

# Digital Preservation Policy

## Version 2

Author: Helen Dafter, Collections Team

Owner: Collections Sub Committee (Champion Chris Taft, Head of Collections)

11/11/2022

Review date 2025

# Contents

<b>OVERVIEW</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>MANDATE</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>SCOPE</b> .....	<b>3</b>
OUT OF SCOPE .....	4
<b>POLICY PRINCIPLES</b> .....	<b>4</b>
ORGANISATIONAL VIABILITY .....	4
POLICY AND STRATEGY .....	4
LEGAL BASIS .....	5
IT CAPABILITY .....	5
CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT .....	5
COMMUNITY .....	5
ACQUISITION, TRANSFER AND ACCESS .....	5
BITSTREAM PRESERVATION .....	5
CONTENT PRESERVATION .....	6
METADATA MANAGEMENT .....	6
DISCOVERY AND ACCESS .....	6
<b>ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES</b> .....	<b>7</b>
RESPONSIBLE .....	7
ACCOUNTABLE .....	7
CONSULTED .....	8
INFORMED .....	9
<b>STANDARDS AND MODELS</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>SUSTAINABILITY</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>RISK ASSESSMENT</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>RELATED DOCUMENTS</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>GLOSSARY</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>CONTACT</b> .....	<b>13</b>

## Overview

British postal heritage has touched the lives of countless millions throughout history, it has helped to shape the modern world and the heritage that The Postal Museum (TPM) preserves helps tell this story. The Royal Mail Archive together with the Museum and Philatelic Collections are a unique testament to the role played by postal services and the post office network in the development of modern Britain and the world.

This policy sets out The Postal Museum's ongoing commitment to the acquisition and preservation of digital collections. This policy forms one element of our collections management framework and should be read in conjunction with other collections management policies including the Archive Collections Development Policy, TPM Collections Development Policy v2, and the Archive Information Policy.

If digital records are not identified, managed, and preserved from the point of creation we risk not having the content to make accessible for future users, in exhibitions, and through the creation of multi-platform content. It also recognises that our practice in this area is under active development and must evolve and improve continuously.

---

## Mandate

The Postal Museum cares for the records of Royal Mail Group (RMG) and Post Office Limited (POL) under the terms of an Archive Services Agreement. This agreement supports the businesses in meeting their obligations under the Public Records Act 1958. The Postal Museum also cares for its own archive to support its corporate memory, accountability and decision making; and to preserve content for future exhibitions and programming.

Other legislation, such as the Data Protection Act 2018, Companies Acts 1985 and 2006, the Postal Services Acts 2000 and 2011, and Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, require records to be kept for specific periods of time. Although these records may not require permanent preservation, the length of some of these retention periods mean that some form of proactive digital preservation will be required.

As a cultural memory institution, The Postal Museum has a duty to ensure that records survive for future generations.

---

## Scope

The Postal Museum collects, cares for and provides access to public records created or received by RMG, POL and their predecessor bodies, Consignia, the Post Office Corporation and the General Post Office. This is because under the Public Records Acts 1958 and 1967, RMG and POL must select, preserve, and make accessible their historic public records. The archive will also collect and

care for records created or received by RMG after its privatisation in October 2013. In addition to records, we also collect publications, such as the staff magazine *The Courier*.

This policy covers born digital records created by RMG and POL which are transferred to the archive for permanent preservation in line with the criteria set out in the Operational Selection Policy 51 and the businesses respective retention schedules.

It will also provide guidance to RMG and POL on the management of born digital and made digital (digitised) records with retention periods longer than 7 years (as set out in the relevant retention schedules), but without a requirement to preserve permanently. It is not intended that these records are transferred to The Postal Museum.

The policy also covers born digital material acquired for the museum collection. This may include (but is not limited to) oral histories, digital photographs, and moving image material.

Digital records will be subject to the same criteria and considered against the same priority collection targets as physical formats. They are accepted on the understanding that the aim is to make them available for consultation alongside physical records. Digital records will need to be identified and potentially transferred earlier than paper records as they require more active preservation to ensure their survival.

It also covers the born digital records created by The Postal Museum which have been selected for permanent retention.

#### **OUT OF SCOPE**

Digitised records (digital copies of material held in analogue form) are not in scope of this policy. The only exception is in the case of digitised versions of records where the analogue version is no longer in existence, or is not held by The Postal Museum.

---

## **Policy principles**

The Postal Museum takes a proactive and risk-managed approach to digital preservation. It recognises that preserving access to digital collections requires ongoing planning, active management, and organisational commitment from the point of creation or accession. It is committed to bitstream and logical preservation of records transferred for long term preservation, ensuring they remain usable, accessible, and understandable.

#### **ORGANISATIONAL VIABILITY**

The Archivist (Digital Preservation) will have day to day responsibility for digital preservation activities. The Archivist (Digital Preservation) will work with the Senior Archivist and the Head of Collections to ensure digital preservation is embedded into The Postal Museum's collections management work. All processes will be documented, and training provided to collections staff to ensure skills are shared across the team.

#### **POLICY AND STRATEGY**

Policies, guidelines, procedures, standards, processes, and workflows developed to support acquisition and preservation activities for digital content are documented and made available to all collections staff.

## **LEGAL BASIS**

Ownership, provenance, and intellectual property rights will be ascertained and documented at the point of acquisition.

Access conditions, copyright and/or rights are adhered to when managing, preserving, and providing access to digital content. Appropriate practices are established to manage personal and sensitive data, and compliance with data privacy regulations.

Access to records will be subject to the 20-year rule.

Copying for preservation or access will be carried out in line with relevant copyright legislation.

## **IT CAPABILITY**

The Postal Museum ensures that its digital collections are managed in a manner which safeguards them against inadvertent alteration and non-authorized access in accordance with its Collection Management policies.

Access permissions are reviewed on a quarterly basis.

## **CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**

The Postal Museum acknowledges that there is much work to be done to establish and embed Business-As-Usual (BAU) digital preservation practices, and is yet to transition from ad hoc, reactive, digital preservation efforts. This requires significant prioritisation, organisational change and workforce planning while mitigating risks and managing expectations. The Postal Museum commits to undertaking annual digital preservation capability maturity assessments to work towards developing trustworthy processes and systems, to inform forward planning.

## **COMMUNITY**

The Postal Museum is committed to membership of the Digital Preservation Coalition until at least the end of 2024.

## **ACQUISITION, TRANSFER AND ACCESS**

The Postal Museum will adopt a pragmatic approach to the acquisition of digital records, working within the constraints and requirements of the transferring bodies.

The Postal Museum will work closely with the businesses to advocate for the importance of digital preservation and the prompt transfer of identified records to the archive.

Duplicate content will be identified and deleted at the point of transfer. Digital transfers will be secured, managed and backed up – with processes in place to ensure The Postal Museum's existing digital collections are not placed at risk – until such times that full appraisal can take place.

## **BITSTREAM PRESERVATION**

Checksums will be created at the point of transfer (if not received as part of the transfer) and will be periodically verified.

The Postal Museum has a workflow to addressing integrity failures.

The Collections team will work with the IT team to improve storage and backup facilities for born digital collections.

### **CONTENT PRESERVATION**

File format identification is carried out at the point of acquisition and recorded along with other metadata.

At risk formats are identified via community resources such as the Bit List of Digitally Endangered Content, and spot checks.

Where migration is necessary to ensure the ongoing preservation and access to records consideration will be given to the significant properties of the record and every effort will be made to ensure these are preserved in the new format. For example, The Postal Museum would avoid migrating a dynamic spreadsheet with formulas and conditional formatting to a static PDF unless this is the only option available, and the original format is at high risk of obsolescence.

Where possible, files should be transferred to The Postal Museum in their original format. The Postal Museum will aim to maintain the files in their original format until the risk of obsolescence necessitates migration.

### **METADATA MANAGEMENT**

Metadata will be captured at the point of acquisition and recorded either in the Collections Management System or alongside the digital content. Minimum metadata requirements are set out <P:\Collections\Collections Management\TPM Digital Preservation Handbook\Metadata\20200930 Minimum metadata requirements d1.docx>.

### **DISCOVERY AND ACCESS**

Use of and access to The Postal Museum's collections are the guiding purposes of its existence.

Preservation ensures that material remains fit for use, even if legislation such as Copyright or Data Protection means that some material is embargoed from public use.

Discovery of digital material will be informed by the Archive Collections Information Policy and the Archive Collections Access Policy.

Access will be in line with the 20-year rule and Data Protection legislation.

---

# Roles and responsibilities

## RESPONSIBLE

### Archivist (Digital Preservation)

- Has overall responsibility for digital preservation including acquiring new content, ingesting, monitoring, preservation, and access.
- Responsible for engaging with Royal Mail Group, Post Office Limited, and internally to secure the transfer of born digital records.
- Responsible for developing workflows for born digital collections.
- Responsible for planning long term infrastructure to support the preservation of born digital collections.
- Responsible for providing training and support to the Collections team to develop skills.
- Responsible for documenting processes and workflows.

### Senior Archivist

- Responsible for ensuring appropriate staffing and development resources available to enable the preservation of born digital collections to appropriate standards.
- Responsible for managing the relationship with Royal Mail Group and Post Office Limited to ensure the value of born digital records is recognised and relevant records are transferred to the archive in a timely fashion.

### IT & Systems Manager

- Responsible for providing appropriate software and hardware to support the preservation of born digital collections and integrating this with existing systems.
- Responsible for involving the Archivist (Digital Preservation) in discussions regarding new IT systems for The Postal Museum to ensure record keeping and preservation considerations are factored in at the point of record creation.

### Collections staff

- Responsible for the acquisition and preservation of born digital material in line with established processes, with support from the Archivist (Digital Preservation) as required.

## ACCOUNTABLE

### Head of Collections

- The Head of Collections will ensure The Postal Museum has appropriately skilled and equipped staff to preserve and make available born digital collections.

### Postal Heritage Trust Collections Sub Committee

- Will review and approve the Digital Preservation Policy, in line with approval processes for all collections related policies.

#### Head of Finance and Resources

The Head of Finance and Resources will ensure that digital preservation activities receive appropriate support from the IT team. This includes staff time and skills, hardware, and software.

#### Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

- The CEO will be accountable to ensuring the digital preservation is recognised as core activity for The Postal Museum and appropriately resourced. This includes approving budgets to ensure The Postal Museum's ability to manage and preserve digital collections to a high professional standard. This budget should include technical capacity (software and hardware), human resources (adequate staff), training, and membership of professional bodies.

### **CONSULTED**

#### The Postal Museum Digital Preservation progression group

- Will review and provide input to the Digital Preservation Policy to ensure it is relevant to all collections activities. They will ensure the policy is implemented in their own work areas.

#### Royal Mail Legal Director, Corporate, Finance, and Governance; and other key contacts

- Will be consulted on the Digital Preservation Policy and will ensure that born digital records identified for permanent preservation in the retention schedule are transferred to The Postal Museum at an appropriate time. They will promote good digital recordkeeping practices across Royal Mail, drawing on advice and guidance from The Postal Museum where required.

#### Royal Mail IT department and third-party providers

- Will facilitate transfer of selected born digital records to The Postal Museum. This may include allowing access to relevant systems to capture the records and ensuring encryption keys are transferred together with the records they relate to. Where possible they will factor record keeping considerations into procurement of new IT systems, drawing on advice from The Postal Museum as required.

#### Post Office Limited Company Secretary

- The Company Secretary will be consulted on the Digital Preservation Policy. They will promote good digital recordkeeping practices across Post Office Limited drawing on advice and guidance from The Postal Museum where required.

#### Post Office Limited Data Governance Lead

- Will ensure that POL's information governance practices promote and facilitate the transfer of born digital records selected for permanent preservation to The Postal Museum.

#### Post Office Limited IT department and third-party providers.

- Will facilitate transfer of selected born digital records to The Postal Museum. This may include allowing access to relevant systems to capture the records and ensuring encryption keys are transferred together with the records they relate to. Where possible they will factor record keeping considerations into procurement of new IT systems, drawing on advice from The Postal Museum as required.



## INFORMED

### The Postal Museum record owners

- All record creators will be aware of the Digital Preservation Policy v2 and understand how it and The Postal Museum retention schedule v.1.0 impact on the management and disposition of their records.

### The Postal Museum Board

- Will be aware of the policy and its importance of digital preservation to ensuring the collections reflect stories of communication in the twenty first century.

### Royal Mail Group record creators

- All record creators will be aware of the Digital Preservation Policy v2 and will identify and transfer their records to The Postal Museum in line with organisational retention schedules and the Operational Selection Policy 51. The Postal Museum will prioritise the acquisition of records from key departments which have been identified as, the Company Secretary's Office, Finance, Legal, Comms, Stamps and Collectibles, Human Resources, and Information Technology teams.

### Post Office Limited record creators

- All record creators will be aware of the Digital Preservation Policy v2 and will identify and transfer their records to The Postal Museum in line with organisational retention schedules and the Operational Selection Policy 51. The Postal Museum will prioritise the acquisition of records from key departments which have been identified as, the Company Secretary's Office, Finance, Legal, Comms, Human Resources, and Information Technology teams.

---

## Standards and models

The Postal Museum will follow good practice in the sector as recommended by the Digital Preservation Coalition, The National Archives, and the Archives and Records Association. Digital preservation practice will meet the requirements of Archive Service Accreditation.

The digital preservation workflow will be mapped to the OAIS standard where applicable.

Metadata requirements will be informed by PREMIS and ISAD (G).

Any digital preservation system procured by The Postal Museum will comply with ISO27001:2013 compliant.

The NDSA Levels of Digital Preservation and the Digital Preservation Coalition's Rapid Assessment Model (DPC RAM) will be used to monitor the organisation's digital preservation activities and set targets for development.

At present sha256 algorithms (see Fixity in the Glossary for more information) are being used for fixity checking digital records. This will remain under review.

---

## Sustainability

Digital Preservation activity will be funded via the Archive Services Agreement which is format neutral. This agreement covers the period until the last business day of 2040.

Provision will be made on an annual basis in the Collections budget for software, hardware, staff, and training to ensure The Postal Museum is able to meet its responsibilities in respect of digital preservation.

When developing new workflows or procuring digital preservation systems consideration will be given to the financial and environmental implications. This may include exploring the appropriate number of copies to store, the frequency of fixity checking, and the types of storage selected.

Digital preservation activities will take into account The Postal Museum's commitment to net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. They will also work to minimise wider environmental impacts including the extraction of raw minerals and the use of water.

---

## Risk Assessment

Changes to the priorities of either or both businesses may curtail time available for this project and the ability to progress it. Likewise lack of engagement by the businesses, particularly in terms of encouraging and supporting the transfer of born digital records to the archive.

A particular area of concern is the lack of a named individual with defined Departmental Record Officer responsibilities within the businesses. This may impact on ownership of recordkeeping issues (including digital recordkeeping) within the organisation and the ability of The Postal Museum to engage the relevant teams in this project.

A further risk is staff capacity within The Postal Museum. The manual nature of existing workflows and the growing volume of digital material received and processed are unsustainable within the existing staffing levels allocated to this area

---

## Related documents

The Postal Museum Forward Plan

[Archive Services Agreement](#)

The Postal Museum Retention Schedule v1.0

[Archive Collections Development Policy](#)

[TPM Collections Development Policy v2](#)

[TPM Documentation Policy v2](#)

[Archive Information Policy](#)

[Operational Selection Policy](#)  
[The Postal Museum Records Management Policy](#)  
[Royal Mail Group retention schedule v7.0](#)  
 Royal Mail Group Records Management Policy

---

## Glossary

Term	Definition
Bitstream preservation	A term used to denote a very basic level of preservation of digital resource as it was submitted (literally preservation of the <b>bits</b> forming a digital resource). It may include maintaining onsite and offsite backup copies, virus checking, fixity-checking, and periodic refreshment to new storage media. Bit preservation is not digital preservation but it does provide one building block for the more complete set of digital preservation practices and processes that ensure the survival of digital content and also its usability, display, context and interpretation over time
Born digital	Refers to a record which has never had an analogue equivalent.
Checksum	A unique numerical signature derived from a file. Used to compare copies
Digital preservation	Refers to the series of managed activities necessary to ensure continued access to digital materials for as long as necessary.
Fixity check	Refers to a method for ensuring the integrity of a file and verifying it has not been altered or corrupted. During transfer, an archive may run a fixity check to ensure a transmitted file has not been altered en-route. Within the archive, fixity checking is used to ensure that digital files have not been altered or corrupted. It is most often accomplished by computing checksums such as MD5, SHA1 or SHA256 for a file and comparing them to a stored value. <a href="http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File_Fixity">http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File_Fixity</a>
Intellectual Property	Refers to copyright, designs, patents and trademarks which provide the creator with protection against other people stealing or copying the names of products, inventions, the design or look of products, or things the creator writes, makes, or produces.

Logical preservation	This form of preservation seeks to ensure the continued accessibility of digital resources over time, in the face of technological change, through active intervention. It may generate new technical manifestations of those resources through processes such as format migration. These new manifestations are then incorporated into the preservation storage environment for ongoing bitstream preservation
Metadata	Basically 'data about data'. Used to refer to structured data associated with the content to assist its management and use. Examples include creator, date, format, and checksum values.
Migration	A means of overcoming technological obsolescence by transferring digital resources from one hardware/software generation to the next. The purpose of migration is to preserve the intellectual content of digital objects and to retain the ability for clients to retrieve, display, and otherwise use them in the face of constantly changing technology. Migration differs from the refreshing of storage media in that it is not always possible to make an exact digital copy or replicate original features and appearance and still maintain the compatibility of the resource with the new generation of technology.
NDSA Levels for Digital Preservation	Refers to a tiered set of recommendations for how organizations should begin to build or enhance their digital preservation activities.
OAIS standard	Open Archive Information System reference model. An international standard (ISO 14721: 2000) defining a high level functional model for a digital repository. This standard is widely used in the digital preservation community.
Obsolescence	Digital obsolescence is a situation where a digital resource is no longer readable because of its format: the physical media, the reader (required to read the media), the hardware, or the software that runs on it is no longer available.
Permanent preservation	Continued access to digital materials, or at least to the information contained in them, indefinitely.
PREMIS	The PREMIS Data Dictionary for Preservation Metadata is the international standard for

	metadata to support the preservation of digital objects and ensure their long-term usability.
Significant properties	Characteristics of digital and intellectual objects that must be preserved over time in order to ensure the continued accessibility, usability and meaning of the objects and their capacity to be accepted as (evidence of) what they purport to be

## Contact

Helen Dafter  
Archivist (Digital Preservation)  
[helen.dafter@postalmuseum.org](mailto:helen.dafter@postalmuseum.org)