



Archives and Research Collections

Collections Digitisation Policy

This policy describes how and why we digitise items from our collections.

1. Policy

- 1.1 This policy describes why we digitise our collections, how this is carried out, the standards we adhere to, and the preservation approaches we take for digitised collections content.

Aims

- 1.2 Digitisation is carried out to fulfil the following aims:

- Support academic teaching and research at York and elsewhere in higher education.
- Widen and improve access to collections in our care to support diverse user groups locally and globally.
- Open and add value to new areas for research.
- Preserve fragile and vulnerable materials by providing digital surrogates in their place.

Selection

- 1.3 Selection of materials for digitisation takes into account many factors, including, but not limited to:
- existing and potential research, teaching, and learning demand
 - the condition and physical characteristics of the original item
 - ownership of - and rights to - the material
 - estimated complexity and length of projects
 - cost and the likelihood of obtaining funding

- availability and quality of descriptive metadata
- commercial potential

Based on these variables, we review priorities for digitisation annually through our Collections Development Group.

Standards and legislation

- 1.4 We create digital surrogates that are fit for their intended purpose. Specific and detailed digitisation standards are cited in the supporting documents and selected with the digital surrogate's end use in mind.
- 1.5 When making decisions about the digitisation and dissemination of material, due consideration will be given to:
 - Copyright legislation and intellectual property rights. A 'best endeavours' approach to finding rights-holders will be employed.
 - Data Protection legislation and protection for the rights of living individuals identified in documents.
 - Contractual and other obligations with owners, donors and commercial partners.

Methodology

- 1.6 Digitisation equipment and methodologies are selected to ensure the care of the original and the production of a digital surrogate that is fit for purpose.
- 1.7 Staff undertaking digitisation are trained in appropriate digitisation and handling techniques.

Metadata

- 1.8 Digital surrogates to be retained long-term must retain a permanent reference to the original item.
- 1.9 Additional metadata will be created as part of the digitisation process to support long-term preservation and access.
- 1.10 Wherever possible, metadata created during digitisation will be standardised and structured.

Preservation

- 1.11 All digitised materials will undergo the appropriate level of preservation activities and processes following the Digital Preservation and Collections Care and Conservation policies to ensure they are accessible for as long as necessary.

Access

- 1.12 Digitised materials will be made available online where appropriate, following the Access to Collections Policy.

Sustainability

- 1.13 Digitisation activities will be scalable, sustainable, and evolve with industry developments. Staff will determine the cost and benefits (including environmental impacts) of different options and secure project funds and resources for digitisation and ongoing curation as required.

2. Scope

- 2.1 The policy applies to materials held by the Borthwick Institute for Archives and the University of York Rare Books collection.
- 2.2 The policy does not apply to University of York Library materials other than Rare Books.
- 2.3 Separate documentation and terms and conditions exist for our external digitisation service.
- 2.4 The policy is binding on all staff, volunteers and contractors involved in archive digitisation activities

3. Oversight

- 3.1 Overall responsibility for digitisation is with the Keeper of Archives and Research Collections.
- 3.2 The Digital Preservation Archivist is responsible for overseeing policy implementation.

4. Responsibilities

- 4.1 Digitisation is carried out by competent staff or other appropriately trained and experienced people, including, for example, volunteers and external contractors.

- 4.2 The Digitisation Manager coordinates digitisation activities and establishes appropriate digitisation methodologies and workflows.
- 4.3 The Conservation and Preservation Team monitors and advises on implementing digitisation programmes and the methodologies employed.
- 4.4 The Keeper of Archives and Research Collections is responsible for final decisions on whether digitisation of fragile materials should be carried out.

5. Policy implementation documents

5.1 This document is supported by the following policies and implementation documents:

- Access to Archives Policy
- Collections Care and Conservation Policy
- Archives Information Policy and plan
- Reprographics procedures
- Digitisation procedures
- Preservation and conservation procedures
- Digital Preservation Policy
- Digital preservation procedures
- Access plan and procedures
- University of York Information Security Policy
- University of York Data Protection Policy

Document history and status

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| February 2017 | BGSM | Approved |
| December 2020 | Borthwick Leadership Team | Light touch review, adjust review date to harmonise with other policy review dates. |
| January 2024 | Archives and Research Collections Leadership Team | Approved |

Review cycle 5 years
Date of next review September 2028