

Version 3

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Advice for External Digital Deposits

Unlike physical material such as documents and photographs that can survive for years with minimal intervention in the right conditions, digital records are fragile and vulnerable to loss and therefore require particular attention. We must actively preserve digital files over time to continue to ensure they remain useable and accessible. At the point of transfer to the archive, we have certain steps and standards to follow to ensure we are capturing as much original data about the files as possible ensuring we can preserve the original context, provenance and authenticity of the files. Essentially, we want to preserve the original files with their original metadata, such as the date the file was created or last modified. We do not want files to be restructured, renamed or reformatted and would advise against changing the names of files, migrating them to new formats or rearranging files.

This document offers initial advice on the transfer of digital material. It only refers to born-digital material, meaning files created in digital form, rather than digitised material, where a digital surrogate has been created from an original document. We do not accept digitised copies of original material, preferring to take the original document along with a digitised version if available and if of high enough quality. The records you transfer to us must be at the end of their life cycle, meaning you must have finished using them and do not need to make any further changes.

We only collect digital material that falls within our Collections Development Policies, so please check this in the first instance. All offers of material go through a formal accessions process, with offers considered and a decision on whether to accept made by an accessions panel. Also, due to the resources required to preserve digital files, we would ask that we are the only repository where the digital files will be donated. Please contact us to begin discussions with one of our archivists before reorganising, moving or deleting files, using theatre-collection@bristol.ac.uk or special-collections@bristol.ac.uk

Transfer methods

Type of transfer/format	Examples	Notes
Physical storage media	Optical media – CDs; DVDs External hard drives USB devices Floppy/Zip disks	We prefer material to be delivered in person. We can accept through the post, but would request drive encryption if contents contain sensitive/personal data. Please let us know what operating

		system you use i.e. Windows, Linux, Mac
Physical devices	PC Laptop Phone	We rarely take physical devices, as much of the content is not relevant. Please contact us to appraise content for transfer.
Cloud based transfer	O365; Sharepoint Google Drive	We will need to be given access to allow transfer, whether of specific folders or a whole shared drive.
Websites		We can collect this data via web crawl software ourselves. If websites are due to be closed down please notify us as soon as possible.
Social Media	Facebook Pinterest Instagram Twitter / X	We need to approach on a case-by-case basis, so please contact us to discuss the platform and how it was utilised.

The digital transfer process

There are many stages to the digital transfer process, before the physical transfer of files. Please contact us as soon as possible to begin discussions.

The first step is to understand the digital content intended for transfer. Depending on the type of transfer this may include creating a file manifest known as a DROID report using software recommended by The National Archives. Running a DROID report on the files will automatically create a spreadsheet of useful information, such as number of files, file formats, sizes and names. It can be used to highlight duplicates, encrypted and unwanted files.

We will then appraise the content together to select the final content for transfer. This conversation will include discussion about:

- The original metadata and whether it has been retained and whether any additional metadata is required
- What file formats there are
- Any files that have been password protected or encrypted. We will need to be made aware of any passwords or encryption keys needed to access the files before transfer.
- Version control. If many versions of a draft document exist, these may need to be weeded so we will preserve the version showing significant changes.
- Duplicate files
- Intellectual Property. Within your digital collection, there may be material (published or not) that will have been created by others. It will be helpful to make the archivist aware of any third-party copyrighted material, and if known, who owns the copyright.
- Personal/sensitive information. There may be files that contains personal information about living individuals and therefore subject to data protection legislation, or sensitive information that may require a closure period.

There will likely be ongoing discussions, which may take time as part of this preparation stage and will include investigation on some of the records, as it may be that some records will be removed.

When the digital material is ready for transfer a formal transfer agreement form will need to be completed, and arrangements for the transfer of the digital material will be made.

