

**BRITISH
LIBRARY**

DIGITAL LIVES: an AHRC-funded research project

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**RLG Programs 2008 Annual Partners Meeting
Philadelphia, USA
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The British Library – The World's Knowledge

National library of the UK.
Serves researchers, business,
libraries, education & the
general public

Over 250 years of collecting.
Beneficiary of legal deposit, and
£17m annual acquisitions
budget
150 million collection items

Collection includes over 2m
sound recordings, 5m reports,
theses and conference papers,
the world's largest patents
collection (c.50m)

Collection fills over 600km of
shelving and grows at 11km per
year
Terabytes of digital material
through voluntary deposit



**Helping people
advance knowledge to
enrich lives**

The largest document supply
service in the world. Secure
e-delivery and 'just in time'
digitisation enables desktop
delivery within 2 hours

Generates value to the UK
economy each year of 4.4
times public funding

GIA Funding 07/08:
£92m operational,
£12m capital

Other funding secured
06/07:
£25m

3 main sites in London
and Yorkshire. Circa
2,000 staff

Key Statistics, 2006/2007

- The British Library maintains a wide range of statistics and management information. (For more details, see the Annual Report: www.bl.uk/about/annual/2006to2007/)
- 8.5 million items supplied / consulted remotely and onsite
- 408,594 catalogue records created
- 536,617 items received on legal deposit
- 61 million successful requests for web pages (www.bl.uk); 5 million unique hosts served
- 25,893,440 searches of online catalogue
- 1,625,424 visitors to onsite and online activities

British Library Research Agenda

- Arts and Humanities Research Council Independent Research Organisation status
- Track record of successful research projects funded by AHRC in partnership with UK Higher Education institutions, for instance University of Sheffield; Royal Holloway, University of London
- International partnerships too: recent JISC/NEH funded Shakespeare quarto project
- BL Research Committee and policy
- BL Research Register (see www.bl.uk/researchregister/)

Digital Lives Project

- Arts and Humanities Research Council funded project
- In partnership with University College London, School of Library, Archive and Information Studies, and the University of Bristol
- Project funded for period September 2007 to March 2009
- Principal Investigator: Dr. Jeremy Leighton John
- See www.bl.uk/digital-lives/

Digital Lives: Objectives

- Helping people to capture and secure their individual memories, their personal creativity, their shared historic moments
- A pathfinding research project setting out to understand how individuals retain and manage their personal collections of computerised information – from digital photographs and videos to podcasts and text files – and how these digital collections can best be captured in the first place and preserved in the long term
- Assessment of the impact of these changes for curators and repositories such as the British Library

Digital Lives: Workpackages

The research consists of a series of linked studies, including;

- Study of personal collections and dissemination practices of authors and researchers, including qualitative survey, user forum and second-stage questionnaire-based study
- Legal and ethical issues
- Desktop studies of emerging technologies and services offered by intermediaries
- Mapping the personal with the professional: assessing the impact of the survey and study findings on curatorial practice at the British Library

Digital Lives: Qualitative Survey

Qualitative Survey

- In-depth interviews to explore the views, practices and experiences of a number of eminent individuals in the fields of politics, the arts and the sciences, plus an equal number of young or mid-career professional practitioners
- For more detail, see article by Pete Williams, Katrina Dean, Ian Rowlands and Jeremy John in Ariadne, Issue 55, April 2008 (www.ariadne.ac.uk/issue55/)

Digital Lives: User Forum (1)

User Forum

- Held in January 2008 and comprised user representatives, British Library curators and members of the Digital Lives research team
- Objectives: to communicate research findings and experiences with personal digital collections; to explore the needs and views of potential users of these collections; and to obtain user views on how curators should approach them

User Forum (2)

Emerging themes:

- Need for authenticity of digital sources
- Greater access to digital collections; need for access tools and finding aids where these can be machine enabled
- Risk around outsourcing personal digital collections for storage etc
- New research opportunities employing a greater range of research methods and skills
- Curators to provide advice to creators, facilitate access by researchers and advocacy on issues around personal digital collections

Digital Lives: Questionnaire

Questionnaire-based survey

- Based on findings from interviews and user forum, a more detailed questionnaire has been devised
- Targeted at a cross-section of the general public and also at key creator groups via mailing lists etc.
- See <http://tinyurl.com/5wtwgm>

Digital Lives: Legal and Ethical Issues

Legal and ethical issues

- Workpackage led by Andrew Charlesworth, University of Bristol
- What are the legal issues for this environment, namely the context of personal digital collections and their possible deposit and retention at repositories?
- Issues for people who have personal digital collections and are intending to keep them
- Practical matter of defining and drawing up model licences, e.g. for deposit, donation etc.

Digital Lives: Some Milestones

- User Forum, 2008
- Legal and Ethical Issues Workshop, June 24th 2008
- Curatorial Workshop, September 2008
- Digital Lives Conference, British Library, February 10th 2009

Digital Lives: Dissemination

- Conference papers and presentations
- Website and blog (see www.bl.uk/digital-lives/ and http://britishlibrary.typepad.co.uk/digital_lives/)
- Publications, e.g. recent article in Ariadne

Digital Lives

- Questions?
- Discussion?
- Comment?