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Preparing Data for Sharing

How you get your data ready depends on the format -- do you have a dataset, a video, a recording? In the categories below there are guides to best practices, tools, techniques and other resources. Remember, when you decide to share your work with other researchers, you should ensure that the data and documentation are easy to use and that anyone not familiar with the study can find all necessary details through the codebook. The Archive can provide advice and examples on how to create good documentation and other data preparation activities.

If there is only one rule to follow in preparing data for archiving it is that you must document the data collection and file creation activities from the beginning and continue throughout the project. Doing so will save you money and stress. Estimates on the cost to fully documentation data are as follows: if you document as you carry out the project, then your overall cost for this activity will be less than 5% of your total budget. However, if you wait until the end of the project, then your costs will rise to between 10% and 20% of your total budget. (Einowski, Ilona. 2002. These figures were arrived at after making inquiries about data preparation costs at a number of institutions.)

Below are some resources to use to manage files in various technical formats, including statistical files; video, audio and multi-media; archaeology; history; performing arts; literature, language and linguistics; visual arts; digital games; and survey data.

Statistical Files

If you are collecting statistical data the most useful tool is the Guide to Social Science Data Preparation and Archiving published by the ICPSR. Documentation of your research data includes preparation of a codebook, a blank final version of the survey instrument or questionnaire, and a bibliography of writings and publications about the use of the data. You should also prepare written statements about sampling, weighting, and any special methodologies used in data collection. You should describe how items were coded and why and how missing data are handled. The process of creating derived data should be fully explained. Depending on the complexity of the survey instrument and the technology used to collect the data, you should also provide details on the flow of the questionnaire, including any randomization, branching and skip patterns.

Your data file should be free of personal identifiers. You should plan on providing a portable system file as well as a raw ascii file to the archive in which you plan to deposit your work. All items should be completely documented in your data file as well as in your codebook, including, variable names and labels, value names and labels, clearly described recodes, and raw n and frequency for each value.

Video, Audio, Images and Multi-media

The JISC Media Advice website in the UK provides advice on best practices for video, audio, and images.

Texas Commission on the Arts. Videotape Identification and Assessment Guide contains links to several organizations and resources on preserving moving images.

Conservation Online has produced a guide to audio preservation. The section on Standards, Guidelines and Best Practices contains links to a variety of resources, articles, and organizations.

Harvard Sound Directions Toolkit has published Sound Directions: Best Practices for Audio Preservation and it can be downloaded here. (5.52 MB)

Knight, G. & McHugh, J. (2005). *Moving Image Preservation Manual*. UK: Arts and Humanities Data Service.

Frost, H., ed. (2008). *Audio Preservation.*

The section on Standards, Guidelines and Best Practices contains links to a variety of resources, articles, and organizations.

Fells, N., Donachy, P., Owen, C., & Iles, K. (2002). *Creating digital audio resources: A guide to good practice*. Oxford: Oxbow.
SRLF Call Number: TK7881.65 .F45 2002

This Guide aims to provide information and more specific technical guidance for those considering small or medium-scale audio digitisation projects. The guide is aimed at a non-technical audience and will be of interest to holders of analogue collections considering digitisation, managers who need enough information to plan resources for a digitisation project and those experimenting with or piloting digitisation on a small scale for research, teaching, promotion or creative projects.

Archaeology

Bewley, R. (1999). *Archiving aerial photography and remote sensing data.* Oxford: Oxbow Books for the Arts and Humanities Data Service. SRLF Call Number: CC80.4 .A745 1999

Guide to digital preservation of aerial photographs, satellite imagery, and archaeological interpretations derived from these sources.

Schmidt, A. (2001). *Geophysical data in archaeology: A guide to good practice.* AHDS guides to good practice. Oxford [England]: Oxbow Books.
YRL Call Number: CC79.P5 S3 2001

Guide to Good Practice in collecting, documenting, and preserving raw geophysical data and images and interpretations drawn from this data.

Eiteljorg, H. (2003). *CAD-- a guide to good practice.* Oxford: Published by Oxbow Books for the Arts and Humanities Data Service.
SRLF Call Number: AZ186 .C33 2003

A Guide to Good Practice in collecting, documenting, preserving, and using Computer Aided Design datasets and images.

Richards, J. C., & Robinson, D. (2000). *Digital archives from excavation and fieldwork: A guide to good practice*. AHDS guides to good practice. Oxford: Oxbow.
YRL Call Number: CC80.4 .D54 2000

Guide to digital archiving of records produced in the course of assessment, excavation, and post-excavation phases of archaeological projects.

Gillings, M., & Wise, A. (1990). *GIS guide to good practice.* AHDS guides to good practice. Oxford, Eng: Oxbow Books.

A guide to good practice in documenting and archiving datasets (both spatial and attribute) from Geographic Information Systems.

History

Townsend, S., Chappell, C., & Struijve´, O. (1999). *Digitising history A guide to creating digital resources from historical documents*. [London, England]: Arts and Humanities Data Service.

This guide is intended as a reference work for individuals and organisations involved with, or planning, the computerisation of historical source documents.

Gregory, I. (2003). *A place in history: A guide to using GIS in historical research*. Oxford: Oxbow.
YRL Call Number: D16.12 .G745 2003

This guide is intended for historians who want to use Geographical Information Systems (GIS). It describes how to create GIS databases and how to use GIS to perform historical research.

Performing Arts

Goodman, L., Milton, K., Weldon, R., & Hamza, K. (2005). *A guide to good practice in collaborative working methods and new media tools creation: (by and for artists and the cultural sector)*. Office for Humanities Communication publication, no. 18. London: Office for Humanities Communication.

This Guide offers new perspectives on the role of new technologies in creative and collaborative practice in performance and is one of a series of titles commissioned and edited by AHDS Performing Arts at the University of Glasgow.

Smith, B. (2002). *Creating digital performance resources: A guide to good practice*. Oxford: Oxbow.

This Guide covers various issues in related to digital resources in the performance arts. It examines the construction of web-based databases, digital archives, e-journals and teaching applications, all in the context of performing arts datasets. There is also a section on the use of electronic resources in the actual practice of performing arts.

Fells, N., Donachy, P., Owen, C., & Iles, K. (2002). *Creating digital audio resources: A guide to good practice*. Oxford: Oxbow.
SRLF Call Number: TK7881.65 .F45 2002

This Guide aims to provide information and more specific technical guidance for those considering small or medium-scale audio digitisation projects. The guide is aimed at a non-technical audience and will be of interest to holders of analogue collections considering digitisation, managers who need enough information to plan resources for a digitisation project and those experimenting with or piloting digitisation on a small scale for research, teaching, promotion or creative projects.

Frost, H., ed. (2008). *Audio Preservation.*

The section on Standards, Guidelines and Best Practices contains links to a variety of resources, articles, and organizations.

Casey, M. & Gordon, B. (2007). *Sound Directions: Best Practices for Audio Preservation*.

Literature, Language and Linguistics

Morrison, A. S., Popham, M., & Wikander, K. (2000). *Creating and documenting electronic texts. AHDS guides to good practice*. Oxford [England]: Oxbow Books for the Arts and Humanities Data Service.
YRL Call Number: Z699 .M677 2000

This Guide outlines various approaches to creating electronic texts, their advantages and disadvantages, and includes the recommendations of the AHDS. Particular emphasis is placed upon the importance of documenting the process of text creation in order to provide bibliographic information appropriate to the needs of teachers and researchers.

Visual Arts

Fernie, K., & Richards, J. D. (2003). *Creating and using virtual reality: A guide for the arts and humanities.* AHDS guides to good practice. Oxford: Oxbow.

This Guide to Good Practice concentrates on accessible desk-top virtual reality which may be distributed and viewed on-line via the World Wide Web. It is concerned with the variety of virtual reality models that may be produced and how to ensure that these can be delivered successfully to users and preserved for future reuse.

Grout, C. (2000). *Creating digital resources for the visual arts: Standards and good practice.* AHDS guides to good practice. Oxford: Oxbow.
YRL Call Number: ZA4084.A78 C74 2000

This Guide both highlights examples of current practice in the creation of digital information in the visual arts domain, and makes recommendations for best practice in data creation, collection, description, delivery and preservation. It covers the use of domain specific resource description standards and the issues involved in the creation and use of resource discovery metadata for this domain. It also covers explicitly technical issues such as choice of data format and hardware and software platforms for a given resource.

Texas Commission on the Arts. *Videotape Identification and Assessment Guide*

Contains links to several organizations and resources on preserving video.

Knight, G. & McHugh, J. (2005). *Moving Image Preservation Manual*. UK: Arts and Humanities Data Service.

Digital Game

The International Game Developers Association, Game Preservation Special Interest group has produced a white paper discussing the issues, and have included some suggestions on how to preserve games:

Lowood, H. ed. (2008) "Before It's Too Late: A Digital Game Preservation White Paper,"

Survey data

ICPSR. (2009) Guide to Social Science Data Preparation and Archiving. Best Practices Throughout the Data Life Cycle, 4th ed. Ann Arbor, MI: ICPSR