



## **Library Digital Preservation Policy**

### **1-Context**

Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin, hereafter referred to as Trinity, affirms the Library's commitment to the long-term preservation of, and access to, digital assets of enduring administrative, cultural, educational, scholarly, or historical significance. This policy is the Library's first digital preservation policy, providing a foundational framework for the stewardship of these assets.

The Library has responsibility for the preservation of permanently valuable College records from the point of transfer to its stewardship. The commitment to digital transformation in Trinity's Strategic Plan 2025-2030 is an opportunity to examine current processes in anticipation of the imminent transition from paper-based College records to born-digital records being transferred to the College Archives in the Library.

The Library is increasingly creating, acquiring, and curating a wide range of digital assets, including personal archives, digitised resources, scholarly outputs, and electronic legal deposit publications. In addition, Trinity is developing a new digital-only library building, the Laidlaw Research & Innovation Library at Trinity East. With digital content and services at its centre, this will further accelerate the Library's need to curate and preserve digital assets, facilitating new opportunities for user engagement.

This necessitates a proactive approach to digital preservation that ensures digital assets remain accessible, authentic, useable, and secure over time. Digital preservation is an active and continuous process throughout the lifecycle of digital content and requires sustainable resourcing, strong governance, and robust organisational and technological infrastructures.

### **2-Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to:

- define the scope of assets to be preserved by the Library under the authority of the Board of Trinity College Dublin and to define what is out of scope.
- fulfil the long-term obligations of the Trinity's Records Management Policy.
- ensure that preserved assets are managed according to best preservation practices, remaining authentic, reliable, and usable over time.
- establish the transfer of data stewardship of permanently valuable College records from College units to the Librarian and College Archivist.



### 3-Benefits

**Safeguarding Trinity’s Digital Assets:** Safeguard the investment in the creation, acquisition, and management of digital assets of enduring value. Maintaining long-term accessibility ensures that future generations of staff, students, researchers, and the public can continue to benefit from these resources.

**Trustworthiness and Accountability:** Ensure the integrity, authenticity, and reliability of digital assets under the Library’s custody. This mitigates legal, technological, and reputational risks by ensuring compliance with statutory obligations and institutional policies. Digital preservation supports academic integrity by guaranteeing that preserved research outputs can be authenticated as unaltered works of scholarship.

**Institutional Reputation:** Demonstrate Trinity’s commitment to responsible and enduring stewardship of digital assets, reinforcing its role in research, education, cultural heritage, and public engagement. Safeguarding historical records protects Trinity’s institutional memory.

### 4-Definitions

**Digital Preservation:** “The series of managed activities necessary to ensure continued access to digital materials for as long as necessary”.<sup>1</sup> Digital preservation focusses on the long-term and protects content. It ensures content stays authentic, accessible, understandable, usable, and meaningful for as long as necessary even as formats, software, and hardware change.

**IT Backups:** Backups focus on the short-term and protect systems. They protect against accidents and outages by providing disaster recovery. They are focused on redundancy, resilience, and business continuity.

**Digital Materials:** A general, descriptive term for content in digital form regardless of value.

**Digital Assets:** Digital materials that have been appraised, selected, and designated as having enduring value and therefore requiring long-term preservation.

**Born Digital:** Digital materials originally created in digital form that have no analogue source (e.g. e-mail).

**Digitised:** Digital materials that are a surrogate created from an original analogue source (e.g. a digitised medieval manuscript).

---

<sup>1</sup> Digital Preservation Coalition (2025) What is Digital Preservation? Available at: <https://www.dpconline.org/digipres/what-is-digipres> (Accessed 09/12/2025)



**College Archives:** College records that have been identified as permanently valuable records, as defined by Trinity's Records Management Policy.

**College Record:** A record as defined in Trinity's Records Management Policy.

**Irish Legal Deposit Libraries:** These are the National Library of Ireland; the Library of Trinity College Dublin; the Library of the University of Limerick; the Library of Dublin City University; the libraries of the four constituent universities of the National University of Ireland; and the British Library.

**UK Legal Deposit Libraries:** These are The British Library; National Library of Scotland; National Library of Wales; Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford; Cambridge University Library; The Library of Trinity College Dublin.

## **5-Scope**

### **5.1-In Scope**

#### **a. Library Created Content**

Digital assets created by the Library, or created on the Library's behalf, and identified as enduring components of the Library's collections.

#### **b. Institutional Repository**

Assets accepted for deposit in Trinity's institutional repository, including, but not limited to, theses and staff publications.

#### **c. Digital Archives**

Born-digital and digitised archives, from individuals or organisations, obtained through donation or purchase, as well as College archives.

#### **d. Trinity's Website**

The public-facing pages of the @tcd.ie and @tcdlibrary.ie domains, captured on at least an annual basis. Under the 2026 version of the policy, password-protected content and intranet content is out of scope.

#### **e. Electronic Legal Deposit**

Digital publications from both the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom. This includes storage of a preservation copy of assets acquired under UK e-legal deposit as part of a collaborative preservation and access infrastructure with the other five UK Legal Deposit Libraries.



#### **f. Digital Materials Accepted Under the Library's Donations Policy; Purchased Digital Materials**

The Library exercises discretion in acquiring a wide variety of digital materials and designating them as digital assets for long-term retention and preservation. Purchased materials are only preserved if permissible under licence agreements and if materials are deemed appropriate for long-term retention and preservation.

#### **5.2-Out of Scope**

The following categories of digital materials are considered out of scope for routine inclusion in the digital preservation activities of the Library.

- a.** Social media content, including posts, comments, and interactions created on third-party platforms.
- b.** Live research data and active digital projects, including datasets, observational data, quantitative and qualitative outputs, web applications, exhibition or digital engagement platforms, and large-scale web infrastructures that rely on complex backend systems. Storage and access to live research data need to be supported by purpose-built infrastructure and policies that fall outside the scope of this preservation policy.
- c.** Administrative records, including e-mails, not designated as permanently valuable records under Trinity's Records Management Policy.
- d.** Digital materials actively managed by Trinity enterprise systems and external repositories.
- e.** Commercial or subscription-based content that cannot legally be preserved due to licence agreements.
- f.** Course materials, including content hosted on Virtual Learning Environments (VLE) and Learning Management Systems (LMS).

These exclusions are kept under review. The Librarian and College Archivist may approve the preservation of digital materials normally considered out of scope. Such decisions are made on a case-by-case basis and do not establish a general precedent.



## 6-Principles

1. **Integrity and Authenticity:** Ensure the long-term trustworthiness of digital assets.
2. **Usability and Access:** Digital assets remain available and usable to their designated communities, with strategies that balance long-term preservation with the retention of essential content and functionality. While access is the goal, this may be restricted due to privacy considerations, confidentiality, donor agreements, or functional limitations of the assets.
3. **Risk Management:** Risks such as technological obsolescence, data corruption, and cybersecurity threats, are mitigated through redundancy, monitoring, and regular integrity checks.
4. **Sustainability and Responsibility:** The Library is dependent on adequate financial, technical, and human resourcing to support the sustainable management of digital assets that are within the scope of this policy.

## 7-Policy

1. **Preservation Scope and Value:** Preserve digital assets of enduring administrative, scholarly, cultural, or historical value within the scope defined above.
2. **Authenticity and Integrity:** Maintain the integrity, authenticity, and reliability of preserved digital assets.
3. **Access and Metadata:** Digital assets remain accessible to authorised users subject to restrictions required by privacy considerations, confidentiality agreements, donor stipulations, or the functional limitations of digital objects. Sufficient metadata is created and maintained to ensure authenticity, management, and discoverability.
4. **Legal and Regulatory Compliance:** Compliance with relevant statutory and regulatory requirements, including but not limited to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), UK and Irish legal deposit obligations, Trinity's Records Management Policy, and Trinity's Records Retention Schedule. Preservation actions are undertaken in accordance with applicable legal, ethical, and institutional frameworks.
5. **Data Stewardship:** Ownership of all College records remains with the Board of the College with stewardship of records transferring from the creating unit to the Librarian and College Archivist when they are designated as permanently valuable records, as defined in Trinity's Records Management Policy; when they have reached



their final disposition, as specified in the Records Retention Schedule; and upon transfer to the custody of the Librarian and College Archivist.

6. **Risk Assessment and Mitigation:** The Library identifies, assesses, and seeks to mitigate risks to digital assets on a continuous basis. Risks arising from technological obsolescence, media degradation, cyber threats, and format dependencies are managed through proactive monitoring, planning, and the application of appropriate technical and procedural controls.
7. **Sustainable Preservation Practices:** Digital preservation practices are informed by principles of environmental sustainability, ensuring that integrity and redundancy are maintained while optimising energy efficiency and reducing environmental impact. The Library balances its corporate, cultural, and environmental stewardship responsibilities in managing digital assets.
8. **Collaboration:** The Library may collaborate with external partners, or commission third-party services, where this represents the most efficient, cost-effective, proportionate, and sustainable course of action.
9. **Disposal:** Under limited and exceptional circumstances disposal of digital assets is necessary. This must be justified, authorised, and documented in accordance with the Library Disposal Policy.
10. **External Review:** The Library commissions external expert assessment of policy implementation at key milestones.

## 8-Policy Owner

The Librarian and College Archivist has overall responsibility for the Policy, ensuring it aligns with the Library's Strategy and Trinity's strategic goals and values. Members of the Library Leadership Team monitor its implementation.

## 9-Responsibility and Implementation

The Library defines and document roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities for digital preservation activities. Policies, procedures, and practices are regularly monitored, reviewed, and updated to reflect emerging challenges, technological developments, and evolving best practice. The Library ensures that digital preservation governance supports transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement.



### **10-Related Documents**

- Trinity Strategic Plan 2025-2030
- Trinity's Records Management Policy
- Library Donations Policy
- Trinity's Open Access Publications Policy
- Library Disposal Policy

### **11-Document/Version Control for New Policies**

Approved by: Board

Date policy approved: 17 June 2026

Date of next review: June 2028

Officer responsible for review: Librarian and College Archivist