

How to Use These Guides#

The results from 'Strategies for Digital Data', a survey on digital data in archaeology carried out in the UK by Archaeology Data Service (Condron et al. 1999, 29-32), and a more recent survey in the US by Digital Antiquity (Watts 2011), show that a wide variety of organisations are both creating and retaining digital data from archaeological projects. While current methods for preservation and access to data vary widely, nearly all of these organisations agree that careful management of digital archaeological resources is an important aspect of the responsible conduct of research. For this reason the Guides to Good Practice are aimed at the following audiences:

In the UK:

- Agencies and bodies commissioning archaeological projects, including national heritage agencies and local authorities;
- Creators of digital archives containing archaeological data. These include commercial contracting and consultancy units, university-based research projects and national and local voluntary groups and societies;
- Curators who will receive digital archives, including museums, National Monuments Records and county or regional Historic Environment Records (HERs) or Sites and Monuments Records (SMRs);
- Voluntary groups and societies.

In the US the following audiences are addressed by these Guides:

- Federal, state, and tribal agencies that manage archaeological resources on the land they administer, e.g., the Bureau of Land Management, Department of Defense services, the Forest Service and the National Park Service;
- Agencies that fund, or require as part of permit applications, archaeological investigations that result in collections and associated records, e.g., the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission;
- State and Tribal Historic Preservation Offices that manage information about archaeological resources within their state or reservation jurisdictions;
- Museum and university researchers who undertake archaeological research and produce digital data as part of their activities;
- Cultural resource management (CRM) firms that carry out archaeological studies under contracts or cooperative agreements with public agencies or private organizations and produce archaeological data as part of their investigations;
- Museums and other repositories of archaeological collections and associated records who are responsible for ensuring the access to and long-term preservation of the collections and associated records.

When to Use These Guides:

- During the planning phase to identify relevant issues and plan appropriately
- Throughout the project as a reference on specific issues
- Ahead of the deposit of materials to a digital archive or repository

Recommendations on How to Use These Guides#

The audiences outlined above can, in the broadest sense, be divided into two main groups: (i) those funding and creating data and (ii) those caring for it after its creation. In many cases both of these roles may be undertaken within the same organisation, either by the same individuals or by separate departments. The following points aim to outline how both groups can best use these guides.

Data Creators and Funders

- Raise Awareness of best practices, standards, and common workflows;
- Provide guidance on:
 - Evaluating and selecting archives;
 - Successful workflow strategies that are conducive to archiving;
 - Appropriate project and workflow documentation.
- Assist in short, mid-term, and long-term planning:
 - Identifying issues not traditionally considered within the context of archiving that are critical to future preservation and use.
- Inform creators about copyright, access and moral obligations that should be considered throughout the process.

Data Retainers

- Raise awareness of best practices, standards, and common workflows;
- Provide guidance on issues and file formats specific to archaeology;
- Ensure access;
- Assist in short, mid-term, and long-term planning;
- Identify issues around copyright, access and moral obligations that should be considered;
- Ensure that digital archive follows the principles related to access and preservation established for trusted digital repositories.?

Pathways Through These Guides#

The Guides to Good Practice have been created in order to allow a degree of flexibility in how they can be used. As outlined in the preceding section, general preservation themes are discussed in the early chapters and are followed by chapters which look at common project lifecycle (i.e. non-technique specific and widely applicable) elements such as file naming, metadata creation and copyright. These lifecycle chapters are then followed by technique and file type-specific chapters and, finally, by chapters dealing with archive structuring and deposit. The Guides are essentially designed so that users can proceed from the introductory material to the specific chapters relevant to their data types and then on to the concluding structuring and depositing chapters. While all chapters have been written with a certain degree of self-containment in mind, users are advised to at least be aware of the wider preservation issues raised in the introductory chapters to these Guides when using the technique or file type focused chapters.

How to Cite These Guides#

The Guides to Good Practice should be considered as a single publication encompassing a number of individually authored chapters. The different chapters can be cited as shown in the following examples:

- Niven, K. J. (2011) 'About these Guidelines', in *Archaeology Data Service / Digital Antiquity Guides to Good Practice*. Archaeology Data Service, University of York, UK. <http://guides.archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/g2gp/GuideAim>
- Payne, A. (2011) 'Laser Scanning for Archaeology: A Guide to Good Practice', in *Archaeology Data Service / Digital Antiquity Guides to Good Practice*. Archaeology Data Service, University of York, UK. http://guides.archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/g2gp/LaserScan_Toc

Terms and Spelling Used in These Guides#

Authors of the different chapters of the Guides hail from both the United Kingdom and the United States. Conventions of spelling and terminology used in different chapters within the Guides may vary and, as a rule, are those of the author or lead author. Extra explanatory text is provided in the relevant glossary sections when specific terminology is used or may need to be made clear.

'How to Use These Guides'. Edited by Kieron Niven
Archaeology Data Service / Digital Antiquity (2011) *Guides to Good Practice*