

Development objective:

Please explain what development have you identified and why. Please identify the competency that you think relates to the development.

Since 2017, I have been working on implementing digital preservation workflows in my organisation. This was partly to fulfil the requirements of the revised accreditation standard; partly because I wanted to increase my knowledge and skills in this area; and partly because I realised I needed to put a system in place to preserve digital media in the deposits I was receiving.

Some of the media types I was receiving, like floppy disks, were already obsolete. It is an area in which I knew little and which is becoming ever more vital to an archivist's work. I was also prompted by an Archives West Midlands initiative to help all the region's services attain level one of the National Digital Stewardship Alliance's Levels of Digital Preservation. Archives West Midlands were offering subsidised training and this seemed too good an opportunity to miss, for my service and me.

This has helped me develop competency B14: Digital curation: preserving born-digital and digitised records and archives.

Development period

The date or dates which the development took place

2017 - 2021

Development activity

What development activity did you undertake to meet the objective, and what did you learn? For example, events,.

I have attended the Digital Preservation Coalition Getting Started in Digital Preservation and Novice to Know How courses; and Archives West Midlands training courses on using Archivematica, accessioning digital material and integrity checking.

I have implemented what I have learnt by writing some depositor guidance on depositing digital files, uploading records stored on portable media onto the council servers and creating workflows and procedures for processing digital accessions. I have implemented the use of National Archive's Droid software and I am at an early stage of exploring how the council's EDRMS software can be used to store and provide access to born digital archives. As I have progressed through the training, I have revised documents I had written earlier in the process, such as the depositor guidance.

I furthermore, asked a representative from Archives West Midlands to talk about their digital preservation initiative at an East and West Midlands ARA training event, to encourage others to take first steps in digital preservation. I have also joined the Midlands Digital Preservation Network to discuss and share problems, solutions and experience.

Reflection:

Please give examples to show how you have applied what you have learned. Think about what went well, what didn't go well, and how you will continue to develop.

My opinion of Digital Preservation has changed during the course of these activities. I always believed that the solution to the Digital Preservation problem was a technological one, and that I would need to gain technical expertise. Whilst this is true, I have learnt that it is as much about policy as technology and there are many simple things that can be done as first steps. Giving depositors guidance on file naming and suggesting suitable methods of deposit was a good example, as was deciding on what file types were acceptable. Rather than seeing the lack of a digital repository as an obstacle to any progress, uploading records from portable media to the council servers would at least ensure they could be accessed and backed up in the short-term. The problem of digital preservation could therefore be broken down into smaller, more achievable aims. Doing so gave me more motivation to carry on and I can use this method when tackling large projects in the future.

I wrote a business case for our I.T. department for using Droid and built on what I had learnt about talking to non-professionals about archives (explained in a separate CPD Review form), because I had to explain to I.T. professionals exactly what I wanted and why. Using frameworks like the National Digital Preservation Stewardship Alliance Digital Preservation Levels and the Archives Accreditation scheme helped to demonstrate my case and I know that benchmarking against frameworks like these should help me advocate for future projects. I was also able to use what I have learnt from writing policies and plans (explained in a separate CPD Review form) to break potential work on digital preservation systems down into short, medium and long-term priorities based on risk. Obtaining files from portable media and using Droid to check them was a high priority. Using EDRMS to store them was a lower priority.

It has been very valuable acting on and putting into practice what I have learnt on the courses. This has really helped the knowledge stick and raised questions, which can be shared in the networks I am part of. As well as digital preservation skills, I have learnt about risk management and making cases for new ways of working. I hope that I can learn other new skills using the methods identified, and use what I have learnt to better advocate for resources and manage large projects, which are an inevitable part of future roles