



**Press Release**  
21<sup>st</sup> March 2003

### **Digital Future Looks Brighter**

Digital documents such as e-mails, word-processed documents and databases have virtually replaced the printed page and have become a vital part of life, both at work and at home. Due to the rapid rate at which software applications become obsolete and the instability of storage media such as disks and tapes, future generations may miss out on a significant part of their heritage. Will the modern day Domesday Book be lost because nobody preserved the software to run it? As a continuation of its role in preserving the nation's heritage, The National Archives today announced new measures to preserve digital material.

'As the world is becoming more technologically advanced, it is claimed that the average life span of a web page is around 100 days, while the software required to view digital information can become obsolete within 5 years. Digital information cannot be left for 20 years in the hope that it will remain readable for our grandchildren' says David Ryan, Head of Archive Services at The National Archives.

Over a hundred national and international delegates are expected to congregate at the *Practical Experiences in Digital Preservation* conference in The National Archives, Kew, from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> April to discuss methods of preserving these digital documents

Speakers from archives across Europe and international experts in the field of digital preservation will discuss different approaches to the problem of digital preservation. The National Archives will also discuss its digital archive system that will store electronic government records so that we will be able to read and interpret this information in thirty years time just as we do now with paper records. The National Archives will reveal it has succeeded in preserving the content of the BBC Domesday project which has often been cited as an example of the problem of digital preservation. It provides a unique snapshot of life in the 1980s and will become an invaluable resource available for future generations of users to view at The National Archives.

#### *Notes for the editors:*

- The National Archives, the national archive of England, Wales and the United Kingdom, will merge with the Historic Manuscripts Commission on the 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2003 to become The National Archives. The National Archives is open to the public to carry out research 6 days a week. It holds over 1000 years of documents including sources for family history research.
- The Digital Preservation Department at The National Archives oversees the archiving, storage and preservation of *born digital* records. *Born digital* records are records that have been produced electronically. Examples of *born digital* records are e-mails, databases or spreadsheets.
- The International Council of Archives (ICA) is the professional organisation for the world archival community, dedicated to promoting the preservation, development, and use of the world's archival heritage. Archives, by providing evidence of human activities and transactions, underlie the rights of individuals and States, and are

fundamental to democracy and good governance. Archives safeguard the memory of mankind by preserving records of the past. In pursuing the advancement of archives, ICA works for the protection and enhancement of the memory of the world.

- For any press enquiries or images please contact Siobhan Wakely in the Press and Publicity Office at The National Archives tel: 0208 392 5277 e-mail: [siobhan.wakely@nationalarchives.gov.uk](mailto:siobhan.wakely@nationalarchives.gov.uk)