Digital Records Guidelines for Donors
Manuscripts Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections
Princeton University Library

The Manuscripts Division is committed to providing long-term preservation and access to digital materials. This document is intended to provide donors transferring digital materials to the Library with information about the Library's digital capture and preservation capabilities, accepted file formats, and instructions for various transfer options.

Princeton currently has the infrastructure necessary to acquire, process, and preserve born-digital material of various types, including text files, images, databases, spreadsheets, presentation slides, digital audio and video files, email, websites, and social media.

While the Library is committed to preserving and providing open and equitable access to digital cultural heritage, the Manuscripts Division also acknowledges the personal nature of the materials it collects. The Library will therefore work with donors to ensure the preservation of unique digital materials while respecting the privacy and wishes of donors.

File Formats

The Library can accept various file formats, including obsolete formats. Donors should not convert file formats in advance of transfer. The Library asks that donors not manipulate, rearrange, extract, copy, or otherwise alter digital files on original source media prior to transferring materials to the Library so as to preserve original file structure and important metadata such as file last modified dates. Be aware that simply viewing files can alter them.

Transfer Options and Instructions

In order to preserve original metadata, the Library recommends that newer or active digital files be transferred virtually via Google Drive, Dropbox, or other cloud services. Files currently stored on floppy disks, optical disks, flash drives, computer hard drives, etc. should not be migrated; instead, donors should send the native media. Laptops and computer towers can also be accepted. Donors should also fill out the **Manuscripts Division Inventory Form for Digital Materials**, where basic information about file types and content, quantities, date ranges, file naming conventions and arrangement schemes, operating systems, and hardware can be indicated. *Assistance available upon request.*

Google Drive/Dropbox: If you are uploading records to Google Drive or Dropbox, create a zip file before uploading your files in order to preserve original metadata. Then share the archival folder (view-only access) with the Manuscripts Division email address, mssdiv@princeton.edu. If your records are already stored in Google Drive or Dropbox, simply share the folder.

Email: The Library encourages donors to transfer email correspondence in its native digital form rather than printout copies on paper. Even if research access to email files is temporarily restricted at the donor's request, the Library can preserve original digital files to ensure long-term preservation for future access. See separate instructions for detailed guidance on exporting select emails or entire mailboxes from major email platforms, such as Gmail, Yahoo!, Microsoft Outlook (includes Hotmail), Thunderbird, and AOL. Follow the instructions specific to your email platform.

Websites/social media: The Library uses Archive-It to capture and preserve websites and other social media platforms. Donors should discuss with curator what websites/pages of sites they'd like to preserve. The design of your website largely influences our ability to preserve it successfully. To assess your website's ability to be captured without information loss, visit http://archiveready.com, an online tool that evaluates if a website will be archived correctly.