

**Policy No.** COL 102

# Digital Preservation Policy

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**Applies to:** Applies to all EWSHS personnel.

**References that apply to this policy:** Listed below are some, but not all, applicable governing requirements. Note: Laws and rules may change over time and such changes may take precedence over this policy.

- RCW 27.34.070
- EWSHS Policies COL-100

**Effective date:** May 1, 2024

**History:** This is a new Board Policy.

**Approved by:** Approved by the **Eastern Washington State Historical (EWSHS)** Board of Trustees.

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## Purpose

The Eastern Washington State Historical Society (EWSHS) is committed to sustainable access, use, and long-term preservation of the digital collection content, records, and resources within the museum's collections. The purpose of this policy is to:

- Define preservation objectives;
  - Outline the scope of content covered in this policy;
  - Establish digital preservation as a key consideration within EWSHS Collections;
  - Inform how preservation actions are implemented; and
  - Set reasonable expectations on how digital preservation is impacted or limited within EWSHS.
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## Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, definitions provided are drawn from the Society of American Archivist's Dictionary of Archives Terminology<sup>1</sup>, and adapted for agency use:

- Digital Preservation:** the combination of policies, strategies, and actions that ensure authenticity, integrity, reliability, long-term access, and use of digital assets—digitized and born-digital—created and acquired by the EWSHS Collections Department. Digital preservation efforts seek to provide an accurate and authentic rendering of content while ensuring its future functionality and usability over time.
  - Digital Object:** digital objects comprised of information in binary form and its associated metadata.
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Digital objects may be either simple or complex. Simple digital objects are made up of a single file, such as a PDF or an image, while complex digital objects are made up of multiple files, such as a website or a digitized book.

- C. **Digital Assets:** digital objects considered part of the Museum’s collection. As such, these digital assets are held in trust for the people of Washington State in accordance with RCW 27.34.070(2).
- D. **Born Digital:** Materials originating from a computer environment.
- E. **Digitization:** the act of copying/converting analog physical/electronic materials into digital objects. The act of digitization does not negate the need for the preservation of analog materials, nor does it function as digital preservation by itself.
- F. **Metadata:** information about data that promotes discovery, structures digital objects, and supports the administration and preservation of records. Metadata may be embedded with or stored separately from the digital object.
- G. **Authenticity:** the quality of being genuine, not a counterfeit, and free from tampering, and is typically inferred from internal and external evidence, including its physical characteristics, structure, content, and context.
- H. **Integrity:** the quality of being whole and unaltered through loss, tampering, or corruption.
- I. **Access Copy:** digital copies created for use by patrons, protecting the original from wear, damage, and corruption. Access copies are typically reformatted and/or scaled down from a high-quality preservation format to a lower-quality, easier-to-access, and store format.

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## Context and Directives

The EWSHS Digital Preservation Policy should be approached in the context of other existing Society policies, plans, procedures, and strategies, including rights and reproduction procedures, strategic plans, EWSHS Board-approved policies, including the Collection Policy (COL-100), and Washington State regulations and laws.

The EWSHS Digital Preservation Policy is in alignment with other EWSHS directives, including:

- **Museum Strategic Plan (2022-2024), Goal 1: Streamline the MAC’s Systems and Operations:** “Build on existing resources to invest in its human and digital infrastructure.”
- **Collection Policy COL-100, Records Management, 5.2.1:** “All records of the permanent collections, including records of conveyance, accession records, loan and registration records, including digital records, shall be organized according to professional standards and housed to ensure their preservation, access, and retrieval.”

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## Scope

This policy does not seek to establish digital preservation requirements institution-wide. Instead, this policy centers on the digital assets—digitized and born-digital—created and acquired by the EWSHS Collections Department. As such, this policy is limited to the following digital assets:

- A. EWSHS objects, art, and archival collections held in trust for Washington State that have digitized materials or born-digital content.
- B. EWSHS Collections-created resources including, but not limited to:
  - Online exhibits and digitized exhibition materials
  - Curatorial records
  - Contextual data and metadata
  - Digitized institutional records managed within the Collections Department

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## Principles and Strategies

- A. **Access, Authenticity, and Integrity**

EWSHS seeks to provide long-term access to authentic, accessible versions of the digital assets held and created by the Collections Department to the best of its abilities.
- B. **Professional Commitment**

EWSHS is committed to proactive participation in the digital preservation of its collections, centering digital preservation as a core practice in its procedures, projects, and professional development.
- C. **Adaptability**

Due to the constantly evolving nature of digital preservation, EWSHS is committed to developing adaptive procedures that can address preservation needs as technology changes.

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## Challenges

- A. **Scalability**

Due to the many variabilities that comprise and affect data, there is no single, standardized structure to manage and preserve all digital assets. Such variabilities include, but are not limited to, file formats, metadata, user accessibility needs, or software and hardware obsolescence. Therefore, EWSHS will implement scalable preservation actions based on the three categories of consideration – *use*, *risk*, and *value* – to balance preservation actions with the needs of our users, the priorities of EWSHS, available resources, and technological capabilities.

**B. Environmental Sustainability**

EWSHS recognizes that there are environmental costs to digital preservation, including, but not limited to, energy consumption and electronic waste. The Collections Department seeks to conduct preservation actions and digital storage with environmental sustainability in mind.

**C. Financial Sustainability**

EWSHS recognizes that there are financial costs to digital preservation, including, but not limited to, software, digital storage, staffing, and time. EWSHS seeks to center digital preservation actions within the applicable established workflows of the Collections Department. The Society will continue to seek project-based funding from external and state funding sources to supplement and support long-term digital preservation objectives.

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## Implementation

- A.** To meet the scalability and adaptability needs surrounding digital preservation, this policy establishes a preservation framework with clearly defined principles, strategy, and scope.
- B.** The Collections Department will implement this policy through the creation and documentation of procedures to be followed, including a Digital Preservation Plan. This plan, in conjunction with other collections management procedures, will outline specific preservation activities, internal standards, and department workflows in alignment with the Digital Preservation Policy and industry standards. The Digital Preservation Plan is subject to the review and approval of the Executive Director or designee. The Collections Department is responsible for maintaining and implementing procedures aligned with this policy.