

Library of Birmingham Birmingham Archives & Collections Digital Preservation Policy Statement



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Service Description

Birmingham Archives & Collections (hereafter BAC) is the professional archives service for Birmingham City Council and maintains a repository for the storage and custody of its own records and any records deposited with it. All records received are held for the benefit of the public.

Archives comprise documents which exist both in physical and digital format. They are items that have been selected through a process of appraisal as being worthy of permanent preservation. The service's collecting remit is defined by various legislative and legal obligations, as detailed in our Collections Development Policy.

BAC is the sole local authority archive within the jurisdiction of Birmingham City Council with Accredited status as conferred by The National Archives.

Vision and Mission

BAC continues to collect documents, in all forms, which tell the story of today for people in the future. To make this possible, we ensure that significant records are:

- actively collected and described
- are preserved for future generations
- are accessible and set in a context that helps customers understand them

BAC fulfils a valuable role in providing evidence for legal and other official purposes.

Alongside the core activities of customer service and developing collections, BAC at the Library of Birmingham also makes important contributions to the city in areas such as skills and employability, community engagement, health and wellbeing, and tourism.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Code of Practice on Records Management issued by the Lord Chancellor under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 recommends public sector bodies introduce a strategy for managing digital records, ensuring long-term survival and accessibility in the face of technological change.
- 1.2. BAC acquires, preserves and makes accessible archives, local studies and other special collections material in any format to visitors, as well as providing other forms of onsite and remote access, for on the website or via programs of workshops and activities.

- 1.3. Digital Preservation is defined in the Digital Preservation Handbook as a ‘series of managed activities necessary to ensure continued access to digital materials for as long as necessary.’
- 1.4. For legal reasons some corporate records may need to be kept for longer periods (i.e. 100 years) but are not suitable for permanent preservation. Earlier intervention is still required to ensure authenticity of content, guarantee accessibility, and maintain digital continuity.
- 1.5. Our collections comprise small but growing numbers of records created in digital format, as well as about 1.5 terabytes of content digitised from our physical archives.
- 1.6. Significant risks are posed to digital materials, including technical obsolescence of hardware, software or storage media; uncertainties about resources, responsibilities and methods for management and preservation them; legal or organisational barriers.

2. Aim and purpose of the policy statement

- 2.1. To affirm the commitment by the Library of Birmingham and the local authority to address the long-term preservation needs of digital assets held across the Council.
- 2.2. To raise awareness of the importance of digital preservation amongst Library and Council staff and officers, our users and other stakeholders, and the wider public.
- 2.3. To encourage the transfer and deposit of digital archives by Birmingham City Council and other individuals, organisations and businesses.
- 2.4. To commit to implementing strategies, procedures, technical standards, infrastructure and guidance addressing specific aspects of digital preservation activity.
- 2.5. To participate in regional initiatives in digital preservation, having defined service obligations in relation to Archives West Midlands Digital Preservation Policy template.

3. Scope of the policy statement

- 3.1. The policy applies equally to digital records created by the City Council; digital records created by external depositors (including other public sector bodies and private entities); digitised content created from the library’s physical collections.

- 3.2. The definition “*Digital Materials*” (hereafter “*Digital Assets*”) refer both to records and archives that exist in “*born-digital*” format from point of creation, and digital surrogates created by the Library of Birmingham as “*digitised*” content.
- 3.3. Digital material is selected in accordance with our Collections Development Policy.
- 3.4. The policy relates to BAC and wider Council documentation including Accessioning & Cataloguing Guidelines; Digital Preservation Strategy; Guidance for Depositors & Agreements; Information & IT Security Protocols; Information Management Policies.

4. Strategy and approaches

- 4.1. BAC will manage and preserve digital assets in our digital repository, Preservica. The system and cloud storage are managed by a third-party provider and is compliant with International Standard for an Information Security Management System (ISO 27001). Further information can be found in our Digital Preservation Strategy.
- 4.2. BAC will ensure that digital assets stored on portable storage media (i.e. floppy disks, CDs, USB drives) are transferred to the digital repository as quickly as possible, to reduce the risk of any data loss that might be caused by hardware degradation.
- 4.3. BAC will provide guidance to encourage good records management practice and provide guidance and documentation to owners and potential depositors on best practice to support the requirements of life-cycle management and preservation.
- 4.4. BAC might act as the custodians of corporate records created by Birmingham City Council where long-term, rather than permanent, preservation is required, with ownership of the records remaining with the originator.
- 4.5. BAC will endeavour to capture and preserve appropriate metadata to manage the preservation, discovery, access and rights management of its digital assets.
- 4.6. BAC will adopt a strategy of file format migration (where applicable) to more recent preferred file formats as the preferred method of preservation.
- 4.7. BAC will ensure digital surrogates of physical archives created for preservation and/or access purposes are authentic, traceable to original metadata stored with the copy.
- 4.8. BAC will ensure that where no restrictions apply, public access to our digital assets to be delivered on-line or onsite, for example a dedicated workstation or other resource.

- 4.9. A Digital Preservation Strategy is available which goes into the service's aims and objectives in more detail, last revised and updated in 2021.

5. Sustainability

- 5.1. Long-term preservation of our digital assets requires constant review of our resource requirements, particularly relating to technical infrastructure, staffing (particularly awareness and training), financial, and administrative.
- 5.2. BAC is committed to best practice and engaging with the wider digital preservation community to remain on top of recent developments in the sector, i.e. engaging "technology watch" activities or taking part in professional forums and user groups.
- 5.3. BAC will monitor the growth of our digital collections and plan accordingly.

6. Standards and Legislation

- 6.1. BAC aims to adhere to emerging standards and best practice. These are detailed in our Digital Preservation Strategy, but at a basic level include:
- ISO 14721:2003 – Model for an Open Archival Information System
 - ISO 15836-1:2017 – The Dublin Core Metadata Element Set
- 6.2. BAC's archives and local studies collections (which includes digital assets stored on portable storage media) are cared for in high quality storage which meets the British Standard for the storage and exhibition of archival documents (BS 4971:2017).
- 6.3. BAC manages its digital and physical assets in adherence to a defined legal and regulatory framework, including the Copyright Act (1988); Freedom of Information Act (2000); Environmental Information Regulations (2004); Data Protection Act (2018).

7. Roles and responsibilities

- 7.1. Birmingham Archives & Collections is responsible for ensuring that:
- Appropriate guidance is given to staff, depositors and other stakeholders
 - Professional standards are met, and compliance reviewed
 - Appropriate transfer of records identified for permanent preservation
- 7.2. Allied professionals in Birmingham City Council are responsible for ensuring that:
- digital preservation solutions are considered and included in relevant projects, i.e. website design or procurement of new systems
 - digital information is managed in a way that facilitates adherence to this policy
 - strategies are put in place ensuring the regular migration of digital records

- *Collaborative approaches* are adopted in the life-cycle management of digital resources, where possible
- 7.3. Senior officers at the Council are responsible for ensuring that:
- Digital preservation is recognised as a corporate concern within the council and receives appropriate levels of support to remain sustainable
 - Staff are supported in terms of training and development
 - The corporate digital preservation policy, strategy and associated guidelines are implemented within departments, service areas, or sections
- 7.4. Depositors, both internal Council and external, are responsible for ensuring that:
- Digital material and metadata come to BAC in a suitable manner for transfer
 - Advice is sought from BAC at the earliest opportunity before transfer

8. Communication

- 8.1. BAC liaises with bodies across the city regarding the acquisition of material where there may be a common interest. It will consult whenever this policy is revised.
- 8.2. An annual report of all new deposits, whether physical format, digital or mixed, is made to the National Archives. This is published online.

9. Review

- 9.1. The policy is to be reviewed every two years prior to the preparation of supporting documentation in application to renew National Archives Service Accreditation.
- 9.2. The review process should take place in consultation with internal and external stakeholders, and in consideration of developments in legislation and best practice.
- 9.3. The next review date for this policy is March 2024.

10. Further Information or Comment

- 10.1. Copies of this policy are available in large print
- 10.2. For further information on this policy or to comment on it please contact:

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[Archives and Collection website](#)