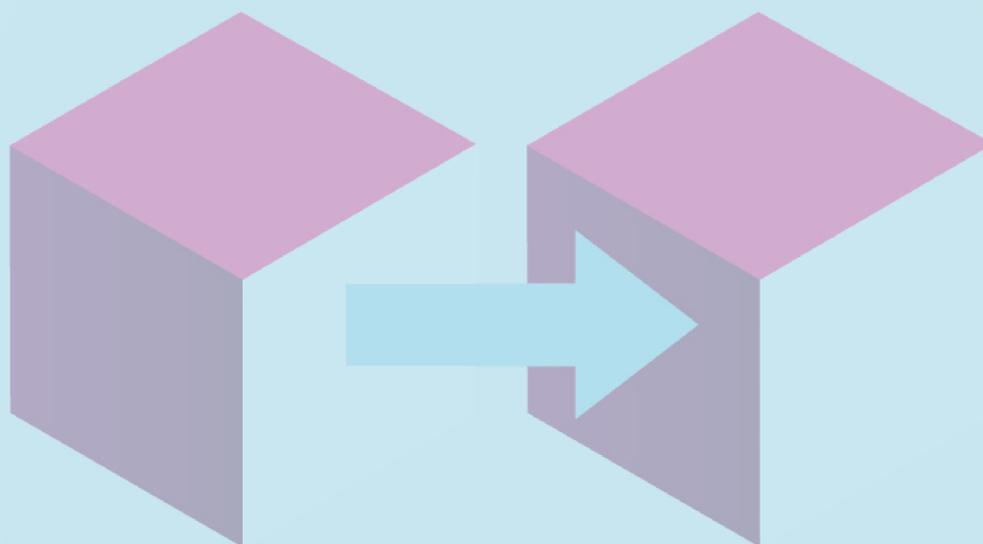
PLAN TO SHARE

PREPARE FOR ACCESS

Providing access to your digital collections, as well as preserving them for future generations, is often the end goal of an Archive's work. But it's vitally important to consider and manage any potential obstacles to access provision.

These might include:
- Copyright is owned by someone else
- The collection contains personal information that cannot be shared/must be protected
- Harm may be done to the communities which created the collections or are described by them

Even where there are no legal obstacles to providing access, there is the potential to negatively impact communities to which the content is bound in some other way. For example, treating content of or about indigenous peoples sensitively and with an equitable approach is essential.

JUST ONE THING

It is critical to plan any access to digital collections carefully, with a view to avoiding common pitfalls. If you are not 100% sure that you have the necessary rights to provide access to the content, or if you have any concerns that individuals or communities will be harmed by making it available,

DO NOT provide access to it until the correct way forward can be confirmed.

PRESERVE YOUR WEBSITE

SUBMIT YOUR WEBSITE TO BE ARCHIVED

Submitting your website to organizations that capture and preserve websites can be a simple and powerful way of protecting your community archive's digital content.

Websites only last as long as they are maintained and paid for. Research shows that community websites can often disappear after only a few years.

JUST ONE THING

Submitting your website for archiving is straightforward and there are several options.

Many countries have archives dedicated to preserving their national web space. In the UK, The British Library runs the UK Web Archive. You can use the form on their web site to nominate your site for preservation.

The Internet Archive captures websites from around the world. Use the "Save Page Now" feature on their website to point the Internet Archive to capture specific pages of your website.
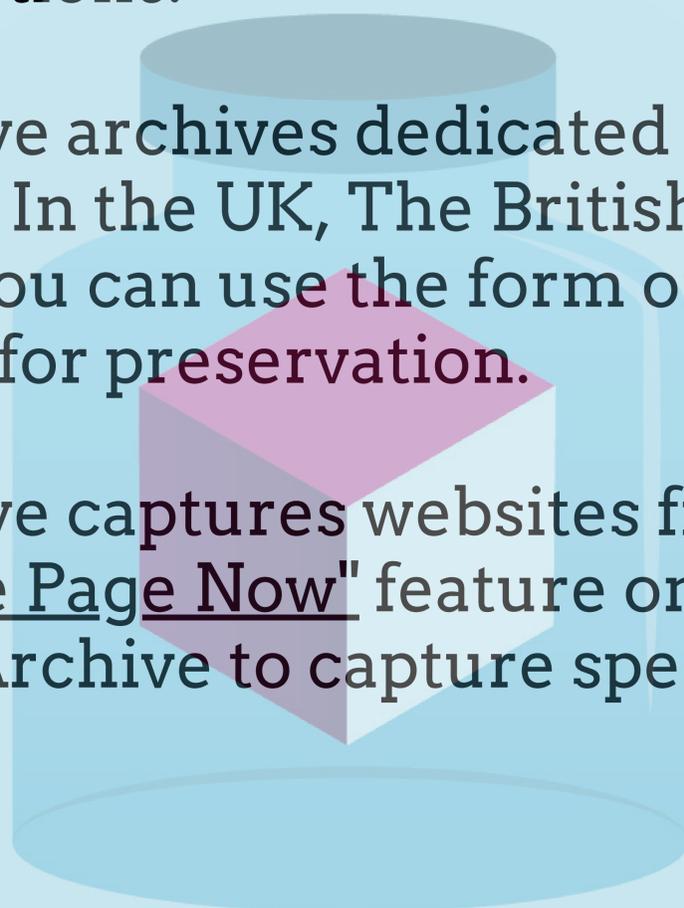
SAFEGUARD YOUR CONTENT

PLAN FOR THE WORST – EXPECT THE BEST

No one wants to think of the worst-case scenario when it comes to the collections they look after. But having a plan of what will happen to your collections if you or the group you work with can no longer care for them is one of the most important steps in preserving your collections for the long term.

Creating a Succession Plan will provide peace of mind that should the worst happen, plans are in place to secure your collections. It is also important to make sure that everyone involved with your group knows what the plan is and how to access it if they need to.

JUST ONE THING

A one-page plan which documents where the collections could or should go if your organisation can no longer care for them is the focus of this level. Include names and contact details of the people who will be responsible for transferring the collections if this is needed and include any access information that will be required.

Do not include names and details of people who have not confirmed they will help.

The template in the resource pack provides more information.

RESOURCE PACK

These templates have been designed to be printed off, completed then stored. Online copies of all resources are available within the Community Archive Toolkit.

CHOOSE / CREATE YOUR CONTENT

COLLECTION POLICY TEMPLATE

Organisation	
Policy Author	
Contact Email Address	

The **community archive group collects records relating to,**

Records will be accepted from the following sources,

We do not collect the following records,

ORGANISE YOUR CONTENT

NAMING CONVENTIONS

Naming Conventions

The key to implementing good naming conventions for the files in your collection is simplicity and consistency. Whatever convention you decide to use, use it for all your files with no exceptions.

Something to things about when deciding on naming conventions are;

- Your file names should be as short as possible but still meaningful
- If your files have reference numbers, include them in the file name
- Be consistent
- Ensure the topic of the file is quickly and easily identifiable
-

Naming convention examples

File Type and Description	Example File Names
Digital image of Edinburgh Castle taken in 2006. Image has reference number ED/4	• ED4EdinburghCastleImage2006 • EdinburghCastleED4 • ED4EDCastle2006
Poster Advertising Edinburgh Fringe Show 'Banana Pants'. Dated 2015. Not yet Catalogued	• FringeShowBananaPants2015 • BananaPantsFringe • EdinburghFringeShowPoster2015
Cassette Tape of oral histories recorded by the history village community group from 2003 - 2007	• HistVilOralHist • OralHistories2003.2007 • OralHistoriesHisVil

Date Conventions

Dates can be confusing if not expressed in the correct way. Again consistency is the most important. For example, the standard date convention in the UK is DD/MM/YYYY, while in America it is MM/DD/YYYY. Other point to consider include;

- Do you want to write the month in text format or use only numbers?
- Do you need to use the full date or would part of it be enough (for example using only the year, or only the month and year)?
- Do you have full-date information for your collections?

Date Convention Examples

24/07/2005	07/24/2005	24th of July 2005
July 2005	07/2005	2005

WHO DOES WHAT

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES TEMPLATE

ORGANISATION NAME –

TASK	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE	CONTACT INFORMATION

UNDERSTAND YOUR CONTENT

CONTENT LOG TEMPLATE

This template is easier to complete on your computer. Use spreadsheet software (for example, Microsoft Excel, or Google Sheets) to replicate the template shown below.
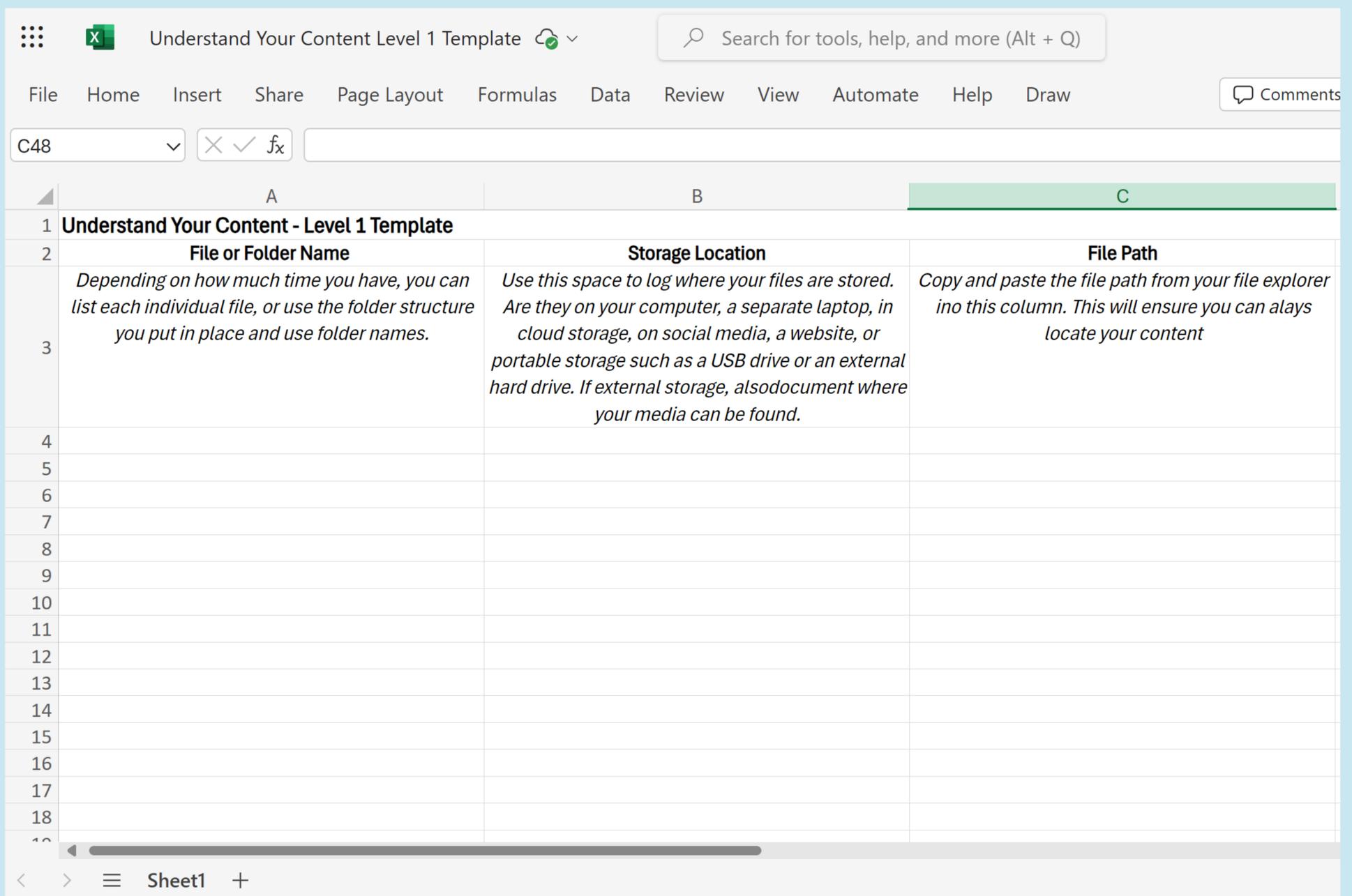
	A	B	C
1	**Understand Your Content - Level 1 Template**		
2	**File or Folder Name**	**Storage Location**	**File Path**
3	*Depending on how much time you have, you can list each individual file, or use the folder structure you put in place and use folder names.*	*Use this space to log where your files are stored. Are they on your computer, a separate laptop, in cloud storage, on social media, a website, or portable storage such as a USB drive or an external hard drive. If external storage, alsodocument where your media can be found.*	*Copy and paste the file path from your file explorer ino this column. This will ensure you can alays locate your content*
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Sheet1

Every digital collection you have should be logged in this spreadsheet. You can decide if you want to log every individual item or each collection. This will depend on the resource you have. The more information you have about your collections, the better.

KEEP YOUR CONTENT

STORAGE REVIEW TEMPLATE

First, find out the current size of the collections in your care.

How do I do this?

Right clicking on the digital folders containing your collections and selecting properties, will give you the size of the folder in GB. Add up all the folders containing your collections together to get the final storage size.

Full Collection Size in GB -

Next, list the digital storage mediums you use currently. Include everything with collection content stored on it, such as laptops, pcs, cloud storage, USB sticks, External Hard Drives, CDs, DVDs. Include the size of the content stored on each medium.

Storage Medium	Age of medium	Size of content stored

Any storage medium that is over 5 years old may need to be replaced to ensure the content stored on it remains accessible. You can replace with like for like storage or the use the information in 'Keep Your Content – Level 2' to change or upgrade your content.

Remember to update your list when you replace or add new storage mediums.

SAFEGUARD YOUR CONTENT

SAFEGUARDING TEMPLATE

Community Archive Name:
Main archive contact Name:
Main archive contact Email Address

Additional archive contacts:
Name: Email Address:
Name: Email Address:
Name: Email Address:

In the event that   can no
longer care for the collections in their care,
should be contacted using the contact information below;

Contact Name:
Contact Email Address:
Contact Phone Number:
Group Address:

If the collection is to be split between groups and organisations, adapt the form to reflect this. Make sure you include clear instructions about where each collection should go and who should be contacted. Do not include anyone who has not confirmed they will help.