

# DIGITAL PRESERVATION FOR COMMUNITY ARCHIVES



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The Digital Preservation Handbook describes Digital Preservation as the series of managed activities necessary to ensure continued access to digital materials for as long as necessary ... (digital preservation) refers to all the actions required to maintain access to digital materials beyond the limits of media failure or technological and organisational change.

## **But what does this mean for a community archive and why is it important?**

Digital collections come in a huge variety of sizes and formats and there is no one size fits all for preserving them. This means that digital collections are very fragile and there are a range of risks involved in preserving this content. For example,

Changes in technology may leave collections unreadable or inaccessible as the software that interprets them becomes obsolete.

Without committed resource, such as time, and in most cases budget, the storage and management of digital collections will not be possible.

Changes within the community group might leave digital collections without a committed person to work on their preservation. Digital preservation requires a series of actions over time to ensure digital content remains alive, discoverable, accessible and usable.

The DPC's Bit List of digitally endangered species explains more about the types of records at risk, why they are at risk and what can be done to help preserve them. Community created collections are on this list.

There are three main strands that come together to help ensure effective management and preservation of digital collections. They are;

- Technology
- Management
- Resources

Without some work in all these areas, preservation of digital collections in any group or organisation won't be possible.

Ultimately, digital preservation is about making an investment in properly managing digital collections with common sense, consistency and an attention to detail. Careful planning for digital preservation will safeguard your assets and avoid the need for costly intervention further down the line. In addition, Documenting what you do, and why you are doing it, will help anyone who needs to preserve your digital collection in the future.

## **Why does digital preservation matter?**

The collections held by your community groups have value. In most cases this value is historical, and the collections should be preserved so they can be accessed and shared for many years to come. Without digital preservation. Long term access to your collections will not be possible. Read more in the Digital Preservation Handbook: Why digital preservation matters.

## **What about digitisation, is it the same thing?**

No!

Digitisation is the process of creating digital content from non-digital collections, such as paper volumes, sound recordings on a cassette tape, or film content on VHS tape.

Digital preservation is the preservation of digital content over time. Once your physical content has been digitised, it should then be digitally preserved. Digitisation should not be started without a plan in place for how you will preserve the content you are creating going forward.