UK Parliament

From parchment to podcasts:
developing digital preservation services at three UK national bodies

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A Tale of Four Repositories

- Repositories past, present and future

- Getting started – first steps

- Key lessons

The set of actions required to maintain digital information in an accessible and authentic form, for as long as required for business purposes and across changing technical environments
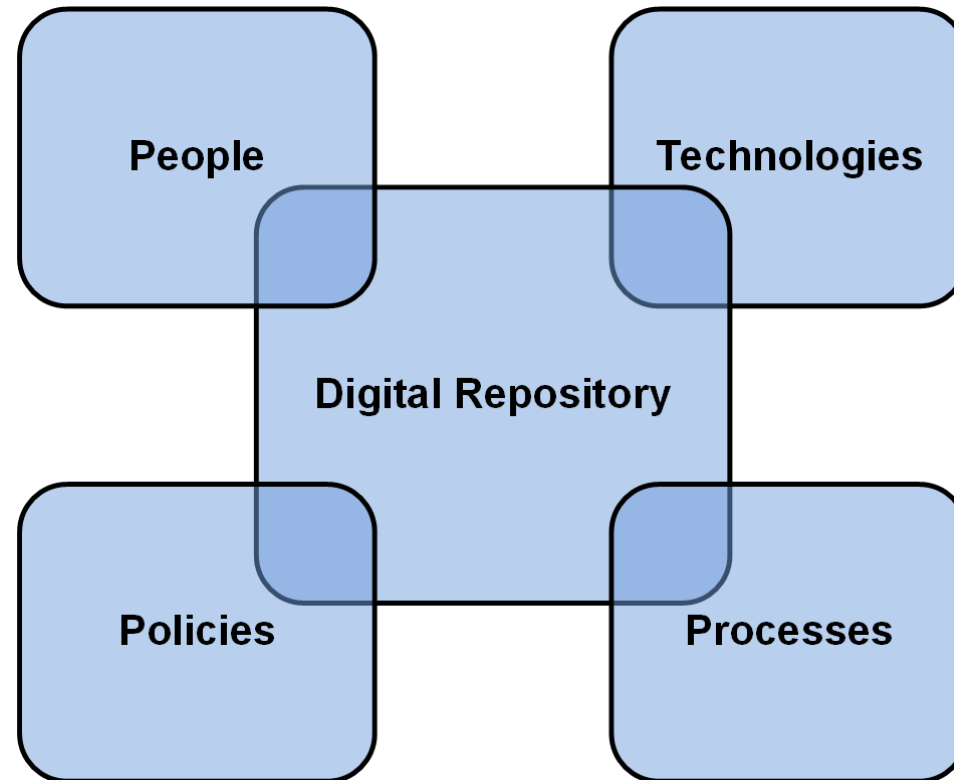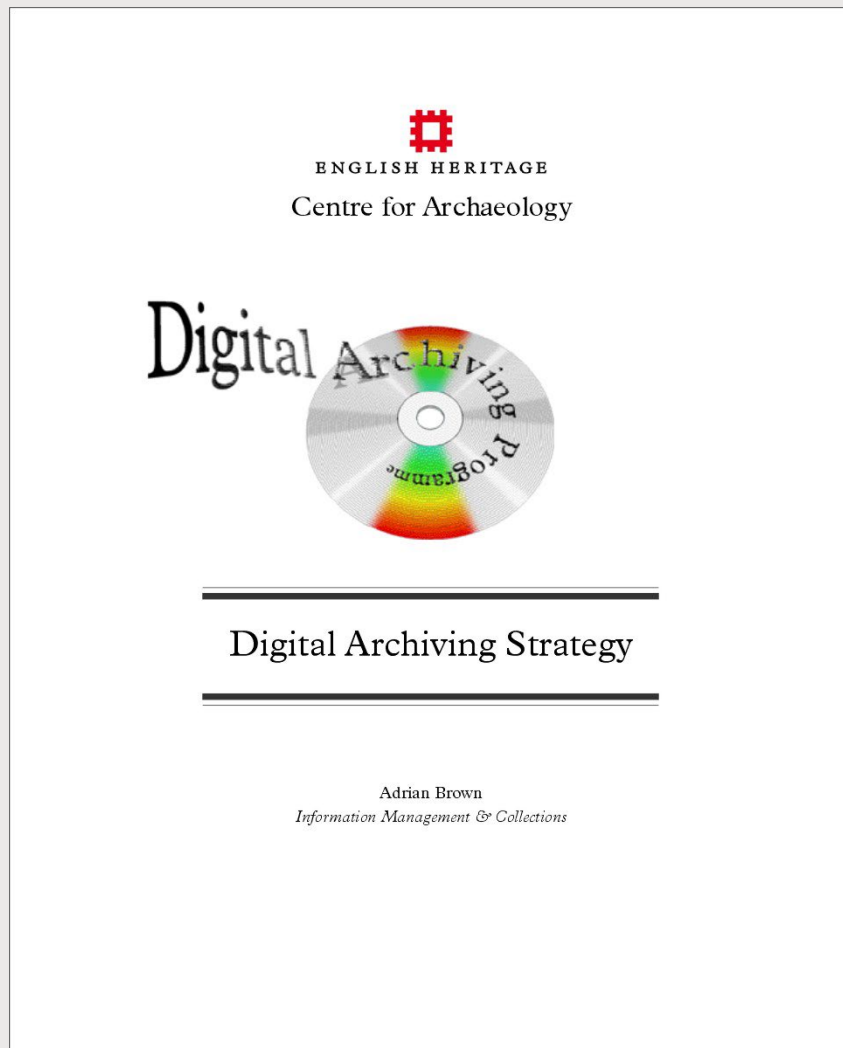
Digital preservation: the components

People

Technologies

Digital Repository

Policies
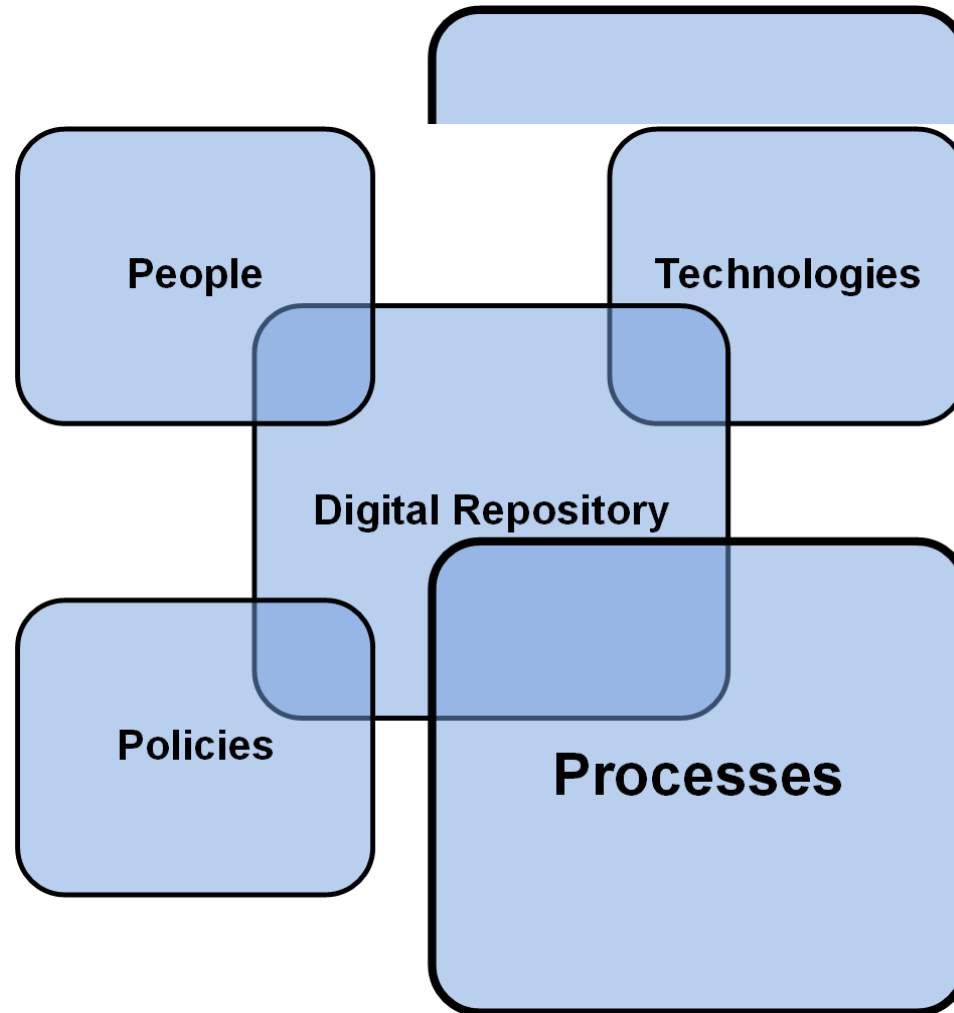
Processes

Processes
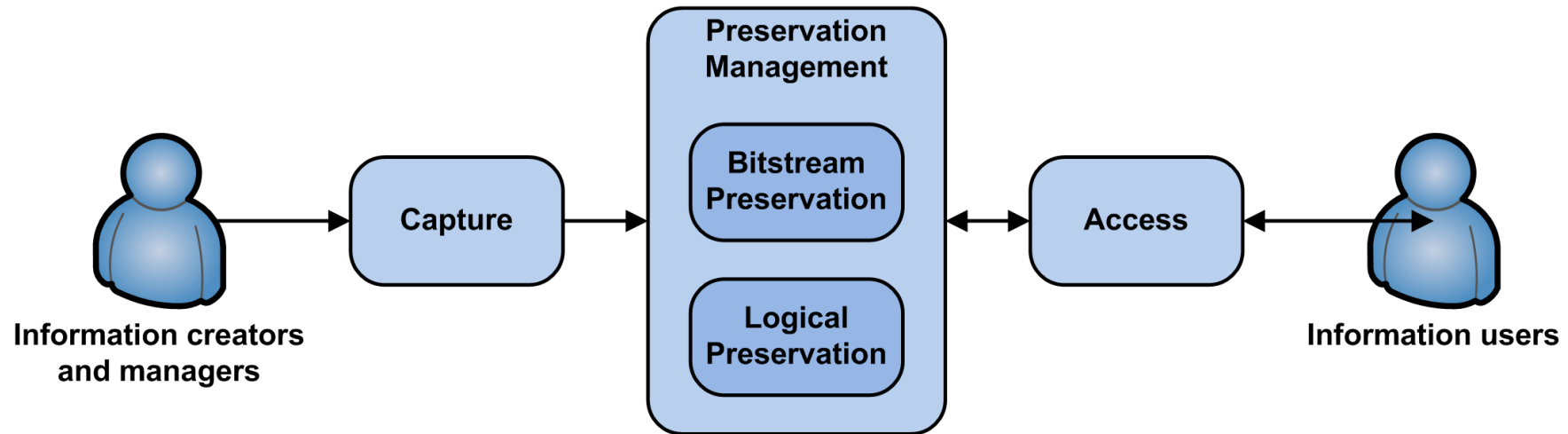
Digital preservation: the components
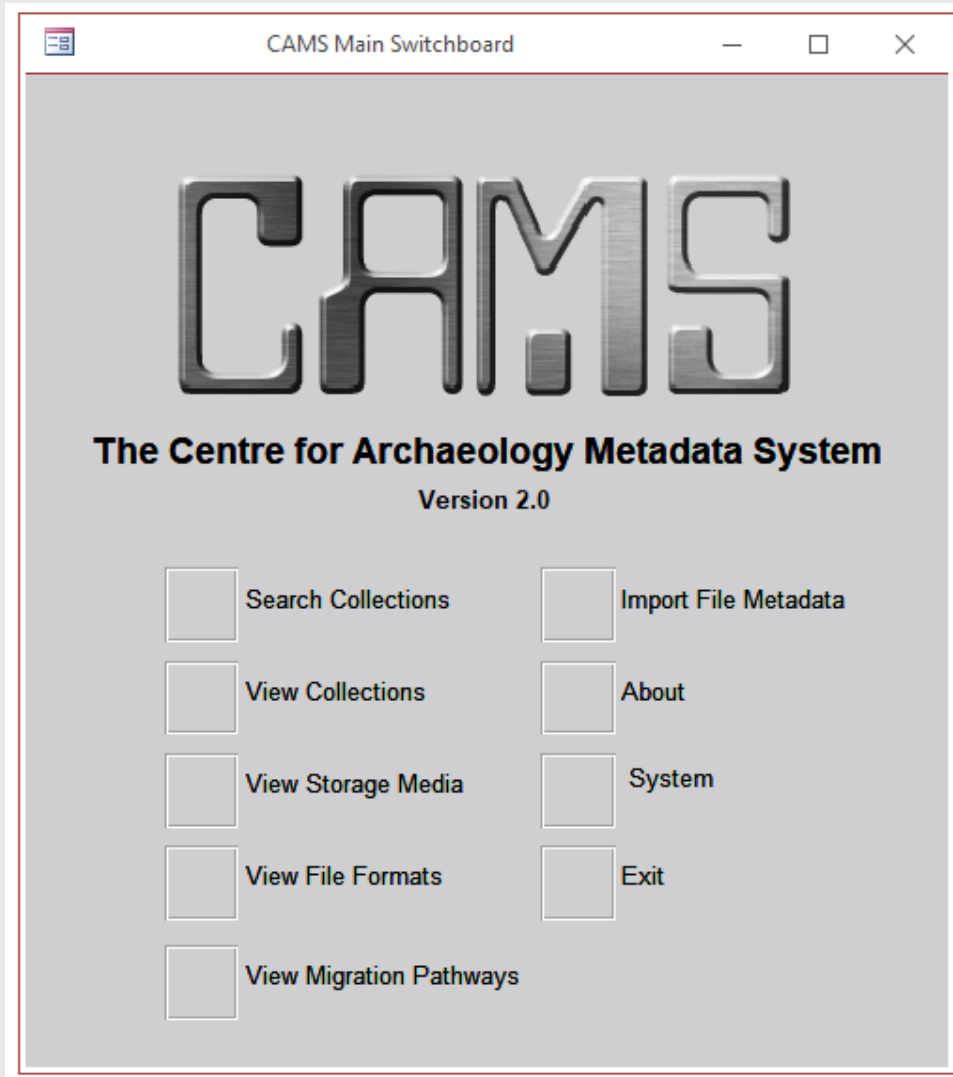
Repositories past

Centre for Archaeology (CAMS)

Context

- Developed in 2000
- English Heritage's first digital repository
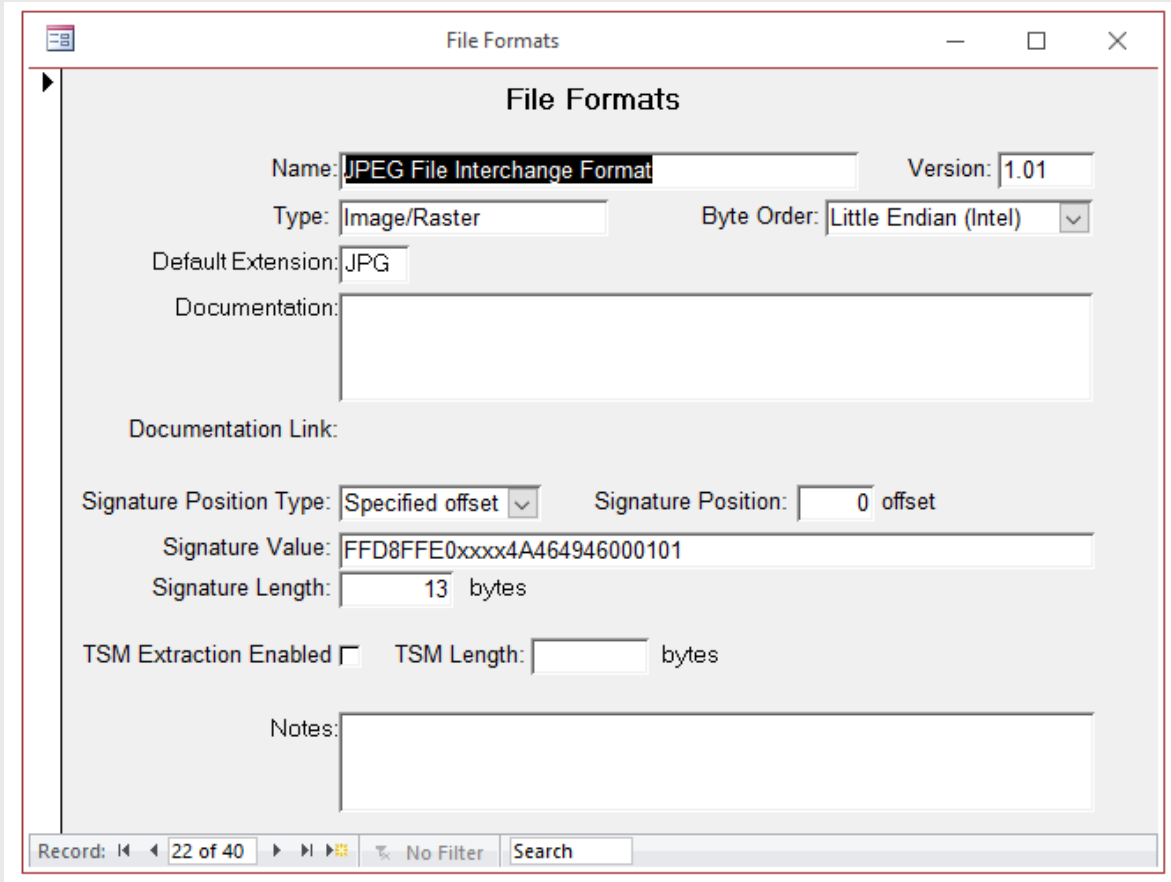- Managing digital archaeological archives

Centre for Archaeology (CAMS)

Development and resources

- One-person team (me!)
- No budget
- Minimal IT support
- Bespoke in-house

Centre for Archaeology (CAMS)

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Approach

- Some automation

- Included prototype format registry and characterization tools

- Service model - focused on ingest

- Assumed technology obsolescence as key risk and migration as key solution

- Minimal end-user access

- Dedicated offline storage: CD and DLT tape

- Based on mainstream IT infrastructure: MS Access database

The National Archives (SDB)

Context

- Developed in 2003
- The UK National Archives' first digital repository
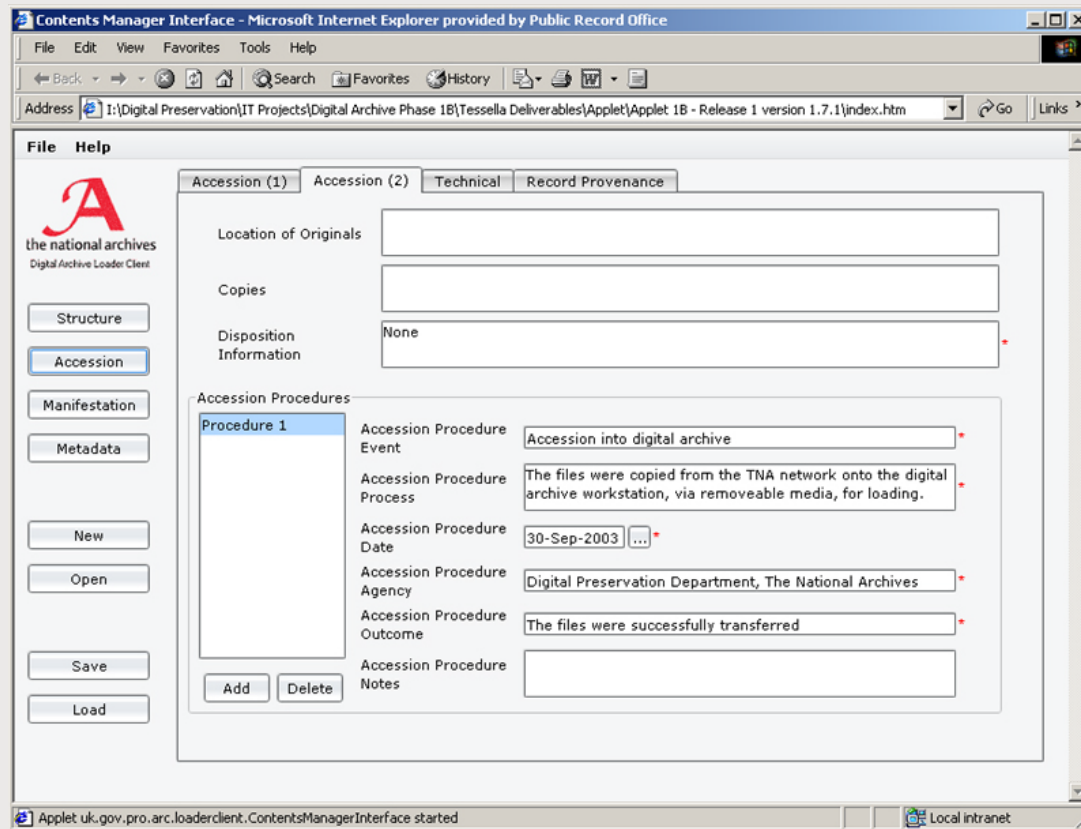- Managing digital public records

The National Archives (SDB)

Development and resources

- Dedicated specialist team
- Significant budget
- In-house IT support
- SDB - bespoke commercial, then licensed for resale
- PRONOM/DROID – open source, community services

The National Archives (SDB)

Approach

- Maximum automation
- Included full technical registry (PRONOM) and characterization tools (inc DROID)
- Holistic solution – ingest to access
- Assumed technology obsolescence as key risk and migration as key solution
- Internal public access only initially, then web-based access
- Dedicated storage – robotic tape libraries
- Isolated from corporate infrastructure
- Significant innovation but over-engineered

Repositories present

The Parliamentary Archives

repository@parliament
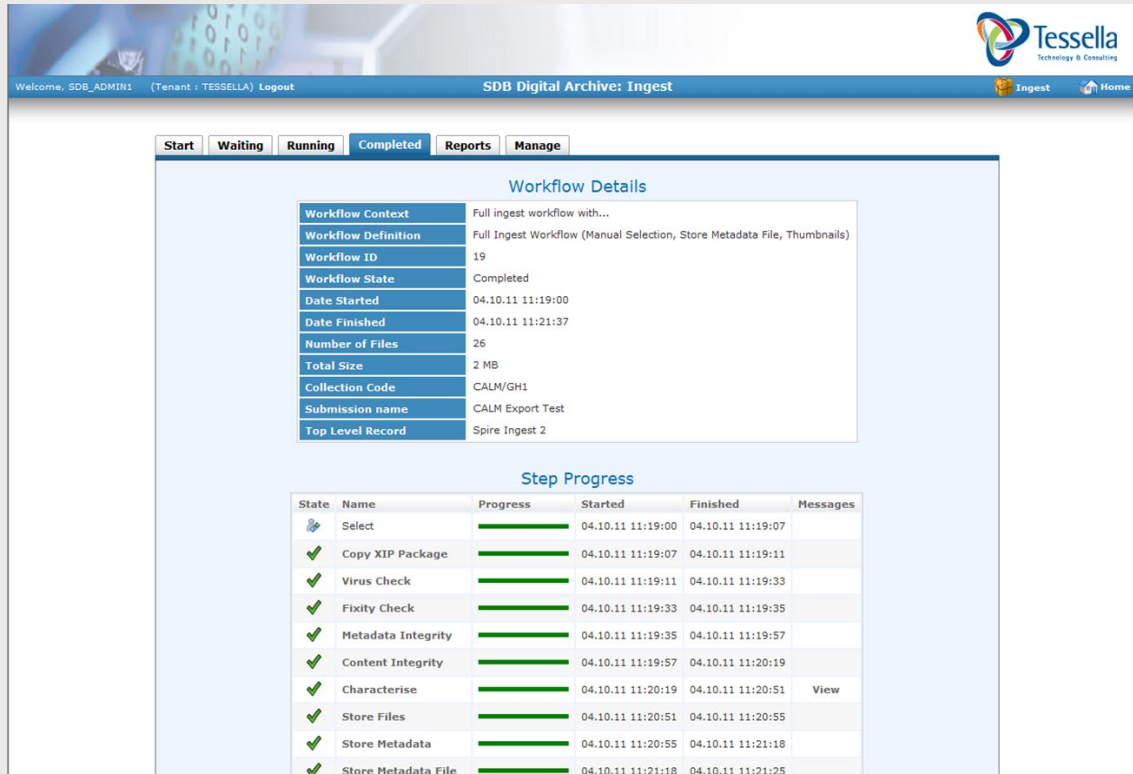
UK Parliament

© Parliamentary Archives

Context

- Developed in 2011 onwards
- The UK Parliament's first digital repository
- Managing digital parliamentary records and publications
  - Born digital and digitized
  - Web archive, inc. social media
  - Audio-visual

repository@parliament

Development and resources

- Small, multi-disciplinary team

- Significant budget

- In-house IT support

- Commercial off-the-shelf

repository@parliament

Approach

- Pragmatic approach to automation
- Holistic solution – ingest to access
- Preservation strategy agnostic
- Fully integrated with archive catalogue
- Online public access from outset
- Standard storage – network and cloud
- Integrated with corporate infrastructure

Online catalogue https://archives.parliament.uk/
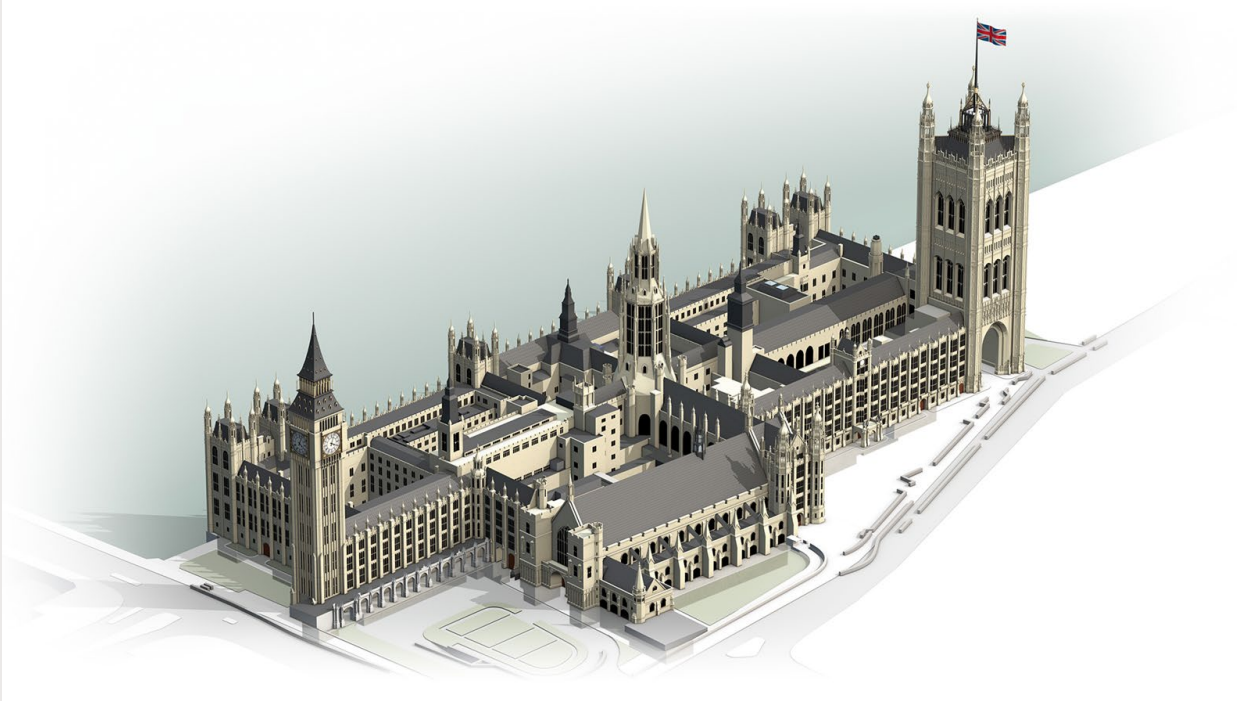
Online access
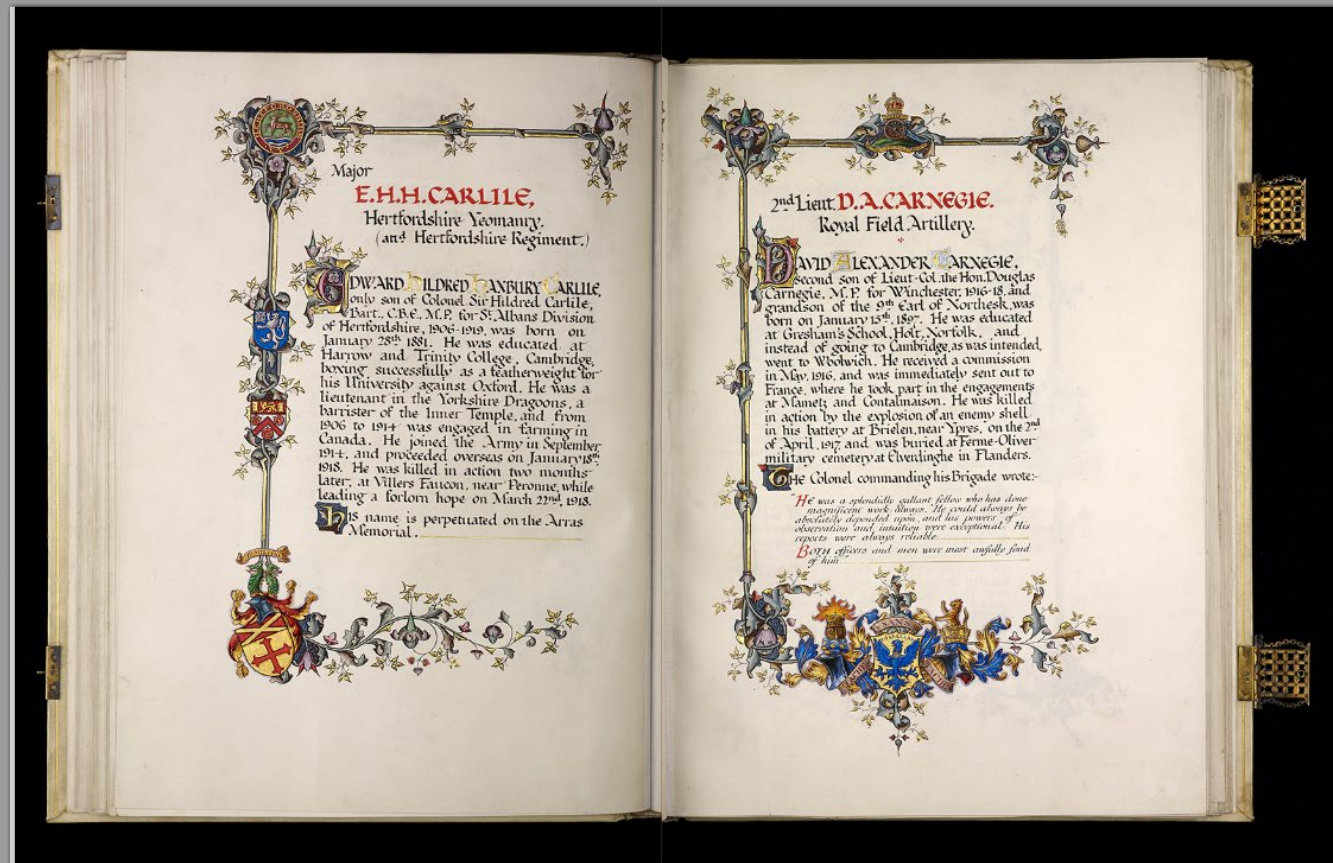
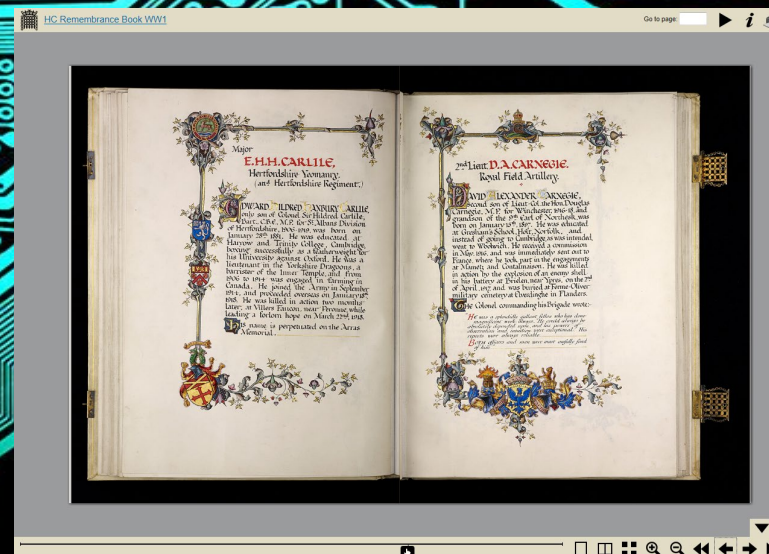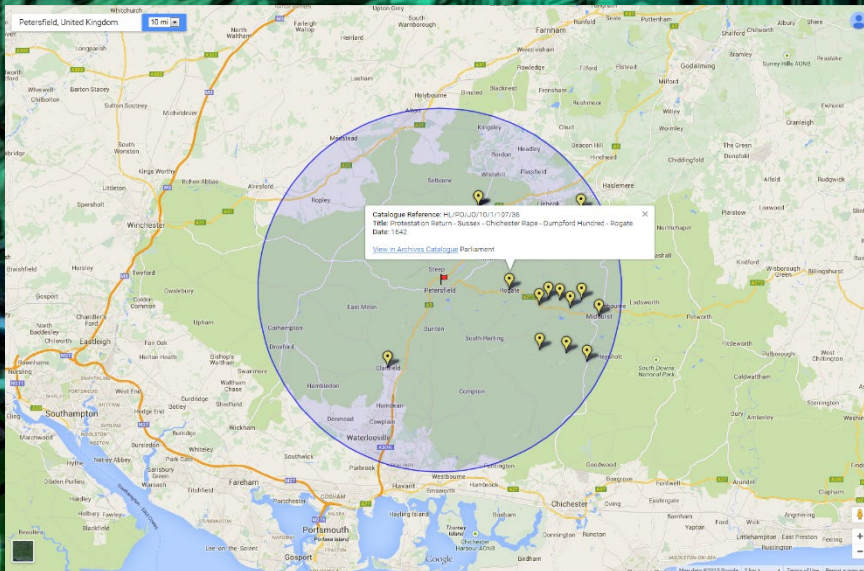# Repositories yet to come

Challenges

- Evergreen technologies
- Pace of change
- Diversity of content sources
- Processing at scale
  - Audio-visual collections
  - Web archives
  - Cloud storage
  - Sensitivity review
  - Cataloguing
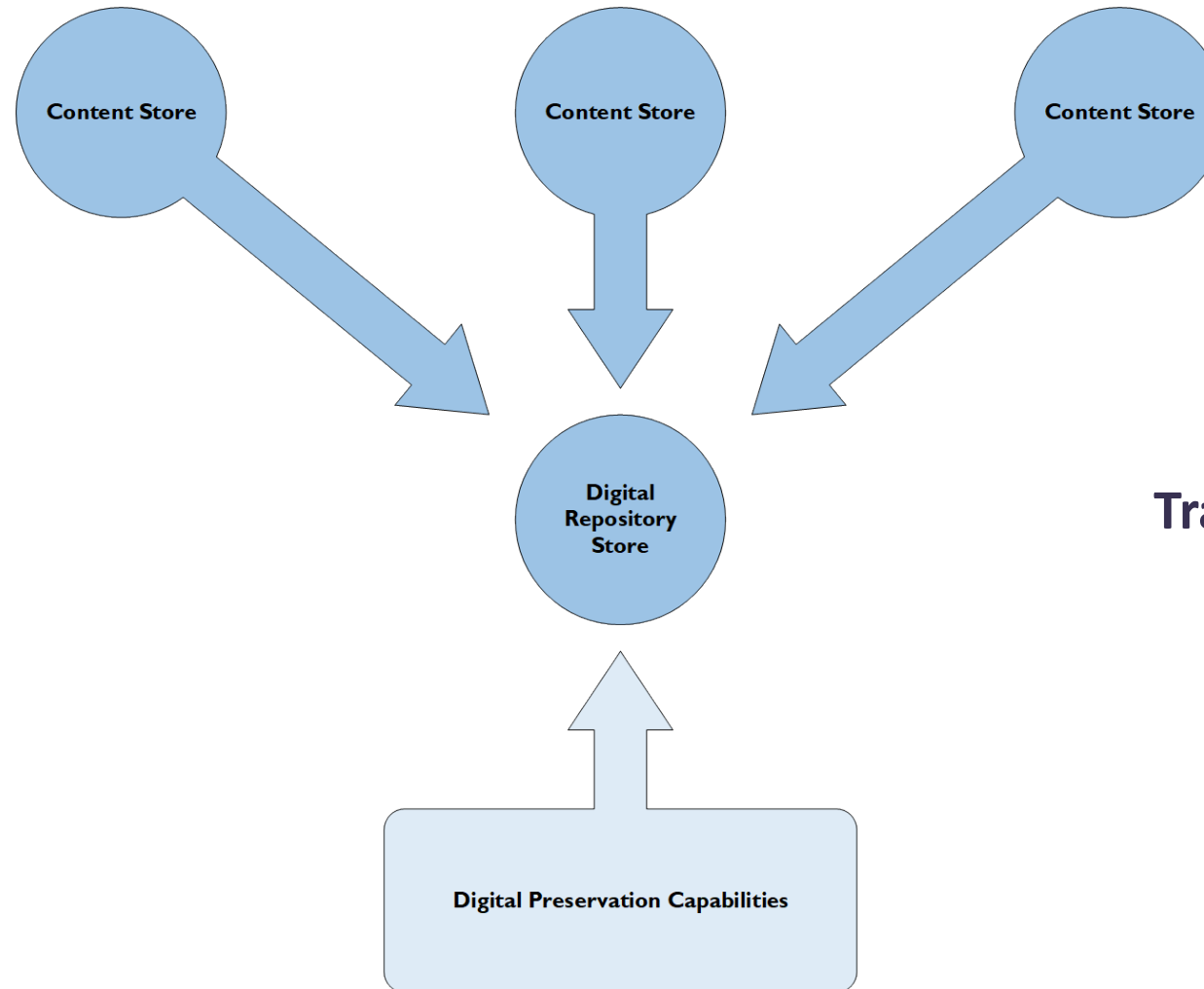 - Integrity checking
  - Ingest

Hybrid archives

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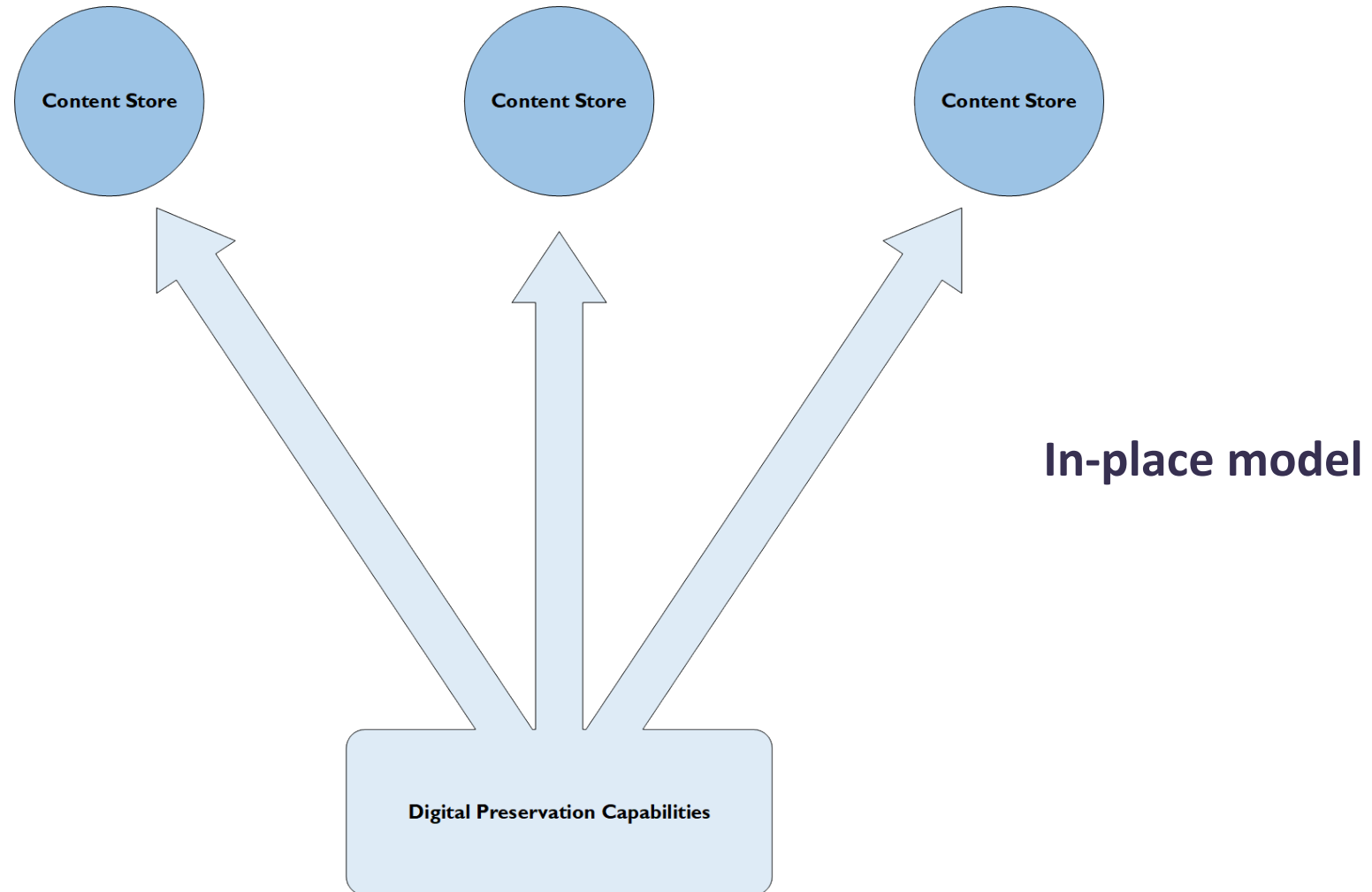
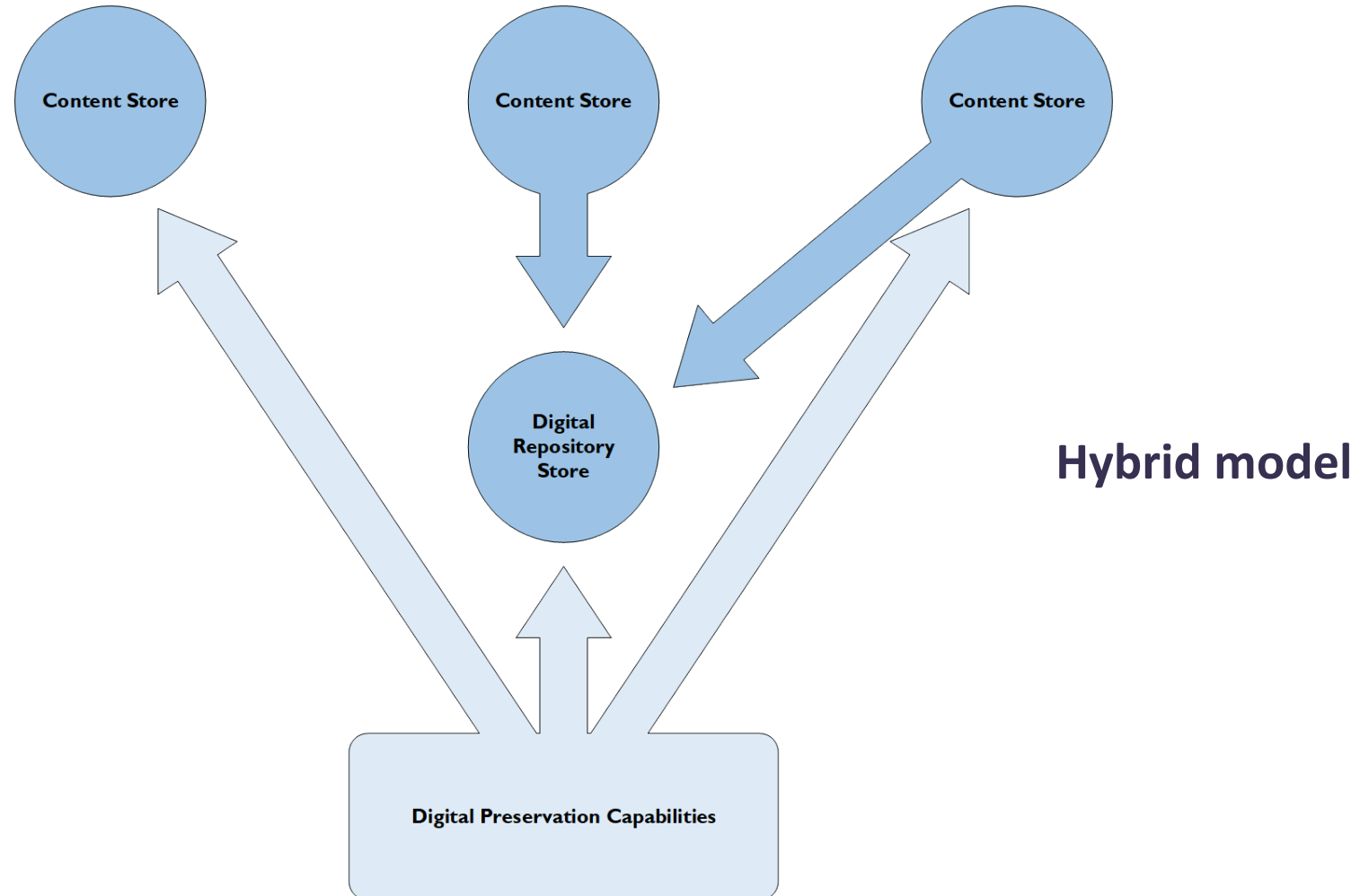# Understanding what users need

Re-defining the digital repository

Content Store

Content Store

Content Store

Digital
Repository
Store

Digital Preservation Capabilities

Traditional model

Re-defining the digital repository

UK Parliament

In-place model

Content Store

Content Store

Content Store

Digital Preservation Capabilities

Re-defining the digital repository

Content Store

Content Store

Content Store

Digital Repository Store

Digital Preservation Capabilities

Hybrid model

# Repositories yet to come

Summary

- Agnostic about threats and solutions
- Capabilities not systems
- Modular services
- Highly scalable
- Use techniques such as machine-learning to automate key processes
- Flexible to deliver different levels of capability
- Prioritise limited resources to achieve greatest benefit
- Preservation-as-a-service
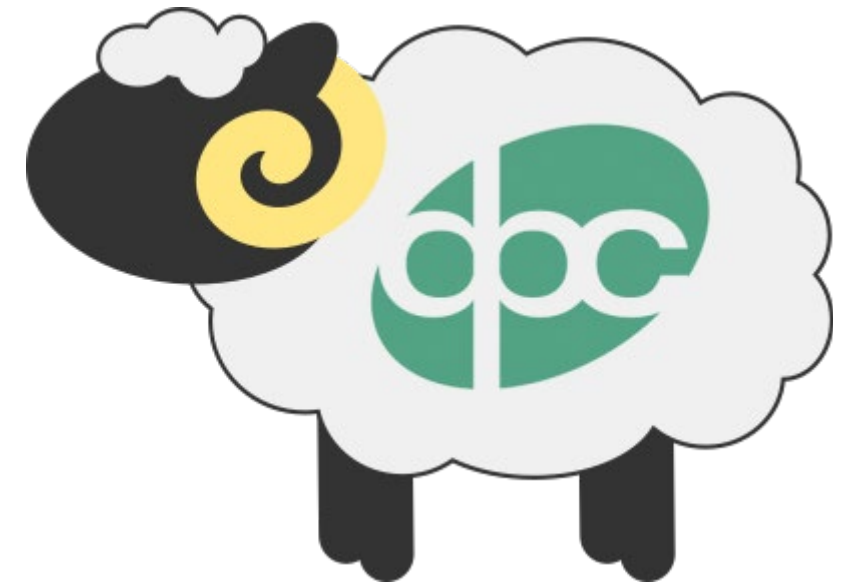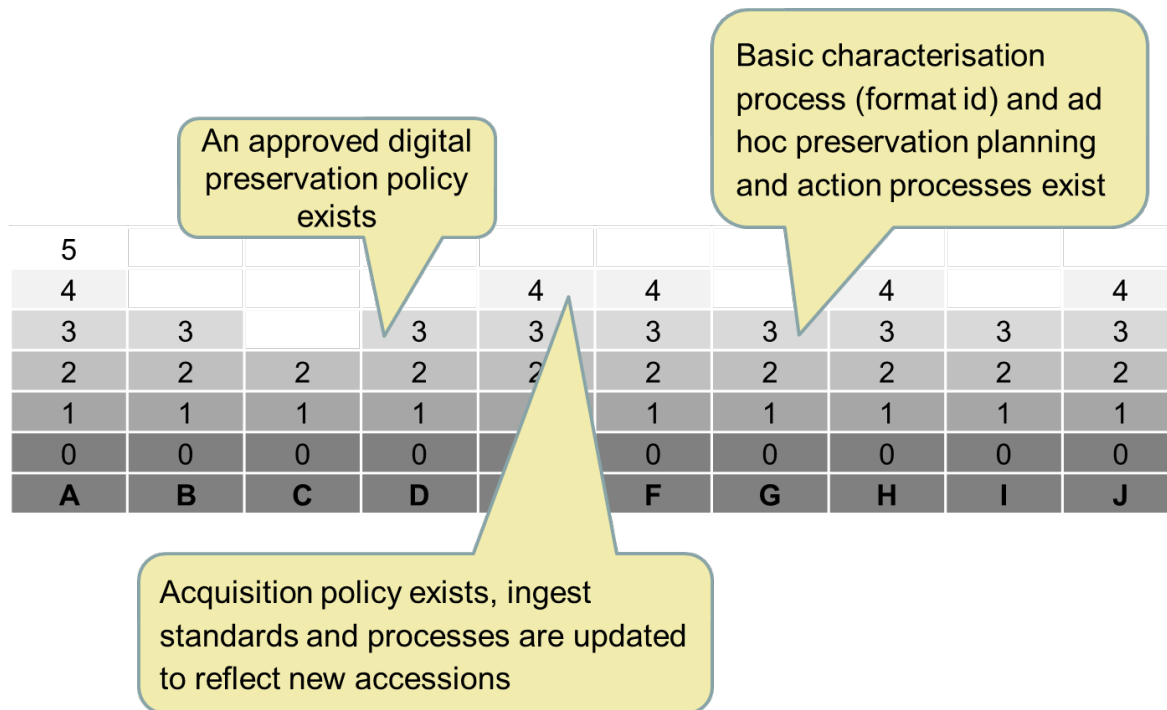
Getting started – first steps

Step #1: make connections with your community

Step #2: secure a mandate
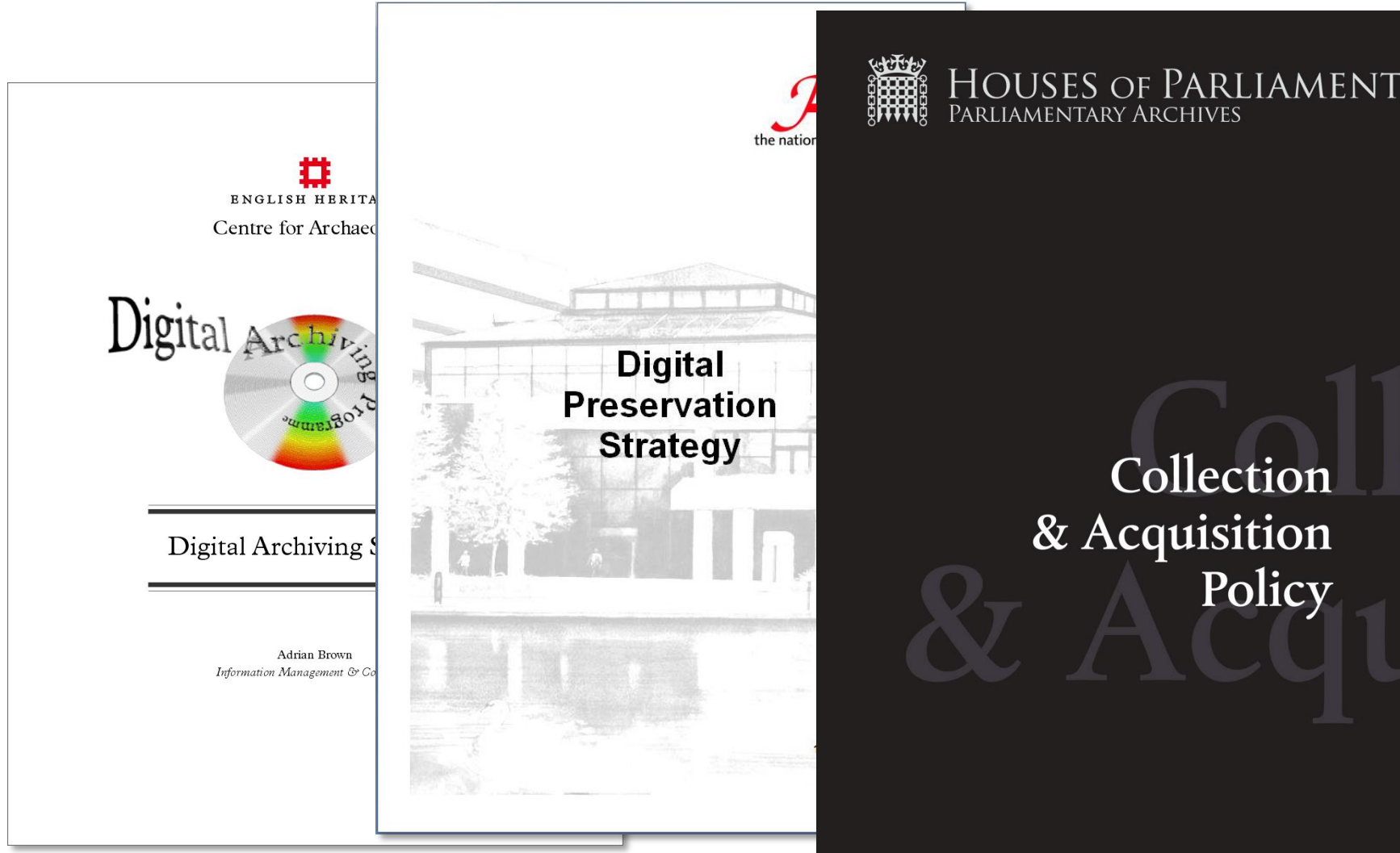
Step #3: assess where you are and where you want to be (and how to get there)

https://www.dpconline.org/digipres/implement-digipres/dpc-ram

Step #4: make the business case
Identifying the challenges

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Step #4: make the business case Realising the benefits
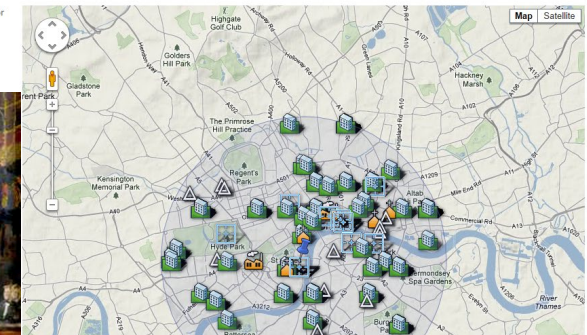
Step #5: understand your requirements

Policies → Processes → Requirements

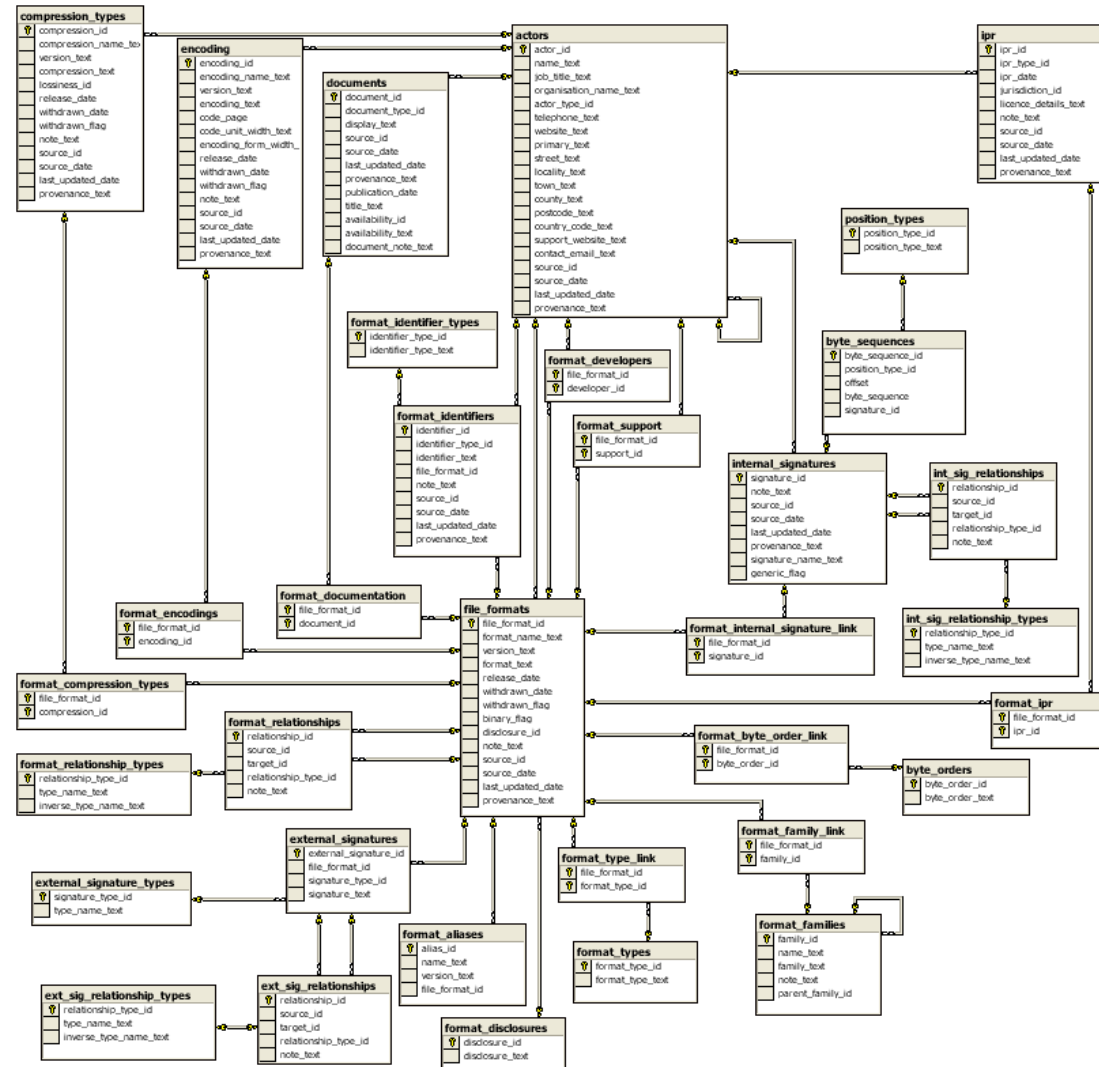# Step #6: choose and implement a solution
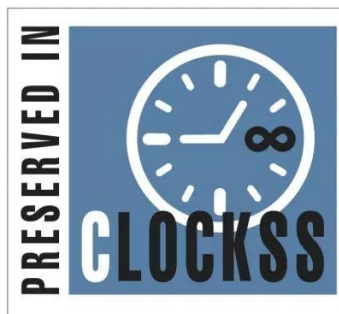
Key lessons

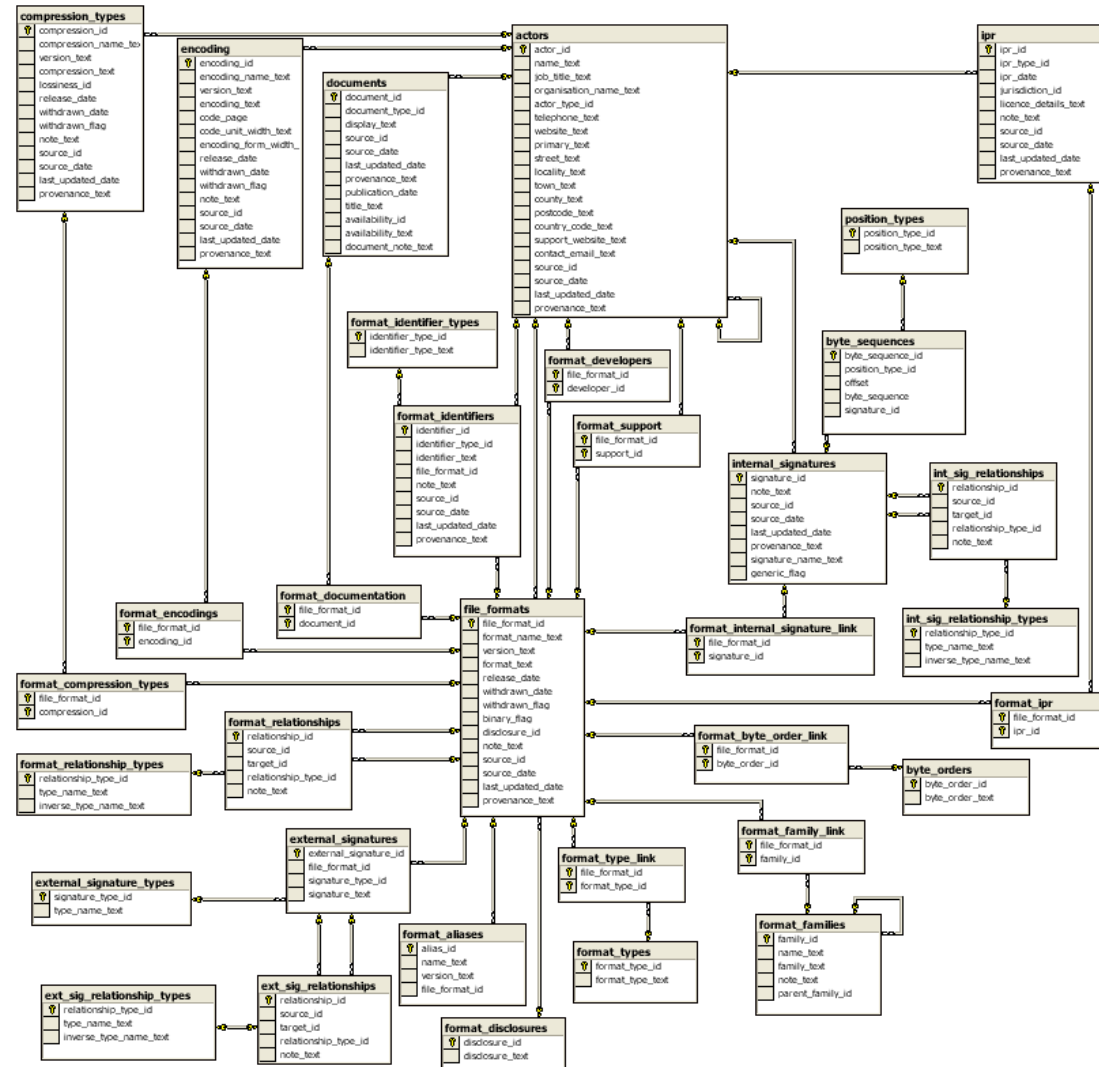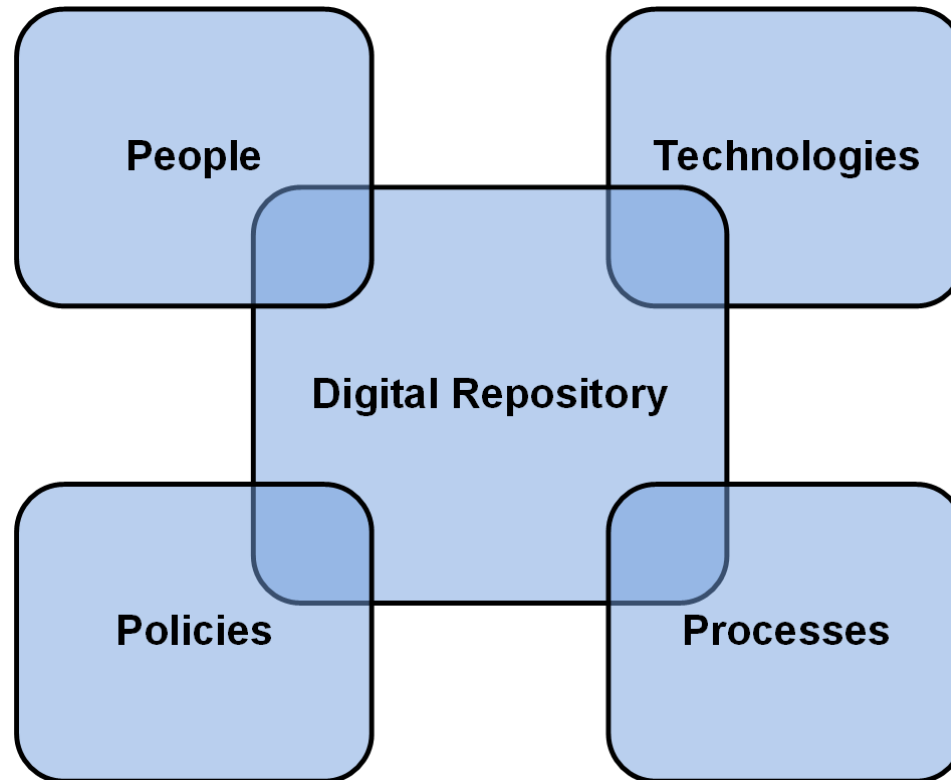# Ingest accounts for up to 90% of digital preservation activity...
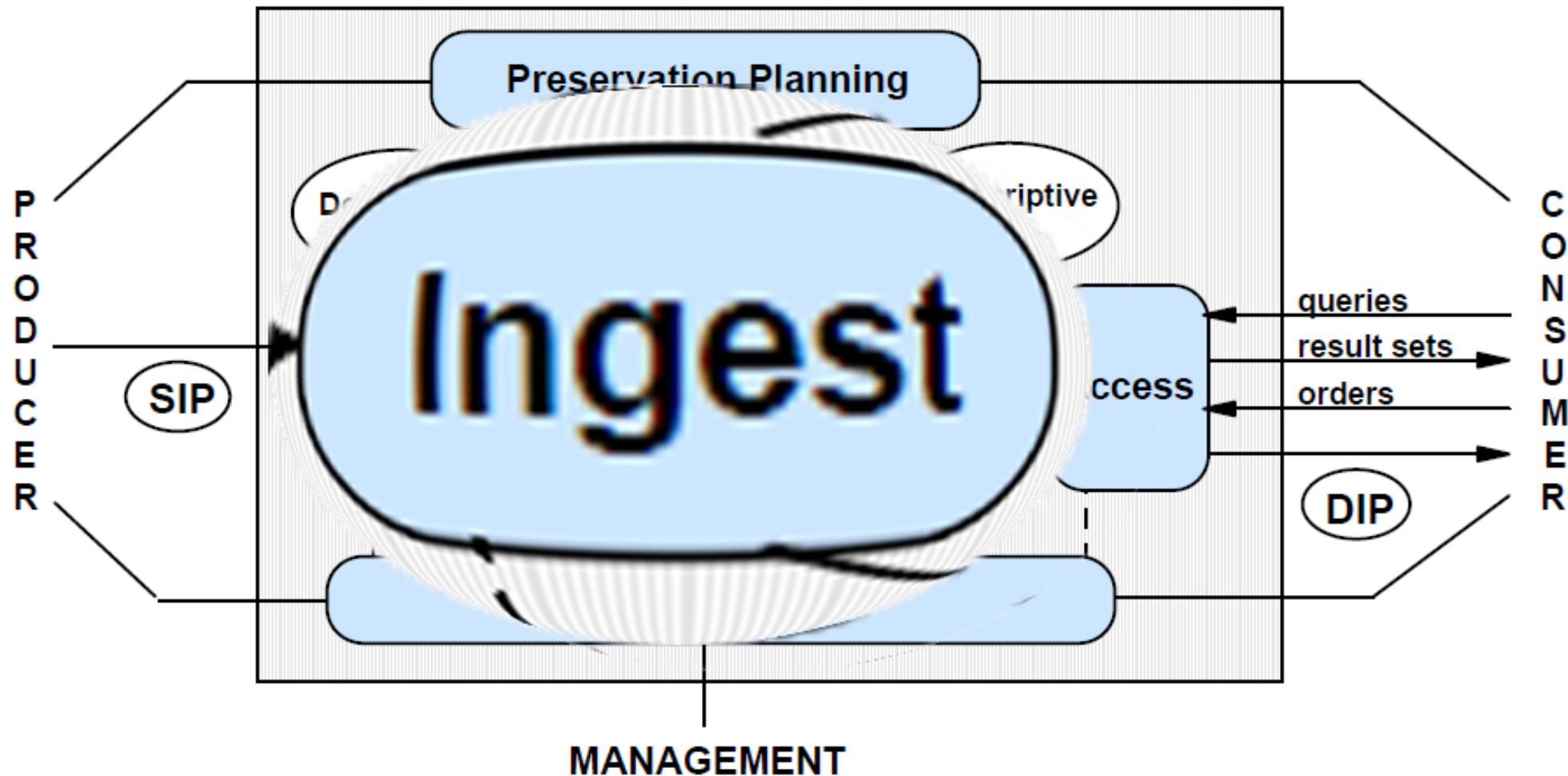
…and the other 10%…

Metadata is a means to an end…

...so keep it as simple as possible

It isn't just (or mainly) about technology

People

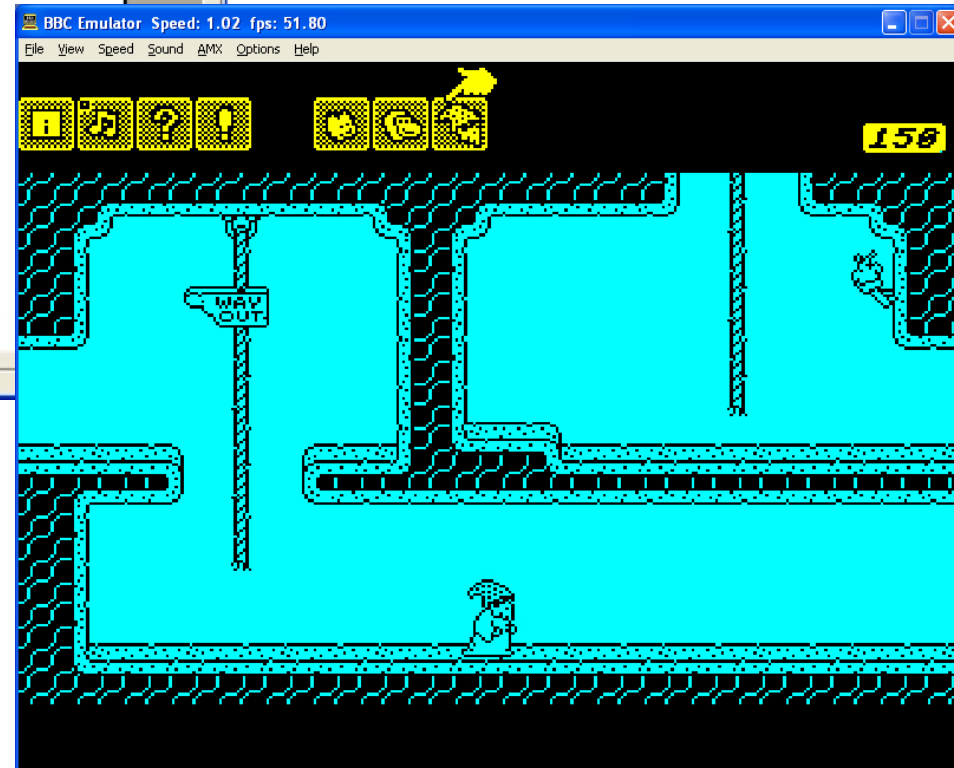Technologies

Digital Repository

Policies

Processes

There is no one right way to do digital preservation...
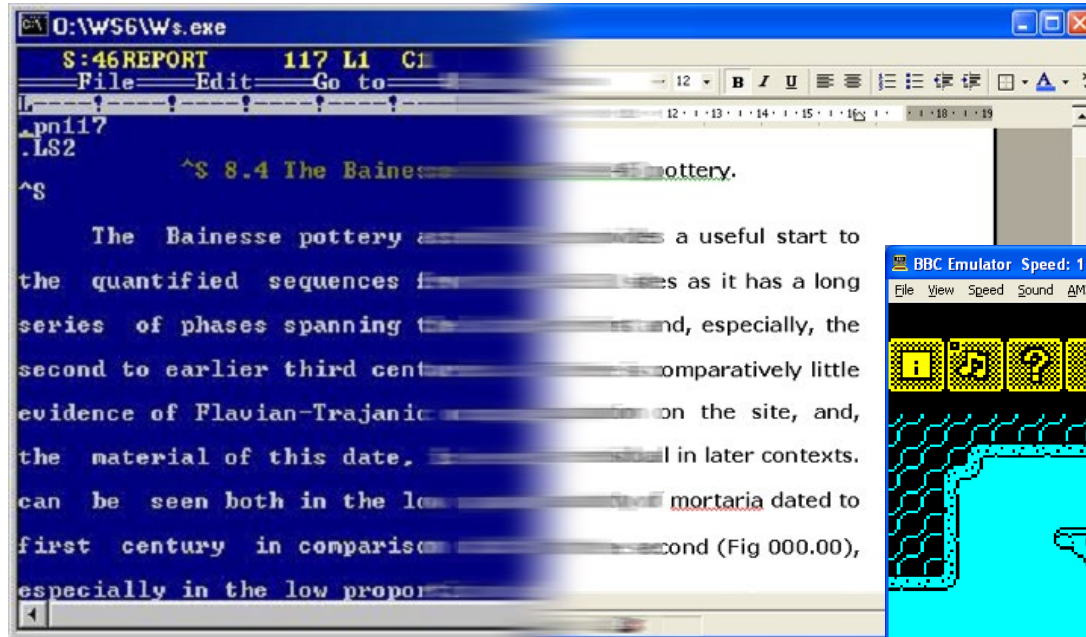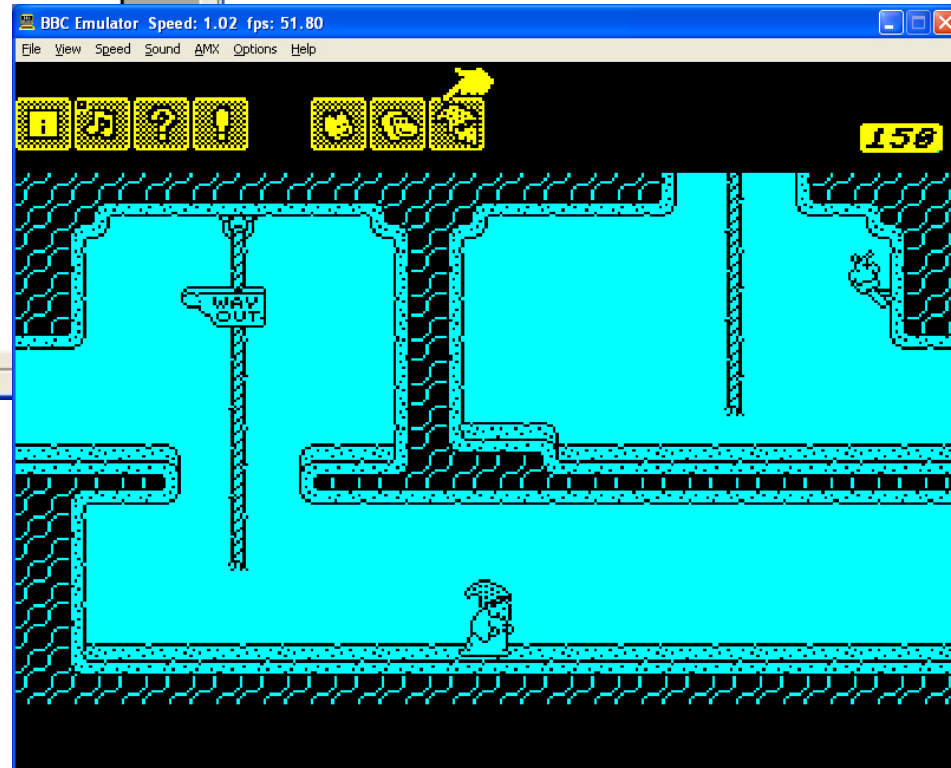
Emulation

Migration

...the right way is the one that works
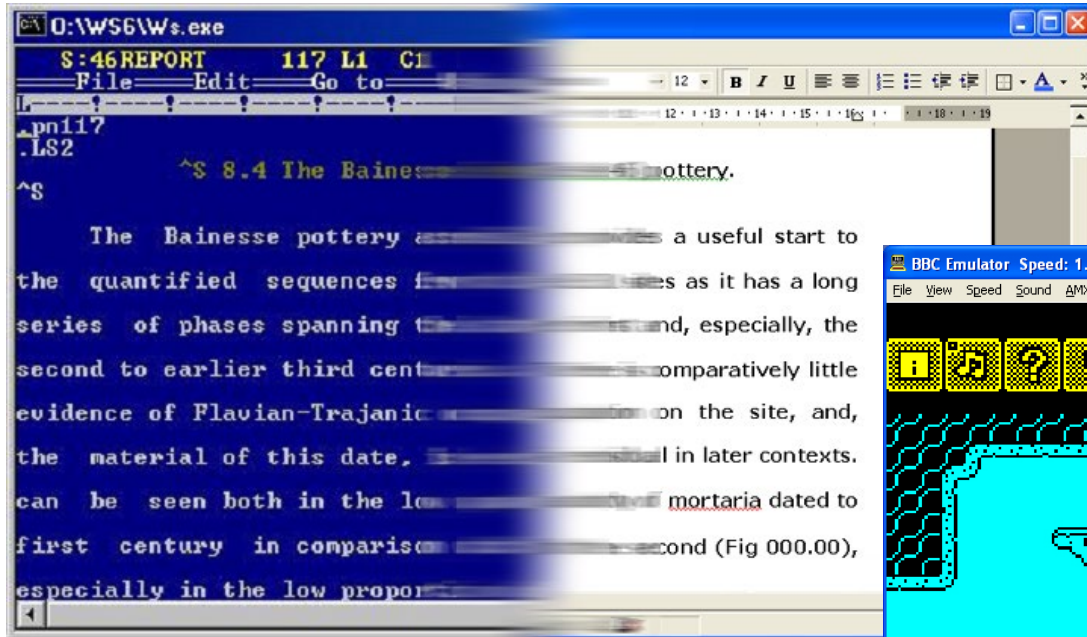
Emulation

Migration

Be wary of 'paper thinking'
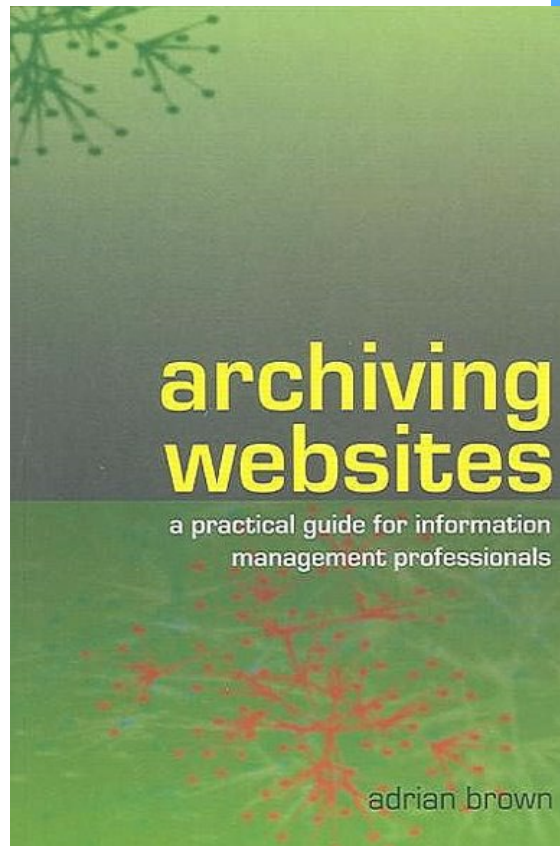
Digital preservation skills are archival skills

Digital archives matter

Digital archives matter

Useful sources

Questions?

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W: https://archives.parliament.uk/

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