



Archiving the 8th

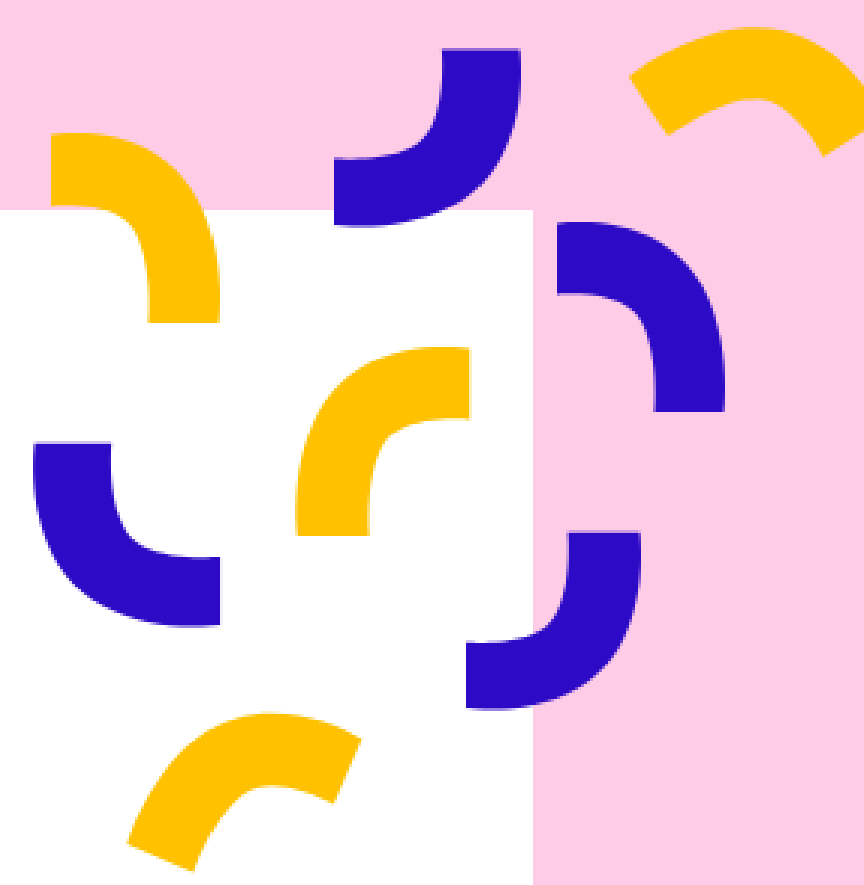
A Beginner's Guide to Archiving Material from the 2018 Referendum on the 8th Amendment





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Archiving the 8th

Archiving the 8th is a group with representatives from libraries, archives, universities, museums, and activist groups.

It aims to develop strategies for a coordinated approach to archiving materials relating to the 2018 referendum on the 8th Amendment to the Irish Constitution.

This guide aims to provide easy-to-understand and unbiased information for use by non-professionals who wish to preserve items from the referendum for the Irish historical record.

What Are Archives?

Archives are collections (of anything) that have permanent or enduring importance because of their value as evidence or as a source for historical or other research. They provide evidence of activities and they tell stories. They are created by the activities of people and organisations.

Archive collections are unique and therefore need to be protected and preserved for future use.

Archives are important because they have value to nations, organisations, communities and individual people. Evidence of current changes in society must be preserved for future generations for use in research, exhibitions and learning.

Archival collections are made up of material of different formats.

Types of Records


Physical

- Leaflets
- Event materials (posters, flyers, etc.)
- Polling cards
- Merchandise (stickers, clothing, badges, etc.)
- Newspaper articles and ads (especially local papers)
- Photographs

Digital

- Internal organising documents*
- Emails*
- Online articles (news sources, websites, blog posts)
- Social media (difficult to archive though screenshots can be taken and personal/identifying information removed)
- Photographs
- Oral histories/sound files

* If these documents contain personal information they are subject to GDPR



Note: these lists are not exhaustive, but give an idea of items commonly found in records

What Should I Know About GDPR?

Everything containing personal information is subject to GDPR. This doesn't mean you can't collect and keep it, but it limits how long you can keep different types of personal information for.

Personal information can be redacted from materials where the rest of the content is in the public interest to exhibit.

In theory there is archival exemption to GDPR, but it is as yet untested, so to be safe due diligence should be applied.

Data and Labelling

Metadata

Sound scary? Don't be put off.

Metadata is **data about data**. It gives us information about the data we have collected. Descriptive metadata is really important for good archiving. You can write metadata out in notebooks, spreadsheets, word docs, or programmes specially built for it - but it's the quality of the metadata that matters. Interoperable formats (e.g. CSV instead of Excel, Docx instead of Doc) are preferable.



Good metadata...



...great metadata!

Recommended Metadata Fields:

- Title of item
- Creator
- Subject*
- Description (what is it? If it is an image file, what does it display?)
- Publisher
- Contributor
- Date (of creation or publication)
- Type/genre of item
- Format (physical/digital)
- Identifier (a unique reference from your own filing system)
- Source (an archival reference or original location, URL)
- Language
- Coverage (the location and/or time period referenced by the resource)
- Rights (who owns the item)

The subject is the topic of the resource. To describe them, it is helpful to use vocabularies. Vocabularies are fixed terms used to describe material from a particular domain/subject - e.g. archaeology, music. There are also 'general' vocabularies that can be applied to all sorts of material. A famous example of this is the Library of Congress Subject Headings.

Informed Consent for Oral Interviews

If you are engaged in an Oral History project ask yourself first if it is **legal** and **ethical**. It is vital that your interviewee is aware, from the beginning, about the purpose of the project, what participation means, and how their interview will be used.

You must provide an information sheet about the project and ensure that the interviewee understands what is involved. It is unethical and in some cases illegal to use interviews without the **informed consent** of the interviewee.

Consent forms should also inform the interviewee about copyright ownership. Sample consent forms can be found on the Oral History of Ireland website (www.oralhistorynetworkireland.ie)

A good consent form will tell interviewees:

- The purpose of the interview/s
- The funding source (if any)
- Your contact details
- What is involved in participation
- Will outline any benefits/risks to participation
- Ensure that interviewees understand they are under no obligation whatsoever to take part in the interview/s and may leave at any time without explanation

A good consent form will offer confidentiality, e.g.:

I will be identified and quotes from this interview will be attributed to my name [YES]

or

I understand that I will not be interviewed and my interview will be rendered anonymous [YES]

The consent form will explain how the data will be used and it will outline how long it will be retained for. If you wish to archive the data, you need to ask for permission to archive the data and explain who will have access to it. For example:

Permission to Archive:

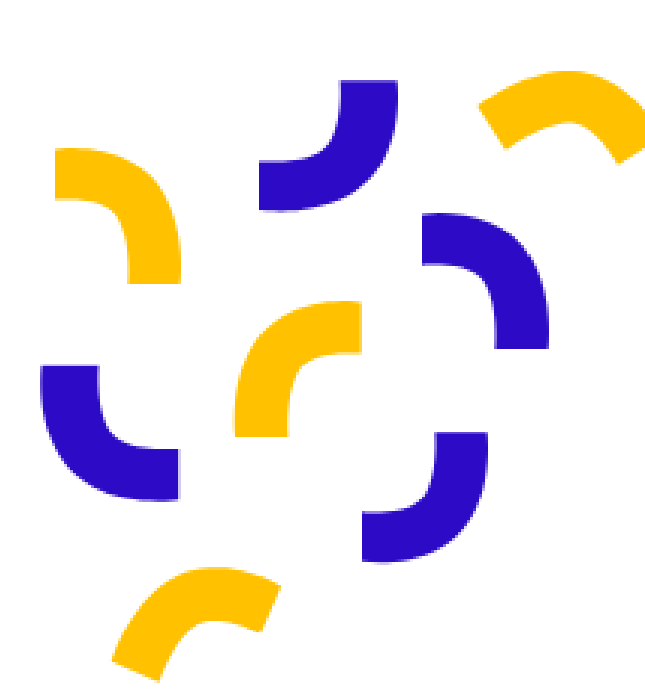
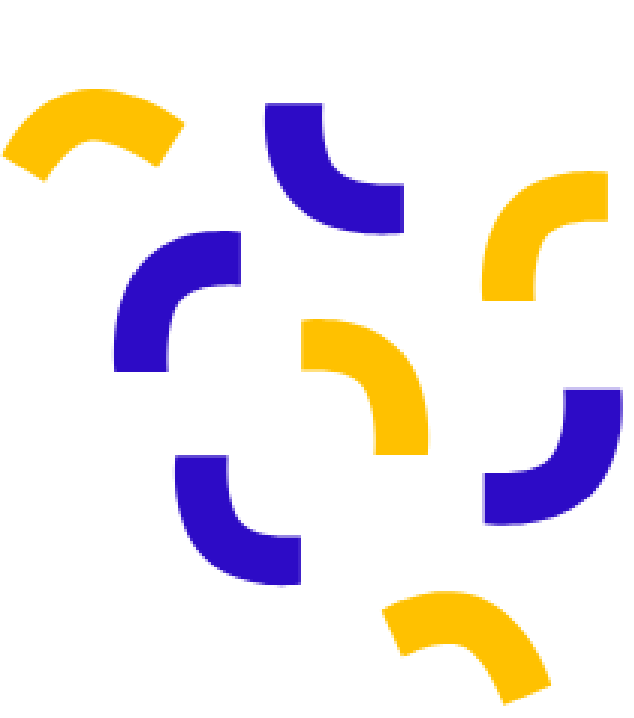
I agree that my interviews will be deposited in an archive [Yes] [No]

Access to My Interviews:

I agree that access to my archived interview will be open to the general public [Yes]

or

I agree that access to my archived interview will be restricted to those engaged in academic research and teaching [Yes]



Item Storage

Digital Storage

There are only a few specialist repositories for reliable, long-term preservation of digital items. They are not yet accessible to general users. In the meantime, digital records can be stored reasonably securely in the cloud and on hard drives.

- Invest in good quality hard drives, such as Lacie or G-Technology. Avoid cheaper consumer brands. Most hard drives last for about two years, after which they need to be replaced and the content migrated.
 - Try and create duplicates/mirrors of your digital archives in case of technological failure.
- Storage can cost money, though cloud storage is becoming quite cheap for smaller collections. An example is Google Suite, whose first update is approximately 20e PA. It should be noted that Google photos may not maintain the uploaded quality of the original photo, so be sure to have the original stored separately on a hard drive.
- Open access/widely-used formats should be utilised where possible. Good examples include:
 - PDF
 - RTF (Rich Text File)
 - ODT and ODS (Open Office)
 - MP4 (audio)
 - WAV (audio)
 - JPG (image)
 - TIFF (image)
 - PNG (image)

Physical Storage

- The main risks affecting collections of archives are fire, flood, theft and unauthorised access. Your home won't have archival-quality climate conditions. However, keeping your material somewhere **cool, dry** and **secure** will go a long way to keeping it in good condition.
 - The best storage for physical materials is acid-free boxing/foldering, but this is costly. Good quality folders and boxes will do. A handwritten list of all items in a box/files should be placed inside said items, with a backup copy held elsewhere.
 - Easily-lost labels (like post-it notes) should not be used outside of a box/file. Instead, use a pencil to clearly write the number on the outside of the box/file.
- Storage boxes/files must avoid metal elements at all costs, including **staples** and **paper clips**, as metal will degrade over time and damage items. Metal items part of the archive collection (e.g. badges) will also corrode easily and damage other items. Any existing rust should be gently removed and metal items wrapped individually in acid-free paper before storing.
- Fabric items may grow mould, so it is imperative to ensure items are cleaned and completely dry before storing on a flat surface. When storing fabric/metal it can be useful to place sachets of silica gel (the kind that come when you buy leather products) into the storage boxes to absorb minor penetrating damp.

Thinking about Long Term Preservation

Anyone looking to preserve items for the future should ask themselves if they can provide the best environment, long term, for the records in their custody.

If not, it is worth considering depositing the collection in an established archive service. An archive service will meet with you and discuss the procedures they follow to receive deposits of material.

They will be able to explain their storage facilities, how they preserve material and how they make it available. There are a number of different agreements that can be arrived at between a depositor and an archives service.

Archives need to be stored in conditions which are cool and dry, with minimum exposure to light and where they are protected from pests and pollution. They also must be protected from unauthorised access. Material that requires specialist care such as sound recordings, photographs, textiles, artefacts, etc., will benefit from being deposited in an established archive service.

There are considerable costs involved in the provision of long term for material as well as the storage of digital objects. These long-term costs will need to be budgeted for in any funding application

Useful Contacts/Additional Information

Online Archives Portal:

Irish Archives Resource (IAR): <http://www.iar.ie/>

Archive Consultancy companies:

Arcline: <http://arcline.ie/>

Enneclan: <http://www.eneclann.ie/>

Archives Ireland: <https://www.archives.ie/about-us>

Professional organisations:

Archives and Records Association UK and Ireland (ARA,I):
<http://www.historians.ie/archives-and-records-association/>

Oral History Network of Ireland: <https://www.oralhistorynetworkireland.ie>

