

Belmont Preservation Policy

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Executive Summary

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Belmont University's Digital Preservation Policy outlines how the library and Archives & Special Collections ensure the long-term accessibility and integrity of the university's scholarly, creative, and historical digital materials. Prioritizing unique, high-value, and institutionally significant content, the policy defines what will and will not be preserved, guided by best-practice archival formats and national standards. Preservation relies on redundant storage, active monitoring, and format migration using platforms like Digital Commons, Amazon S3, and Preservica. Roles and responsibilities are shared across library units, with oversight by the Digital Projects & Scholarly Communication Committee. The policy is reviewed every three years to remain aligned with evolving technologies and preservation practices.

Introduction

This statement outlines the preservation policy of the Belmont Digital Repository (BDR) and Archives and Special Collections at Belmont University, a private, four-year university. Belmont is a Christ-centered, student-focused community, dedicated to developing diverse leaders of purpose, character, wisdom and transformational mindset, eager and equipped to make the world a better place. This policy covers scholarly, research, and creative works produced by Belmont faculty, students, and staff, as well as digitized materials of historical value to the larger Nashville story, including collections relating to the music history of Nashville, which is also a Belmont story.

Through redundancy in our systems which includes multiple backups and cloud storage with Amazon S3 we ensure access to our content over the long term. These arrangements are monitored and managed by the Library's Digital Projects & Scholarly Communication Committee.

This policy was created and will be monitored and managed by the Library's Digital Projects & Scholarly Communication Committee and is approved by the Library Director and the Library Advisory Board.

Our institution is committed to the long-term preservation of the scholarly, research and creative works published by our community, as well as digitized materials of historical value to our community. In recognition that current authors, as well as future researchers, will need access to the works we publish today and that this requires a coordinated effort on the part of the various actors involved in digital material curation we present these statements.

Scope

General Principles

The primary focus of our digital preservation activities is on preserving the intellectual content and the artifactual value of the materials acquired, ingested, and published in our systems. However, preservation always entails making choices about what to preserve. Finite resources of time, attention, and technology necessarily limit what an institution can actively preserve. In the interest of both resource management and transparency, the selective application of preservation practice should be the result of a deliberate decision-making process, the results of which are delineated in this preservation policy.

Recommendation

Best practices dictate that for certain digital objects, particularly those with large file-sizes, we archive both a non-publicly-accessible, archival-quality master file and also an access derivative. These derivatives can be popular and/or proprietary file formats which are also more conveniently accessible to users than their master file counterparts. Both master files and access derivatives should be stored securely and with appropriate redundancy.

The current platforms used by the Belmont Digital Repository (BDR) and Belmont Archives and Special Collections, respectfully BePress's Digital Commons and PastPerfect Museum Software are designed to be accessible with public facing discovery tools. While happy with the front end and ease of use of these platforms, there are however other administrative documents and master files that should be kept in a dark archive. For its dark archive, Belmont is currently utilizing the Preservica software. Preservica is an active digital preservation platform that digitally backs up preservation copies while ensuring that our digital materials are accessible for the long-term. This is a system that the University is just beginning to institute and will continue to expand as additional digital collections are added.

What we preserve

Given the scope outlined above, we aim to preserve the following broad categories (word or phrase referring to author/origin) of objects, both born-digital and digitized:

- Belmont faculty research including but not limited to such objects as: preprints, postprints, datasets, poster presentations, images, videos, graphical and/or video abstracts, along with any associated supplementary materials/media
- Belmont student research, grad and undergrad including but not limited to such objects as: preprints, postprints, datasets, poster presentations, images, videos, graphical and/or video abstracts, along with any associated supplementary materials/media
- Belmont academic journals, student and faculty

- Journal front matter (e.g. editorial information, policies)
- Related blog/social media posts or other promotional material
- Articles and/or full issues of Belmont newspapers/newsletters
- Proceedings of conferences held at/sponsored by Belmont
- Media produced by Belmont's marketing team
- Metadata (descriptive, technical, admin) attached to primary objects
- Annotations or comments
- Peer review notes (open or proprietary) and author responses
- Oral histories
- Material omitted from print versions for cost reasons (e.g. additional tables or figures)
- Any other materials not mentioned above that are deemed important and/or relevant to Belmont's history including but not limited to: yearbooks, interviews, academic catalogs, other historical manuscripts, sound recordings, historically significant images

The following is a list of material types followed parenthetically by the preferred and acceptable archival formats [according to the NARA](#); preferred will be bolded, acceptable in plain text). This is a non-exhaustive list of material types which we may add to later.

- Text documents (**PDF/A**, PDF, TXT, XML)
- Presentations (**PDF/A**, PDF)
- Tabled Data (**CSV**, **XML**, TXT)
- Web Records (WARC, ARC)
- Emails (**EML**, **MBOX**, XML, MSG)
- Images (**TIFF**, PNG, DNG, JPEG)
- Video files (MP4, AVI, MOV, MJ2, MJP2, MXF, WMV)
- Audio files (**FLAC**, WAV, MP3)

For end-user access

It is recommended that this section focuses on defining the "Version of Record" of a digital publication and what its constituent parts are. For example, if one defines the Version of Record as including everything essential to understanding and supporting the scholarly argument of a work, then one can better identify what needs to be included in the scope of a preservation policy that keeps that work useful over time.

Example materials to consider for inclusion:

- Institutional collections
- Texts (ebooks, articles, dissertations, etc.)

- Embedded Assets
- Metadata
 - Descriptive
 - Administrative, including Intellectual Rights
 - Technical
- Datasets
- Annotations or comments
- Peer review notes (open or proprietary) and author responses
- Previous versions, e.g. pre-prints
- Material omitted from print versions for cost reasons (e.g. additional tables or figures)
- Journal front matter (e.g. editorial information, policies)
- Related blog/social media posts or other promotional material

Other aspects of a publication may be considered essential for certain enhanced digital publications (particularly in the digital humanities), but require higher-cost solutions (e.g. emulation) that may be prohibitive:

- Look and feel
- Navigation elements (if essential for understanding the relationships among the parts)
- Custom software

What we don't preserve

No preservation steps will be taken for the following:

- Subscription e-resources the library does not own
- Published materials digitized or otherwise made available for reserve
- Published materials digitized for Interlibrary Loan

Anything considered above that has been ruled out, even in selected circumstances, should be described here, preferably with some account of the reasoning behind the decision. Doing so is in the interest of transparency for external users and stakeholders (so they have a clearer idea of what to expect when accessing these resources in the future) and in the interest of clarity for internal stakeholders during their decision-making processes while performing preservation tasks (to remove ambiguity about what is covered under the policy).

Selection Criteria

Because of the prolific nature of the creation of digital objects, and limitations in storage the best representations of each type of file will be kept. Given the breadth and complexity of materials available for acquisition, it is essential

to prioritize the collection materials. The following criteria have been developed to determine priorities.

- Original or unique quality of materials

Those materials that are one-of-a-kind, or would be very difficult to replace. The historical items contributed must have undergone review by someone with expertise relating to those items and/or the University Archivist.

- Materials with high research interest or usefulness

Items that are of prime interest to either the Belmont community, or other constituents such as research communities, will receive a higher preservation priority. Their importance is measured by the institutional memory they hold, and/or their significance in a larger cultural or scholarly context.

- Intellectual works created by the Belmont scholarly community

The scholarship contributed must have undergone at least one process of review by faculty (for student work), by the department, or via publisher, by a peer-review process.

- Copyright cleared

The author/copyright owner must be willing and able to grant Belmont University the non-exclusive right to preserve and distribute the work

- The work must be in a finished form, ready for distribution and in a digital format

Strategies

Monitoring

We will monitor formats (both at the file level and the metadata level) used in the BDR in order to ensure their suitability for long-term preservation. If the library determines one or more file formats need replacing/updating, we will approach the process in a systematic way according to the [Digital Preservation Coalition's Digital Preservation Handbook](#).

Our long-term digital preservation system, Preservica, implements an Active Digital Preservation feature. This feature automatically migrates obsolete or soon-to-be-obsolete formats to newer, readable formats according to policies we create within the system. Older file formats can be kept alongside newer ones.

Storage & Security

BDR materials [primarily showcased in Digital Commons] are backed up to both Digital Commons servers and an Amazon S3 server daily.

Each item and/or folder uploaded to Preservica will have an associated checksum and Audit Trail. Our items/folders managed in Preservica are stored on Amazon S3 servers.

Recovery

Our recovery strategy is built on redundancy and multiple modes of recovery. The aforementioned backups are intended to serve as the basis for restoration of the BDR and Preservica materials in the case of disaster recovery or corruption of data.

Removal

Items will be removed from the Belmont Digital Repository (a) at the direct, written request of the author of those items or (b) upon university directive for legal, ethical, educational, or policy compliance reasons. Items may be removed or temporarily suppressed/restricted if they are found to violate the policy of a third-party vendor. In all cases in which the author does not initiate the removal, they will receive notice of said removal via email. Unless legally required to remove all traces of an item, BDR administrators reserve the right to retain the metadata for removed items in order to preserve the scholarly record.

Principles

This section identifies the broad concepts and functions that guide this digital preservation program and its activities. The foundational principles address the more theoretical or values-based aspects of the program, whereas the operational principles address the functional aspects of the program.

Foundational Principles

- **Ideal:** Our ideal goal is to both document the university's history and to preserve its intellectual output
- **Purpose:** We affirm that the purpose of digital preservation is to maintain long-term access to digital assets over time
- **Clarity:** Digital preservation is not a binary state where digital assets are preserved or not. It is a property of the policies and procedures used to manage digital assets that either increase or diminish their usefulness over time.

- **Leadership:** The library's preservation strategy is ~~mandated and/or~~ supported by the library's mission to "provid[e] stewardship of digital, print, archival, human, and other resources paired with expertise that empowers research, teaching, and interaction with a complex information ecosystem"
- **Strategic Alignment:** The digital preservation program will comply with the university's existing policies, procedures, and/or relevant applicable legislation.

Operating Principles

- **Responsibility:** Digital preservation efforts will be chiefly shouldered by the Digital Strategies Librarian, the University Archivist, and the Systems & Metadata Librarian, with oversight from the University Librarian.
- **Reliable Infrastructure:** Acquiring and maintaining necessary hardware, software, and protocols to ensure long term access is a key component for any digital preservation program. We will prioritize the use of platforms and tools from which preserved objects and all associated metadata can be maintained and also extracted with integrity.
- **Building Capacity:** Building shareable expertise in digital preservation practices, ensuring those responsible for the preservation planning and operations are well trained and knowledgeable in their practice.
- **Adaptability:** Fostering a culture of adaptability as digital preservation technologies evolve
- **Collaboration:** Identifying and partnering with other Belmont departments and other institutions (both within the Belmont family and outside of it) to accomplish objectives that cannot be met with the library's efforts alone.
- **Accessibility** - Bepress (Digital Commons vendor) endeavors to meet all guidelines and standards established by the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) 2.0](#) at level AA conformance, and [Section 508 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act](#). These guidelines define how to make web content more accessible to people with disabilities, and conformance to them improves the web's usability for all people.
 - For a detailed review of how Digital Commons conforms with WCAG 2.0 success criteria, please refer to Bepress's [Voluntary Product Assessment Template \(VPAT\) document](#). This document was produced by the members of the Elsevier and bepress internal accessibility teams.

Roles and Responsibilities

The traditional role of librarians and archivists has included preserving the intellectual record of the research community in analog formats. This role continues as scholarly resources evolve from physical to digital formats. Thus far, the Belmont University Library and Archive and Special Collections has carried the primary responsibility for digital preservation, but digital preservation is a shared responsibility across

the University. All stakeholders with custodial roles for digital content identified for long-term preservation have a responsibility to actively contribute to the intent and priorities necessary to fulfill this policy.

Decisions on what will be preserved are made by the Library's Digital Projects & Scholarly Communication Committee composed of:

- University Librarian
- University Archivist and Gallery Curator
- Digital Strategies Librarian
- Systems & Metadata Librarian
- Scholarly Communication Librarian

Decision-making also takes into consideration the needs and interests of authors, reviewers, and editors who provide the different pieces of content and information that may be needed for preservation.

The Library's Digital Projects & Scholarly Communication Committee is responsible for undertaking digital preservation activities. These may include:

- Collecting or managing material for preservation;
- Promoting and following good practices;
- Actively monitoring technology and workflows;
- Responding to technological obsolescence through migration or other strategies;
- Collaborating with other institutions on possible shared services and activities focused on digital preservation;
- Reviewing this document as needed based on the review cycle.

Framework Administration and Review Cycle

The framework was approved and made effective on June 1, 2022, by the University Librarian.

This document will be reviewed and updated as needed with a full review every three years to align with changes in technology, preservation strategies, and/or expertise. The review process will be initiated by the Library's Digital Projects & Scholarly Communication Committee.

This policy underwent its first review by the Library's Digital Projects & Scholarly Communication Committee in the fall of 2025.

Collaboration

Belmont University has a deep commitment to collaborations, both internal and external to the institution. These partnerships are essential to the advancement of preservation strategies and to make sure the institution is adhering to our mission and current best practices.

Resources

[Digital Preservation Policy Toolkit](#) - Resource developed to assist in the construction of a digital preservation policy

[NARA Records Management: Appendix A](#) – Guidance regarding preferred and acceptable file formats for archiving media

[Belmont Digital Repository Policies](#) - Access, submission, content and use policies of Belmont's IR

[Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) 2.0](#) - December 2008 guidelines for accessibility of web content