









BT Group Archives

Collections Management Guidance



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BT Group



	Contents	Page
1	Introduction	4
1.1	BT Group Purpose	4
1.2	BT Group Archives' Mission statement	4
1.3	About this Guidance	4
1.4	About BT Group Archives	5
1.5	Legal and statutory status	5
1.6	Standards	6
1.7	Contact details	6
2	Collections Development	7
2.1	Guiding principles	7
2.2	Formats accepted	7
2.3	Methods of collections development	8
2.4	Terms and conditions of acquisition	8
2.5	Reappraisal, deaccessioning and disposal	8
3	Collections Information	9
3.1	Guiding principles	9
3.2	Standards	9
3.3	Accessioning and cataloguing	10
4	Collections Care and Preservation	13
4.1	Guiding principles	13
4.2	Standards	13
4.3	Archive storage	13
4.4	Packaging	14
4.5	Handling	14
4.6	Conservation	14

4.7	Loans	14
4.8	Creation of surrogates	14
4.9	Emergency planning	15
4.10	Collections Security	15
4.11	Auditing and benchmarking	16
5	Digital Preservation	17
5.1	Guiding principles	17
5.2	Why is digital preservation important to BT Group Archives?	17
5.3	Content covered by this Digital Preservation Guidance	18
5.4	Standards and models	19
6	Access	20
6.1	Guiding principles	20
6.2	Legislation and Standards	20
6.3	Access to records and closure periods	21
6.4	Copying and reuse	21
6.5	On-site access	21
6.6	Remote Access	22
6.7	Online access	22
6.8	Measuring Success	22
7	Appendix A: Collection Guidelines	23
8	Appendix B: Post-1984 access request	24

1 Introduction

1.1 BT Group Purpose

BT Group’s purpose is We Connect for Good.

BT Group’s behaviours are Customer First, Challengers, Committed, Clear, and Connected. .

Our 2030 ambition is to be world’s most trusted connector of people, business and society.

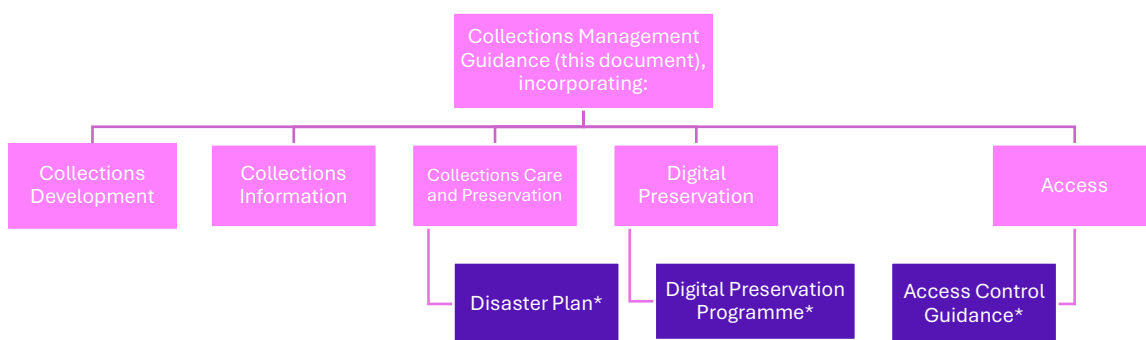
1.2 BT Group Archives’ Purpose

We help protect and celebrate BT Group. We build our Archive collection, preserve it, create impact from it, and support the Group’s purpose to ‘connect for good’.

1.3 About this Guidance

The Collections Management Guidance sets out the principles by which BT Group Archives acquires, accessions, manages, preserves, and provides access to its archive collections. A review of the Guidance will be completed every five years and approved by the Senior Archives Manager. Reviews can be carried out before this time if needed.

Previously we have produced separate Collections Management policies and Access policies; these documents have now been combined and renamed as Guidance so that it can be situated within BT Group’s broader Policy Framework.



* outside of this document

1.4 About BT Group Archives

BT Group is the world's oldest communications company with a history stretching from the foundation of the Electric Telegraph Company in 1846.

BT Group Archives, established in 1986, preserves the records of BT Group and its predecessors and promotes access to the records and their content internally as a corporate resource, and externally to national and international communities.

BT Group Archives is appointed by the Secretary of State as a Place of Deposit for Public Records, for those records created prior to BT's privatisation in 1984. The preservation and promotion of the historical records within BT Group Archives:

- provides a source of knowledge about past actions and decisions, which can inform decision making in the future
- fulfils BT Group's obligations under the Public Records Act 1958, as amended 1967
- supports BT Group in compliance with the Freedom of Information (FoI) Act 2000
- provides legal evidence
- demonstrates accountability
- substantiates claims of quality and performance
- advances the study of the history and impact of telecommunications by providing a basis for historical research

1.5 Legal and statutory status

Organisation within BT Group

BT Group Archives (as a team and an organisational unit) is the heritage and archives function for BT Group plc, and is part of Corporate Affairs (a Group Function).

BT Group Archives manages the archival repository within BT Group which preserves the company's documentary heritage. This includes records of archival value created after privatisation in August 1984, as well as the records of our predecessors, which are Public Records, and which BT Group plc holds on behalf of The National Archives as a Place of Deposit.

BT Group plc is the listed holding company for the BT group of companies which provides communications services solutions, serving customers in more than 170 countries. BT Group plc is listed on the London Stock Exchange.

BT Group plc is the successor organisation to the British Post Office Telecommunications function and to the preceding private telegraph and telephone companies which were taken over by the Post Office during the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Public Records Act, 1958 and 1967

The Public Records Act makes provision for the Public Record Office (now part of The National Archives) and sets up arrangements for the selection and transfer of public records to The National Archives or a place of deposit.

BT Group Archives has been appointed a Place of Deposit under s4(1) of the Public Records Act for the following public records:

- British Telecom Archive 1981-1984
- Post Office records relating to telecommunications 1837-1981

- Post Office Telecommunications and BT Photographic, Film and Sound Libraries, 19th century- 1984
- Post Office and BT Telephone Directories 1879- 1984
- Post Office Telecommunications and BT Research Reports 1878- 1984

A Place of Deposit is required to make available for inspection Public Records in its care (in BT's case, those that pre-date BT's privatisation in 1984) that are over 20 years old (as amended by the Freedom of Information Act).

1.6 Standards

We aim to meet the following standards relating to the management of archive collections:

- BS 4971:2017 – Conservation and care of archive and library collections
- BS EN 168903:2018 – Conservation of Cultural Heritage. Specifications for the location, construction and modification of buildings or rooms intended for the storage or use of heritage collections
- International Standard of Archival Description General [ISAD(G)]
- OAIS (Open Archival Information Systems) Reference Model; this is a standardised model (ISO 14721:2012)
- Archive Service Accreditation¹

1.7 Contact details

BT Group Archives address is:

BT Group Archives
Holborn Telephone Exchange
268-270 High Holborn
London
WC1V 7EE

For further information please contact BT Group Archives via archives@bt.com.

¹ [Archive Service Accreditation - Archives sector](#)

2 Collections Development Guidance

2.1 Guiding principles

BT Group Archives will acquire and preserve material which reflects the development and operations of British Telecommunications plc, its predecessors and subsidiaries both in the UK and overseas, from the formation of the Electric Telegraph Company in 1846, BT Group's earliest direct predecessor, to the present day. Our major collections comprise:

- historical phone books (1880-2024)
- records for the telecommunications function of the Post Office and its predecessors
- private telegraph company records
- BT Group collection (1984-)
- visual materials collection (photographs, video and film of BT Group and Post Office telecommunications)
- historical communications library (journals, periodicals, books, publications and reports)

BT Group Archives does not normally accept records of other telecommunications companies from which BT Group cannot claim descent or ownership, nor those of international or professional bodies of which BT Group may be a member e.g. International Telecommunications Union, Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation etc.

BT Group Archives does not seek to compete for records with other repositories, and seeks to avoid competition, conflict and duplication of effort with external repositories. It works closely with other repositories with related collections, for example, The Postal Museum, and our museum contacts.

BT Group Archives uses functional analysis of the business at different points in its history to identify gaps in holdings and priority collecting themes. A broad overview of collecting areas can be found in [Appendix A](#).

2.2 Formats accepted

Material offered to BT Group Archives will be considered on its archival information value rather than its format or medium. Records are accepted in most formats, including, but not exclusively, manuscript, typescript, printed, machine readable, electronic, photographic, microform, artwork and film. The only condition on format is our 'duty of care', that is BT Group Archives may not accept:

- material which requires immediate costly work in order for it to be preserved or accessible, unless resource can be secured for its transfer and preservation
- material which, through its unstable nature, might create a risk to the collections overall.

BT Group Archives have sometimes accepted artefacts/objects that have added to the body of knowledge, and our understanding, of BT Group's corporate history. The acquisition of objects and artefacts is not a primary aim of BT Group Archives and we reserve the right to decline offers of objects and artefacts. We are unable to accept telecoms equipment, but if significant will try to broker a deposit arrangement with a museum contact.

BT Group Archives will sometimes accept published sources for its reference library and information files to support the archival collection. The acquisition of published material is not a primary aim of BT Group Archives and the reference library does not set out to be a comprehensive library on the history of telecommunications.

2.3 Methods of collections development

BT Group Archives acquires material through the following channels:

- Regular transfers directly from core BT Group lines of business
- Regular transfers through BT Group records management activities, in alignment with the BT Group Data Retention Standard and the BT Group Data Retention Schedule(s)
- Ad hoc transfers from within BT Group e.g. when an Exchange or office sites close
- Occasional transfers from The Postal Museum under the terms of the Public Records Act 1958 and 1967
- Transfers of items from partner museums
- Donations from BT Group people
- Donations from members of the public
- Purchase from online auction sites, or the antiquarian trade
- Oral history interviews conducted by BT Group Archives staff

2.4 Terms and conditions of acquisition

BT Group Archives will acquire material by internal transfer, statutory deposit, gift, or purchase.

All material must come from a bone fide source and have a demonstrable provenance. Depositors must have the authority to transfer the material and are required to sign a gift agreement.

All donations will be confirmed in writing by a deposit agreement signed by both parties.

On transferring material to the Archives, copyright will be assigned to BT Group Archives (when the depositor is free to transfer it) unless stated otherwise.

For acquisitions from external sources, it is a condition of acceptance that material will be available for public access either immediately or at the expiry of a specified period.

All acquisitions will be by prior agreement. BT Group Archives reserves the right to refuse ad hoc transfers whatever the source.

2.5 Reappraisal, deaccessioning and disposal

Archive materials and objects formally accepted into the BT Group Archives collection are intended for permanent preservation. However, we may reappraise our collections as needed (particularly those that were accepted into our collection prior to a formal collection policy) and to deaccession and dispose of as necessary, honouring terms of deposit for each collection and following archive good practice and professional principles. Reappraisal will be carried out using the guidance from [The National Archives](#) and conducted by qualified archivists.

A record is retained of destructions, including rationale and, where appropriate, authority obtained.

All confidential destruction is carried out on site by BT Group Archives staff or by BT Group Security approved contractors.

3 Collections Information Guidance

3.1 Guiding principles

Collections Information is the ‘information an organisation collects, creates, holds and maintains about its collections and/or collected items’ (Archive Service Accreditation Standard)².

Good collections information is vital to the work of the BT Group Archives team and the service we can provide to the Group and to external stakeholders. Good collections information ensures:

- We have intellectual control over the records (i.e. we know what we have and where each record is kept) – we can quickly respond to internal enquiries from colleagues as we have this intellectual control and can easily locate records of use to the Group
- We can document the provenance, custody and ownership of records – this is important in demonstrating the trustworthiness and integrity of the Archive collection
- We know where individual records are stored and can physically retrieve them quickly
- We can document the condition of records, both those which are historic and exist physically, and those which are digital records, and the conservation and preservation requirements of those records to ensure they remain accessible to the Group
- Present descriptions of records, and where available digital versions of records, via a website, fulfilling one of our obligations to provide access to the records in the Archive collection which are classed as public records.

3.2 Standards

BT Group Archives recognises that good documentation of its collections is fundamental to collections management and sustained access.

BT Group Archives will gather, preserve and share information about its collections through accessioning and cataloguing.

We aim to meet common international cataloguing standards for each format:

- Archival material will be catalogued with due regard for archive professional standards, namely International Council on Archives General International Standard of Archival Description, ISAD(G), second edition 1999; National Council on Archives Rules for the Construction of Personal, Place and Corporate Names (NCA Rules), 1997; International Council on Archives International Standard Archival Authority Record for Corporate Bodies, Persons and Families, ISAAR(CPF), second edition, 2004

² [Archive Service Accreditation Guidance 2022](#), page 36.

- Artefacts will be catalogued with due regard for SPECTRUM 5.0, The UK Museum Collections Management Standard, 2017
- Audio visual collection items are catalogued using the FIAF Moving Image Cataloguing Manual and the IASA Cataloguing Rules where appropriate.

For born digital archives, BT Group Archives recognises the need for, and will seek to acquire or create, additional technical and preservation metadata required for the purpose of long-term preservation and access.

BT Group Archives maintains physical control of its collections via its CMS (Collection Management System) locations database and clear labelling of packaging and/or material.

A procedural manual is available to staff and volunteers for their collections information work.

3.3 Accessioning and cataloguing

Accessions

All new acquisitions are recorded in our CMS (Collection Management System) accession database. Each accession record will give a preliminary indication of the scope, content and creation dates of the records, record their legal status and any restrictions on access, date of accession, and shelf location.

Information relating to the source of the material is retained in the Depositors database.

The unique number assigned to each accession will subsequently be linked to the catalogue record in our CMS. The full detail of the accession, including the donor's contact details, will not be made available to the public. Donors and/or record creators are encouraged to supply as much information as they can about the content and context of the material.

All gifts or permanent transfers are acknowledged in writing (email or letter) and include full details of the material and terms of deposit. A form is issued for all external deposits, requiring the countersignature of the donor.

We do not attempt to keep detailed information on accessioning or disposal of duplicates, material produced by other institutions, or published books. This enables us to tackle our cataloguing backlog more quickly.

Cataloguing

Archive records, books, and other published material are catalogued in the Archive catalogue database of our CMS.

A pragmatic user-focused and priorities-led approach to archive cataloguing is taken, to enable us to catalogue material more quickly. We also focus on formats which are vulnerable or obsolete.

Records will be catalogued as resources allow and prioritisation demands.

Cataloguing priorities (ranked order)

- The business value/impact of cataloguing the collection

- Any material that hasn't been captured in our CMS (either as accessions or catalogue records) and isn't properly stored
- Material that is already well described and could be made available easily
- The time taken to complete cataloguing
- The demand for the collection or theme [e.g. data from our user surveys may support this, or academic partnerships may help shape what our partners catalogue on our behalf]

Approach to prioritisation

Prioritisation will be renewed annually by the BT Group Archives team, taking into account any changes to BT Group strategy, or Archives strategy, and any wider sectoral changes.

The BT Group Archives team keeps watch over sectoral developments that relate to collections information, such as ICA's Records in Context (RiC) to understand developments and what they might mean for us. The RIC model allows for complex relationships and structures between entities, and should help us shape our future cataloguing, incorporating elements from ISAD(G), ISAAR(CPF) and other standards.

Safe custody

Semi-current transfers of physical records from within BT Group made under a Safe Custody agreement are recorded in a dedicated, secure database. A unique identifier is assigned and sent to the records owner. Records subsequently selected for permanent preservation are accessioned and catalogued in our CMS. Initial appraisal is undertaken at the point of accession. More detailed appraisal may occur during the cataloguing process and destructions noted in the accession record (carried out as per deposit agreement or transfer arrangements).

4 Collections Care and Preservation Guidance

4.1 Guiding principles

BT Group Archives takes a strategic, risk management approach to collections care.

Appropriate measures for storage and packaging, creation, care and use of surrogates, and handling training will be adhered to.

BT Group's current records are now primarily created and managed in digital form. BT Group Archives is addressing these challenges and we have a digital repository with digital preservation capabilities to professional best practice and standards.

Collections care is the responsibility of all staff and users.

This Collections Care and Preservation section covers the approach to physical collections; digital preservation strategic principles and activities are defined in the [Digital Preservation guidance](#).

4.2 Standards

BT Group Archives aims to care for its physical collections in according with the professional standards BS4971:2017 (Conservation and care of archive and library collections), and BS EN 168903:2018 (Conservation of Cultural Heritage).

We aspire to the 'good' level of practice as set out in Benchmarks 3.0 (Conservation Planning for Archives, Libraries, & Museums).

We are a member of the National Conservation Service (NCS) and work with them to ensure our strongroom can meet these standards.

4.3 Archive storage

The physical Archive collection is stored in a strongroom on the third floor of Holborn Telephone Exchange.

Environmental conditions are monitored through five environmental monitors located throughout the strongroom (three are local monitors, two are part of the NCS monitoring scheme).

We undertake pest monitoring (also part of the NCS monitoring scheme) and will take necessary steps to deal with pests.

New acquisitions are inspected for pests and mould, and other signs of deterioration, and are quarantined/isolated if necessary.

4.4 Packaging

Archive collections are repackaged into suitable archival quality boxes and/or archival standard polyester sleeves/pockets as appropriate. Other archival supplies (ties, tape) are archival standard.

4.5 Handling

Staff and volunteers working with Archives are trained in good handling techniques.

Researchers are given handling guidelines and offered help and advice during their appointment.

Staff, volunteers and researchers have access to weights, cushions and nitrile gloves if required.

Researchers can take digital photographs of collection items; they are required to sign a declaration that the images are for private research use only. Copying of archival material using a flat bed scanner is only undertaken by BT Group Archives staff or volunteers, with appropriate training, after an assessment of the material.

Access to original items is generally not provided if a surrogate (digital, microfilm/microfiche) is available.

4.6 Conservation

BT Group Archives undertakes a rolling conservation programme to identify material that is in need of conservation work and to prioritise requirements within the framework of resources available.

BT Group Archives commissions qualified and/or accredited conservators to carry out assessments and treatments, using information from sources such as the Institute of Conservation (Icon) Conservation Register. We have access to professionally qualified conservators as part of our membership of NCS.

Any conservation treatments carried out are documented.

4.7 Loans

BT Group Archives will only loan original material (at the discretion of the Head of BT Group Archives) on condition that the loan party will comply with BS 4971:2017 Conservation and care of archive and library collections. The exception to this is short-term loans for internal events, but in this situation a member of the Archives team must transport material and be present at all times.

Loans for conservation treatment, digitisation, or exhibition are managed by a via spreadsheet/CMS, and forms agreed with the contractor.

We do not offer any heritage material as gifts to individuals at any level of the organisation or elsewhere. We will work with internal colleagues to source duplicates or offer facsimiles as appropriate.

4.8 Creation of surrogates

There are a few reasons when we would create surrogate copies of archive records:

- For preservation: to continue to provide access to at-risk collection items, whether because of condition or because of technical or format obsolescence
- To support the Group: for use in promotional activities or to support Group external or internal communications
- For increased access: to lessen the handling of original items and provide greater remote access through partnership projects – an example is the digitisation of the Phone Book collection through Ancestry

We are unable to offer a digitisation on demand service for researchers.

Original records are retained after a surrogate is created. This may be revisited in the future as more formats become technologically obsolete.

4.9 Emergency planning

BT Group Archives maintains an up-to-date Disaster Plan and makes it available to all relevant BT and CBRE people (Facilities Management contractors).

All BT Group Archives staff are trained in disaster response.

BT Group Archives also have Business Continuity Planning as part of wider Corporate Affairs Business Continuity Management Manual which is reviewed annually.

4.10 Collections Security

BT Group Archives is housed on the 3rd floor of Holborn Telephone Exchange.

Access to Holborn Telephone Exchange is through pass card access, which is monitored by BT Security.

Access to the 3rd floor is restricted to BT Group Archives colleagues, and members of CBRE (Facilities Management) that require access for facilities and maintenance requirements, specific to BT Group Archives. Access is controlled by pass card access. Access to the 3rd floor is only given/approved by BT Group Archives staff.

The Archive collection is stored in the strongroom. Access to the strongroom is by additional key access (controlled by BT Group Archives staff) and entry code; access to the strongroom is restricted to BT Group Archives staff only. Contractors requiring access to the strongroom are supervised.

Holborn Telephone Exchange, including the third floor public search room, is monitored by CCTV camera.

All visitors without pass card access (BT Group colleagues, as well as external visitors) are required to sign into the Archives using the signing-in book; this also acts as a fire register.

In order to safeguard our collections, all visitors to the search room are required to show photographic identification, complete an Access to BT Group Archives form and abide by the regulations and guidance on display in the search room. Any visitors consulting post-privatisation records (those that post-date 6 August 1984) will need to complete a separate access form and abide by additional rules ([Appendix B](#)).

Lockers are provided for visitors to store personal belongings, and to ensure that bags and coats are not taken into the search room (or strongroom, in the case of providing colleague tours).

Access to BT Group Archives systems, applications, and network spaces is covered in a separate Access Control Guidance (*in development*).

4.11 Auditing and benchmarking

BT Group Archives completes an annual self-assessment, using Benchmarks 3.0 (Conservation Planning for Archives, Libraries, & Museums), which will inform our collections conservation and care planning.

5 Digital Preservation Guidance

5.1 Guiding principles

‘Digital Preservation’ refers to a series of managed activities to ensure continued access to digital records³ for as long as they are required. It encompasses all the actions required to maintain access to digital records beyond the limits of technical failure or obsolescence, or organisational change.⁴

Digital records rely on software and hardware to be able to read them and to be able to migrate them to other formats if necessary. However, they are at risk of loss due to technical obsolescence (of hardware and/or software), media degradation or failure, manmade or natural disaster, human error, or malicious damage.

As well as ensuring digital records remain accessible, digital preservation is also concerned with ensuring the authenticity of digital records (that they are reliable, accurate, and trustworthy; that they haven’t been modified accidentally or on purpose).

Digital preservation needs to be proactive. It is more than just a storage solution and also requires broader organisational capabilities (policy, strategy, governance, collaboration) and service capabilities (procedures around acquisition, transfer and ingest, processes to preserve content and the bitstream, metadata processes and standards, and access procedures).

5.2 Why is digital preservation important to BT Group Archives?

The risks of doing nothing to secure the long-term preservation of, and access to, digital records are:

- That records may be irretrievably lost if they are not accounted for, or accessioned into BT Group Archives. They may be lost through lack of capture, through hardware or software obsolescence, or through the degradation of the physical carrier (if the record is held on physical media such as DVD, CD, usb drive)
- That we will be underprepared when record creators wish to deposit digital records for long-term preservation, instead of analogue equivalents.

These would undermine:

- our objectives of supporting business continuity
- our ability to provide legal evidence and accountability (which has reputational risk)

³ For the purposes of this Standard, which is focused initially on BT Group Archives records, ‘digital records’ includes, but is not limited to, digital images, digital video and audio, data in databases, MS Office documents, website content.

⁴ [What is digital preservation? - Digital Preservation Coalition \(dpconline.org\)](https://www.dpconline.org/)

- our ability to provide a source of knowledge about past actions and decisions, which can inform decision making in the future.

Records created up to the date of BT's privatisation in 1984 are public records under the Public Records Acts (1958 and 1967). BT Group Archives has been appointed to be the custodian of these on behalf of the UK National Archives. As a custodian under the Public Records Act, BT Group Archives needs to demonstrate that we are implementing digital preservation and managing the risks to digital records. Losing our Place of Deposit status would mean the loss of our 1846-1984 heritage assets (control would be taken by The National Archives) which would have both a reputational and operational impact.

5.3 Content covered by this Digital Preservation Guidance

This Digital Preservation Guidance applies to all BT Group Archives digital collection material held for the purposes of long-term preservation and access, as well as any preservation metadata associated with digital collection material. It includes:

- Digital records, both born digital and those made-digital (those created on a physical medium, but then digitised), acquired for BT Group Archives collections and owned by BT Group. These can include records transferred from other business units (through records management procedures), records from members of the public and BT staff (past and present), purchases made via auction, and any digital outputs of BT Group Archives projects (for example, oral history recordings)
- Made-digital (digitised) public records (those records created prior to BT's privatisation in 1984⁵) which BT Group Archives has been appointed to be custodian of under Section 4 (1) of the Public Records Act (1958) on behalf of the UK National Archives.

All digital records will be assessed and appraised under the same conditions as any other records offered to, or proactively collected by, BT Group Archives:

- Our [Collection Guidelines](#) outlines the record categories we are interested in acquiring for Our Archives
- Appraisal and selection procedures will align to the [Collection Development principles](#)

This Digital Preservation Guidance applies to both born digital and made-digital records. However we recognise that the focus should be on protecting authentic copies of born-digital records and those made-digital records whose original carrier format is obsolete⁶. The rationale is that born-digital records are prone to loss without active digital preservation.

⁵ BT Group Archives is appointed as a Place of Deposit for public records created prior to BT's privatisation in 1984.

⁶ For example, audio and video recorded on analogue magnetic media.

5.4 Standards and models

Standards play an important role in digital preservation – they provide clear benchmarks for best practice, and facilitate the access and discovery, as well as the long-term preservation, of digital records. To support digital preservation BT Group Archives aims to comply with the following standards and models:

Digital preservation models

- The OAIS (Open Archival Information Systems) Reference Model. This is a standardised model (ISO 14721:2012) that describes a way that archives intended for long-term preservation (analogue and/or digital) can be managed. It has six high-level services (or ‘functional entities’) which define the actions required to run an OAIS environment: ingest, archival storage, data management, preservation planning, access, and administration⁷.

Metadata

- ISAD(G)⁸ for descriptive metadata about our archive collections
- PREMIS Data Dictionary for Preservation Metadata

Benchmarking

- We will regularly use tools and benchmark models (such as the NDSA Levels of Digital Preservation, and DPC RAM), to assess and review our digital preservation readiness and progress, and to provide priorities for our development in digital preservation.
- We have a responsibility to meet the requirements of the National Archives Archive Accreditation Standard. This standard defines good practice in all aspects of collections management and access. As part of this standard we need to demonstrate that digital preservation is vital and part of our remit, that we are working towards implementing digital preservation at policy strategy and procedural levels, and that we are managing the risks to digital material that we have already acquired⁹.

⁷ OAIS is an ISO standard, reference ISO 14721 ([ISO - ISO 14721:2012 - Space data and information transfer systems — Open archival information system \(OAIS\) — Reference model](#))

⁸ General International Standard Archival Description ([ISAD\(G\): General International Standard Archival Description - Second edition | International Council on Archives \(ica.org\)](#))

⁹ [Getting Started with Archive Service Accreditation \(nationalarchives.gov.uk\)](#), section 3.4, page 12-13

6 Access Guidance

6.1 Guiding principles

BT Group Archives preserves the records of BT Group and its predecessors and promotes access to the records and their content, internally as a corporate resource and externally to national and international communities. BT Group Archives serves multiple communities:

- BT Group people (staff, contractors and pensioners)
- General public
- Educators and students
- Subject enthusiasts
- Heritage specialists

BT Group Archives aims to meet the needs of each group as far as current resources allow. We recognise that there are many overlaps between the different communities, often to the advantage of our access objectives.

BT Group Archives' Access Guidance is developed to balance the principles of access, confidentiality, and collection care. This is to ensure compliance with legislation and archival standards, and to guarantee the existence of materials for future researchers.

This guidance outlines our approach to public access. BT Group Archives also provides a comprehensive research and access service to people across BT Group.

6.2 Legislation and Standards

BT Group Archives aims to identify and comply with relevant legislation and ethical codes in relation to access to archives, including:

- Public Records Acts 1958 as amended
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Companies Act 2006 and predecessors

BT Group Archives aims to meet the Archive Service Accreditation standard for access to its archive collection¹⁰.

BT Group Archives is committed to providing excellent customer care to all our communities. All our staff have access to BT Group's customer service training and resources.

¹⁰ [Archive Service Accreditation Standard](#)

6.3 Access to records and closure periods

In all cases, access to Records in the BT Group Archives will be provided in accordance with applicable data laws and regulations and as follows:

- **Pre-Privatisation Records** – BT Group Archives includes material of BT and its predecessors up to 6 August 1984 (the date on which BT became a private company). Such Records are legally defined as Public Records, and BT is legally obligated to make them available to the public. BT Group Archives will make Public Records available free of charge in its Search Room (defined opening hours; appointment required) and online for its digitised content.
- **Post-Privatisation Records** – Public access to documents that are not public records (i.e. those created after 6 August 1984) and that are more than 30 years old may be permitted at the discretion of the Head of BT Group Archive, with reference to other areas of the business as appropriate. Such access will only be granted for the purposes of historical research after formal application in writing, stating the purpose of the research. An access form¹¹, which lays out the conditions of access, must be completed in advance of the Head of BT Group Archives granting access.

6.4 Copying and reuse

Users are able to make copies of open records within the guidelines of BT Group Archives photography and reproduction information.

Any copies that are made of in-copyright material in the BT Group Archives (whether digital image copies or any other form of copying) must be used only for the personal study of the researcher. They may not be published, circulated or reproduced in any way unless permission has been granted by BT Group Archives.

6.5 On-site access

BT Group Archives welcomes external parties to undertake research using the archive collections in its dedicated search room.

Details of our location, services and facilities are published on our webpage www.bt.com/archives. We will provide adequate notice of planned closures directly to researchers.

The search room provides an appropriate and comfortable environment for access to archival material.

The search room is open to everyone although visitors under 18 years old must be accompanied by an adult. As our archive is housed in a 1920s telephone exchange, accessibility is limited – please contact us to discuss arrangements. We can host visitors at a more suitable alternative space if needed.

BT Group Archives provides facilities to access material in the search room, including:

- Microfilm and microfiche readers
- Viewing facilities for digital surrogates
- Dedicated space to consult maps, patents and other outsize documents

¹¹ See [Appendix B](#) 'Application for access to BT Group Archives records dating later than 6 August 1984'

In order to safeguard our collections, all visitors to the search room are required to show photographic identification, complete an Access to BT Group Archive form and abide by the regulations and guidance on display in the search room. Any visitors consulting post-privatisation records will need to complete a separate access form and abide by additional rules ([Appendix B](#)).

Users must handle the archive material in a sensitive and careful manner. They must take care to retain the archives in the order in which they are found. Under no circumstances may any archive material be removed by a researcher from BT Group Archives.

Users can photograph records themselves using their own cameras.

Documents will not usually be made available to external researchers prior to the completion of cataloguing.

Where documents are deemed unfit for production, they will be temporarily withdrawn while remedial conservation action is sought.

6.6 Remote Access

BT Group Archives recognises that not all current and potential users can come to our search room.

Trained archive staff will provide free information on our holdings by email and post.

BT Group Archives will undertake straightforward enquiries including identification of potential sources within the collections, but does not carry out research on behalf of external parties.

Enquiries will be answered in accordance with the Public Records Acts and Data Protection legislation.

BT Group Archives does not have the resources to provide a paid research service, but will refer researchers to published lists of Independent Researchers e.g. on The National Archives website.

6.7 Online access

BT Group Archives is committed to making as much information about collections as possible freely available online.

- Summary collections information and subject information sheets are available on our website www.bt.com/archives
- Our archive catalogue can be accessed online via <https://www.digitalarchives.bt.com/CalmView>, where remote users can also view and download digitised photographs and documents from our collections
- A selection of our film titles are available to watch at <https://btarchives.access.preservica.com/>
- BT phone books (1880-1984) can be searched on Ancestry (<https://www.ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/1025/>)

6.8 Measuring Success

BT Group Archives monitors website traffic (page views, visits and catalogue searches where possible). We record visitor and enquiry figures.

7 Appendix A: Collection Guidelines

Record categories required for long-term retention

BT Group Archives protects, preserves and promotes BT Group's heritage. We need to ensure that the BT story of business success, innovation and connection is kept up to date, by continuing to identify and transfer relevant records to our 'corporate memory'. This information resource is actively exploited to support the business and many years into the future will be made available to researchers and historians, where appropriate.

The following breakdown gives a sense of the records we are interested in, but it's not an exhaustive list.

Archives@bt.com will be able to offer advice on specific records.

- **Governance**
 - Boards and decision-making bodies
 - Annual reporting and other high-level reporting
 - Key acquisitions and disposals
 - Shareholding and subsidiaries
 - Relations with government, regulators, stakeholders or shareholders
- **Central functions** – including major projects or programmes and significant events (e.g. Olympics, Coronavirus (Covid-19) response), defence, security, social, community and environmental programmes, buildings and property.
- **Legal** – including major contracts, patents etc.
- **Specifications, procedures, rules and policies**
- **International, national and local service and operations** – major services and high-level detail about operations.
- **Finance** – including high-level accounting and financial planning.
- **Staffing and employment** – including recruitment strategy, key training material, standards and policies...
- **Networks** – including network planning and significant developments.
- **Research and development** – including records relating to significant innovations, research reports, business strategy and planning, digital developments.
- **Procurement and supply chain** – including major contracts, and planning/strategy.
- **Communications, publicity and marketing** – including media relations, sponsorship, key advertising and publicity campaigns, information on products and services and manuals/installation guides, major rebrands, brand guidelines.

8 Appendix B: Post-1984 access request

Application for access to BT Group Archives records dating later than 6 August 1984

BT Group Archives supports the use of its archive collection in accordance with its Access Policy and any appropriate data protection, privacy law or other regulation.

On 6 August 1984 the Public Corporation British Telecommunications was replaced by the Private Limited Company British Telecommunications plc. Post-privatisation material (that is, material dated later than 6 August 1984) is a private collection and all public access is at the discretion of BT Group Archives. Access will be granted for the purposes of historical research only. Researchers must outline their research interest.

By signing this form, I undertake:

1. To outline in writing below the reasons for access and provide an outline of my research.
2. Not to make notes about, or subsequently to disclose to anyone, any information relating to any business outside that of my enquiry.
3. To append to this form (in advance of any visit) a list of records I am requesting and to update this with any further requests as they arise.
4. To provide proof of identity on my first visit.
5. To abide by BT Group Archives Access Policy and [Search room rules](#).
6. Prior to publication, reproduction or circulation of my work, to obtain express written permission of BT Group Archives by sending to BT Group Archives any part of my work which is based upon material in BT Group Archives in good time before the intended publication, reproduction or circulation.
7. To ensure that I include any acknowledgements required by BT Group Archives.
8. That BT Group Archives is advised of the date and intended publication.
9. To ensure that the results of my research are presented to protect the identity of BT's customers and staff, and that of any other individuals.
10. To ensure that my research is not malicious or intended to cause distress to any group or individual.
11. To complete a new Application for access form if I have not visited BT Group Archives in the previous 12 months, or if my request for access relates to a different research project.

YOUR DETAILS:

Name:	
Address:	
Telephone:	Email:
Please state if you have any access requirements:	
Signature:	Date:

YOUR RESEARCH:

Please provide a brief description of your research topic:
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Your data will be processed in line with our privacy notice, for more information please visit <https://www.bt.com/privacy-policy/>.

Find out more at [bt.com](https://www.bt.com)

BT Group

