



SUSTAINABLE DIGITAL SCHOLARSHIP SERVICE

A YEAR IN REVIEW

2023-2024

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Foreword

In September 2023, the Sustainable Digital Scholarship (SDS) service was integrated into the Bodleian Libraries' rich ecosystem. This pivotal move marked a significant milestone in our mission to support digital sustainability at Oxford. Our team is dedicated to fostering a collaborative environment, strengthening links between the Bodleian and the Humanities Division, facilitating collaboration, and creating synergies that enhance our service offerings. This move has not only broadened the scope of our service but also enabled us to better meet the evolving needs of our diverse user community.

At the vanguard of a new shared service model, SDS is dedicated to providing comprehensive support and advice for researchers in a wide range of academic disciplines, while ensuring that digital sustainability remains at the forefront of our initiatives. We are committed to supporting our colleagues in delivering the Bodleian Strategy (2022-2027), with a focus on key areas such as providing accessible, integrated, and expert support for open scholarship, Research Data Management (RDM), and copyright. We are also dedicated to embedding the University's recommendations on RDM into all stages of the research data lifecycle.

As we look back on this transformative year, we invite you to join us in celebrating what we have achieved with the unwavering support of our colleagues in the Bodleian and Humanities Division. We remain committed to our vision of facilitating excellence in RDM and look forward to building on this foundation in the years to come.

Alex Rooney
SDS Service Manager

Our year in numbers



57

Consultations



2,879,221

Views



15

Bulk migrations completed

677,765

Downloads



7,400

Website visits



11,668

Deposits made

224

New user
accounts created



Making connections

A decorative graphic in the top right corner featuring a white cable that enters from the top, splits into two, and then forms a circular shape around two interlocking puzzle pieces. The puzzle pieces are white with black outlines and are set against a dark grey background. The cable continues to the right and then curves downwards.

The primary purpose of the SDS platform is to keep research outputs ‘warm’ - openly accessible, editable, and extensible – for as long they need to be. We do not offer our service users preservation in perpetuity, as this is provided instead by the University’s core institutional repository, the Oxford Research Archive (ORA).

Our collective aim has always been to ensure that, in the fullness of time – where appropriate and agreed by researchers – data hosted on the SDS platform (‘warm’ data hosting solution) is migrated to its final home in ORA (‘cold’ data hosting solution). However, now that the SDS service is fully integrated with the Bodleian’s Research Data Management (RDM) services, we’ve been able to collaborate with our ORA colleagues to streamline this migration process.

This year we’ve developed a new protocol for ensuring that data held by SDS are recorded as catalogue entries in ORA from the outset. In June 2024, the first SDS ‘catalogue record’ was created in ORA, with many more to follow.

We have enjoyed the opportunity to work much more closely with our ORA colleagues since our transition into the Bodleian, and have already seen the many benefits of being able to do so - for the service and our users.



Love Data Event

SDS hosts and supports events in collaboration with services across Oxford to raise awareness of the Research Data Management (RDM) solutions available to researchers within the University.

On 14 February 2024, to celebrate Love Data Week (12-16 February), we joined forces with colleagues from Oxford Research Archive (ORA), Digital Scholarship @ Oxford (DiSc), Open Science Framework (OSF), Digital Preservation Service (DigiSafe), Research File Service (RFS), and the LabArchives Electronic Lab Notebook service, at an event in the Sheldonian Theatre aimed at helping researchers to find their perfect research data management match.

Together, we delivered a series of presentations to over 50 researchers and research support staff from across the University. As well as giving a flavour of the RDM services at Oxford, it was an excellent opportunity to discuss researchers' requirements and to offer tailored, in-person advice.

For details of upcoming and previous events, visit our website: www.sds.ox.ac.uk/events.

MSc student placement

This year the SDS service has, for the first time, welcomed a practicum placement for the MSc in Digital Scholarship.

The assignment we gave to our placement student, Amy Forza, was to develop a Python script to monitor data usage on the SDS platform, in order to identify in the long term which of our datasets remain 'warm' and which might be candidates for archiving in ORA.

By engaging with the MSc Digital Scholarship programme, we are not only harnessing the technical skills and imagination of the next generation of scholars, but also embedding the best practices of data management at the start of their research careers.



‘I truly enjoyed working on this project and appreciated the opportunity to contribute to such an impactful initiative. The tasks of devising Python scripts for API access, developing analytical criteria, collecting user statistics, and creating a dynamic reporting page to track when data transitions from warm to cool to cold were not only educational but also incredibly fulfilling.’

Supporting our service users

SDS Self Help Library

An important role of the SDS service is to provide advice and guidance to Oxford's academic community on the tools, methods and best practices available to them, to support their Research Data Management (RDM) activities.

In May 2024, we launched a new SDS self-help library (hosted on the SDS platform). Our self-help library collection contains a number of instructional videos ranging from how to create an SDS platform account to 'Data tips: pivot tables in Excel'.

With well over 1,000 views to date, this resource is already proving popular, and we plan to continue to grow and develop this resource further over the coming academic year.

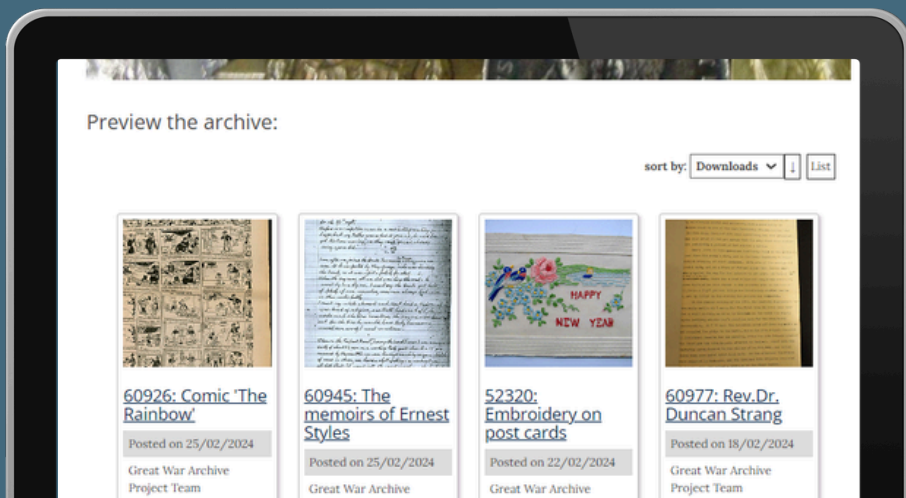
Visit: www.portal.sds.ox.ac.uk/SDS_self_help



SDS Platform Mosaic Widget

In early 2023, the SDS service commissioned the Mosaic development team to create a widget - essentially, a snippet of code - which could be deployed to embed a gallery of records from the SDS platform into a Mosaic webpage. Released in September 2023, the [new Mosaic widget](#) allows project outputs to be sustainably hosted on the SDS platform and also simultaneously surfaced on a project's own website. Importantly, the widget has been developed in a framework-agnostic way, so that it can be embedded in any website within the Oxford domain, not just Mosaic sites, so that it will remain usable on the forthcoming Fresco platform and in custom HTML pages.

This widget has been warmly welcomed by our service users, particularly those with projects aimed at a general public/non-expert audience. It allows for better curation of user journeys and a more seamless experience when navigating between project outputs hosted on a project website (e.g. event information) and the SDS platform (e.g. research data or collections items).



THEIR FINEST HOUR

PRESERVING THEIR MEMORIES UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Funded by the National Heritage Lottery Fund and based in the Faculty of English, '[Their Finest Hour](#)' was a two-year crowdsourcing project that aimed to collect, digitise, and safeguard stories and objects relating to the Second World War. The project culminated in the launch of the '[Their Finest Hour Online Archive](#)', which was published on the SDS platform on 6 June 2024 - the 80th anniversary of the D-Day landings.

The project received more than 2,000 submissions from members of the general public, through a combination of 70 in-person events and an online submissions portal. It also generated over 26,000 files (incl. photographs, audio recordings, and scans of diaries and letters).

This project presented some unique challenges for SDS, particularly in terms of presenting often sensitive and sometimes graphic and/or potentially offensive material on the SDS platform. Furthermore, as the primary audience for this collection is the general public, rather than researchers familiar with navigating archives and repositories, SDS worked closely with the Their Finest Hour project team to ensure records would be findable and accessible e.g. consulting on how to use the project's Mosaic website to curate user journeys and entry points into the SDS platform.

The project received local and national press attention incl. [Sky News](#), [BBC Radio 4 and Radio 5](#), [The Metro](#), and the [The Jewish Chronicle](#) and has had more than 56,000 views and 33,000 downloads on the SDS platform in its first month alone.

We are delighted to have been able to support this important and already well used resource.






The Sphakia Survey

The Sphakia Survey (Faculty of Classics) - which undertook intensive historical, archaeological, and ecological fieldwork in rural Crete - was a digital pioneer, launching a sophisticated research website in 2000. However, by the 2020s, both the software and hardware supporting the website were at imminent risk of obsolescence. The SDS service worked with principal investigator Lucia Nixon to resurrect this unique resource on the SDS platform: obtaining thousands of images from the project archive of CD-ROMs and arranging them in a new framework based on the original website structure.

The [new Sphakia Survey online collection](#) has not only restored access to this widely-used resource but has also enabled the sharing - for the first time - of high-resolution versions of the project's images, and of documentary videos previously only available as VHS cassettes. Thanks to growing access to the internet in the Sphakia region, and the 'responsive design' built into the SDS platform, local residents have been able to engage with the new resource in a way that they could not have done with the original site. The collection has thus achieved a significant impact not only in the academic community but also among the general public - including, importantly, the local communities in Crete.





Child Policy during COVID-19 Database

The COVID-19 pandemic presented unprecedented challenges, testing the limits of policy resources and response capacities globally. The Child Policy during COVID-19 Database, funded by UNICEF, was developed to fill critical information gaps and support the policy and research community in understanding and evaluating the effectiveness of measures taken across 40 countries during the pandemic crisis.

The SDS service worked closely with Principal Investigator Professor Mary Daly to host the database, offering an easily accessible and searchable treasure trove of data detailing the exact measures taken by each country and the conditions under which they were able to respond. The delivery of this important resource enables cross-national comparisons, focusing on similarities and differences across countries during this critical time period, providing a framework and set of benchmarks for the future development and assessment of child and family policies.

This initiative has paved the way for more informed and impactful policy decisions, ensuring that the lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic translate into better protection for children and families worldwide.



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