Digital Preservation at the Archaeology Data Service

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Archaeology Data Service
Accredited digital archive for heritage data in the UK.

Founded in 1996

Based at the University of York

Predominantly England (work with national agencies)

Data from Industry and Higher Education

For more information see https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/about/annualReports.xhtml
Archaeology generates a lot of data
Excavation *is* destructive
Preservation by Record is at the heart of most work
Moral – and increasingly legal – obligation to ensure data is preserved

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Archaeology can produce...

Data from scientific analysis

Databases

CAD + GIS
Background

• ADS archive over 3 million digital objects...
• ...In 299 unique formats
• ‘Bespoke’ systems stack not tied to any proprietary or open source preservation system

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Background

• Entirely project funded.
• Maintain a core staff of 12.
• Of which 5 are directly/predominantly focussed on Digital Preservation.
• “Curatorial And Technical Staff” or CATs.
Preservation via migration

• Every file accessioned preserved as a standardised format e.g. all raster images as uncompressed TIFF, databases as delimited text...

• This is called “normalisation”

• Formats used based on a mixture of technical consideration (e.g. compression = data loss), but also judgements on longevity of format and ease of establishing future migrations.
Operational workflow
• Increasingly, our work is focussed on understanding what we have, where it is, actively managing risks to that content
  • Checksums: is it the same?
  • Obsolescence: do we need to migrate
  • = understanding what we’ve done and what we need to do
• ADS are increasingly using the PREservation Metadata: Implementation Strategies
  • Objects: levels of information that have relationships to one another
  • Preservation Events: The things we do
  • Actors (us, the tools we use)
• Ensuring the ‘complexity’ of objects and their metadata is retained
• Supporting ongoing repository management activities
• Retaining the history of digital object
Internal + External Assessment

- **DPC RAM**
- CoreTrustSeal (CTS)
- Encourage reflection, and assessment of where we can improve
- Often feed into developing Policy and ensuring workflows are documented
Collaboration (1)

• With the DPC – training for staff, being part of a community and sharing best practice
• National Heritage agencies – giving the same message!
Collaboration (2)

• Internationally!

• Sharing metadata: Ariadne  
  https://t.co/Ri32qb8sjq?amp=1

• Working to establish best practice: SEADDA  
  https://www.seadda.eu/
Thanks!

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