

## Digital Preservation in Parliament – Website FAQs

- **What is Digital Preservation?**

Digital Preservation is the process of ensuring that digital information remains accessible to us in the long term.

For Parliament, this means making sure that our digital resources remain authentic and accessible in the future for anyone who needs them. To do this we must counter the threats of rapid technological obsolescence and the inherent fragility of digital media, by finding ways of identifying and predicting the impacts of those threats on our data, and by planning and carrying out appropriate preservation strategies to mitigate these impacts.

- **How does Parliament preserve its digital heritage?**

The Digital Preservation Project (DPP) will provide Parliament with the capability to manage and preserve our vital digital records, publications and procedural papers, databases, web estate, and other electronic resources over the long-term, to the same standards that we have always applied to our paper and parchment collections.

The main focus of the project will be to set up a digital repository to allow us to safely store and preserve digital records. This system will also ensure that we are able to provide an accessible copy of each record to our users, via a presentation system that will integrate with our existing archival catalogue (Portcullis).

- **Will everything Parliament creates be archived?**

No, only a small proportion of the information generated by Parliament is appropriate for permanent archival preservation. There are Record Management guidelines determining which information needs to be transferred to the Archives and preserved in the repository.

The rest of the information needs to be kept for as long as it is useful, and then discarded appropriately. This may be after days, weeks, months or even years. The Digital Preservation Project will provide a service to ensure that this 'current' business information is kept accessible for as long as it is needed.

- **Why does digital content need preserving?**

The longevity of all of Parliament's digital resources is under threat. Without access to the trusted digital information we need to preserve (for the long term) neither House will be able to support the work of its members or its administration, nor the requirements of the public for access to Parliamentary information wherever and whenever they want it in the future. It should be emphasised that these risks are real, substantial, and imminent. The longer we delay, the greater the risk to Parliament of significant data loss, reputational damage, and a failure to realise potential savings and other benefits.

The Parliamentary Archives' mission is to safeguard the records of Parliament throughout their lifecycle - that is, from their creation or receipt to their destruction or archiving - and to maintain their accessibility thereafter, no matter what their format.

- **Why does it need to happen now?**

For over 500 years Parliament has managed its information in various hard-copy formats, including parchment, paper, and more recently videotape and photographic film. It now needs to address the challenge of preserving access to Parliament's valuable digital resources for the same length of time. Parliament today creates a great deal of digital information, and the volumes of data are expected to increase exponentially in future. It is vital that action is taken now to avoid the loss of existing assets, since recovery of lost data is at best expensive and at worst impossible. Prevention of loss is always cheaper than repair for digital information. These costs rise rapidly, the longer they are deferred.

By taking action now, Parliament will invest to save on the future costs of recovering data that might otherwise become locked in obsolete systems. This project will enable Parliament to conform to its statutory and regulatory obligations, including the Code of Practice issued by Government in July 2009 under Section 46 of the Freedom of Information Act, which recommends public bodies to take action to ensure that digital records remain accessible and are preserved for future generations.

- **What is the difference between digitisation and digital preservation?**

Digitisation is a process of creating digital files from original physical ones (e.g. scanning or taking digital photographs of original paper documents or photographs). Once created, these digital files will also need preserving.

Digital preservation is the process of preserving digital files, whether they exist because of a digitisation action, or whether they are born-digital (have only ever existed in digital format, eg email, office document, website).

- **How do I view Parliament's digital archive?**

From mid-2012 onwards we will be preserving Parliament's digital records in our repository. At this point you will be able to access presentation copies of these records, via the Parliamentary Archives' catalogue, Portcullis. (<http://www.portcullis.parliament.uk/>)

- **I'm an archivist/ information management professional/ IT professional and I'd like to hear more about this – who should I contact?**

Please contact the digital preservation team in the Parliamentary Archives ([digitalpreservation@parliament.uk](mailto:digitalpreservation@parliament.uk))