

Digital Preservation Policy

Dorset History Centre
Bridport Road
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Service Description

The **Joint Archives Service (JAS)**, based at **Dorset History Centre (DHC)** is operated on behalf of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council, and Dorset Council. Partnership between the two authorities as delivered through the joint service sits at the heart of JAS activities and underwrites the protocols and processes by which DHC acquires material. This is enshrined in the 2022 Inter-Authority on Archives which was approved by the Cabinets of both councils.

Local history services (primarily local studies library material) are provided locally at **Poole History Centre** and **Bournemouth Library's Heritage Zone** respectively.

DHC is the sole local authority archive within the county with Accredited status as conferred by The National Archives. Local studies library services and the Historic Environment Record are operated on behalf of Dorset Council.

Our Vision

That Dorset History Centre is the physical and virtual hub for the archival and recorded heritage of the county of Dorset in both hard copy and digital formats.

Our Mission

To acquire, preserve and make accessible the archives of the county of Dorset and so promote cultural, economic, educational and social well-being.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Code of Practice on Records Management issued by the Lord Chancellor under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 recommends that public bodies across the country introduce a strategy for the preservation of digital records to ensure that they can continue to be accessed and used and are resilient to future changes in technology.
- 1.2 The JAS acquires, preserves and makes accessible archives, records, local studies and literary material in any format for use by present and future generations. DHC makes these collections accessible to visitors as well as providing world-wide access online and through a range of off-site activities.
- 1.3 Digital preservation refers to the actions required to ensure the continued and reliable access to authentic digital records. Unlike paper and parchment records, active management is required throughout the record lifecycle to ensure the maintenance of the integrity, authenticity and accessibility of digital materials.
- 1.4 For legal compliance some corporate records need to be kept for up to 100 years but are not necessarily suitable for permanent preservation. Where these records are created

digitally, earlier intervention is required to ensure they remain accessible and authentic for as long as they are needed. In this way, digital preservation activity can contribute to ensuring digital continuity.

- 1.5 At present, the JAS continues to accession significant quantities of paper records, of which it holds over a thousand cubic metres. However, an increasing quantity is now being received in electronic format and DHC is itself creating digital copies of hard copy originals for preservation or access reasons.
- 1.6 This digital heritage is at risk of being lost to posterity. Contributing factors include the rapid obsolescence of hardware, software and storage media, uncertainties about resources, responsibility and methods for maintenance and preservation, and legal barriers to digital preservation activity.

2. Aim and Purpose

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to affirm the JAS's formal commitment to address the challenges surrounding the indefinite preservation and accessibility of the unique digital archives of Bournemouth, Christchurch, Dorset and Poole.
- 2.2 Raise awareness of the need to address the long-term needs of digital materials amongst staff at BCP Council; Dorset Council and members of the public.
- 2.3 Encourage the transfer of digital archives to DHC by individuals, organisations and businesses.
- 2.4 Further procedures, standards, and guidance will be developed in future to address specific aspects of digital preservation.

3. Scope

- 3.1 We exist in an increasingly digital environment with many born digital items never appearing in hard copy form. The corporate strategies of the two funding councils include the assumption that business activities will be 'digital by default.' There is also increasing awareness of the fragility of digital data and the need to be able to preserve it correctly. The National Archives reflected this view in its strategy for increasing digital preservation capacity [Plugged in, Powered up](#)¹.
- 3.1 This Policy applies equally to digital material received from Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council; Dorset Council; external depositors such as other local authorities, official organisations, groups and individuals; and material created in-house as accessible surrogates for use in and beyond DHC.
- 3.2 Digital material includes born-digital material, information which has been created and managed electronically; and digitised material, information which has been created in a non-digital form, but which has been subsequently converted to a digital form, e.g., through digitisation projects.
- 3.3 Digital material is selected for preservation by the JAS in accordance with the [Acquisitions Policy](#) (2020), and corporate retention schedules (for records created by local government agencies). This will include material requiring long-term, rather than permanent, preservation which is equally at risk from loss, corruption and obsolescence during its lifecycle.
- 3.4 This policy operates in conjunction with other relevant JAS policies.

4. Preservation strategy

¹ <https://nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/projects-and-programmes/plugged-in-powered-up/>

- 4.1 Digital material selected for permanent preservation will be stored in a managed digital preservation environment (digital repository). The management software will be provided by a third party, with suitable measures in place to mitigate supplier failure and allow full data transfer.
- 4.2 Electronic material stored on removable media such as CDs, floppy disk and USB sticks will be transferred to the digital repository as soon as possible to mitigate the risk of permanent loss of content through hardware corruption, degradation and damage.
- 4.3 Creators of digital records will require guidance on the creation and management of sustainable digital resources, including the need to use open and standard file formats wherever possible. DHC will encourage good records management practice and provide advice to the owners of digital records to assist potential depositors of digital archives to create and curate records in a form which meets requirements for long-term preservation and digital continuity.
- 4.4 Where long-term, rather than permanent, preservation is required DHC will act as custodians of corporate records (BCP Council; Dorset Council) to ensure they remain accessible and authentic, with ownership of the records remaining with the originator.
- 4.5 DHC will endeavour to capture and preserve all appropriate metadata required for on-going preservation, discovery, access and rights management of digital assets from all sources.
- 4.6 When appropriate, the JAS will use migration to more recent file formats as the preferred method of preservation. Migrating to another format involves, in most cases, minimal or no loss of content and simplifies access by ensuring that format technologies are current at the time of copying.
- 4.7 Copies of digital files made for preservation purposes shall be authentic and traceable to the original via metadata stored with the digital copy.
- 4.8 Provision for public access to non-restricted digital archives will be delivered online and on-site at DHC.

5. Sustainability

- 5.1 Long-term preservation of Dorset's digital archives requires continuing assessment of all the relevant resource commitments, including:
 - Technical infrastructure (equipment, software, maintenance and development)
 - Staffing
 - Financial (on-going budget commitments). Financial sustainability will be monitored by the JAS to track the digital preservation costs and overall sustainability of the repository.
 - Administrative oversight (policy reviews and strategies pertaining to digital archives held by DHC)
- 5.2 The JAS will continue to monitor the growth of the digital archive and use this information to inform sustainability planning. The potential for income generation from digital resources will be investigated.

6. Standards and legislation

- 6.1 The JAS intends to adhere to emerging standards and best practice for digital preservation. Standards and guidance which inform digital preservation strategies and processes developed by DHC include the following:
 - ISO 14721:2012 The OAIS (Open Archival Information System);
 - The Dublin Core Metadata Element Set (ISO Standard 15836);

- BS 4783 Storage, Transportation and Maintenance of Media for Use in Data Processing and Information Storage;
- Code of Practice for Legal Admissibility and Evidential Weight of Information Stored Electronically

6.2 At DHC archives and local studies are stored in high quality accommodation which meets fully the British Standard for the storage and exhibition of archival documents (BS 4971:2017)

6.3 All data will be managed in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act, Data Protection Act and Environmental Information Regulations.

7. Roles and responsibilities

7.1 Dorset History Centre responsible for ensuring that:

- Appropriate advice and guidance is given to depositing bodies, including staff and councillors within BCP Council, and Dorset Council.
- Professional standards for digital preservation are met and that compliance is regularly reviewed.
- Records identified for permanent preservation are transferred as appropriate to DHC.

7.2 Allied professionals (including information governance, records management and IT) within BCP Council, and Dorset Council

Responsibility for ensuring that:

- Digital preservation issues are considered and included in relevant strategies and projects, including procuring new software or hardware.
- Digital information is managed in such a way that facilitates adherence to this policy now and in the future.
- Where appropriate, strategies are put in place to ensure the regular migration of records held solely in digital format.
- A collaborative approach is adopted to facilitate good management of information throughout its life-cycle.

7.3 Senior officers and Cabinet member leads BCP Council, and Dorset Council

Responsibility for ensuring that:

- Digital preservation is recognised as a corporate concern within the councils and receives the necessary levels of organisational support and resources required to ensure effectiveness.
- Staff are supported in terms of training and development to enable them to address digital preservation issues.
- The corporate digital preservation policy and its associated guidelines are implemented within their department/service/section.

7.4 Depositors (including staff within BCP Council, and Dorset Council)

Responsibility for ensuring that:

- Digital records are submitted in a suitable condition for acceptance by the archive, including all appropriate metadata
- Advice is sought from DHC at the earliest opportunity regarding digital material created for the archive

8. Communication

8.1 DHC consults and/or liaises with other bodies across Bournemouth, Christchurch, Dorset and Poole regarding the acquisition of digital materials in which there may be a common interest. It will also consult whenever this policy is revised.

8.2 An annual report of accessions of archives is made to The National Archives. This is published online.

9. Review of the Policy

9.1 The policy will be reviewed in consultation with interested organisations, stakeholders, and individuals every 3 years to consider any new legislation, regulations, guidance, or business practices. The policy will be next reviewed in September 2026.

10. Further information or comment

10.1 Copies of this policy are available in large print.

10.2 To comment on this policy or for further information about it, contact the Service Manager for Archives and Records at:

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Tel: 01305 250550

E-mail: archives@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Website: www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/dorsethistorycentre