Acquisition of Digital Media

There are a number of unique issues to consider when acquiring digital media. In accordance with good practice, the Arts Council England/V&A Purchase Grant Fund expects all applicants to demonstrate they have addressed these issues in their applications:

Each acquisition will have its own precise requirements, but in general when acquiring digital media applicants should:
- Define what is being acquired and why;
- Determine the legal rights related to the acquisition;
- Ensure a preservation plan is in place.

This can be determined by answering the following questions:
- Is the acquisition a:
  - Digital Media File – the purpose of acquisition being a single file that may be downloaded or provided on physical media. It may;
    - have an associated physical output for display.
  - Digital Media Package – the purpose of acquisition being the artwork produced. It is a set of files in a folder structure. It may;
    - have a self-running software file;
    - be downloaded or provided on physical media;
    - require physical components to produce the artwork; and/or
      - have an associated physical output.
  - Software Package – the purpose of acquisition being the software. It is a set of files in a folder structure. It may;
    - produce data through use; and/or
    - be downloaded or provided on physical media.
  - Physical object with software - the purpose of acquisition being the physical object. It includes some form of software.
- Is the acquisition unique or is there an edition? If the latter, how many versions are extant/likely to be produced?

- What rights do I need/have?
  - o Is a licence to use agreement required for the software? This is not the same as acquiring it, and may need renewing, with possible associated ongoing costs.
  - o Is approval required to change the format? As part of any preservation plan (see below) files may need to be updated as technology advances – is there both a plan and permission for this to happen?

- What preservation requirements need to be taken into account?
  - o Is/are the file(s) in a format that can be preserved? Can this be updated as technology advances? What software is required to read this file?
  - o What platform is needed to use the software?
  - o Are any physical components (such as monitors) replaceable?
  - o Does your museum have a Digital Asset Management Plan, is your IT team aware of the acquisition and have all ongoing preservation costs been considered?

Note:
- always document the decision-making process

- this advice is not exhaustive nor should it be used as a substitute for legal advice

Useful resources:

Digital Preservation Policies: Guidance for archives National Archives

Digital Preservation Strategy 2013-2016 British Library

JISC Digital Media Email: info@jiscdigitalmedia.ac.uk, Tel: 0117 331 4447

SPECTRUM Digital Asset Management 2013 Collection Trust

Preservation Management of Digital Materials: The Handbook Digital Preservation Coalition

Moving Image Collections Handbook Screen Heritage UK programme

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