

Guidelines and advice for depositors of born-digital records

The notes below should help you to make a decision about whether to offer digital records to Berkshire Record Office and will help you with the formatting and presentation of these records. Please contact the record office before sending the records.

What types of records can be deposited at Berkshire Record Office?

- Born-digital records (records originally produced in a paper format should be deposited in that format if possible)
- Records which contain information of interest to current and future researchers
- Records relating to Berkshire (including parishes in Old Berkshire)
- Records which are no longer in current use
- Records which can be understood by researchers (check that any specific acronyms are explained, that there are no untitled columns or rows or other unstructured data, and that they do not include references to non-deposited records)
- Records that you have the permission of the copyright owner to deposit (this is particularly relevant for images)

How do I deposit these records?

Records can be accepted either via email attachments (small documents only), a filesharing link, USB stick or CD/DVD. We can accept records either as deposits (you retain ownership of the record) or as donations (ownership passes to Berkshire Record Office).

What file types and formats can I use?

- Nearly all file types can be accepted (please check if you use specialist or very old software)
- Preferred file format is PDF/A (the archive version of PDF), but PDFs are acceptable
- If you send records in other formats (e.g. Microsoft Word or Excel) save them as read-only to protect them from accidental alterations
- Photographs can be sent as either PDFs, JPEGs, or TIFFs (if you have very large TIFF files it is helpful to provide a smaller JPEG copy)
- Film and sound records can be sent in digital format (older formats such as film reels, video cassettes and tape cassettes will be sent to the Wessex Film and Sound Archive). If possible, check contents before sending.

How do I organise my data?

- Files should be arranged in a clear and consistent manner so that we can understand how they relate to each other
- If possible, include an excel spreadsheet which lists all of the folders and/or files (see below for what information to include)
- Organise files into folders and sub-folders which are clearly labelled (such as minutes, annual accounts, project records, records of a certain individual or building)
- Save the files with a title which explains what they are and allows them to be arranged in order within the folder (e.g. if you have files for minutes of meetings on 4th June 2008 and 1st September 2009 if you name them as 'Minutes 2008-06-04' and 'Minutes 2009-09-01' they will appear in date order in the folder)

- Before renaming undated files make a note of the date that it was last saved as otherwise this information will be lost
- Delete unnecessary earlier drafts of documents or duplicates before deposit and consider whether every file needs to be preserved.

What information do we need to know about your data?

- All digital records have their own metadata. Some of this is created automatically (e.g. type of document) and some of it you will have added when you created the record (e.g. name). There will also be information that you know about the record which it is useful to capture before it is deposited.
- Create a spreadsheet to record as much of the following information as you can:
 - Name of digital file
 - Title (may be useful to give a more detailed description than is recorded under the name)
 - Date created
 - Dates amended (if known)
 - Previous title (if you have renamed)
 - Date of final save before deposit (particularly important if you are sending the records via filesharing software as the date associated with the record will change to the date of transfer)
 - Creator (who created the original and for copies who created the digital version)
 - Subject/Place
 - Type of document (e.g. photograph)
 - Does it relate to other documents in the collection (e.g. two documents may only make sense if viewed together)
 - Does it contain any sensitive information about living individuals? (If so, it is helpful to provide dates of any entries relating to individuals)
 - Publisher (if relevant)
 - Who owns the copyright?
 - Are there any copyright restrictions in place? Will we be allowed to create copies?
 - For images it is important to establish who owns the Intellectual Property Rights so include who took the image and if they give their permission for the image to be made available to the public?
 - Does the owner give permission for Berkshire Record Office to license the use of high-quality images of the digital image and are there any restrictions on such licensing?
- It may also be useful to include a couple of paragraphs recording the history of the collection and how it was created.

What happens after I have deposited my records?

- You will receive a receipt for the records
- The records will be saved in two secure locations prior to cataloguing
- The records will be catalogued and made available to the public for research purposes (please note that there may be a significant period of time before the records are catalogued)
- The records will be saved securely in Preservica, our Digital Preservation System (This allows us to manage and track the security of the record, create conservation

and viewing copies, migrate old software to newer versions, and to make the document accessible to the public)

- If appropriate the records will be made available for researchers to view either via our website, by request, or onsite in our searchroom (records which include sensitive data relating to individuals will be subject to an appropriate closure period)

General advice for storing and maintaining digital records

- It is always advisable to back up your files regularly. If you are part of a community group, it should be possible to store the records in two different physical locations. If this is not possible copy the files on to an external hard drive or memory stick and store separately to the first version of the files. You may also want to save a further version in the Cloud. Check the second copy regularly to make sure it has not become corrupted.
- How often you back up the files will depend on how regularly you update them, how important the contents are to your organisation, and if they are made available elsewhere (e.g. via your website)
- It is easier to keep track of and maintain your records if you introduce good housekeeping systems from the moment you create the records. If you create a logical system of folders and create clear and consistent file names this will save you time when it is time to archive the files.