

The National Archives

Development Networks Evaluation Report: Case Study

A common goal – Sharing Archivemata

The East of England Regional Archive Council (EERAC)

EERAC have been supported by The National Archives (TNA) through the Sector Sustainability Fund (SSF) to explore a collaborative approach to preserving digital archives. A key issue identified by EERAC is that most archive services are too small to effectively address the challenge of digital preservation on their own.

The Sharing Archivemata Pilot Project (SAPP) aimed to test an off-the-peg system to see if it could support collective digital preservation. It involved five archive services:

1. Cambridgeshire Archives
2. Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies
3. History of Advertising Trust
4. Norfolk Record Office
5. Peterborough Archives

[Archivemata](#) is a system which is capable of handling common file types and normalising or migrating them to suitable preservation formats. SAPP was set up to determine the suitability of Archivemata as a centrally hosted tool that multiple archives can use for their digital preservation requirements.

The EERAC network recognised that there had been a lot of research into digital archives. They felt it was important to undertake a practical trial for a collective solution to digital preservation issues. One of the key barriers initially identified in achieving this was the difficulty and often inability for change within local authority IT systems. An external supplier who could host Archivemata online was sourced at a cost. The cost of this was supported by TNA's SSF funding, EERAC and the five participating SAPP archive services, initially for one year.

The objectives of the collaborative approach were:

1. To collect and extract digital records irrespective of storage media
2. To appraise digital records in a timely manner using efficient procedures
3. To collect and generate appropriate rights and metadata during the [pre-ingest](#) phase
4. To store digital archives in a 'trusted digital repository' (ISO 16363)
5. To establish preservation, data management and administrative procedures compliant with the OAIS Reference Model ([ISO 14721](#))
6. To provide for the discovery and use of digital archives from their catalogues
7. To develop staff skills to manage digital archives and advise digital information producers/suppliers

The project has enabled:

- The set-up of a shared installation through a third party
- The sharing of a single Archivemata pipeline between organisations
- The examination of issues relating to the post-ingest processing and storage
- A determination of ways in which [Atom](#) can be used as a tool for description and access

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The strongest outcome of the project has been the increase in level of skill and knowledge within the participating archives. ERRAC have also ensured the project has aligned to the work of the Transforming Archives Heritage Lottery Fund placement trainee at Norfolk Records Office, adding sector value beyond the SSF activity. They are now looking at sharing the knowledge and encouraging other archives to trial Archivemata. They recognise that across the sector “there is a real need to start doing things” to address the issue of effectively managing digital archives.