

Digital Preservation Policy

Purpose:

This policy statement indicates the direction the Georgia Archives (hereinafter referred to as the Archives) intends to take in preserving its own digital collections and in collaborating with others to enable the preservation of other digital information resources likely to be of value to the citizens of Georgia. This policy aims to minimize the risks associated with technological changes and ensure that the records remain reliable and accessible over time.

Objectives:

The Archive's preservation role is guided by its key objective to preserve and maintain the historical records of Georgia government and ensure they are available for current and future use. This objective applies to both digital and non-digital historical resources, although the Archives recognizes that it will use different methods and draw on different skills, procedures and partnerships, for managing digital and non-digital collections.

Policy:

Digital records are part of the Archives collections and subject to the same criteria for retention and acquisition as other media. As such they are included under the central preservation policy:

The Archives will ensure that historical records acquired as part of the archives of the state of Georgia remain available over the long term, through prevention of damage and deterioration; reversing damage where possible; and, when necessary, changing the format of materials to preserve their intellectual content.

For digital records that are deemed to be of historical value, preservation is defined as the actions needed to assure continuing access to the full content of those records over time. Content has wider implications than simply assuring that a given image or file can be accessed. Thus, hierarchical and structural relationships among files and metadata that make the files usable must be preserved as well as the files themselves. In addition, digital records may exist in multiple versions. The Archives is committed to preserving the integrity and usability of digital records along with the descriptive, structural, and administrative metadata associated with it.

Scope of responsibility:

The Archives intends to preserve all digital materials covered by this policy. However, it is likely that the Archives will need to allocate priorities for action, based on the relative significance of particular materials and the technical complexity of ensuring access to them.

The Archives is committed to lifecycle management of its digital resources and will pursue methodologies and processes likely to mitigate the potential costs associated with digital preservation. Guidelines and procedures for each stage have been or are being developed, and are reviewed as technology changes or other need arises. The Archives will participate actively where appropriate in research, development, and implementation of new practices for preservation of digital resources.

Models for Practice:

The Archives believes its digital archiving and preservation objectives will be best achieved by developing practices that comply with an adequate, coherent, and widely understood framework for reliable, accountable, and manageable digital archives.

The Archives will use the broad understanding and concepts embodied in the Open Archival Information Systems (OAIS) Reference Model as a conceptual check for its own digital archives construction and management. In developing systems and infrastructure to manage its digital collections, the Archives will operate within the principles of reliable digital repositories as defined by relevant international standards and best practices.

The Archives also recognizes the value of practical experiments in developing useful new approaches. The Archives will continue to develop process models addressing its particular business needs, clearly identifying and articulating points at which its practice does not comply with the OAIS Reference Model, and why.

Development of a Digital Preservation Strategy:

A formal written digital preservation strategy supports this policy and includes consideration of the following elements:

- Degree of integration with storage, backup, and preservation for non-digital materials
- Development and use of decision-making tools (e.g. risk analysis, usage monitoring, probability of loss calculations, cost models, etc. in support of long-term planning, migration/conversion planning, and resource allocation)
- Maintenance strategies (backups-online and/or offline, condition monitoring of offline storage media, refreshing, redundancy through mirror sites or caching, etc.).
- Survival strategies (migration, emulation, archeology, etc.).
- Reliance on outside consulting and archiving services, if any (contract negotiations, etc.).

Collaborations and Partnerships to Preserve Digital Records:

The Archives is one of many players with an interest in ensuring that the state's documentary heritage is preserved and accessible. Others with such an interest may include local, state and municipal agencies, libraries, universities, and organizational

archival/historical agencies. The Archives seeks to work with others who are taking or could take responsibility for preserving and providing access to Georgia's digital information resources. In working with such partners the Archives wishes to:

- Identify appropriate partners and stakeholders able to contribute to the statewide effort
- Establish agreements on responsibilities and roles
- Pursue agreements that provide a reliable basis for ongoing accessibility over time
- Help identify and develop policies, procedures and tools to support such an aim
- Work with creators, publishers and re-users of digital content to encourage practices that will enable, rather than hinder, preservation
- Work with government agencies and officials to develop legislative and funding frameworks that will enable cost-effective preservation.