

Personal Archives Accessible in
Digital Media:
*Introduction and Background to
Project*

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Origins

- Concern over issues relating to digital preservation in research libraries.
- Paper archives exist in 'regimes of benign neglect' (Clifford Lynch, *ARL Bimonthly Report* Feb 2003).
- Not possible to assume that digital materials will survive in such an environment – need for active curation of data throughout life-cycle.

Origins

- **Increase in digital activity across HE sector.** *Researchers' Use of Libraries and other Information Sources: current patterns and future trends* (HEFCE, 2002) indicated that 'in the humanities, the overall impression is that researchers ... are very interested in increased availability of e.g. of electronic full texts of manuscripts and primary documents' and that 'the potential strength of electronic access in terms of 'anywhere, anytime' was recognised across all subjects'.

Origins

- Emerging concerns over ‘digital abundance’ (Roy Rosenzweig in *American Historical Review* Vol. 108 No.3 June 2003)
- Great deal of attention paid to ‘published’ electronic information in HE (eg subscriptions to electronic journals and databases) – comparatively little to digital preservation, and almost none to personal digital material.

JISC

- Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) of the Joint Funding Councils.
- Responsible for a whole range of activities from R&D to Support Services (eg part-funding AHDS)
- Very interested in the trend towards developing 'Institutional Repositories' – systems designed to manage digital information created in an institutional setting eg a University.
- 2004 invited bids for a Programme on Institutional Digital Preservation and Asset Management. Awarded 14 projects with funding

PARADIGM

- Oxford – Bodleian Library as a centre of political papers (6 PMs, 100+ Cabinet Ministers etc, Conservative Party Archives)
- Manchester – also major centre for political papers, including Labour Party Archives
- Two institutions combined to respond to the bid to address issues associated with personal digital material in the context of existing collecting and curatorial responsibilities.
- October 2004 awarded funding of £150k.

PARADIGM

- Project Directors: Richard Ovenden (Oxford), Michael Popham (Oxford), Stella Butler (Manchester).
- Project Manager: Susan Thomas
- Advisory Board Chair: Lawrence Goldman
- Two years from January 2005, working with politicians from Labour and Conservative Parties.

PARADIGM

- **AIMS:**
- Attempt to pilot a system for selecting, taking-in, managing, cataloguing, and making available in the long-term personal digital material.
- To compare and contrast these operations in the digital and traditional archival environments
- To come forward with 'best-practice' guidelines for other institutions.
- To be realistic about the difficulties
- To set up a digital archive that can serve as a platform for future work in Oxford and Manchester.

Advisory Board

- To advise the Project Directors and more broadly the project staff as a whole on matters relating to the academic requirements of personal archives in digital form. Specifically:
- To advise on the policies relating to the selection of materials, also giving indication relative academic value of different materials.
- To advise on the policies and applications relating to the useability and access regimes surrounding of personal archival material in digital form from the viewpoint of both the researcher, and from the viewpoint of the academic tutor/supervisor.
- To advise on matters relating to promotion of the project, and advocacy relating to the issues surrounding digital archiving.
- To advise on other matters as requested by the Project Directors.