

Closure of British Library Microfilm Unit

Frequently Asked Questions and Responses

1. Will the British Library be able to issue guidelines to public libraries as regards microfilming/digitisation standards and best practice with regard to the preservation of newspaper holdings?

A: The guidelines on microfilming standards remain those issued by the National Preservation Office which continue to be freely available to all here: <http://www.bl.uk/blpac/pdf/microfilmguide.pdf> (or in hard copy on request from the Preservation Advisory Centre).

Forthcoming resources of use will be The National Archives' Handbook on Digitisation, which will be published in early 2011, and 'Guidelines for Creating, Acquiring & Managing Digital Material in Museums, Libraries and Archives' to be produced as a collaborative effort coordinated by the Museums, Libraries & Archives Council and The National Archives, and to which the British Library has input. These are also due to be published in Spring 2011

2. Is microfilming still considered to be the best means of long-term preservation of newspaper holdings or is digitisation also now considered a suitable means of preservation as well as access?

A. Whether microfilming or digitisation is the best method of long-term preservation for newspaper holdings will, at present, largely be determined by an individual organisation's structure and capability for digital preservation. The Preservation Advisory Centre works with other organisations such as the Digital Preservation Coalition to raise awareness of digital preservation issues, and is in the process of establishing a series of low-cost events on digital preservation between January-April 2011 which may be of interest to Newsplan members – further information is available here: <http://www.bl.uk/blpac/digievents.html>

3. Does the British Library now have a programme of digitisation for all its newspaper titles, including regional titles?

A: No, The Library does not have a programme of digitisation for all its titles. The collection has over 750 million pages and is growing every year through Legal Deposit ingest. It will be impossible in the foreseeable future to provide a digital copy of all newspapers.

We are exploring partnership opportunities to digitise parts of this huge collection.

At present we are working with **brightsolid**, an innovative online publisher, and part of the DC Thomson group, to digitise up to 40 million pages of newspaper content over the next ten years. This hugely significant project will mean substantial parts of all our newspaper collections – regional and national - will be available on line for the first time, both providing access for people across the world and also preserving large amounts of our collections

<http://pressandpolicy.bl.uk/Press-Releases/British-Library-and-brightsolid-partnership-to-digitise-up-to-40-million-pages-of-historic-newspapers-271.aspx>

This will supplement our existing digitised 19th century newspaper collection.

4. In the absence of any future microfilming of titles, will the public have access to the British Library original newspapers or will access be to digital surrogates?

A. As part of the current Newspaper Programme, the Library intends to offer access to non-surrogated original newspapers in St Pancras, along with other document supply and St Pancras based research material. This will be alongside access to microfilm and digital surrogates, which will be available in Library reading rooms. This will only apply to non surrogated newspapers which are in suitable conditions for researchers to use. 19% of the collection is not useable, and a further 15% at risk. This deterioration will be greatly slowed by moving the items to Boston Spa.

5. Will the British Library be in a position to return the copyright permission letters we provided for our standing orders so that we can make arrangements with other suppliers? Will the newspaper industry be prepared to allow local authority libraries access to their digital content?

A. Please do let us know which standing orders you have, and we will arrange for the copyright permission letters to be returned to you. As regards access to content, it will be desirable that local authorities make arrangements with local newspaper publishers for copying material

6.1 Will we be able to obtain replacement copies of microfilms previously supplied by the British Library?

6.2 How do you intend to allow access to your printed newspapers in order for us to replace microfilm that has deteriorated and where the original copying was not at a sufficiently high standard?

6.3 As our microfilm collection receives heavy use, there is the inevitable wear and tear. Where you have originated the film will you offer access to your negatives to replace lost/ damaged reels in the future?

A. Yes; the Library has in place arrangements with a third party supplier to provide copies of microfilm

7.1 As we wish to carry out our responsibilities under NEWSPLAN to preserve, and make available locally, newspapers that are currently only held at British Library how will we do this? Do you intend to replace the microfilming service with a digitization service?

A. The Library will not be replacing the existing microfilm service with a digitisation service. Existing microfilm and digital surrogates will continue to be made available in Colindale until the site closes and going forward, at St Pancras.

7.2 I hope in the future you can make some alternative service available. We were recently informed that British Library would cease copying microfilm at the end of this year. Will that service be replaced by a digitization service? Will it be possible for researchers to purchase a digital copy of both short and long runs (a year or more) of a newspaper?

A. We are exploring many partnerships and opportunities to digitise our newspaper collections; and are at present working with brightsolid, an innovative online publisher, to digitise up to 40 million pages of newspaper content over the next ten years. This hugely significant project will mean substantial parts of all our newspaper collections – regional and national - will be available on line for the first time, both providing access for people across the world and also preserving large amounts of our collections.

8. Are there standards available regarding the long term holding of digital content?

A. Standards regarding the long-term holding of digital content are available, but are not widely agreed internationally and are still evolving, as collective understanding of this complex area develops. The training resources produced by the PLANETS project are also useful, and available here: <http://www.planets-project.eu/training-materials/>

9. In view of the fact that less than 6 months notice of the end of the standing order filming was given, will you make available your hard copy newspapers Jul-Dec 2010 for filming by a third party contractor so as to avoid a gap in the microfilmed files.

A. We understand that many of our customers will need to make alternative arrangements to continue to receive microfilm copies of newspapers post 2011. The Library will not be providing this service, however we have provided a list of potential alternative suppliers (please see attached document) who may be of assistance.

10.1 Do you have any suggestions of alternative suppliers who could have our newspapers filmed or digitised?

10.2 A number of our Newsplan members have asked me to see if you have any advice for alternative suppliers for newspaper microfilm now that the BL are ceasing its service.

I am unfamiliar with comparable services that would digitise this material for our library service. Any advice you can provide on this subject and on working with contractors in this field would certainly be appreciated.

A. We do have a list of alternative suppliers; please find their details below:

Bristol Microfilm & Imaging Services Ltd

Unit 5
Dragon Court
St George
Bristol
BS5 7XX

<http://www.businessmagnet.co.uk/company/bristolmicrofilmimagingltd-3899.htm>

Microform Imaging Limited

Main Street,
East Ardsley,
Wakefield,
West Yorkshire,
WF3 2AP

<http://www.microform.co.uk/>

UK Archiving

4 Bankhead Medway, Edinburgh, EH11 4BY
Tel: 0131 453 6872
Fax: 0131 442 1505

<http://www.ukarchiving.co.uk/>

Microformat UK

UK Office Address:	MicroFormat UK Ltd Image House 344 High Street Rochester Kent ME1 1JE UK
Telephone:	+44 (0)1634 813751
Fax:	+44 (0)1634 831557

<http://www.microformat.co.uk/default.aspx>

WILTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

County Hall
Trowbridge
BA14 8JJ
Tel: 01225-713-000
Fax: 01225-713-989

SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL

County Hall
Taunton
Somerset
TA1 4DY
Tel: 01278-451-201
Fax: 01278-452-787
Email: mnfroud@somerset.gov.uk

ROTHERHAM METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Civic Building
Walker Place
Rotherham
S65 1UE
Tel: 01709-823-616
Fax: 01709-823-650
Email: archives@rotherham.gov.uk

SOUTH HAMS NEWSPAPERS LTD

Tindale House
101-103 Fore Street
Kingsbridge
Devon
TQ7 1AF
Tel: 01578-853-101
Fax: 01578-856-499

SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

Corporate Resources
PO Box 1310
Sheffield
S1 1UY
Tel: 0114-273-5067

11. What will become of the BL master negatives (literally thousands of them, I would imagine)?

A. The Library remains committed to safeguarding and preserving this microfilm resource for the future.

12. Has any consideration been given to outsourcing the microfilm duplication to a third party in the UK?

A. The Library has in place arrangements with a third party supplier to provide copies of microfilm

13. The construction of a new building - where will this be?

As you are aware the Government has invested £33m to enable the Library to build a new state of the art Newspaper Storage Building in Boston Spa which will provide the best possible archival conditions for newspapers, to BS5454 preservation standards. This will mean that we will close the Colindale site in December 2012, and the newspaper collection will be maintained in world class conditions.

In the meantime, current legal deposit newspapers are being stored in our new Additional Storage Building at Boston Spa, which is a recently completed state of the art storage centre. The material will be decanted from this building to the Newspaper Storage Building when it is completed in 2012/13.

14.1 With newspapers published after June 2010 not been microfilmed, the implication is that these may be available digitally. Will this be via yourselves, or will this be a case of relying on the digital versions of the publications themselves being maintained electronically?

14.2 Your letter (of September 2010) makes it unclear how visitors to Colindale will have access to newspapers. Is the intention to offer digital access to these newspapers at Colindale or will hard copies be presented to visitors?

14.3 I'd be very grateful if you could let me know what the plans are for future preservation and dissemination of newspapers – I know we've been hoping to move to a digital format for some time, but I'm concerned that the microfilm solution is being ceased without an alternative in place. Look forward to hearing what our options for the future will be.

A. The Library is planning to secure future legal deposit of all electronic publications, including newspapers. We envisage that there will be a gradual build-up of digital files received from publishers.

The Library will preserve digital files received from publishers. Whilst hard copy newspapers are still being received via legal deposit, the BL may offer access in the short term

15. We recently got copies of the a UK regional title up until December 2005 off you, how recent do your records go with this newspaper; would you have up until 2009 in your possession?

A. The Library will continue to collect UK regional newspapers via its legal deposit arrangements, so we will have the dates you mentioned in our collections.

16. If so would it be possible for us to get these copies (Jan 2006 to December 2009) of this newspaper off you before you cease this service?

A. Unfortunately, it will not be possible for the Library to carry out any further microfilming from the end of December 2010. We may, however, place orders for microfilming to take place outside the BL, or we are happy to supply a list of alternative suppliers who could be of some assistance to you in continuing your activities. I have attached the names of these suppliers below.

(see inserted list previous)

17.1 We have received Jan – June 2010 films and would have been expecting to receive the films for July – December 2010 some time in early 2011. We have paid £xxx.xxx for the July – December 2010 films. Can you tell me if this order will be fulfilled or if we will have to ask you for a refund for the amount that has been paid in advance?

17.2 Also please can I check that you will be continuing to do the Newbury Weekly News until December of this year?

A. We will be fulfilling all orders for newspapers published up until the end of June 2010; any orders for periods after June will be fully refunded.

18. We have a credit with you. Presumably you will refund this?

A. We will, of course, refund all credits to our customers

19. The letter says that newspapers received through legal deposit are now processed by Boston Spa rather than London. Will they be storing newspapers a different way, and if so please can I have further details as to what we have to do to start this new process.

A. The site at Boston Spa will be for storing newspapers, and we will be storing them in a state of the art building, with optimum storage facilities. Whereas we will not be microfilming the newspapers, we will be offering access to those hard copy legal deposit newspapers without a surrogate, in the short term. Access to those with a surrogate will be from our reading rooms in Colindale until 2012, and then at St Pancras.

20. Just a quick email to see if you received my earlier email regarding an arrange in which we could possibly borrow issues of newspapers to complete clients microfilming requests

A. Unfortunately, due to collection security and preservation guidelines, we are unable to lend any collection items. We will, however, keep you updated on our programmes to digitise collections.

21. I need to obtain copies of the years 1901-1903 of the Belfast Weekly News, which the Library already has not filmed. Can I place an order for their microfilming?

A. Unfortunately, the Library will be unable to carry out the filming of newspapers. We would suggest contacting the publisher to ask for permissions, and working with an alternative supplier (list attached)