

UCL Special Collections Digital Preservation Policy, 2019-2022

This should be read alongside UCL Special Collections' core strategies, policies and procedures and forms the overarching context for digital preservation of archives and records in Special Collections.

Introduction

Archives comprise non-published content created by individuals and organisations that are selected for permanent preservation. Digital archives have been created for many years but there has been an explosion in the amount of digital content being created since the late 1990s. The majority of archive collections being created today are solely in digital format. In addition the growing tendency to digitise paper collections for preservation purposes has led to a massive increase in the digital archive collections of many universities including UCL.

UCL Library Services' Special Collections department manages more than 500 collections of eminent academics who were pioneers in their fields, as well as UCL's own institutional archive. These paper collections are available to researchers of all levels and will continue to be accessible for hundreds of years to come. In comparison digital collections may become obsolete in a number of years. Already there are internationally important collections held by UCL Library Services that are degrading and inaccessible due to the format on which they are stored. Many archives are 'hybrid' in that they contain both hard-copy and digital material.

Purpose

This policy outlines how Special Collections intends to manage, preserve and make accessible digital records selected for long-term preservation because of their enduring cultural, historical, informational or evidential value in a manner that retains the records' authenticity, integrity, usability and reliability.

Scope

Digital records are typically either:

- Born digital, where the record was created using software and hardware, and saved in digital format, or
- Digitised, where the record was created in a physical, tangible form and has subsequently been recreated, through scanning or photographic techniques, as a digital object.

This policy addresses the care and accessibility of digital material within the collecting areas defined by the Special Collections Collection Development Policy. At present, material identified as being worthy of preservation includes;

- Archival materials deposited with us, this may be as part of hybrid collections (a mix of traditional and digital materials), or may come as purely digital collections
- Material digitised by us for the purposes of preservation, access, teaching or outreach/advocacy
- UCL digital research data where it does not fall under the remit of UCL RITS (Research IT Services).
- UCL Exam Papers collection

This policy will be underpinned by supporting documents, procedures and workflow plans, in order to accommodate the rapidly changing environment of digital preservation.

This policy does not cover most digital research data created by UCL, which comes under the remit of UCLs Research IT (RITS) Department, or digital records created by UCL, and deemed suitable for permanent preservation, which are currently managed through an EDRMS managed by UCL ISD. In both cases UCL Special Collections is working closely with the owners regarding digital preservation requirements and future developments.

Digital formats and media

UCL Special Collections will accept digital records in most file formats (such as text, graphic, image, video, audio, database, website and email) and will apply standard archival appraisal criteria, codes of practice and best practice to determine suitability for preservation. (See separate list of accepted formats).

Special Collections will accept digital records held on physical media (such as CD Rom, floppy disc, external Hard Disc Drive, USB flash drives), but, depending on condition and age, cannot guarantee that their contents can be fully extracted.

At present we are unable to collect certain formats of digital archives; these include some databases, Computer Aided Design files and e-mails.

Principles

UCL Special Collections will take all reasonable measures to ensure digital objects managed and preserved within their systems remain trustworthy and accessible.

Stakeholders: UCL Special Collections will work with donors and record creators to provide consistent and relevant guidance on short term and long term preservation of digital records.

Acquisition and selection: The long term preservation of any collection is predicated on its relevance to the acquisition policy of the collecting body and to the end users. The Special Collections Collection Development Policy contains clear guidelines regarding selection and acquisitions.

Accessioning and appraisal: Born digital archive material will be accessioned according to written procedures, using standard terminology and measurements.

Storage, duplication and backup: Born digital archive collections, and born digital elements of other library and archive collections will be stored as far as possible in a location which enables their ongoing preservation, and will provide the maximum level of security against corruption, loss and unauthorised access. Material will usually be stored in our digital asset management system.

Additional metadata generated by the software which provides access to this type of material may provide essential information in the reconstruction of, and migration of born digital objects Digital versions of library and archive material, or *digitised material* (eg. Scans of material, digital photographs of material) will be stored in the Library Services digital asset management system.

Access: UCL Special Collections will provide public access to its digital collections, unless subject to restrictions imposed by legislation, contractual restrictions or technological issues that limit accessibility. At present the main route to accessing digital collections deposited with, and collected

by UCL Special Collections is through the Library Services digital asset management system Digitool repository. Where users require physical access in a reading room this will be supported on a case by case basis and we will work to expand this provision as demand grows.

Preservation and migration: Lossless archival quality formats are stored as master copies. A combination of high and medium resolution derivatives are made available for research through our digital collections website. All masters and copies are stored on the Library Services Asset Management system. We will continue to work with UCL RITS and other stakeholders to develop long-term digital preservation solutions.

Related policies, strategies and legislation

UCL Special Collections will ensure compliance with all relevant legislation and will adopt key professional industry standards in its approach to Digital Preservation. The most relevant industry standards applicable are (but not limited to):

- Space data and information transfer systems - Open Archival Information System reference model (ISO 14721:2012)
- Space data and information transfer systems – Producer-Archive Interface Methodology Abstract standard (ISO 20652:2006)
- Information and documentation – Records management – Part 1: General (ISO 15489-1:2001)
- Space data and information transfer systems – Audit and certification of trustworthy digital repositories (ISO 16363:2012)
- International Standard for Archival Description (General) (ISAD(G))
- Preservation Metadata Implementation Strategies (PREMIS)
- Metadata Encoding and Transmission Standard (METS)

Staff training

Digital preservation is a rapidly changing discipline. There will be a commitment to the professional development of staff in this area, and we will take a proactive approach to develop the knowledge and skills of all librarians and archivists working with internal and external specialists, and to embed skills gained within the team. Adequate reading time will be assigned to staff to allow them to stay up to date with the relevant literature. We will contribute to wider knowledge and skills of the profession through conferences, training and publications.

Aspirations

Several areas of work have been identified to build on the existing work in this area to ensure UCL has the capability to effectively manage the records it creates, and to support future collection development for all its archive collections. These are:

- Continue to develop a linked set of documentation (digital archive management and digital preservation strategy, policy and procedures) that incorporates all digital collections held by UCL Library Services including research data, records, archives, and selected digitised content
- Continue to assess digital archives (including collections on obsolete media) across all library sites to ascertain current holdings and requirements for any future management
- Research and develop suitable system(s) for the proactive management of digital archives across all sites that can provide access and undertake preservation actions, in-line with agreed financial investment

- Work with relevant teams at UCL to assess institutional records held in UCL digital repositories, to ensure records for permanent preservation are captured
- Develop a format migration programme for collections held on obsolete external media
- Continue to develop guidance for targeted record creators (e.g. key UCL staff, potential donors) on the appropriate management of their content
- Address issues of access, including sensitive personal data, copyright and other restrictions including the provision of adequate hardware and software
- Identify sustainable funding for future staffing and activity in this area

Agreed by Director of Services 21/01/21