



Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwanatanga

**ARCHIVES**

NEW ZEALAND

**Archives New Zealand  
Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwanatanga**

# **Digital Preservation Statement**

**December 2020**

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# 1. Introduction

Intellectual content has traditionally been stored on physical formats from which the information can be easily consumed by the user. The utilisation of digital technology is resulting in public archives being created in or converted to digital environments (born-digital or digitisation), in which they also need to be preserved and accessed.

The ability to access and understand content created, stored and presented in digital form is dependent upon rapidly evolving technologies, while at the same time legacy technologies are rapidly degrading. This raises concerns about:

1. The inability to read data from legacy storage formats due to their technical dependencies and fragility, and thus practically losing the archive.
2. The loss of meaningful access to digital content due to the inability to render that content into a human-understandable form or provide information context and thus failing to provide meaningful access to public archives.
3. The loss of the audit trail and thus the authenticity of the content as well as public confidence in the integrity of the archive.

Archives New Zealand supports the international consensus that these concerns must be addressed in a considered and active manner. Digital preservation must therefore be a formal, continuous, and pro-active process. A sustainable digital preservation programme, including methods of management and care, is required to best preserve digital public archives under the stewardship of Archives New Zealand.

This Digital Preservation Statement describes Archives New Zealand's intention to maintain such a programme to preserve the government's digital public archives<sup>1</sup>; and affirms Archives New Zealand's commitment to ensure that the digital public archives in its care are managed and preserved in a way that reflects their status as an asset and taonga for present and future generations.

The Statement is high-level acknowledgement of Archives New Zealand's responsibilities to digital public archives. It encompasses principles Archives New Zealand will follow in preserving and managing digital public archives. These principles are further expressed through separate internal policies which will detail the processes and operating rules that inform and guide Archives New Zealand's digital preservation work.

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<sup>1</sup> It is adapted from the joint strategy between Archives New Zealand and the National Library of New Zealand produced in 2011.

## 1.1 What is Digital Preservation?

*Digital preservation combines policies, strategies and actions to ensure access to reformatted and born digital content regardless of the challenges of media failure and technological change. The goal of digital preservation is the accurate rendering of authenticated content over time* (American Library Association, Definitions of Digital Preservation, 2009).

Archives New Zealand acknowledges the difference between bitstream preservation and active preservation of the intellectual content. Bitstream preservation retains the integrity of the information and records through good practice in back-up and security regimes, but the accessibility of the content over time is not addressed.

Active preservation of the intellectual content requires:

- assessing the risks relevant for the information and records, and the file formats;
- generating technical, administrative and preservation metadata; and
- deploying preservation actions (like format migration) in order to provide meaningful access to the intellectual content in the future in spite of technological change.

## 1.2 Key Definitions

### 1.2.1 AUTHENTICITY (OF DIGITAL OBJECT)

*A digital object is said to be authentic if it is what it purports to be. This involves proving the identity of the object; that it has not been confused with another object, its creation, the provenance information of the object, and that it has not been changed in any meaningful way* (Archives New Zealand 'Definition of Authenticity and Integrity of Digital Object', 2013).

### 1.2.2 BITSTREAM

A bitstream (or bit stream), also known as binary sequence, is a sequence of bits or rather, a sequence of data in a binary form.

### 1.2.3 BORN-DIGITAL INFORMATION AND RECORDS

Information and records created, produced, maintained and/or accessed in digital form.

### 1.2.4 DATA

Data is a sub-set of information and refers to a set of discrete, objective facts about events, people or places, without context or interpretation. Data often requires computational analysis to derive meaning. Data is covered by the Public Records Act 2005 and Archives New Zealand's standards already apply to it. The Chief Archivist has a particular interest where data forms a record of evidence of a transaction or decision making that may be needed in the long term to hold government to

account or to enhance access to records relating to cultural and historical heritage, and national identity.

### *1.2.5 DIGITISATION*

A means of converting non-digital information and records into digital format (AS/NZS ISO 13028:2012).

### *1.2.6 INTEGRITY (OF DIGITAL CONTENT)*

Digital object integrity is the quality of a digital object remaining uncorrupted and free of unauthorised and undocumented change. Within this context, integrity of a digital object is the quality of its content remaining uncorrupted and free of unauthorised and undocumented changes (Archives New Zealand 'Definition of Authenticity and Integrity of Digital Object, 2013).

NOTE: Integrity is part of the authenticity concept. If the integrity of a digital object is comprised, then the authenticity will also be comprised.

## **2. Mandate**

Under the Public Records Act 2005 section 11(1)(c), the Chief Archivist is tasked with the function of acquiring and preserving public archives regardless of format in order to:

- control and administer public archives; and
- ensure the preservation of public archives; and
- facilitate public access to, and promote the use of, public archives.

## **3. Scope of the Statement**

### *3.1 IN SCOPE*

This Statement deals specifically with digital information and records that are public archives or other records where the content is part of the holdings of Archives New Zealand and is managed and preserved over the long-term as digital assets of New Zealand.

We recognise two categories of content:

- born-digital information and records of archival value created in digital form and transferred or deposited to the control of the Chief Archivist; and
- digitised copies of physical archives held by Archives New Zealand, created in-house or by a third-party provider, to a level of preservation specifications.

This distinction has no bearing on how the content will be treated, assuming the content in question has been deemed to have archival value and is worthy of active long-term preservation.

### 3.2 OUT OF SCOPE

Digital information and records where the content is not part of Archives New Zealand holdings.

Archives New Zealand creates, maintains and uses other digital content, such as:

- secondary finding aids (created in-house or externally);
- business transitory information and records within corporate recordkeeping or business systems;
- externally created content in digital form (such as tags or transcriptions provided by members of the public).

Even though it is recognised that some of this digital content may be considered of long-term value, they are not public archives and fall outside the scope of this Statement.

## 4. Purpose of the Statement

Archives New Zealand has made a commitment to act in a consistent manner with relation to the preservation of digital public archives. The purpose of the Digital Preservation Statement is therefore to:

- define Archives New Zealand's responsibilities towards digital public archives; and
- state the principles within which Archives New Zealand will carry out these responsibilities.

In performing these, the Statement will:

- create a common understanding of digital preservation across Archives New Zealand;
- identify digital preservation principles, from which actions to ensure the sustainability of digital public archives can be formalised; and
- be a statement of the current understanding and vision of digital preservation as expressed by Archives New Zealand.

## 5. Vision

Archives New Zealand works to preserve and manage digital public archives to ensure accessibility to their content now and into the future. This Statement is a vision for the long-term preservation of digital public archives in Archives New Zealand.

To fulfil this vision a suite of

- separate policies;
- operating procedures; and
- a Digital Preservation Work Plan (renewed regularly)

creates a practical framework within which digital preservation work can take place.

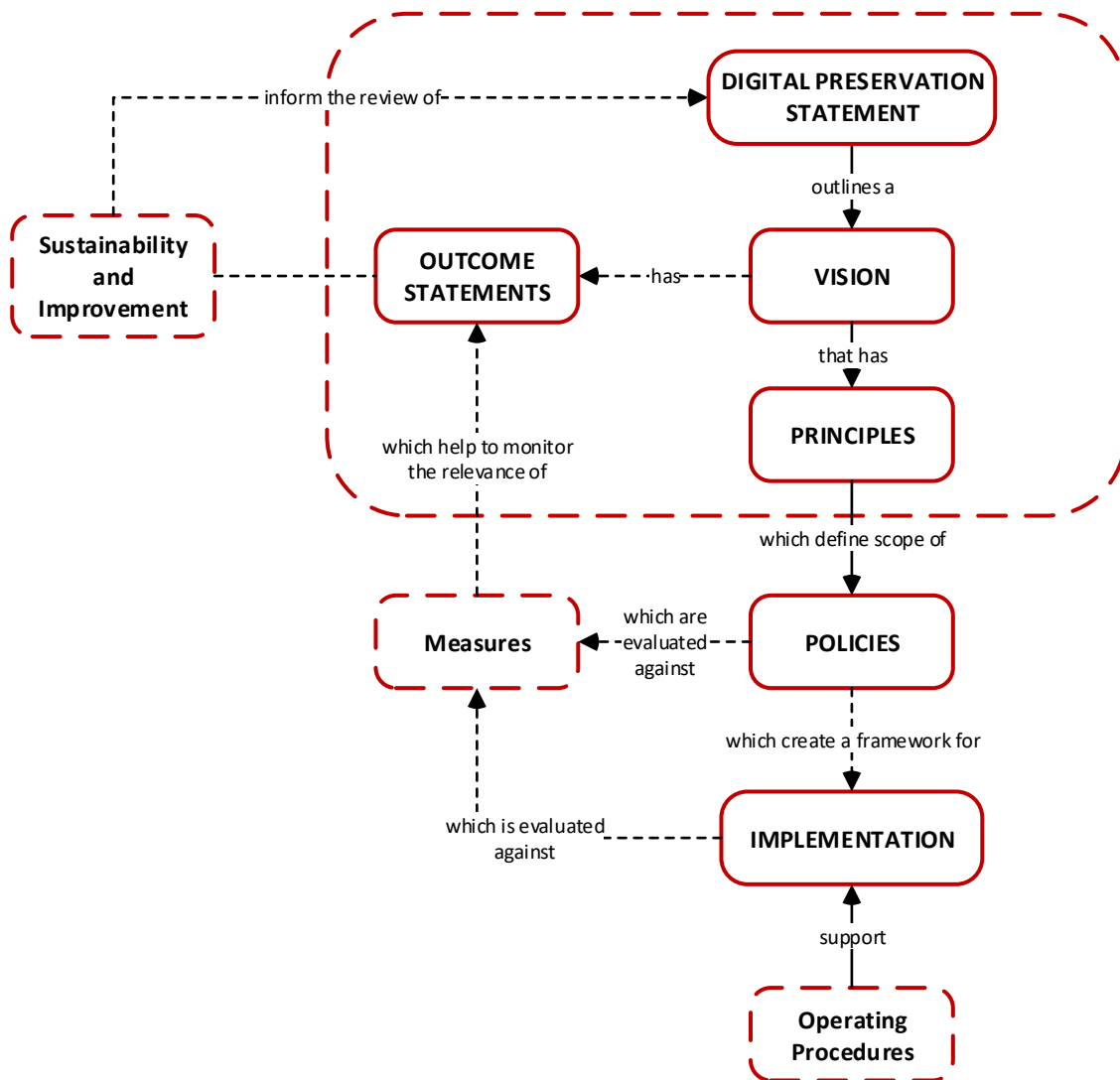


Diagram 1: Components and dependencies of Archives digital preservation policy framework

## 6. Digital Preservation Principles

Archives New Zealand:

1. works to preserve digital public archives for the benefit of all users;
2. recognises that preserving digital public archives is intrinsically linked with enabling suitable access, in accordance with current legislation and access restrictions;
3. understands that preserving digital public archives demands active, constant management;
4. ensures that technology and resources have minimal constraint on decisions about the acquisition and transfer of digital public archives;
5. commits to the full range of preservation requirements over time, including working for a suitable and sustainable legal and economic environment for digital preservation;
6. uses international standards and best practice to meet its preservation responsibilities;
7. undertakes research in order to inform the development of relevant standards and practices;
8. recognises Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Treaty of Waitangi) and acts in accordance with its principles and obligations and with our Aratohu Ahurea Tikanga cultural protocols;
9. ensures that the integrity and authenticity of digital public archives is retained through all preservation actions, and that these actions are transparent and auditable at all times;
10. separates digital public archives from their physical capture media in order to bring the content into the digital preservation environment;
11. maintains an exit strategy from any technical solutions/systems;
12. keeps any technical solutions/system updated and
13. reduces barriers to understanding the requirements of digital preservation through the development of an appropriate range of guidance and advice.

## 7. Outcome Statements

It is critical to determine outcomes for various stages in the preservation process. Detailed measures will be examined within separate digital preservation policies that work towards these outcomes.

The outcome statements are:

- Digital public archives and their intellectual content are easily available for the people of New Zealand and the rest of the world to consult.
- Archives New Zealand will meet its Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Treaty of Waitangi) obligations and those are integrated into lifecycle of public archives in the custody of Archives New Zealand.
- There is no loss of, or damage to, digital public archives once accepted into the custody of Archives New Zealand.



- The entire lifecycle of digital public archives is easily traceable and available over time through event metadata.
- Digital preservation concepts and requirements are recognised, understood and met within Archives New Zealand.
- There is a clear commitment to, and funding for, digital preservation at Archives New Zealand.

## 8. Roles and Responsibilities

Ensuring the preservation of digital public archives is the responsibility of the Chief Archivist.

The day-to-day business of digital preservation is the work of a network of individuals spread across the range of functions of the organisation, including our regional offices. However, the team primarily responsible for digital preservation will lead this work.

Where appropriate during the management and preservation of digital content, Archives New Zealand will consult with internal and external stakeholders (including content creators, business owners, subject matter experts and preservation experts).

## 9. Institutional Environment

This Statement exists in an institutional environment made up of other projects and relevant documents. These projects and the Statement itself impact on one another. This Statement aims to be in line with those projects and documents.

- Preservation of Physical Formats Strategy 2020-2025
- Archives 2057 Transformation programme
- Tāhuhu (Preserving the Nation's Memory) project