Henfield Museum Digitisation and IT Policy
(Version: November 2019)

Contents

1. Introduction

1.1 This document sets out the digital standards and plans of Henfield Museum. These apply to public engagement via digital resources, plus the museum policy for the digitisation of audio–visual resources and the museum catalogue. It should be viewed in tandem with the current Museum Forward Plan and Vision documents. It aims to cover:

1. Use of recognised digital standards
2. Preservation of digital material
3. Digital Asset Management
4. Use of digital material for audience engagement
5. Planning for the future

1.2 What is digitisation?

A useful definition is – *the process of creation of digital replicas, AND making them available for use.* The accession of 'born digital' objects (such as audio/video recordings) can also be considered under the same standards.

1.3 Why digitise?

- *To increase accessibility/engagement*
- *To tell stories that cannot be told physically*
- *To improve security/inventory*

Statistics indicate that digital engagement generally increases the potential for physical visits rather than saps them – particularly if both the physical and digital tell essential parts of the story.

1.4 How should digitisation be prioritised?

- *Condition/size of object to be digitised*
- *Specifically requested enquiries*
- *Skills/equipment required*
- *Funding available (creative commons is often mandated if funding is applied for)*

2. Digital Standards

2.1 Cataloguing Standards

The aim of the digital catalogue/database should be to make physical records as future proof as possible, particularly given now extremely economic cloud storage options. As such, high quality, lossless file formats should be used where at all possible.

2.1.1. General

2.1.1.1 Basic accreditation inventory standards are met by the current Access custom database – a brief description OR an image is required for accreditation.

2.1.1.2 However, a future standard should be set whereby the museum inventory includes both descriptions and photos and also audio accessions.

2.1.1.3 For both purposes of backup and wider access, a single museum cloud storage area should be used, with read, write permissions being assigned as appropriate, the Curator and Deputy Curator administrating.

2.1.1.4 Consideration should be given to auto linking the relevant folders on primary museum computers to this cloud area.

2.1.1.5 The potential longevity of hardware/software standards and file types should be assessed when using new software. For example, opt for stable and secure open source options where possible, being cautious about new standards until they are truly embedded in a general sense.

2.1.1.6 However, while future software standards and file formats may change, this should not preclude the use of a piece of new functionality purely because of this (e.g. 3D filming).

2.1.1.7 Volunteers or paid freelancers must assign digital object rights to the museum – see volunteer agreement. (with paid employees, rights automatically lie with their organisation).

2.1.1.8 Master/working copy should be detailed in the filename.

2.1.1.9 Rights management should be detailed in the file metadata.

2.1.1.10 The museum should continue to maintain the *Spectrum* collection management standard. These 'units of information' standards can be applied to software used when digitising (*[Spectrum 5.0](#)* is the latest standard and aligns with current accredited museum status standards).

2.1.2. Audio

2.1.2.1 Audio recordings should be taken at a high bit rate (320kbps), in either .mp3 or .wav format.
2.1.2.2 Ideally, at least a second of silence should precede and succeed a recording to ease editing (British Museum standard).

2.1.3. Visual

2.1.3.1 Items should be photographed with an appropriate scaling item (ruler or coin or similar if more appropriate) – however, this should be crop–able if possible to also allow use for publicity.
2.1.3.2 Images should display all of an item.
2.1.3.3 If the details of an item are inherent to its accession, additional macros should be taken.
2.1.3.4 The lossless .tiff file format is stable (but large) and should be used where possible; lossy high quality jpg if not. The default setting should be high quality.
2.1.3.5 Photos should be scanned at a minimum of 400 DPI, and preferably at 800 DPI where time is not at issue.

2.2 Public Engagement & Social Media Standards

The importance of social media for engagement is hard to overstate. In the UK in 2019, estimates state that 36 million internet users used Facebook, 13.7 million Twitter, 22 million Instagram and 37.1 million YouTube. Digital environments enable and often by their nature encourage audiences to interact with content and each other very differently to visitors within traditional heritage environments. Particularly as regards social media, there is immediacy, but also more noise, transience and pure duplication of content. So effort must still be targeted, remain in tune with the Museum Vision and be easily accessible in the longer term.

2.2.1 General

2.2.1.1 Remain driven by the story or idea first – and then which technology can facilitate it. Digitisation is not an end in itself.

2.2.1.2 Be aware of the varied utility of different applications for targeting different demographics (such as age and gender), but also their variable utility for the production of high quality, lasting content.
Fashion dictates that the latest popular application will be quickly embraced by the younger demographic, but can just as quickly fall from relevance. Due to their 'immediate' nature (see previously Vine, as of 2019 TikTok) partly driven by being primarily viewed on mobile browsers), these applications can also be tricky to use sustainably or with a longer term focus.

2.2.1.3 Recognise and value the potential of digital engagement for the expression and recording of social history.
Older forms of social media such as Facebook continue to transition to a focus on topical discussion rather than the direct 'Friend' based connections they were founded on – the West leads this trend. This harks back to the

previous generation of online bulletin boards/forums, but now with a far broader sector of the population involved in the online discussion, albeit also an older one.

Many heritage based groups and pages stimulate the sharing of memory in ways often far more organic or easily arranged than can be the case outside the digital sphere. Facebook comment threads on historical photos or articles within local history groups are prime examples of this eliciting of both individual and of a developing collective memory. Those not using social media directly can quite often be indirectly brought into this discussion by those that are.

2.2.1.4 Make the most of both technical and psychological techniques known to increase online engagement, but ensure content still remains true to the museum vision. Avoid clickbait (i.e. snappily titled or structured but insubstantial or repetitive content). Technical techniques can include appropriate tagging, sharing within your network and observance of trends.

2.2.1.5 Ensure a published legacy: much time and effort can be sunk into digital publicity and engagement, particularly via social media, but by their technical and commercial nature, they tend to emphasise the recent, regardless of the relative academic or historic value of older postings. Automated online archiving of social media websites by services such as the *Internet Archive* - which provide a long term record of prior page versions and often the only fairly comprehensive record of defunct websites – is also often problematic for various technical reasons.

2.2.1.6 As such, longer form or newly researched write ups or articles should (where at all possible) be formally listed and categorised by topic/keyword on the museum website, in addition to on social media or other websites. This helps to preserve and make effort more easily accessible, rather than its being lost in the ever expanding digital ether.

2.2.1.7 Maximise the social networks of those engaged with the museum online – this remains almost as crucial in the digital sphere as it has traditionally been outside it.

As such, the building of a digital community feeds organic engagement with blogs and articles. While longer form write ups and research should be formally posted on the museum website as above, it must nonetheless be remembered that the majority of audience engagement has moved to social media – where it often easier to foster a sense of community on a page.

A short teaser snippet on social media linking to the website for the full content is a common and effective solution, allowing discussion while also driving traffic to the more formally organised website.

2.2.1.8 Engage in digital museum outreach via engagement with other groups and pages. Sensitively targeted comments on the posts of other local history groups or community organisations can not only add historical knowledge, but drive engagement with the page of the commenter (N.B. page Admins can choose to comment as themselves or the page they manage).

2.2.1.9 Consider where possible, collaboration with academics to fulfil their community impact criteria. This raises the possibility of match funding etc. as universities will want to make a success of any project they put their name to.

2.2.1.10 For social media, be aware of times with better average engagement for the page audience. The timestamps of previous posts can be used to gauge this, but weekday evenings and weekend afternoons and weekdays are a good rule of thumb. However, this is not a hard and fast rule and exceptions can be thrown in from time to time. Use should be made of post schedulers such as Hootsuite.

2.2.1.11 Measuring the digital community: just as visitors visiting the physical museum space are counted and categorised, so too should be those in the digital space. It should be noted that *Art Council* digitisation grants link in to community engagement. Metrics on digital visitors can be collated from:
2.2.1.11.1 Direct museum website visitors (tracked via Google Analytics or linked website plugins such as Analytify).
2.2.1.11.2 Those engaging via museum social media channels (Facebook analytics etc.).
2.2.1.11.3 Those engaging with museum resources via other digital channels (via manual estimation or contact with those running the channels using museum resources).

2.2.2 Audio

The Museum should maintain an account with an online audio host. This should be publicly accessible and allow wider audiences to freely access museum audio objects such as oral history clips, narrations, or other sounds inherent to museum objects.

2.2.3. Visual

2.2.3.1 'High' quality .jpg format should be used for publicity.
2.2.3.2 Photographs of objects for publicity should aim to inspire, intrigue and bring the object to life – as such, artistic or macro photos should be used as appropriate to context, in addition to re-using purely factual catalogue photos.

2.2.3.3 Reasonable quality images should be used within publicity – visitors should be able to individually request larger or higher quality images on an object to object basis.

3. Objectives

3.1 To aid prioritisation, future digital projects should ideally aim to meet one or more of the following criteria:

3.1.1 Does the project illustrate tangible parts of Henfield's history in new ways?
3.1.2 Does the project aid public engagement with existing museum resources?
3.1.3 Can digital assets can help us to make the intangible or lost parts of Henfield's history, tangible?

3.2 Trial content on new council museum page(s) and prepare to set up dedicated museum website

It may be helpful to think in terms of 'building or enabling a community', rather than simply mechanistically listing resources when structuring and updating the website.

3.1.1 A section should be included for an image and audio library with keyword/tag search for public access to the museum collection.

3.1.2 The website will be a primary channel for publicity such as project and event announcements.

3.1.3 The website will feature an automatically updated stream of the museum social media channels (currently Facebook & Twitter, future Instagram?).

3.1.4 A section will be included for blogs and research, with topical tagging and SEO to ensure longevity and legacy usage.

3.1.5 Functionality will be included for a map viewer with ideally, side by side comparison (ref National Library of Scotland website).

3.3 Setup Cloud Storage

Various account options are available for this, with the most well known being Microsoft, Dropbox and Google. Setup will provide:

3.3.1 Easily accessible and constant automated backup; both of the museum database and other multimedia resources.

3.3.2 Simple public and volunteer access; cloud storage will allow multimedia resources such as podcasts, videos and photos to be easily made available for research, use on social media, displays and other projects. View/edit

permissions can be set at folder or individual file levels and other filing standards as described in 2.1 must be adhered to.

3.4 Update of Access database system

The Museum catalogue is purely textual and as of 2019, runs on a '90s version of MS Access. Windows 10 necessitates an upgrade as the current database filetype is not compatible and Windows 7 ceases to be supported in Jan 2020. This will then also allow multimedia files to be associated with our records or to more easily allow audio and video to be accessioned as records of themselves.

3.4.1 To allow this database to run on Windows 10, it must be converted to run on a more recent version of MS Access. The simplest way to achieve this seems be to convert the file by iterating via two intermediate versions of Access, to the latest. Firstly Access 2000/2002/XP/2003 (to mdb JET4 file), then Access 2007/2010/2013/2016/2019/365 (to accdb ACE file format).
3.4.2 Once in a current format, the option will be available to increase database scope via record attachments to images, sounds, videos and other file types.

3.5 Continue to increase social media engagement

Background: the Museum's social media presence began relatively late, with the Facebook and Twitter accounts having been created by RG on 30th July 2014. Run initially with a general mixture of posts, Costume Curator SR later joined the Facebook page to contribute from within her specialism. The page has since steadily grown to 155 'likes', with considerable momentum in the last year or so. The less often updated Twitter account has 60 followers (both as of 12/11/19) and currently no other volunteers. The Curator AB and Museum Committee Chair AD have also recently joined the Facebook page and it is hoped will be able to contribute content.
N.B. Social media interaction may not be specifically within the museum page. The Parish Clerk has since January posted many hundreds of historic photos, many from the museum collection, to The Henfield Club Facebook page. These have proven extremely popular, with the page now having 733 'likes' and sometimes strong social history engagement within the comments. Where time and knowledge have allowed, RG has commented to add historical notes to some photos. SR does likewise within costume groups.

3.5.1 A minimum frequency of at least a couple of posts a week should be maintained, with ideally one a day.
3.5.2 Continue to engage with other groups and pages, adding historical context and so cross pollinating publicity for the museum.

3.5.3 Setup Hootsuite account to post and schedule (this will enable data entry once here rather than on every website individually for posts to be sent out to every social media account).
3.5.4 Setup Instagram account – more artistic object photos should work particularly well here.
3.5.5 Setup YouTube account – aim to include posts on interactive exhibits, walk arounds of outside heritage.

3.6 Setup Soundcloud or similar account

This or similar (such as BaseCamp) will provide a mobile optimised vessel for publicising museum audio such as: object or external heritage audio, podcast audio and oral histories.

3.7 Acquire interactive visitor screen and audio system

This could take the form of a unit permanently located in the museum, although a degree of portability would be preferred for exhibitions or talks held elsewhere. It is also critical to ensure a unit with reliability and format longevity to avoid a future white elephant. Potential uses include:

3.7.1 Accessing high quality versions of photos, paintings and maps from the museum collection.
3.7.2 Listening to audio files including oral histories and other historic sounds of Henfield.
3.7.3 Watching pre–prepared audiovisual slideshows or videos on themes including those existing:
*Henfield in WW2
*The Henfield Railway

3.6.4 Future themes could include:
*Elizabeth Robins and Backsettown
*The story of the Bishopp Family.
*The Violet Nurseries
*Market Gardening in Henfield
*The Henfield Players & Henfield Theatre Company

3.8 Acquire large scale scanning facility

An A3 or A2 scanner (preferably overhead) will allow for the digital preservation and exhibition of museum documents and images including the large number of maps in the museum collection for which there is no current space for physical exhibit.

3.9 Explore 3D Graphical Recreations and Virtual Reality (VR)

3D models can help to recreate lost heritage and provide 360 degree interactive views of existing objects to be viewed remotely. See example of [a 3D castle](#), [a cuneiform tablet](#), a full Swedish National Museums [case study](#) and Natural History Museum [technical breakdown](#).

VR provides the potential to build on 3D models and for various *chapters* of Henfield's past to be recreated (possible via open source development engines (usually coded in C++, C# etc.)). These recreations can then be viewed via VR headset, navigated through or simply watched on a screen.

3.9.1 ~ Potential Chapter Example ~

'Mr Borrer's Garden' – a drone flyover filming the modern Barrow Hill estate flies down to the remaining oak where the modern video syncs into an immersive audiovisual VR experience of the recreated 3D garden. Recreation based upon existing sources:

- *The detailed 1838 description of the garden from the Gardener's Magazine*
- *The remaining old photos of the house and garden*
- *Vintage OS maps detailing the layout*
- *Vintage C20 aerial photographs (cf. 1946 image)*
- *Kew Gardens records of species taken to Kew after Borrer's death*

Other potential 'chapters' of intangible history could be considered such as Windmill Hill & Sandy Lane's industrial history.

3.10 Explore the use of Drone Technology

Potential Projects could include integration with hidden history projects as above (for example, aerial imagery of the Sandy Lane tramway could be captured), or the recording of Henfield's changing boundaries, overlaying photos or video with historic imagery.

4. Digital Resource Listing

– West Sussex Past Portal
– Media Storehouse – way of backing up/making accessible – 50% of profits go to org.
– Sound Heritage – British Library service
– Audacity open source sound editor & recorder
– GIMP open source image editor
– National Library of Scotland website: online resource for vintage maps & overlays

− Sketchfab: online portfolio of 3D models and touch screen API

5. Case Study Listing

− [The Ballad of Chetham's Library](#) (2016). A physical to digital cataloguing project supported by the Arts Council Designation Development Fund.

− [The Lost Palace](#) (2016). Example of the use of digital & audio to tell the story of lost history not able to be represented physically. Included joint skill sets & group work.

− [In the Eyes of the Animal](#) (2015). A total immersion VR headset project. Google cardboard is a cheap (~£15) way of achieving an approximation of VR via mobile and app.

− [Hold the World](#) (2018). A Natural History Museum & Sky VR project, narrated by Sir David Attenborough. This was a commercial Sky promo using Oculus Rift technology.

− [Smart Murals in the City](#) (2018). Southampton City Art Gallery. A trail with smart phone interaction with paintings, off−site locations enticing patrons to the main exhibition where one chosen work was animated via the Musar app.