

# The Greater Harrington Historical Society Digital Collections & Preservation Policy



# The Greater Harrington Historical Society's Digital Collections and Preservation Policies

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Last Revised: March 6, 2024

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These policies guide the creation and maintenance of centrally managed and/or permanent **digital collections** at The Greater Harrington Historical Society. These policies are reviewed on at least a three-year cycle, but the primary policy steward may initiate an earlier review.

# Digital Collections Development Policy

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**Document Status:** Final

**Prepared by:** Doug Poore

**Reviewed by:** Strategic Planning Committee

**Approved by:** Membership

**Date Approved:** 06/01/2024

**Revision Cycle:** 3 years

**Last reviewed:**

**Next Revision:**

**Primary Policy Steward:** Curator

## Purpose

The Greater Harrington Historical Society's digital collection and preservation efforts are designed to ensure long-term access to an increasing volume of digital materials that have intellectual significance and long-term value, and to deliver digital collections in an environment that allows for ease of searching, browsing, retrieval, and reuse. The Digital Collections Development Policy parallels and aligns with The Greater Harrington Historical Society's other collection development policies and practices, which support teaching, learning, and research needs of faculty, students, and staff.

Currently, digital content is stored and managed on the curator's computer and in the cloud utilizing Dropbox. This policy statement describes what streams of content are appropriate specifically for deposit into GHHS's centrally funded and managed preservation repository, GHHS Digital Collections. Individual licensed electronic materials are not under the purview of this policy. The Curator will provide guidance, as needed, on considerations of long-term storage costs that may affect the scale or scope of building digital collections.

## Principles for Building Digital Collections at GHHS

The Greater Harrington Historical Society's digital collections will:

- Support the mission statement of GHHS.
- Enhance and widen access and use, locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally, of GHHS's rare and unique collections.

## Selection of Materials for Ingest into GHHS Digital Collections

Selection is based on traditional collection development principles including authority, originality, curricular and research relevance, timeliness, breadth and/or depth of coverage, demand, and support of GHHS's distinctive collections.

Proposed materials for inclusion in GHHS Digital Collections will be evaluated for broad and enduring value. Added value components to be considered include:

- suitability for online presentation;
- intellectual control (metadata);
- improvement of resource sharing;
- advancement of collaboration;
- enhancement of access;
- intrinsic research value; and
- rarity or uniqueness of assets/content.

The Greater Harrington Historical Society considers the following criteria to identify materials for ingesting into GHHS Digital Collections for purposes of long-term access. More specific guidance on preservation characteristics is reflected in the *Digital Preservation Policy*. In order for The Greater Harrington Historical Society to consider ingesting digital collections into GHHS Digital Collections for long-term access, digital collections should:

- Have a plan for dissemination that includes the potential for either making the material widely accessible, either now or in the future, or providing restricted access to rare, at-risk materials not otherwise available;
- Be unique or have significant research value or mitigate inherent risks for materials in analog formats. This might encompass intellectual content, carrier/format, or digital enhancements. This potentially includes preservation copies of rare, fragile, or unique collections for long-term access or data analysis, and materials that are at risk of being lost due to an obsolete media or file format;
- Meet our ethical obligations and align with existing collection policies and standards, including GHHS's Open Access Policy and donor agreements;
- Abide by relevant legal statutes governing preservation and distribution of these materials, including U.S. Copyright Law;

# Digital Preservation Policy

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**Document Status:** Final

**Prepared by:** Doug Poore

**Reviewed by:** Strategic Planning Committee

**Approved by:** Membership

**Date Approved:** 06/01/2024

**Revision Cycle:** 3 years

**Last reviewed:**

**Next Revision:**

**Primary Policy Steward:** Curator

## Purpose

GHHS's Digital Preservation Policy outlines the purpose and scope of The Greater Harrington Historical Society's digital preservation program as well as general principles to which The Greater Harrington Historical Society will adhere in order to ensure long-term access to its digital collections. This policy is an integral part of GHHS's comprehensive digital preservation program. This work is done in support of GHHS mission.

## Mandate

The Greater Harrington Historical Society recognizes that its digital collections are an integral part of its overall holdings and acknowledges the necessity of preserving those digital collections in a way that is scalable, programmatic, in alignment with established digital preservation best practices, and mindful of the financial resources and labor that have been invested in the creation and acquisition of these digital collections. Specifically, The Greater Harrington Historical Society commits to preserving its digital collections to support the following objectives:

- **Scholarship and teaching:** The Greater Harrington Historical Society commits to preserving and providing access to its digitized and born-digital assets to support instruction, research, and scholarship.
- **Legal obligations:** The Greater Harrington Historical Society honors commitments made to preservation and ongoing access of digital assets as part of agreements such as deeds of gift and sale, donor agreements, contracts with external partners, and other legally binding agreements.
- **Institutional records:** The Greater Harrington Historical Society enables the preservation of electronic records designated as permanent and identified by the GHHS as having continued and enduring value.

## Scope

GHHS's digital preservation program is responsible for securing, providing the means to preserve, and ensuring long-term access to GHHS's permanent digital collections. Digital collections suitable for long-term preservation include those in GHHS Digital Collections Permanent digital collections are

those that have been designated by The Greater Harrington Historical Society as appropriate for long-term preservation, and can include content from the following categories:

- Digitized versions of physical assets held by The Greater Harrington Historical Society
- Born-digital material acquired as part of (or entire) archival or special collections.
- Digitized or born-digital non-custodial content that The Greater Harrington Historical Society has committed to stewarding through memorandums of understanding or similar agreements.
- Electronic theses and dissertations
- GHHS staff and volunteer research materials submitted to The Greater Harrington Historical Society' open access research repository.

## Principles

The Greater Harrington Historical Society commits to adhering to the following principles that guide our long-term preservation of digital collections:

- We will strive to follow guidelines and implement standards that are agreed upon by the digital preservation community.
- We will maintain a secure environment for the long-term preservation of digital content.
- We will capture and preserve these required essential characteristics of digital content necessary for long-term use.
  - All the content-bearing files that make up a digital object, including supplemental materials.
  - Information about the relationships between the content files that make up a digital object.
  - Representation information that makes the object interpretable to humans and machines
  - The copyright, license, and access status of digital objects and/or collections
  - Information about the chain of custody of digital objects and/or collections
  - Fixity information about digital objects, which is captured regularly and monitored over time.

Compliance with these principles is necessary for The Greater Harrington Historical Society digital preservation program to ensure long term preservation and access. Failure to meet the principles outlined here may result in an inability to ingest a digital object into a preservation system or guarantee the digital object's functionality is preserved.

## Roles and Responsibilities

The roles of key participants in The Greater Harrington Historical Society' digital preservation program include:

- Administrators: leaders at the GHHS responsible for providing material support and advocacy for digital preservation
- Curator: individual tasked with making and implementing decisions about the management and preservation of digital collections content.
- Digital collections stakeholders: archivists, curators, content stewards and others who manage the collecting areas to which digital collections belong. Responsible for selecting collections for digitization and preservation and providing the necessary information to support preservation and access for those collections.
- Technology support providers: Staff who develop and support the software applications and hardware used for digital preservation purposes and monitor technical best practices in the field.
- Technology leadership: The GHHS' leadership sets the technology strategy for digital preservation, ensures it is financially resourced, has adequate staffing, and works with stakeholders to identify future directions for its use.

## Third-Party Preservation Services

In some cases, digital content in permanent digital collections owned or stewarded by The Greater Harrington Historical Society may be determined to be preserved by a third-party service to supplement our local capacity and preservation services. The proposal to join or contribute to third-party preservation services should be made by the curator. Funding must be available prior to any agreement with a third-party preservation service.

### Criteria for choosing preservation service

On behalf of The Greater Harrington Historical Society, the curator, in consultation with other stakeholders as appropriate, will evaluate a third party's capacity to provide preservation for digital objects. General considerations for choosing a third-party service or vendor include:

- **Transparency:** The third-party service provider should offer transparency and disclosure of the policies and strategies it uses for preservation.
- **Business model:** The third-party service provider should exhibit economic sustainability and viability, transparency in business operations and costs, and provide a clearly defined service level agreement and/or terms of service.
- **Standards:** The third-party service provider should align with industry standards.
- **Ownership/Stewardship of Content:** The third-party service should allow The Greater Harrington Historical Society to retain and retrieve preservation copies of submitted digital content, and enable GHHS to version, delete, or decommission submitted digital content per the *Digital Object Retention Policy*.

# Digital Object Retention Policy

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**Document Status:** Final

**Prepared by:** Doug Poore

**Reviewed by:** Strategic Planning Committee

**Approved by:** Membership

**Date Approved:** 06/01/2024

**Revision Cycle:** 3 years

**Last reviewed:**

**Next Revision:**

**Primary Policy Steward:** Curator

## Purpose

GHHS's Digital Object Retention Policy outlines situations in which The Greater Harrington Historical Society must remove or update digital objects in The Greater Harrington Historical Society centrally managed preservation services as part of normal business operations and as The Greater Harrington Historical Society' missions and collecting areas change with time. The purpose of the Digital Object Retention Policy is to identify under which circumstances a fully ingested digital object from a permanent digital collection may be versioned, deleted, or decommissioned from the GHHS Digital Collections repository or The Greater Harrington Historical Society' centrally managed preservation services. The Greater Harrington Historical Society' Items disseminated to third-party services for the purpose of discovery and/or preservation should also comply with the requirements outlined in this policy.

## Defining Retention

All digital objects preserved in the GHHS Digital Collections repository and additional The Greater Harrington Historical Society centrally managed preservation services are intended to be retained permanently. GHHS's preservation services will not be used as a temporary storage facility for digital objects nor as a temporary access platform.

Digital objects are not always considered fully ingested at the time of initial deposit, but only after any required post-deposit processing of the digital object has been completed, at which point it is considered ingested. In some cases, human or system errors may result in the creation of digital objects that are accidental duplicates or are not fully complete, or that require further approval workflows to complete ingest: these in-process objects are excluded from the scope of this policy.

## Versioning

### Defining Versioning

Versioning is the act of updating or editing a digital object that has been fully ingested into the GHHS Digital Collections repository or an additional The Greater Harrington Historical Society' centrally managed preservation service. Where feasible, previous versions of the digital object should be retained for administrative and preservation purposes, but only the most recent version of the digital object will



be accessible to users. When this capability is not available, data should be recorded to indicate that modifications to an object have occurred.

### **Principles of Versioning**

A new version should be created when digital objects' essential preservation characteristics are modified. These characteristics are defined in the *Digital Preservation Policy* and are listed below for convenience:

- The intellectual content of the object.
- The descriptive metadata associated with the object.
- The copyright and/or license status of the object.
- The chain of custody of the object.
- The object's representation.
- Fixity for the object.

Versioning of a digital object should only be performed by a designated digital content steward, an authorized depositor, or a repository administrator. Fully ingested objects, because they are considered final, should be only formally versioned in response to significant preservation or access events. When feasible, the reasons for versioning the object should be recorded within the metadata of the digital object itself.

## **Decommissioning**

### **Defining Decommissioning**

Decommissioning is the act of removing a fully ingested, discoverable digital object from the GHHS Digital Collections repository or an additional The Greater Harrington Historical Society centrally managed preservation service for which access has been granted to end users (e.g. the public or the GHHS community). Decommissioning assumes the digital object's essential preservation characteristics will remain within the designated repository, but the content and metadata will no longer be accessible to end users.

### **Principles of Decommissioning**

Decommissioning can only be considered for digital objects that meet one or more of the following criteria:

- The content in the digital object no longer aligns with its overarching collection strategy; or
- The digital object is unnecessarily duplicated; or
- The digital object no longer retains its integrity, identity, or authenticity; or
- The holding library has withdrawn the physical analog of the digital surrogate; or
- The right to distribute the digital object becomes unclear or unknown.

Before any digital object is recommended for decommissioning, reasonable efforts shall be made to ascertain that The Greater Harrington Historical Society has the right and responsibility to decommission the object.

## **Decommissioning Procedures**

A designated digital content steward or repository administrator may recommend decommissioning a digital object if, in their best judgment, one or more criteria for decommissioning has been met. The recommendation must be made in writing to GHHS's Curator. Such recommendations will specify the source and/or provenance of the digital object and the reason for decommissioning. The curator's approval is required for actual decommissioning, and all decisions will be recorded in a decision document. For recommendations to delete an object or other special circumstances, the Curator will refer a decision document to the Board of Directors for final approval.

Once the object has been decommissioned from GHHS Digital Collections, a tombstone page indicating the object is not available will be displayed in its place. To avoid administrative or system conflicts, the object's persistent identifier is retained and will not be re-used. The circumstances for decommissioning should be recorded as part of the preservation for the now-dark digital object. Ideally, any GHHS centrally managed preservation service with an end user interface should also follow these processes.

## **Deletion**

### **Defining Deletion**

Deletion is the act of removing the essential preservation characteristics of a digital object from GHHS Digital Collections or an The Greater Harrington Historical Society' centrally managed preservation service, including its intellectual content files. Deleting a digital object means that the digital object will no longer be maintained, preserved, or stored in GHHS Digital Collections or an The Greater Harrington Historical Society' centrally managed preservation service.

### **Principles of Deletion**

Deletion can only occur for digital objects that meet one or more of the following criteria:

- The Greater Harrington Historical Society agrees to delete a digital object because its rightful copyright owner has issued a demand to do so or GHHS received an order from a court of competent jurisdiction; or
- The Greater Harrington Historical Society determines that the deletion of the digital object is in the best interest of The Greater Harrington Historical Society; or
- The Greater Harrington Historical Society determines that another entity is the rightful owner of the digital object.

Before any digital object is recommended for deletion, reasonable efforts shall be made to ascertain that The Greater Harrington Historical Society has the right and responsibility to delete the object.

### **Deletion Procedures**

Deletion may only be performed by designated repository administrators. Once the object has been deleted from GHHS Digital Collections, a tombstone page indicating the object is no longer available may, if appropriate, be displayed in its place. While the intellectual content files will be deleted, descriptive and administrative metadata, including a record of the circumstances for deletion, should be retained for repository administrators. The object's persistent identifier will also be retained and not be re-used. Ideally, these procedures should also apply to digital content within other GHHS centrally managed preservation services.

# Third-Party Dissemination Policy

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**Document Status:** Final

**Prepared by:** Doug Poore

**Reviewed by:** Strategic Planning Committee

**Approved by:** Membership

**Date Approved:** 06/01/2024

**Revision Cycle:** 3 years

**Last reviewed:**

**Next Revision:**

**Primary Policy Steward:** Curator

## Purpose and Scope

To expand access to and discoverability of GHHS's digital collections, digital content may be shared with third-party access services. This policy outlines considerations for making digital objects and/or components of a digital object available to third-party services.

Although The Greater Harrington Historical Society may disseminate stewarded content to third parties for access, GHHS will continue to own and/or steward its digital collections.

Only digital content locally owned or stewarded by The Greater Harrington Historical Society is governed by this policy. This policy does not address which components of a digital object are disseminated to third-party services; this may be determined by the service itself.

The proposal to join or contribute to third-party services should be made in consultation with the Curator (if content protected by copyright is included) and reviewed by the Board of Directors. Failure to seek approval may result in The Greater Harrington Historical Society' being unable to comply with the requirements of the third-party service, or a granting agency, if applicable.

## Dissemination for Access

Recognizing that users may desire multiple channels for accessing GHHS's digital collections, it is recommended that digital collections be as widely shared and discoverable as possible. Digital content in the public domain, or to which GHHS holds copyright, may be shared with appropriate third-party services. Digital content still protected by copyright, or with an unknown copyright status, will be reviewed for risk assessment by the curator as part of the approval process for sharing with appropriate third-party services. Preservation copies of all disseminated digital collections will be maintained in GHHS Digital Collections.

The Greater Harrington Historical Society will share digital content with third-party repositories and portals to further expose relevant GHHS University digital content. Any requirements from grant or collaborative efforts for distribution of GHHS's collections should be vetted using the criteria below and submitted to the curator prior to submitting for approval.

## Criteria for Choosing Dissemination Services

The following general criteria are used to determine whether GHHS's digital content should be provided to a third-party dissemination service.

- **Open Access:** The third-party service should not put digital content behind a pay wall or be commercialized.
- **Facility of Ingest:** The third-party service's method of ingest for digital content should be documented and content should be easily transferred from The Greater Harrington Historical Society.
- **Recognition of GHHS:** The third-party service should allow for identification of GHHS as the contributor of the digital content to highlight its contribution to the greater corpus, potentially leading researchers to explore GHHS's unique **digital collections** more deeply; digital content should be able to be grouped as GHHS collections.
- **Accessibility:** The third-party service should demonstrate a commitment to and compliance with current accessibility standards.
- **Ownership and Maintenance of Content:** The third-party service should allow The Greater Harrington Historical Society to retain preservation copies of submitted digital content and enable GHHS to version, delete, or **decommission** submitted digital content per the *Digital Object Retention Policy*.
- **Protection of Patron Privacy:** The third-party service should not require personally identifiable information to use the digital content and should only report user activity at an aggregate level.
- **Search Capability and Functionality:** The third-party service should provide search and discovery tools that allow users to locate and manage their searches and the digital content.
- **Variety of file formats:** The third-party services should support the ability to export a variety of file formats for users to access and download digital content.
- **Availability of content:** The third-party service should make digital content available to a wider audience rather than restricted to institutional members.

# Glossary of Terms Used in this Policy

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- **Chain of custody:** the sequence of individuals or organizations that have created, modified, or transferred materials throughout their lifecycle. Chain of custody can be recorded at the individual digital object level as well as at the collection level.
- **Dark object/dark archive:** an object or set of objects not intended to be accessed by end-users and only available to a select few staff. By contrast, the GHHS Digital Collections repository is a "grey" archive in which some material may be restricted at the time of ingest, with the intent of making it accessible in the future.
- **Decommissioning:** the act of removing a fully ingested digital object from the GHHS Digital Collections repository or an additional The Greater Harrington Historical Society-approved preservation system for which access has been granted to end users (e.g. the public or the GHHS community)
- **Deposit:** initial submission of digital content prior to any processing for ingest into GHHS Digital Collections.
- **Digital Collection:** an aggregation of digital materials managed collectively and based on provenance, function, format, or subject. These include digital materials created by GHHS University, unique born-digital materials collected and stewarded by The Greater Harrington Historical Society and published digital materials that require local hosting and rights management.
- **Digital Content Steward:** a designated individual who oversees different preservation activities on the part of an object or collection.
- **Digital Object:** an individual intellectual entity, comprised of metadata, content files, and may also contain supplemental files.
- **GHHS Digital Collections:** The Greater Harrington Historical Society' centrally funded and managed preservation repository, as implemented through the Digital Library Program.
- **GHHS:** The Greater Harrington Historical Society.
- **Fixity:** the property of a digital file remaining unchanged over time. Fixity is commonly monitored through the periodic generation and verification of values called checksums.
- **Fully Ingested:** objects that have completed their initial **deposit** into GHHS Digital Collections or another The Greater Harrington Historical Society centrally managed preservation service, and any required post-**deposit** processing or quality assurance has also been performed on the digital object.

- **Ingest:** the process by which a preservation repository gathers and/or generates the components of a digital object that will be preserved.
- **Permanent Digital Collections:** Those collections designated by The Greater Harrington Historical Society as appropriate for long-term preservation.
- **Preservation Ecosystem:** the set of centrally managed services that have been implemented through a formal approval process, contain permanent digital collections, and meet minimum requirements for long-term digital preservation.
- **Preservation Metadata:** information detailing preservation activities applied to a digital object in the repository such as system events, human-initiated workflows, or an audit trail of modifications. Additional information regarding the composition and encoding of digital surrogates specifically is recorded through technical/characterization metadata.
- **Representation Information:** information about the structure and meaning of the bits that make up a digital object. Representation information is necessary to convert bit sequences into meaningful information.
- **Tombstone page (placeholder page):** a user-facing page that is generated when content has been decommissioned or deleted. The page should not explain why the content has been removed but should provide contact information should the user believe they have reached the tombstone page in error.
- **Versioning:** the act of updating or editing a digital object that has been fully ingested into the Repository