Preservation In Practice - What Are The Options? A Case Study

Decoding the Digital
British Library Preservation Advisory Centre
27 July 2010

http://www.flickr.com/photos/intherough/3470183543
Joint archive service for the 5 West Yorkshire metropolitan authorities:
- Bradford City Council
- Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council
- Kirklees Metropolitan Borough Council
- Leeds City Council
- Wakefield Metropolitan District Council

Largest local authority record office outside London:
- Over 4200 cubic metres of traditional archive material
- In 2008/09: more than 13000 personal visits, 25000 document productions, answered nearly 26000 enquiries

Public service points in each West Yorkshire district, plus:
- Commercial records management storage and administrative headquarters in Morley (near Leeds)
- Three archive outstores, including purpose-built electronic records room at Morley
“A decidedly analogue approach to a digital problem”

- Nobody has all the answers
- Doing something is better than doing nothing – start small
- Knowing what you’ve got (or are about to get) is a vital first step
- “If we try we may fail, if we don’t try we will certainly fail”

http://www.flickr.com/photos/poodleface/513964717
WYAS Digital Archives Working Group

Digital Archives Policy
- fostering awareness and support
- creating a framework for practical work

Practical Digital Archives Work
- Software testing, using sample objects
- Survey of digital records already held by the Service (first documented digital accession received 1999)
- Digital deposit form and guidelines
- A digital media recognition guide for staff
- Advocacy and training

Small, non-specialist, staff working group
- 3 archivists, plus records manager
- Flexible, but limited, support from West Yorkshire Joint Services’ IT department

HEC-4 (Type 1201) Computer at County Hall, Wakefield, January 1958
MLA Yorkshire: A Case Study

- Regional Museums, Libraries and Archives partnership organisation for Yorkshire
- Wound up December 2008
- Developed out of the Yorkshire Museums Council (YMC), with a continuous history back to 1963
- 1.4 m³ paper, 1963-2008
- 80GB+ digital, c2002-2008
Negotiating a Hybrid Deposit

• Very short timescale – no time to try out software tools
• Depositor had not considered digital records to be ‘archives’
• Digital content may not be held locally (website, e-bulletins)
• ‘Self curation’ of electronic records by staff - closer to personal archive than organisational
• Confidentiality
• Conflicting interests

• Positives:
  – No obsolete hardware
  – Predominantly current office file formats
  – Helpful IT support
  – ‘Dowry’ to pay for boxes, portable hard drive etc.
Collecting Digital Content

- New digital deposit documentation
- ‘Grab & Run’ copying - no time to complete appraisal prior to transfer
- Transfer using 1TB USB external hard drive & FTK Imager Lite (http://www.accessdata.com/downloads.html)
- Capture ‘original order’ & generate checksums
- Problems encountered:
  - Long file paths/file names
  - Need all users to be logged out of corporate network
  - Don’t underestimate the time needed to transfer large amounts of data
Processing Digital Content: Procedure

- Transfer to standalone PC
- Authenticity verified using checksums
- Virus check – twice – using AVG Anti-Virus (Kaspersky on corporate network)
- Use spreadsheets to analyse file listings / check for duplicates
- Appraisal
Processing Digital Content: Tools

• Pre-accession appraisal tools
  – Karen’s Directory Printer
    http://www.karenware.com/powertools/ptdirprn.asp
  – Directory structures
    http://www.paradigm.ac.uk/workbook/record-creators/capturing-directory-structures.html

• Forensics software
  – FTK Imager Lite
    http://www.accessdata.com/downloads.html

• Checksums
  – MD5, SHA-1

• Virus checking
  – Free options: AVG Anti-Virus, Avast! etc.
  – Software and procedures

• File format identification
  – PRONOM
    http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pronom

• Paradigm Workbook
  – http://www.paradigm.ac.uk/workbook

Portrait of a Gentleman Techie, after Thomas de Keyser
http://www.flickr.com/photos/notionscapital/2496369741
Appraisal in a Digital World
MLA Yorkshire Website

Archive-It - [http://www.archive-it.org/](http://www.archive-it.org/)
UK Web Archiving Consortium [http://www.webarchive.org.uk](http://www.webarchive.org.uk)
MLA Yorkshire Cultural Olympiad Update
Mar 08

Arts Council England, Yorkshire Culture, MLA Yorkshire and Screen Yorkshire invite you to:

"YORKSHIRE'S CULTURAL OLYMPIAD - AN EMERGING FRAMEWORK"

A briefing for the region’s cultural organisations on the national framework for the UK Cultural Olympiad for London 2012, progress and opportunities in the region.

The briefing will be led by Tessa Gordziejko, Creative Programmer (Yorkshire) for London 2012 and include speakers from the key partner agencies. The agenda will cover:
“I never have these types of problems with digital”

- Don’t panic at the format and overcomplicate — look for simple solutions that are ‘good enough’
  - Make multiple copies
  - Research software tools and preservation services (eg PRONOM http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pronom)
  - Archival theory is still relevant. Develop new procedures alongside traditional workflows.
- Don’t start with long obsolete material — it’ll be much harder
- Deal with reality, not with ‘what ifs’.
- Do not underestimate your expertise with regards to cultural factors/interpersonal skills vital to digital preservation (eg privacy concerns, depositor liaison)

http://www.flickr.com/photos/jeremymates/2559586321
The Preservation Chain

“Digital information lasts forever, or five years – whichever comes first” Jeff Rothenberg

You don’t need to aim for ‘forever’.

Just the next generation of recordkeepers.

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