

Wellcome Library glossary of terms – original document is a general Library glossary

This is a glossary of terms used by the Wellcome Library.

Access	use of collection material for research, reference or recreation either by Library staff in a management context, by uses of the Library or another institution
Acquisition:	obtaining ownership or access to materials which then become constituent part of the Library's collection
Activity log/audit trail;	record of all processes and/or activities that have been undertaken on or against a particular object during its custody by an institution, any resulting changes to the object and any comments or observations worth noting. An activity log supports the authenticity of an object
Authenticity	an assurance that after conservation or digital preservation an object retains its intellectual content in an unmodified form. If intellectual content has changed then authenticity provides an audit trail of changes and explains the necessity for those changes
Born digital	born-digital is a term from digital preservation describing digital materials that originated in the digital realm and have no print or analog counterpart. This is in contrast to digital reformatting. Examples include email, wikis, multimedia objects, and any other material that is created electronically and is not (or cannot) be printed. ¹
Collection	a formally organised set of materials in any format. Taken with other sub-sets of materials, comprise the entire Library collection
Complex object	object that has a dependent relationship upon another object if it is to be comprehensible, eg an Microsoft Word file containing an embedded JPEG image. Each may stand independently but the loss of one renders the whole incomprehensible. See Simple object
Description/describes	the formally prescribed process of examining material and creating a metadata record of its extent or form, its context, its relationship to other material, its creators, its other properties, its subject content etc
Digital:	electronic means used to generate, store, display, manipulate and deliver textual, numerical and graphical data
Digital curation	the life cycle management of digital material – acquisition, storage, management, preservation, dissemination etc. Activities designed to ensure authenticity
Digital preservation	analogous to life cycle management. The series of managed activities necessary to ensure continued access to digital materials over time to avoid issues of obsolescence

¹ See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Born-digitals>

Digital resources	broad term covering all digital (Often called electronic) or digitised material held in, or accessible via the Library, e.g. digitised image collections, on-line subscription journals, web archives, on-line finding aids
Digital technologies	any system for recording and reading information - images, sounds - in computer-based numerical codes rather than in 'physical' systems where information is directly stored on film or tape, and copies are of lower quality than originals
Dissemination	the means by which material can be searched for, identified, retrieved and made available
Electronic	See Digital
Format migration	process of converting a data from an obsolete structure to a new structure to counter software obsolescence, e.g conversion from Microsoft Word for DOS to XML
Hybrid collections	aggregations of material that contain both physical as well as digital materials with both forms of material incorporated into a single organised hierarchical collection
Ingest	the process of assuming responsibility for material, recording its context and metadata to preserve its authenticity and moving it into a formally managed preservation system
Life cycle management	analogous to preservation. The series of managed activities necessary to ensure continued access to materials over time to avoid issues of obsolescence
Manifestation	a different version of an object but one retaining the intellectual content and presented in a different format, eg a poster of the Mona Lisa is a manifestation of the original painting. See also surrogate
Metadata	structured information that describes, explains, locates, or otherwise makes it easier to retrieve, use, or manage an information resource ²
Normalisation	the process of creating a version (manifestation) of material more conducive to preservation but retaining the intellectual content, eg converting a proprietary format MS word file to XML
Original	in this context an unmodified instance of the bitstream that was transferred to the Library. This bitstream is held in the repository as evidence of authenticity, reliability and provenance. From this bitstream a Preservation Master is created

² NISO, 2004,

Preservation	all managerial, financial and technical considerations applied to retard deterioration, prevent damage and extend the useful life of materials and objects. These considerations include monitoring and controlling appropriate environmental conditions, providing adequate storage and physical protection, establishing exhibition and loan policies and proper handling procedures, providing for conservation treatment, emergency policies and the creation and use of surrogates
Preservation formats	manifestations of material that are less affected by issues of obsolescence and so are more reliable
Preservation master	a manifestation of an object (an Original) held in a non-proprietary or open format and subjected to on-going life cycle management
Physical	items in the collections such as books, manuscripts, paintings etc, analogous to 'analogue'
Reliable/Reliability	a reliable object is one that has undergone a set of managed activities designed to ensure it is as unaffected by issues of obsolescence as possible
Render/rendered	process of using an application or piece of software to turn a bit stream into an object comprehensible to humans
Repository	storage system for material, in this context digital material, for the secure structured storage and management of material along with its technical and descriptive metadata, and from which material can be searched for and retrieved
Simple object	an object which has no dependent relationship upon another object in order to be comprehensible, eg a JPEG image. See Complex object
Structural metadata	metadata that reflects, records and expresses hierarchical relationships between many objects, expressed at the highest level by a collection and at the lowest by an item
sub-Master	when referring to film or video, analogous to the concept of a preservation master
Surrogates	a manifestation of an object in another format, eg a digital image of a painting, this can be made more widely available for use than the object it represents but does not replace the original object
Technical metadata	metadata that records properties that are unique to digital material upon which the material relies for accurate and reliable rendering. Especially important in ensuring that material survives issues of hardware and software obsolescence
Version	see Manifestation
Viability	(see reliable/reliability) ensuring that the bit stream of an object survives changes to its originating hardware and/or software into the future. An object may remain viable even if it cannot be rendered

Q: Where can I get further information?

A: The Library has produced a series of Frequently asked questions (FAQs) about working with digital material. We will be happy to send you copies of these. Alternately you are welcome to contact Library staff.

Q: Is there someone in the Library I can talk to?

A: Yes. There are two contacts at the Wellcome Library who are available to answer your questions,

Dr. Chris Hilton, Senior Archivist, c.hilton@wellcome.ac.uk
Dave Thompson, Digital Curator d.thompson@wellcome.ac.uk

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