

2026 Community Interest Groups Call for Proposals

Group Name:

UK-Ireland Web Archive Research Network (UK-IE-WARN)

Coordinators:

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Potential participants:

- Through a series of network meetings (in-person and online), we will bring together GLAM professionals from web archiving initiatives across Ireland and the UK, researchers using web archives (graduate students, early career researchers), and other types of users (historians, journalists, legal professionals) for meaningful conversations regarding the opportunities and challenges of using web archives for research.
- We will unite web archive GLAM professionals in Ireland and the UK with their users. This specifically includes (but is not limited to) staff from The National Archives in the UK, the British Library, Southampton University Library, the National Library of Ireland, and the Digital Repository of Ireland.
- As a cross-disciplinary network, we will be well-positioned to develop guideline materials for GLAM professionals who are new to the web archiving lifecycle and are interested in learning more about user requirements, and provide guidelines for new or potential web archive users, including guidance on how to access and use web archives based in the UK and Ireland.

- The Digital Preservation Coalition are currently re-instating their web archive group focused on bringing archive practitioners together. This network will exist in conversation with the group, offering a space that represents researchers' views. We will present our initial aims to the DPC SIG as a way to garner interest and encourage knowledge sharing with non-UK/Irish groups, and return to the SIG towards the end of the first 18 months to update the group on our work packages.
- We intend to attend the RESAW 2027 conference to share our learnings and work in progress with the group. We will also be looking for other avenues to share our work, including with the ARA Science and Technology committee.
- We will organise a special event to raise awareness of the use of web archives as resources for research that target non-academic audiences and library/archive patrons.

Abstract (<250 words max):

Web archives contain records and documentary evidence of human society, and are becoming more recognised and used as resources for studying the recent past. Nonetheless, web archives can be challenging environments for users because it is often unclear how to access them, what data they hold, or how to responsibly use and reuse the data.

This network will create a collaborative space where academic researchers, other users such as journalists and legal professionals, and web archive creators can discuss the opportunities and challenges of using web archives for research while supporting wider engagement with web archive collections.

Core activities for the group will include a kick-off meeting to launch the group, followed by bi-monthly meetings to address the following objectives:

- identifying existing researchers using web archives based in the UK and Ireland, documenting their work, and developing a shared understanding of their research needs and requirements
- developing guidelines for GLAM professionals who are new to the web archiving lifecycle, and are interested in learning more about user requirements
- developing guidelines for new or potential web archive users, with a focus on access and use of web archives in the UK and Ireland
- creating an online resource to aid web archive research with UK and Ireland collections

- organising a mailing list for the network to share and express ideas
- providing opportunities for researchers to share work at special group events
- organising a special event to raise awareness of the use of web archives that target non-academic audiences and library/archive patrons

Relevance (250-500 words):

To date, there has been no combined effort to develop a network for web archive creators and users across the UK and Ireland. Several successful projects have taken place at a more local level, such as BUDDAH, the DRI's recent web archive programme, or Archives of Tomorrow – but rarely have multiple institutions across the HEI and GLAM sectors from Ireland and the UK come together to discuss the common challenge of access, use, and reuse of these complex collections. We aim to develop a collaborative network of web archive creators and users which will organically grow over time.

This community of interest aligns with the UK-Ireland Digital Humanities Association's core values of inclusivity, community, collaboration and sustainability, and harmonizes with the Association's goal to nurture research in DH, establish and sustain connections with sectors outside higher education, and create new pathways for collaboration.

This network will be the first attempt to establish a cross-disciplinary community interested in encouraging and enabling the use of web archives for research across the UK and Ireland. To date, this challenge has typically been dealt with at institutional level, which makes working with the collections as an external researcher more difficult. By bringing web archive creators together with academics and other types of users, the network will help lower barriers to using web archives for research or other purposes, and strengthen digital humanities practice. In turn, the collections themselves will become more sustainable, as the use and reuse of web archive collections promotes their value to stakeholders. Supporting researchers enables web archives to develop business cases for stronger funding leverage, which in turn will develop their services and will benefit current and future end users in the long term.

Preserving the web is crucial because web content is fragile and ephemeral. Without active web archiving, we risk losing entire eras of human culture, news, scientific data, and historical records to link rot and technological obsolescence. This means that web archives are essential to capture and preserve the current web, and are a fundamental resource for researchers to study the past web, which makes lowering the barriers for entry to using web archives for research an urgent challenge for the whole DH field.

As a cross-disciplinary network, we will be in a strong position to develop guidelines for GLAM professionals who are new to the web archiving lifecycle and user requirements,

and to develop guidelines for new or potential web archive users, including guidance on how to access and use web archives in the UK and Ireland.

This network is meaningfully embedded both in Ireland and the UK. It will be represented in the new DPC group focused on web archiving and will have opportunities to disseminate the network's activities at conferences and online events such as the IIPC RSS Series.[1] Sharing outcomes from the CIG at events across Ireland and the UK as well as with the DPC and IIPC gives us the greatest chance of enacting change that is far-reaching and sustainable.

[1] The IIPC (International Internet Preservation Consortium) Research Speaker Series (RSS) is a webinar program focused on the research use of web archives. It highlights use cases, collaborative projects, and new data tools for researchers, archivists, and digital humanities scholars.