Should an Existing Digital Object be Preserved?  
A Decision Tree for Cultural Heritage Institutions

Start

Does the institutional mandate or policy require preservation of the object?

Yes

Does the institution have a legal obligation to preserve the object?

Yes

If the resource is a digital copy, is there difficulty accessing the original?

No

Does the long-term value of the resource justify digital preservation?

Yes

Consider Reasons to Preserve

Existing Policy

Legal Obligations

Access to Original

Long-term Value

Do not preserve

No justifiable grounds to preserve.

Consider Limiting Factors

Finances

Preservation Metadata

Copyright

Technical Feasibility (Digital Formats & Physical Carriers)

Preserve in Light of Limiting Factors

Limited Preservation

Preserve Resource

Limited Preservation

Limitations pose barrier to long-term preservation

Are Limiting Factors a barrier to long-term preservation?

No

Yes

Limitations pose no barrier to long-term preservation

Limitations pose barrier to long-term preservation

Is there sufficient budget to preserve this resource in the long term?

Yes

No

Is there sufficient digital preservation metadata be obtained?

Yes

No

Can rights be obtained to migrate the resource to digital & physical preservation formats?

Yes

No

Can sufficient digital preservation metadata be obtained?

Yes

No

The degree to which digital preservation metadata is lacking may limit the ability to preserve.

Under the Copyright Modernisation Act, Technical Protection Measures on commercially produced digital resources limit an institution’s right to migrate these objects to preservation formats.

No

Yes

Limitation Identified

Limitation Identified

Limitation Identified

Limitation Identified

Canadian Heritage Information Network – Department of Canadian Heritage