

Digitisation Policy

1. Introduction

This policy explains the approach taken by St Helens Archive Service in the creation of digital surrogate copies of Archives material. Original documents have their own intrinsic value, and although a digital surrogate is not a replacement for original material, digitisation helps to protect archival documents as well as improving their accessibility.

2. Why digitisation occurs

- To preserve unique originals from wear and tear for public access.
- To increase access to archive collections
- To generate income and provide a copy for a user
- To inspire and promote archive collections

3. Risks

- Lack of physical contact by users with original material can reduce their understanding of the context in which they were created
- Remote access results in reduced support from Archive staff
- Promoting material online can lead to unrealistic expectations of the availability and depth of resources online
- Staff resources and financial implications for digitisation processes
- Increased copyright infringement and greater potential for unauthorised access and the possible intentional or unintentional manipulation of documents

4. Digitisation activities

- Items for digitisation will be examined to ensure they can be safely handled.
- Intellectual property rights and views of the depositors and owners of the collections will always be considered and respected.
- St Helens Archive Service aims to digitise only once and preserve the digitised material as high-quality digital surrogates. This saves staff resources of repeat digitisation and most importantly does not risk damage to the item(s) from repeating processes.
- St Helens Archive Service currently undertakes the following digitisation activities:
 - In-house digitisation to meet customer orders
 - In-house digitisation for use in promotional and educational material
 - In-house digitisation to create surrogate copies
 - Planned in-house or external digitisation projects
- In-house digitisation equipment includes an A4 Epson Perfection V800 scanner (for paper, photographs, negatives, and slides). Larger format image digitisation is currently done using a digital camera.
- Digitisation is carried out by Archive Service staff supported by volunteers who have been

trained in the use of relevant equipment and software.

- Images are captured as TIFF or WAV files, with a surrogate JPEG or mp3 created for access. Master files are currently stored on a networked drive on St Helens Borough Council server and an external hard drive.

5. Digitisation access

Digitised audio files or archive material can be viewed remotely or in-person in the Gamble Building basement.

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