

Digital Preservation at Oxford and Cambridge

A collaborative research project to evaluate and provide sustainable recommendations for our digital preservation programmes

Introducing Digital Preservation at Oxford and Cambridge

Posted on [1 August, 2016](#) by [Sarah](#)

1 August 2016 marks the beginning of a two-year collaborative project between Cambridge University Library (Cambridge) and University of Oxford's Bodleian Libraries (Oxford). This project has been funded to assess current practices, then design and implement best practice digital preservation programmes at each institution.

The project, funded by the Polonsky Foundation, has enabled the appointment of three Polonsky Fellows at each institution focus on three main areas:

1. digital preservation policy and planning;
2. the development of expertise, training and community outreach; and
3. the specification and implementation of the technical tools and workflows which will underpin digital preservation activities.

Together, the Fellows will work towards the further development of sustainable, embedded digital preservation programmes at Cambridge and Oxford.

Why digital preservation?

Both University libraries have rich digitization programmes and are increasingly collecting born-digital collections of rich cultural and research significance. The nature of digital objects requires active management and curation from the time of creation throughout its lifecycle. Cambridge and Oxford have a commitment to preserve our digital collections in perpetuity; digital preservation is a necessary component to fulfilling that commitment and providing access to these rich and diverse materials.

What is the plan?

The first stage of the project involves an audit of the collections, policies, skills and technology currently in place at both institutions. These findings will help to inform the development of new policies and best practices, as well a series of training programmes to raise awareness about digital preservation and help staff further develop their expertise.

The collaborative nature of the project will foster knowledge exchange across the institutions, utilising expertise to develop policies, workflows and training plans together. Working together, the two teams of Polonsky Fellows will build business cases for further funding and prioritisation, while disseminating their findings with the wider digital preservation community.

What will the outcomes be?

Audits of collections, technology, policy and skills. Building upon previous research and expertise in these areas, the audits will provide an informative foundation for further developments of a digital preservation programme.

Updated digital preservation policy. Drawing on existing policies and resources, Cambridge and Oxford will collaboratively develop digital preservation policies tailored to the needs of each institution. These policies will complement existing policies and incorporate established best practices and standards.

A training programme. Using the information from a skills gap analysis and the updated policies, a training programme will be developed and trialled at both institutions. As digital preservation is an ever evolving and changing field, ongoing training programmes

and informational materials are necessary to support staff at all levels.

Outreach to the wider community. It is important to raise awareness about the importance of digital preservation and the key factors to success across the libraries and the wider research community. In order to embed these digital preservation programmes sustainably into business practice, funding bodies, senior management, researchers and other collection users will need to understand what digital preservation is and how it benefits them.

A technical solution. Using the technical and workflow audit to address each library's individual needs, tools will be identified and trialled before making recommendations for further activity and investment. Having the right tools to support our workflows will improve our ability to preserve our digital collections.

A business case. As we know, digital preservation is not a "set and forget" scenario. Digital objects require regular monitoring as does the greater technological environment. It is crucial to engage with the wider digital preservation community and continue to monitor our users as their needs will also shift over time—we must alter to meet those needs.

A strong business case will outline the needs of both libraries into the future and make recommendations for continuing and building strong digital preservation programmes that ensure the longevity of our digital collections and access to our users now, and into the future.

Want to find out more? Check out our 'About' page or follow us on Twitter at @BDLSS and @CamDigLib. Look for #DP0C to see project updates.

You can also tweet us using the hashtag or contact the team using the form on the **Contact** page. We welcome your questions, comments or suggestions.

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