Bulk Digitisation of Records - Guidance

Introduction

- This guidance expands on Section 30-31 of the [University's Records Management Policy (IG03)](). It is intended for use in instances where the bulk digitisation of institutional records held in physical form (e.g. paper) is being considered.

- The rationale for digitisation should be approached as if developing a Business Case that aims to show how it would improve the University's ability to carry out its objectives. It is important to consider: information compliance obligations, the benefits (business or cost efficiencies), and ensure each process involved in digitisation is fully costed and within budget.

Business Case Considerations

- Digitisation involves extensive document preparation and indexing and this can account for the majority of a digitisation budget. It is also important to consider on-going costs; digitisation is not a cheap physical space saving option (e.g. records still require management throughout their lifecycle in digital [any] form).

- Digitisation undertaken for space and cost saving may not be justified when the costs of future information system migration is factored in or where the digitised images are not likely to be: accessed regularly, required as evidence or to be retained for a significant period of time.

- Detailed specifications for digitisation are set out in the British Standard: PD ISO/TR 13028:2010 Information and documentation - Implementation guidelines for digitisation of records. Its Annex A includes questions that assess if digitisation is the appropriate option.

Information Security

- Contact the [University's Security and Information Team]() in instances where a third party provider is to be used for digitisation to ensure they have been approved by the University's Information Security Workbook process and there is an ongoing contract in place with them.

- At all times the information held in institutional records (in any format) needs to be managed in line with the University's [Information Classification Policy (IG05)]() and [Information Handling Policy (IS04)]().

- In certain instances where the information is sensitive it might not be appropriate to use a particular approved third party provider and other secure options will need to be considered.

Records as evidence

- Decide whether the digital image is intended to replace the original physical record. If so then first consider whether the record also needs to be retained in its original format to meet a specific legislative requirement or because it has intrinsic historic value.

- If the digital image is to be the authoritative record (and the original disposed of before its retention period has been met) consider if it is likely to be needed as evidence (e.g. in a Court).

- In such instances where the digital image is to act as the authoritative record and may be required as evidence then its lifecycle management (including digitisation, storage, transmission etc.) will need to meet the requirements of BS 10008-1:2020 - Evidential weight and legal admissibility of electronic information – Specification.

Naming and searching for records

- Consider what information (metadata) from, or about, the physical records needs to be captured during the digitisation process so that each record can be identified and used when it is stored in a University Information System. Refer to the University's guidance on Naming Conventions.

- If the information in the digitised image needs to be manipulated, or an enhanced search capacity is needed, then optical character recognition (OCR) processes should be considered. OCR is the process of translating images of handwritten, typewritten or printed text (usually captured by a scanner) into machine-editable text.

File Format

- The digitised image will need to be stored and maintained in a file format that is likely to remain usable for the duration of the record retention period. If the digitised image will need to be retained in the long term then advice on file format should be sought from Archivists at the University's Modern Records Centre.

Records Retention

- The 'data minimisation principle' in data privacy legislation requires that individuals and organisations should limit the collection, storage and usage of data to that which is relevant, adequate and absolutely necessary for carrying out the purpose for which the data is being processed. Ahead of any digitisation exercise, it is imperative all records are considered and assessed as to whether the entire content, or only part of such, is required going forward.

- Physical records that are no longer required should not be digitised and need to be disposed of in line with the University's Records Retention Schedule (RRS). For example where a record contains personal data adherence to the RRS helps demonstrate compliance with the Storage Limitation principle (Article 5 (1)(e)) of GDPR.

Digital Continuity

- Digital Continuity (DC) is the ability to make digital information continuously usable for as long as required and can be: found and opened when needed; worked with in the way which it is needed, understood over time (what it is and what it is about) and trusted that it is what it says it is.

- To mitigate DC risks consider whether the digitised image(s) will be stored on an information system that is widely used across the University (e.g. File Share). If it is stored on an information system used only in your Department then ask the supplier whether:

  o the system will be supported for as long as you need to retain the information.
  o the information can be migrated from the system in a way that is useable with other systems and in a human readable format (e.g. is there a risk the file format it is stored in is likely to be susceptible to obsolescence).