

Digitizing for Preservation or Access?

Planning a digitization project includes a wide variety of topics, but key among those is an analysis of the items and consideration of the project's mission. Depending on the item's copyright status, access may need to be restricted to local or on-site use only.

Digitizing for PRESERVATION involves creating and maintaining a digital version of the original item in as detailed a manner as possible, with the expectation that future capabilities will be greater than current ones. The digital version can serve as a stand-in if the original is lost.

Digitizing for ACCESS means that the focus is on creating files that, while they may be of lower quality, are quite sufficient for current purposes of display and dissemination.

In many cases, both objectives can be met in a single workflow. This is assumed in the majority of the instructions in this handbook, which include saving high-quality original versions in an Archive folder and then creating derivative copies in other formats/smaller file sizes.

Digitizing for **access only** is a reasonable option in situations such as the following:

- The item to be digitized is not an original (a photocopied document or news broadcast recording, for example)
- The item to be digitized is not unique
- A digitized copy of a copyright-protected work is created under the provisions in Section 108 of the Copyright Act

If the decision is made to proceed with 'access only' digitization of original, unique items, care must be taken to properly preserve those items so they will be available for better digitization processes in the future.

Digital Preservation also means *creating multiple backups* and *migrating digitized files* to newer physical formats and/or file formats as technology progresses. This applies to any version and any quality of digital files!

MIGRATION needs are frequently based on the obsolescence of hardware and software, and provisions for this should be included in long-term plans. Examples include:

- Files saved on floppy disks (obsolete hardware)
- Documents created with WordPerfect (obsolete software)
- Emails from a soon-to-be-discontinued email client (end of access)

Multiple **BACKUPS**, in multiple locations, should be maintained at all times. Equipment failure at some point is a given, and natural disaster or other catastrophic events are always a possibility.

