

Digital Preservation Policy

University of Wyoming
American Heritage Center

Approved by:

Version 1.0

Last updated: November 27, 2018

Introduction

The Digital Preservation Policy establishes the framework for the American Heritage Center at the University of Wyoming to support sustainable, long-term preservation and access of its digital archival collections. The Policy upholds the shared missions of the University and the AHC to enrich learning and research experiences, and to provide access to the unique cultural and historical resources in the Center's collections.

The AHC was established as the official university archives for the University of Wyoming through university regulation 7-490. It is the responsibility of the Center to care for the digital university records in its holdings, as well as digital non-university records that are collected following the subject areas in its Collection Development policy.

This Policy describes the digital archival principles and approaches adopted by the AHC. Further policy documentation, procedures, processes, and guides will be developed to address specific aspects of this Policy.

Standards

The AHC embraces the use of internationally recognized professional standards to preserve digital records. Standards provide clear targets and organized guidance on best practices for the archival community as a whole to follow, create a foundation for preservation activity, and allow for a collective dialogue as new trends emerge. Along with internal standards, the Archives is committed to aligning its digital preservation policies, strategies, and practices with the Open Archival Information System (OAIS) Reference Model / ISO 14721:2012 and the Trusted Repositories Audit & Certification (TRAC) metrics / ISOO 16363.2012.

Operating Principles

The following overarching principles guide the AHC's approach to digital preservation. They are the values that the AHC pursues in its digital projects and workflows and that help to shape the future of its digital collections.

- Accessibility – users are able to easily locate and access the records
- Integrity – the records the users retrieve are accurate and complete
- Usability – the records can be located, retrieved, presented, and interpreted on current and new technologies

Scope

The AHC is committed to preserving and maintaining access to digital content that falls under the collecting scope in the Collection Development and Acquisition policies. The digital records that are preserved at the AHC come from two general categories:

- Born-digital: created originally through the use of computer technology
- Digitized: created originally in physical form, but later converted to a digital format for preservation and access purposes

This Policy defers to the Collection Development and Acquisition policies to determine scope for collection content and parameters for deaccessioning.

Strategies

The AHC uses several key strategies to provide effective preservation of its digital content, while also recognizing that we should maintain flexibility to adapt to new professional trends and technologies. The purpose of the strategies is to comply with best practices and to limit risk when preserving and providing access to digital records.

1. Documentation of Standards and Procedures

The AHC documents the archival processes undertaken to perform appropriate tasks for digital preservation. Internal documentation is provided in an appropriate format and updated regularly.

2. Prioritization

The AHC accepts all kinds of media devices and file formats that donors or the University transfer to it. The media devices and file formats that match the AHC's available technical resources may be prioritized for processing.

3. Metadata Creation

Appropriate metadata is created to maintain the context of the records and to enhance discoverability. Care will be given to capture technical, preservation, descriptive, and administrative metadata as necessary.

4. File Format Management

The AHC is committed to providing long-term access to its digital collections. However, due to the complexities of various file formats and available resources at its disposal, the archives may be limited in how it preserves records. At a minimum, each record is preserved at the bit-level, meaning that the integrity of the original record is maintained. When possible, the AHC will support format migration as demand and resources allow.

5. Integrity (fixity)

Ensuring that digital records are accurate, complete, and unaltered is paramount in a preservation program. To ensure integrity, the AHC generates a unique alpha-numeric identifier for each record in its collection. The identifier is checked regularly to monitor any unintended changes made to the record.

6. Records Capture

Establishing authenticity and integrity begins at the start of the acquisition process. When digital records are transferred to the AHC, staff generate and track unique identifiers beginning with moving the files from media devices or file sharing software to server space.

7. Storage

Redundancy is the cornerstone of digital storage best practices. The AHC's storage infrastructure makes use of a combination of offline, near-offline, and online systems to house multiple master copies of digital records for the long-term.

8. Access

Records must be capable of being accessed by users across time and changing technologies. The AHC follows best practices, such as file format management and metadata creation, to support long-term accessibility. Unless donor or legal restrictions are placed on the records, the AHC will do its utmost to make all digital records available. However, the AHC also respects privacy and confidentiality of donors' digital materials and may redact or remove sensitive information.

Policy Review

This Policy is reviewed biennially on a calendar-year basis to meet the developing needs and new requirements of the digital collections housed at the AHC.