

Personal Digital Archiving Strategies

MIT Libraries Institute Archives & Special Collections

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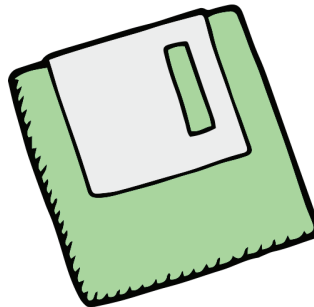
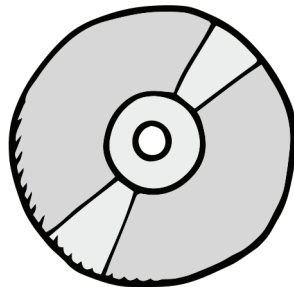


www.digitalbevaring.dk

This document provides five stages of a personal archiving workflow that draws from the steps provided by the Library of Congress Personal Digital Archiving program and the Digital Preservation Outreach and Education efforts (see resources for links). The five stages used in this guide are: Find, Select, Describe, Store, Manage. If you are (or think you are) required to preserve digital or physical records related to your work at MIT, please contact the Institute Archives for more direct guidance. We'd love to help.

Get Started: Find

Where is your important content currently? Check: personal computers, external hard drives, USB drives, cell phones and cameras, SD cards, cloud service platforms, social media, websites, work computer, healthcare patient portal, blog, etc.



Identify and download/gather content to a working space -- maybe your current laptop. This working space will be the place you do selection and description work.

Tips for downloading content from productivity platforms, cloud services and saving web pages:

Tool/Guide name	What is it?	Link
Google Take Out	Download you Google data – includes drive and calendar. Email not included	https://www.google.com/settings/takeout
Facebook Data Download	Download a copy of Facebook posts, pictures, messages	https://www.facebook.com/help/131112897028467/
Backing Up Evernote	A guide to exporting Evernote content	http://www.howtogeek.com/163349/how-to-backup-your-evernote-notebooks-just-in-case/
Web Recorder and Web Archive Player	Allows for recording a website, downloading the copy, uploading and viewing the archive.	https://webrecorder.io/ https://github.com/ikreymer/webarchiveplayer
Internet Archive - Save Page Now	Enter a link and IA will crawl it and add it to the Way Back Machine	http://archive.org/web/
Download from iCloud	YouTube video showing how to download photos from iCloud	http://bit.ly/1KdssSv

Personal Digital Archiving Strategies

Get Organized: Select Important Content

Now that you've identified some content that you might like to archive, it's time to get it organized. Because it isn't always sustainable to keep all your digital content for the long-term, it can be helpful to assess your content at a high level and pick specific things for archiving. In the archival profession we call this process *appraisal*. Sometimes the process of archiving is as much about letting go as it is about saving things.

The following prompts may help you decide what to keep long-term:

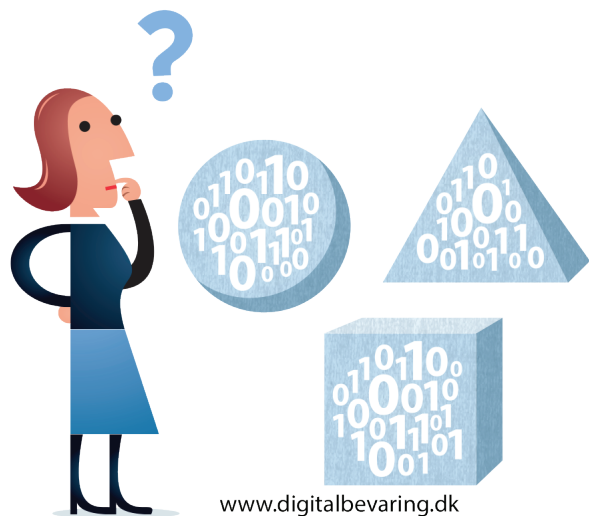
At a high level, what kind of content do I have?

Do I need this for legal, business, financial related reasons?

Do I have to archive this for my job? (if so, talk to your institutional archivist about this!)

Do I want to keep this long term?

What value does this have for me, my family, my colleagues, or my community?



Preservation Considerations

In addition to considering the intellectual content of the digital files, the technical characteristics of the files may help you decide what to keep.

What kind of digital formats do I have? Can I open these files? Can I access this storage media? If not, what can I do about that? Is it worth trying to recover or access the content?

Are these files accessible, but the format is not widely used anymore? If so, you might consider moving the content to a newer format. Feel free to keep the original file as well.

Is the content in an online platform? Can I download it all? If I can't download it, how might I preserve it?

Personal Digital Archiving Strategies

Get Meta: Describe your Archive

In order to remember the context of the content in your personal archive, you should consider creating descriptive metadata about your archiving plan and about the files.

Descriptive metadata might include:

Headers and footers in documents that list dates of creation, version context, creator

Embedded file metadata using Properties (Windows) or Get Info (Mac). Or using specific photo metadata programs (Adobe Bridge, Photoshop, Picasa, etc.)

A document that describes your archiving plan and organization methods

Meaningful/unique file names - avoid long file names and record name conventions

Describe content with others in mind -- avoid jargon and shorthand



Meta-what? Metadata is information created to describe the intellectual content or technical structure of content. You can use metadata to describe physical or digital content.

Keep it Safe: Store and Protect

Now that you've gathered, appraised, and described content, you can store your archive.

Basic: 2 copies of your archive - store one copy on your current computer and one copy on an external hard drive.

Pro: 3 copies of your archive – store one copy on current computer, second on external hard drive in secure location, third on an external hard drive in a different geographic location (e.g. your sister's house, your work office)

Cloud storage is an acceptable option, but shouldn't be used for sensitive information or as the only storage location.

Manage Your Archive

Review files in your archive yearly – *do you still need them? Can you still access them? Is the storage device still stable and effective? do you have new files to add?*

Update all copies of your archive as needed. Periodically replace your external hard drives – approximately every 4-5 years.

Update storage media as technology changes (zip disks > DVD > External Hard Drives).

Personal Digital Archiving Resources

Help from MIT Libraries

MIT Libraries Research Guides: <http://libguides.mit.edu/manage-info>

MIT Institute Archives and Special Collections, mithistory@mit.edu

Research Data Management: <https://libraries.mit.edu/data-management/>

The What and Why of Personal Digital Archiving

The following resources discuss and provide examples of the risks to digital content overtime and the need for digital preservation.

Christian, John. (April 23, 2015). "Deleting the Family Tree: Ancestry.com Deleted 10 years worth of my family correspondence." Slate.com. Retrieved April 27, 2015.

Cohen, Patricia. (2010). "Fending Off Digital Decay, Bit by Bit." The New York Times. <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/16/books/16archive.html?pagewanted=all>

Jeffries, Adrienne. (2013). "Posterous is shutting down." The Verge. <http://www.theverge.com/2013/4/30/4281780/posterous-is-shutting-down-tomorrow-here-are-the-best-alternatives>

Library of Congress. Personal Digital Archiving. <http://digitalpreservation.gov/personalarchiving/>

Library of Congress National Digital Information Infrastructure and Preservation Program. (2013). *Perspectives on Personal Digital Archiving*. http://www.digitalpreservation.gov/documents/ebookpdf_march18.pdf

Modine, Austin. (2009). "Web 0.2: Archivists Save Geocities from Deletion." *The Register*. http://www.theregister.co.uk/2009/04/28/geocities_preservation/

General Guidance

Bailey, Helen. (2014). Keeping Your Memories Alive presentation. <https://bitsandpages.wordpress.com/2014/04/24/preserving-your-familys-digital-legacy-a-talk-at-the-winchester-historical-society/>

Library of Congress. (2014). "Digital Preservation Outreach and Education Curriculum." <http://www.digitalpreservation.gov/education/curriculum.html>

Library of Congress. (2014). "Introduction to Scanning." Personal Digital Archiving. <http://digitalpreservation.gov/multimedia/videos/scanner.html>

State Library of North Carolina and State Archives of North Carolina. (2013). "Digital Preservation Best Practices and Guidelines." <http://digitalpreservation.ncdcr.gov/>

Personal Digital Archiving Resources

Working with Archival Repositories as a Donor

Redwine, G., et al. (2013). "Born-Digital Guidance: for Donors, Dealers and Archival Repositories." CLIR Report. <http://www.clir.org/pubs/reports/pub159/pub159.pdf>

Specific Guides for Formats and Metadata

American Society of Media Photographers. (2012, Feb. 27). "Digital Photography Best Practices and Workflow - File Format." <http://www.dpbestflow.org/links/37>

WITNESS. (2013). Activists' Guide to Archiving Video. <http://archiveguide.witness.org/>

JISC Digital Media. (2014). "Choosing a Digital Audio File Format." <http://www.jiscdigitalmedia.ac.uk/guide/choosing-a-digital-audio-file-format/>

Pinola, M. (2013). "How Long Your Hard drive is Likely to Last." <http://lifehacker.com/how-long-your-hard-drive-is-likely-to-last-1462918832>

Smith, K. and Macdonald, M. (2012). "Tagging and Finding Your Files." MIT Libraries LibGuides. <http://libguides.mit.edu/metadataTools/>

State Library of North Carolina and State Archives of North Carolina. (2013). Digital Preservation Tutorial Videos. <https://www.youtube.com/user/statelibrarync/playlists>

State Library of North Carolina and State Archives of North Carolina (2013). "Create Digital Files." <http://digitalpreservation.ncdcr.gov/create.html>

Digital Estate Planning

The Digital Beyond. <http://www.thedigitalbeyond.com/about/>

Roberts, Molly. (2014). "A Plan to Untangle Our Digital Lives After We're Gone." NPR: All Tech Considered. <http://www.npr.org/blogs/alltechconsidered/2014/07/23/334051789/a-plan-to-untangle-our-digital-lives-after-were-gone>

Image Credits and Workshop Inspiration

Jørgen Stamp, created for www.digitalbevaring.dk (Creative Commons Attribution 2.5 Denmark license) <http://digitalbevaring.dk/about-us/>

SPRUCE Digital Preservation Images. http://wiki.dpconline.org/index.php?title=SPRUCE_Digital_Preservation_Illustrations

Some of the resources listed and the Connect the Clues workshop were inspired by the Society of Georgia Archivists, Georgia Library Association, Atlanta ARMA "Find the Person in the Personal Digital Archive" resources. <http://soga.org/involvement/advocacy/professional>.