

RECOMMENDED FILE FORMATS

University of Reading Research Data Archive

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Introduction: file format categories

The University of Reading Research Data Archive will accept any file type that you choose to deposit, but you should wherever possible aim to deposit files that are optimised for long-term preservation and use. For these purposes, the Archive acknowledges three categories of files:

Recommended file formats: standard preservation;

Acceptable file formats: general purpose;

Other file formats: specialist and rarely-used.

Guidance on file formats with examples of recommended and acceptable formats is provided in this document.

Overview: formats for preservation and use

To ensure your data remain accessible and usable in the long term, you should where possible deposit files in standard preservation file formats.

Preservation formats typically encode information in a way that is software-independent or allows interoperability between systems and applications. These are usually recognised standard or open formats, such as OpenDocument Format (ODF), ASCII text (.txt), comma-separated values (.csv), or XML.

Recommended File Formats

Proprietary formats are more suitable for preservation if they are widely-used and can be opened in different operating systems and with different programmes or applications:

Recommended File Formats

File type	Format name	File extension(s)
Documentation	Adobe PDF/A	.pdf
	Microsoft Word XML	.docx
	OpenDocument Text	.fodt, .odt
Markup	CSS	.css
	HTML	.htm, .html
	SGML	.sgm, .sgml
	XML	.xml
Tabular	Comma separated values (CSV)	.csv
	Microsoft Excel XML	.xlsx
	OpenDocument Spreadsheet	.fods, .ods
	Tab separated values	.tsv, .tab
Image/graphics	GIF	.gif
	JPEG 2000	.jpxml, .jp3d, .jpf, .jpm, .jpx, .jp2
	PNG	.png
	Postscript	.ps
	Scalable Vector Graphics (SVG)	.svg

TIFF

Acceptable file formats: general purpose

The file formats listed below are not considered to be standard preservation formats, for one or more of the following reasons:

- they are proprietary and system-, software- or version-dependent;
- they are lossy (data are lost when compression is applied);
- they are not as common as formats that have been recommended above.

These are mostly general-purpose formats, and as many are widely used, it is likely that the Archive will be able to preserve them. But preservation of data files in these formats cannot be guaranteed, and they are deposited at your own risk.

If you wish to preserve information, formatting or functionality encoded in files in these formats, you may deposit the original files alongside the same files converted into standard preservation formats.

For instance, you could deposit your SPSS files (.por or .sav) along with standard preservation files in SPSS syntax (.sps) and Plain Text (.txt) data files.

File type	Format name	File extension(s)
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Text

Recommended File Formats

File type	Format name	File extension(s)
Audio	Audio	.au, .snd
	FMP3	.fp, .fmp, .fp3, .fm
	MPEG Audio	.m4a, .mpa, .abs, .mpega
	RealAudio	.rpm, .ra, .ram
Video	AVI Audio/Video Interleaved Format	.avi
	Flash Video	.f4b, .f4a, .f4p, .f4v, .flv
	MPEG	.mpeg, .mpg, .mpe
	Ogg Vorbis Codec Compressed Multimedia File	.ogg

Further information

The National Archives. PRONOM. <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/PRONOM/Default.aspx>

Online registry of file formats.

UK Data Service. Recommended formats. <http://ukdataservice.ac.uk/manage->

data/def114 Tm2 Tr 3154 26g.14 Re2 t3154 8(t)lha6RSe318 m@ (On)42 T8F143.ile f.