

## Archives and Special Collections Digitisation Policy

Division: Library Services  
Directorate: Students & Education  
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## 1. Policy Statement

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The Archives and Special Collections Digitisation Policy is intended to ensure that digitisation of original archives (including institutional records and deposited archives) and special collections items meets the broader objectives of Library Services to improve access to materials for teaching, learning and research, including supporting distance learning initiatives. Digitisation must meet appropriate collection care thresholds commensurate, as appropriate, with The National Archives' Accreditation standard, and with the format of the item being digitised.

## 2. Overview

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- 2.1 Archives Services and Special Collections undertake digitisation to meet the needs of specific service users who request copies of original materials for their research, and proactively to preserve items at risk of physical decay or destruction. Digitisation may also be carried out as part of thematic or other projects to preserve entire collections (or selected contents of collections) or for broader teaching, research and public engagement purposes, as set out in *Library Services 2025: Our Vision*.
- 2.2 Archives Services will digitise university records selected for permanent retention and associated university publications where it is appropriate to do so for the purposes of ensuring their longer term preservation and to support the regular business activities of the university, including optimising the use of space for physical storage or for promotional or marketing purposes.
- 2.3 Digitisation may further be carried out to make best use of staff resources by making material available to users in a self-service manner.
- 2.4 Systematic digitisation of archives and special collections may be carried out to support university research and funded programmes which require the availability of large quantities of content as part of research projects.
- 2.5 Digitisation may take place irrespective of physical format - including paper, magnetic tape, and optical carriers - and the type of information contained, but the processes of digitisation may differ in each case.

## 3. Selection for digitisation

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- 3.1 Services users may request copies of archives and special collections items for research purposes subject to the provisions of UK copyright law.
- 3.2 Criteria to be exercised when selecting material for proactive digitisation include its monetary and historical value; its uniqueness or rarity; whether similar material has already been digitised and published by other institutions; whether items are in poor physical condition and at risk of further damage if produced for service users; and whether the digitisation supports university and Library Services priorities and initiatives.

- 3.3 Out of copyright items may be easier and cheaper to digitise, but the fact that items are in copyright should not in itself be a bar to carrying out digitisation.
- 3.4 Some formats including audio and video may be more difficult and expensive to digitise, but this should not in itself be a bar to digitisation.
- 3.5 Items at high risk of decay or damage should be prioritised for digitisation.
- 3.6 Items which support university priorities in teaching and research should be prioritised for digitisation.
- 3.7 Items may sometimes be loaned to Archives Services with the specific intention that they be copied and the originals returned to the depositors.

#### **4. Digitisation process**

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- 4.1 Digitisation may either be carried out on-site by Archives and Special Collections staff or by an approved outsourced supplier, or off-site at suitable premises which meet minimum thresholds for storage security and environmental standards, notably PD5454.
- 4.2 Contracts for external digitisation must be let according to current university policies and procedures.
- 4.3 Selection of suitable suppliers of digitisation services will depend upon a number of factors: cost, quality, special requirements of the items it is proposed be digitised, estimated time taken, logistical concerns such as the location of facilities, and the availability of suitable equipment. The track record of the potential supplier will be considered in relation to fragile and valuable items that require specialist handling.
- 4.4 Suppliers must specify the equipment to be used, and the proposed methodology, and agree output file types and any other standards and specifications of work in advance of contracts being approved, including special handling and storage if required.
- 4.5 Prior to digitisation, selected items should be reviewed to assess their conservation status. Items in need of conservation should be added to the Archives Services or Special Collections conservation register, as appropriate. All items sent for digitisation must be accompanied by an inventory and inspected prior to digitisation to ensure that they are not damaged or that any damage is recorded, so that the specified work is carried out appropriately and that items are returned in their original condition. Items should be appropriately packaged for transport to and from digitisation facilities.
- 4.6 All items sent for off-site digitisation must be returned in good condition unless it is requested that they be destroyed (for example duplicates of university records). Where contracts for digitisation or similar activities that involve movement of university publications or other similar material to third parties are let, the contract terms should set out what should happen to the hard copy material at the conclusion of the exercise i.e. return to the university or, if appropriate, destruction/disposal of the original material accompanied by destruction notices.

## **5. Standards**

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- 5.1 Archives Services and Special Collections will endeavour to adopt consistent technical specifications which meet industry standards as set out in guidance published by Jisc and the Collections Trust.
- 5.2 Digitised archival and Special Collections items will be accompanied by technical metadata created as part of the digitisation process including file type, resolution and size. Standards-based metadata including keywords/indexing should be created by Archives or Special Collections staff to ensure that digital files can be retrieved appropriately from any file store.

## **6. Publication of digital surrogates**

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- 6.1 All reasonable steps must be taken to obtain necessary approvals for the publication of digital files to ensure compliance with UK legislation including the Copyright, Designs and Patent Act, 1988, and its recent amendments, including those relating to orphan works.
- 6.2 All in-copyright items published online for which it has proved impossible to contact the rights holder must be accompanied by a takedown statement including current staff contact details to ensure that complaints are addressed in a timely way.
- 6.3 Approval must be sought, where necessary and possible, from the owners of deposited archival collections for the publication of these collections online and a record kept of these agreements. Permission notices must accompany online publications if these have been requested by depositors. Where possible, digital files should be accompanied by Creative Commons notices to encourage sharing and re-use of data.
- 6.4 Where possible, optical character recognition (OCR) should be used to make digitised printed sources searchable.
- 6.5 Digital surrogates will be used on university websites and digital platforms for use in exhibitions (including physical exhibitions), publications and third party portals and aggregators to facilitate the use of Archives and Special Collections material.
- 6.6 Statistics should be kept of the use of online digital collections by the public, and their value and impact reviewed periodically.

## **7. Digital preservation and storage**

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- 7.1 Digital storage for the purposes of preservation should comply with the Open Archival Information System (OAIS) model.
- 7.2 At ingest, digital files should be virus- and fixity-checked.

- 7.3 Digital files should be kept in a dedicated digital store, with access restricted to the staff of Archives Services, Special Collections, Information Management and Compliance, and King's IT.
- 7.4 Preservation copies should be stored with their associated checksums and metadata. Access copies should be created and stored separately. Access copies of born digital or digitised archive collections should be made available to readers only on a dedicated stand-alone PC in the Archives Reading Room.
- 7.5 Access copies of heavily used archival files should be loaded into the university's digital asset management system, Celum, with associated metadata.
- 7.6 Archives Services staff monitor the Technology Watch reports of the Digital Preservation Coalition for notifications and advice on updated software and hardware, and possible risk implications for stored data.
- 7.7 For the avoidance of data loss, data backups should be maintained in a trusted repository in a different geographical location. A regularly updated record of associated metadata should be kept in a separate location to the digital files to facilitate data recovery in the event that this is required.

## **8. Implementation and Review**

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- 8.1 This policy will be communicated to Library Services staff, relevant parties within King's College London, and to external agencies and others with an interest in its context, on demand. It will be made available to the public via the Governance Zone on the King's College London website.
- 8.2 This Policy will be reviewed every two years, unless internal or external developments warrant an earlier review.

## Appendix: Related Sources

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- King's College London Library Services *Library services 2025: Our vision* (2015) (<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/library/about/strategic-plans>)
- King's College London Library Services *Document handling* (2015)
- King's College London Library Services Archives Services: *Preservation priorities* (revised 2016)
- King's College London Library Services *Preservation Policy* (2014)
- British Library Preservation Advisory Centre *Basic preservation* (2013)
- Digital Preservation Coalition *Digital preservation training programme: an introduction to digital preservation* (2014)
- Collections Trust: digitisation (<http://www.collectionstrust.org.uk/itemlist/category/206-digitisation>)
- Jisc Digital Media (<https://www.jisc.ac.uk/>)
- Intellectual Property Office: Copyright Acts and Related Laws (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/copyright-acts-and-related-laws>)
- The National Archives, *Archive Service Accreditation Standard* (2014)