# nli

# Digital Preservation Policy

**2023**

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## Revision Record

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| **Document Title** | NLI - Digital Preservation Policy |
| **Document Number** | NLI_POL1_36 |
| **Lead Responsible Person** | Head of Digital Collections |
| **Approved by and Date** | 2023-05-16: LT |
| **Next Review Date** | 2024-06-30 |

# 1. Background

The Dublin Science and Art Museum Act, 1877, established the National Library of Ireland (NLI). The mission of the NLI is to collect, protect and make available the recorded memory of Ireland. Today we operate under the National Cultural Institutions Act of 1997.

Information exchange increasingly occurs in digital form. The NLI, like our counterparts the world over, is facing up to the challenge of collecting, preserving and providing access to this digital material. We continue to add to our outstanding national collections of Ireland's literary, cultural and documentary heritage, which now includes both digitised and born-digital[1] material.

The NLI has actively preserved digitised material and websites since the early 2010s. Therefore, this Digital Preservation Policy builds on existing NLI practices and, drawing on the Digital Preservation Coalitions' Preservation Policy Toolkit[2], further addresses the preservation needs of these and other born-digital materials.

As stated in the NLI Collection Development Policy[3], the NLI acquires collection material in a number of different ways including donation, deposit and purchase. The nature of digital collecting requires active preservation planning[4] and actions before, during, and immediately following the acquisition of digital material, in addition to subsequent preservation-focused interventions taken during accessioning, arrangement, and long-term management of materials. The NLI 2022-2026 Strategy[5] groups objectives under five key pillars: Collect, Protect, Reveal, Engage, and Innovate. While the Policy primarily relates to the 'Protect' pillar of the NLI 2022-2026 Strategy, digital preservation is also an important consideration under the 'Collect' and 'Reveal' pillars. As outlined below, evaluating digital preservation requirements is an important consideration when acquiring new digital materials and it is a critical enabler to ongoing access to and reuse of digital collections over time. As digital preservation continues to rapidly evolve as a field of practice, knowledge sharing and collaboration within the NLI and with colleagues across the global digital preservation community is an important factor in expanding the range of formats that the NLI can collect. The NLI's participation in and contribution to developing good practice in the area of digital preservation, contributes to objectives under the 'Engage' and 'Innovate' pillars of the NLI Strategy.

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1   The term born-digital refers to materials that originate in a digital form. This is in contrast to digital reformatting, through which analog materials become digital, as in the case of files created by scanning physical paper records: "Born Digital", Wikimedia Foundation, last modified April 17, 2023, **https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Born-digital**

2   "Digital Preservation Policy Toolkit", Digital Preservation Coalition, accessed May 5th, 2023, **https://www.dpconline.org/digipres/policy-toolkit**

3   National Library of Ireland, "NLI Collection Development Policy 2022", accessed May 5th, 2023, **https://www.nli.ie/sites/default/files/2022-11/nli_collections_revisedpolicy_2022.pdf**

4   Preservation planning involves monitoring the collections and creating plans to ensure that digital material remains accessible to and understandable by the NLI's users.

5   National Library of Ireland, "NLI Strategy 2022-2026", accessed May 5th, 2023 **https://www.nli.ie/sites/default/files/2022-11/nlistrategyenglishweb2022.pdf**

## 2. Digital Preservation

The Digital Preservation Coalition (DPC) defines digital preservation as follows;

*Digital Preservation refers to the series of managed activities necessary to ensure continued access to digital materials for as long as necessary.[6]*

The NLI views the need for continued access to and re-use of our collections as the primary driver for digital preservation. The NLI also recognises that digital preservation requires more than storage and IT systems. Digital preservation activities are diverse and occur at all phases of the lifecycle of digital material, from pre-acquisition[7], transfer, description, storage, access and re-use. Digital formats[8] provide many advantages and benefits in comparison to physical formats, but are inherently volatile. These risks include data loss, obsolescence, and loss of context. The NLI seeks to mitigate the risks of this volatility by employing robust, sustainable[9] digital preservation practices. Good digital preservation practices ensure that digital material remains findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable. These good practices play a role in managing risks to the reputation of the NLI so that further collecting is not inhibited.

## 3. Purpose

This Policy outlines the principles, roles and responsibilities for digital preservation activities within the NLI. The Policy adheres to the overarching NLI Strategy, and will inform policy and processes and guide decision-making. In addition, the Policy outlines the risks inherent to collecting digital material and making it accessible.

This is the NLI's first Digital Preservation Policy. It represents a formalisation of existing or emerging practices within the NLI, with a recognition of the need to continuously improve our digital preservation capability. The Policy provides a pathway to integrating digital preservation as a core activity within and across the NLI. As such it is expected that this Policy will evolve and be supplemented by complimentary guidelines and procedures over time. The audience for this Policy includes NLI staff and stakeholders, and as it is published on the NLI website, its language is intended to be accessible to a general audience.

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6    "Digital Preservation Handbook, 2nd Edition", Digital Preservation Coalition, accessed May 5th, 2023, **https://www.dpconline.org/handbook**

7    This phase occurs prior to acquiring collections from donors, depositors and creators. It can involve conversations with donors (where possible) and documenting the outputs of those conversations in a survey document. This can include working with the donor regarding scope and content of the collection, rights information, file transfer method and access to the collection.

8    The NLI has preferred formats and file types depending on the collecting area which will evolve over time, but aims to be flexible when accepting material from donors, depositors and creators.

9    Sustainability refers to the overlapping environmental and organisational concerns. Examples of these practices include robust governance and responsible financial and resource allocation, along with energy use and supply chain considerations.

## 4. Scope

This Policy only refers to digital collections material and associated metadata, whether it originates in digital form or is digitised from an existing physical holding. The scope does not include administrative digital files generated as part of the work of the NLI, for example internal emails and documents. The management of these corporate records is addressed in the NLI's Data Management Policy and related policies.

**Material within the scope of the collections:**
• Born digital archival and published collections including born digital material that is part of a hybrid acquisition
• Digitised NLI collections
• The NLI Web Archive

## 5. Policy Statements

5.1.   **The NLI recognises the need for skilled staff that drive, implement and advocate for digital preservation.**
As part of the Work-Force Planning process, the NLI will increase the number of skilled staff across departments that execute the many aspects of digital preservation. The NLI commits to continuous staff upskilling as digital preservation is an evolving field.

5.2.   **The NLI collaborates internally and externally to achieve our digital preservation goals.**
The NLI acknowledges the necessity for collaboration in the complex and evolving field of digital preservation in order to embed digital preservation across the NLI. This collaboration will leverage the knowledge, resources and skills of the global digital preservation community, key NLI stakeholders and NLI departments.

5.3.   **The NLI takes a standards-based approach to digital preservation.**
The NLI adopts relevant standards, frameworks and community good-practice approaches. For example, the FAIR principles[10], Open Archival Information System (OAIS)[11] reference model, metadata standards, open and community-adopted digital formats, and maintaining standards-based data models for preserved materials and associated metadata (also known as Archival Information Packages[12]).

5.4.   **The NLI maintains policies and procedures that guide and implement digital preservation.**
The NLI acknowledges the need for documentation that is actively updated and used. This commitment to documentation increases sustainability and protects against knowledge loss through organisational change.

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10   Wilkinson, M., Dumontier, M., Aalbersberg, I. et al. "The FAIR Guiding Principles For Scientific Data Management and Stewardship", *Scientific Data 3*, no. 1 (15 March 2016). **https://doi.org/10.1038/sdata.2016.18**

11   Consultative Committee for Space Data Systems, "Reference Model for an Open Archival Information System", June 2012, **https://public.ccsds.org/pubs/650x0m2.pdf**

12   The Archival Information Package, or AIP, is the version of the information package that is stored and preserved by the OAIS. The AIP consists of the information that is the focus of preservation, accompanied by a complete set of metadata sufficient to support the OAIS's preservation and access services:Lavoie, Brian. 'The Open Archival Information System (OAIS) Reference Model: Introductory Guide (2nd Edition)'. Digital Preservation Coalition, 1 October 2014. **https://doi.org/10.7207/twr14-02**

**5.5.** **The NLI provides, maintains, and manages the appropriate ICT infrastructure and capability needed to apply this Policy.**

- The NLI acknowledges the need to invest in actively maintained, fit-for-purpose, secure and robust ICT systems, infrastructure and procedures to underpin digital preservation. Examples include preservation storage systems, repository infrastructure, forensic workstations, and more.
- The NLI commits to including digital preservation requirements as a central consideration when reviewing, updating, or acquiring new ICT systems or infrastructure which are used in the management of digital collections.
- The NLI acknowledges the risk posed by Cyber Security threats to the preservation of digital collection material, and commits to including digital preservation requirements when reviewing and updating policies and procedures relating to data management and information security.

**5.6.** **The NLI actively engages with donors, depositors and creators who help us build our digital collections in order to achieve the best possible preservation, access and re-use outcome.**

The NLI recognises the benefit of a collaborative approach with donors, particularly during the acquisition phase. Examples include asking donors and depositors to create checksums, fill out surveys, and engage in relevant phases of digital preservation activities, and working with them to capture additional contextual information and metadata.

**5.7.** **The NLI continuously monitors and seeks to improve our digital preservation capability.**

The NLI commits, within 2 years of publishing this policy, to assess the maturity and robustness of its digital preservation procedures using recognised frameworks such as Core Trust Seal[13] and DPC's Rapid Assessment Model[14] and to identify key areas for improvement.

**5.8.** **The NLI routinely ensures the integrity and authenticity of our digital collections as a measure of trustworthiness.**

Digital preservation activities such as fixity checking[15] play an essential role in ensuring the integrity and authenticity of our digital collections, for the benefit of our users and donors, depositors and creators.

**5.9.** **The NLI preserves the descriptive, administrative, preservation, technical and rights metadata that facilitate sustained access and re-use.**

A compelling example is rights metadata, which allows the NLI to confidently provide both access to and re-use of preserved collections, while also enforcing the necessary access controls for sensitive or restricted materials.

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13  CoreTrustSeal Standards And Certification Board. 'CoreTrustSeal Requirements 2023-2025'. Zenodo, 5 September 2022. **https://doi.org/10.5281/ZENODO.7051012**

14  'Digital Preservation Coalition Rapid Assessment Model (DPC RAM)'. Digital Preservation Coalition, 31 March 2021. **https://doi.org/10.7207/dpcram21-02**

15  A method for ensuring the integrity of a file and verifying it has not been altered or corrupted. Digital Preservation Coalition, "Digital Preservation Handbook, 2nd Edition".

5.10.   **The NLI recognises the need to account for digital preservation activities in assessing the total cost of collection stewardship[16]**
The NLI holds our collections in trust for the public, and recognises that responsible collecting requires a full assessment of the total cost of stewarding material over the long-term. This is particularly important with digital collections, where the risk posed by inaction or delay in processing is often more acute than is the case with non-digital material. While seeking pragmatic and efficient solutions, the NLI recognises the need to take an informed and risk-based approach to acquiring and managing digital material.

## 6. Relationship to Other NLI Policies

Digital preservation involves data and collections management, therefore this Policy has key dependencies on other NLI policies and policy areas. As the Policy deals with data, it should be read alongside the NLI's Data Management Policy, Data Protection Policy, and ICT Information Security policies. This Policy plays a crucial role in managing digital collections and sustaining access to and re-use of digital collections material, therefore it also sits within the NLI's suite of collection management and development policies, e.g. the Collection Development Policy and related guidelines.

## 7. Roles and Responsibilities

Digital preservation is a cross-cutting concern and an organisation's shared responsibility. In addition to their responsibilities as Data Users under the NLI's Data Management Policy, any **NLI Staff member** who works with digital collection material has a responsibility to abide by this Policy and associated guidelines.

The **Digital Preservation Manager** has responsibility for maintaining this Policy and leading initiatives to coordinate its implementation, reporting to the NLI's Digital Collecting Steering Group.

The **Digital Collections Department** is responsible for the NLI's core technical infrastructure and for developing organisational digital collecting and digital preservation capabilities.

The NLI's **Digital Collecting Steering Group** provides cross-department governance of this Policy and is responsible for reviewing and monitoring its implementation, including making recommendations to the NLI Leadership Team regarding resourcing, coordination and the prioritisation of specific initiatives.

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16   For a recent discussion on this topic see Weber, Chela, Martha Conway, Nicholas Martin, Gioia Stevens, and Brigette Kamsler. 'Total Cost of Stewardship: Responsible Collection Building in Archives and Special Collections'. OCLC Research, 2021. **https://doi.org/10.25333/ZBH0-A044**

The **Head of Digital Collections** is the Lead Responsible Person for this Policy on the NLI's Leadership Team.

The **NLI Leadership Team** ensures the Policy's effective implementation and provides oversight of this Policy as part of the NLI's wider policy framework.

## 8. Implementation & Next Steps

As noted above, this Policy builds on established as well as emerging practices within the NLI. Work is underway to review and consolidate existing process documentation and related policies. It is expected that this work will form the basis for an evaluation and benchmarking of the overall maturity of the NLI's current approach to digital preservation against community norms and good practice (e.g. via DPC RAM, Core Trust Seal, Public Sector Cyber Security Baseline Standards/NIST[17], Principles of Open Scholarly Infrastructure[18]), from which specific areas of improvement will be identified. In line with the Roles and Responsibilities set out above, this evaluation will be led by the Digital Preservation Manager within 2 years from publication of this Policy, drawing on relevant expertise across the NLI, with monitoring and governance provided by the NLI's Digital Collecting Steering Group.

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17  Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, "Public Sector Cyber Security Baseline Standards", 1 November 2022, **https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/d1fd5-cyber-security-baseline-standards/**

18  Bilder, Geoffrey, Jennifer Lin, and Cameron Neylon. 'The Principles of Open Scholarly Infrastructure'. The Principles of Open Scholarly Infrastructure, 2020. **https://doi.org/10.24343/C34W2H**