



# National Digital Archive of Datasets (NDAD)

## Transfer Procedures (OVERVIEW)



### About this document

This document aims to provide background information and a short description of the National Digital Archive of Datasets (NDAD) and an overview of the procedure for transferring datasets to the Archive.

More detailed information can be found in the following documents:

- Explanatory notes accompanying the Dataset transfer forms
- NDAD Transfer Procedures: Help & Advice (i) Documentation
- NDAD Transfer Procedures: Help & Advice (ii) Glossary of Terms Used
- NDAD Transfer Procedures: Help & Advice (iii) Practical Issues - Packaging & Transport
- NDAD Transfer Procedures: Help & Advice (iv) Advice for IT staff

Further background information on NDAD can be found on the website (<http://www.ndad.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>) or via The National Archives' (TNA) website (<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>).

### Background

The Public Records Act 1958 does not define public records by physical medium and therefore records which are created and held in digital form by government bodies are covered by the Act and are public records in the same way as paper and parchment records. In recognition of its obligation to secure the preservation of, and ultimate provision of access to electronic records, TNA has established a Digital Preservation Department, which manages the storage of all electronic records transferred for permanent preservation. NDAD is one of its services, and deals specifically with structured datasets, such as survey files and databases, which have been used in government departments for some years.

In 1995, TNA decided to find an outside body to act as its agent in preserving and providing access to this data. A contract to provide this service was awarded in 1997 to the University of London (UL). The services are provided by the University of London Computer Centre (ULCC).

TNA also manages an e-records programme for the records created in the office networks in operation in government bodies. This work focuses on word-processed documents more analogous to traditional paper records, and is being run by TNA itself.

## Description of NDAD

The National Digital Archive of Datasets is a service to conserve and, where possible, provide access to public records which take the form of computer datasets and which originated in central government departments and agencies. The digital preservation and public access services are provided through secure facilities at ULCC based on a 300 Terabyte storage server (equivalent to almost half a million CD-ROMs.) In contrast to other records held at TNA and in places of deposit, access to the catalogues and the archives themselves usually will be remote, via the World Wide Web.

The datasets transferred by NDAD come from the same wide range of government departments and agencies which currently transfer material to The National Archives. A list of currently available datasets can be seen on the NDAD website at: (<http://www.ndad.nationalarchives.gov.uk/access/?sort=dept>). Selection of material for transfer to NDAD takes place in the same way as for traditional paper records, with TNA and government departments together deciding which data qualifies for permanent preservation. Once this decision has been taken, staff from NDAD and TNA work with staff from the relevant department in order to transfer the data and related documentation to NDAD. NDAD staff then begin work on accessioning and cataloguing the data (producing descriptions of the data's origin, provenance, purpose and contents) and convert it to formats suitable for long-term storage.

Datasets and related documentation transferred to NDAD are made available to the public following their acquisition and subject to agreement on access/confidentiality issues. These are covered in greater detail in the explanatory notes accompanying the Dataset Transfer forms for both the DRO and Data Owner.

## Preparing for transfer of data

If a dataset has been selected for transfer by TNA, departments can help to ensure that the process of transfer goes as smoothly as possible by observing the following points.

1. Inform NDAD of any areas such as confidentiality issues, copyright, Data Protection, Freedom of Information etc that could have an effect on access to the data and/or documentation.
2. Make a decision on what related dataset documentation can be transferred to NDAD for accessioning with the data or loaned to NDAD for reference or digitisation.
3. Notify NDAD of particularly convenient or inconvenient times of year for the work on transfer to take place.
4. Give an indication of any technical problems that might arise in the process of preparing data for transfer.
5. Provide NDAD with contact details of personnel who may be able to assist with various aspects of the transfer such as technical specialists or those in a position to provide information about the original implementation or use of the system.

## Transfer process

There are a number of steps involved in arranging the transfer of a dataset to NDAD.

1. TNA & Department identify data for permanent preservation. TNA informs NDAD requesting that they contact the Department to make arrangements for transfer.
2. NDAD sends Dataset Transfer forms to the DRO and Data Owner in transferring Department. (A separate Transfer List form, which will list the items dispatched to NDAD, is also sent). This is usually done within a week of receiving notification from TNA of a dataset to be transferred, unless the transfer is not to take place for some months, in which case the forms are normally sent out nearer the time scheduled for the transfer.
3. The DRO and Data Owner complete the Dataset Transfer forms seeking assistance from relevant staff such as IT specialists and staff in the originating division who may need to provide information. NDAD can also provide help and advice at this stage if necessary.
4. Once completed the two forms should be sent direct to NDAD who will send a copy to the Client Manager at TNA. When NDAD staff have received the transfer forms from the Department they may ask the Department to provide further information to assist with processing the data.
5. The Department arranges for the preparation of the data; this may involve arranging for the required work to be carried out by the internal IT department or an external IT contractor.
6. The Department should begin packing the material to send to NDAD as early as possible following the receipt of the transfer forms by NDAD. When the transfer forms and all other information relevant to the transfer have been received, NDAD staff request the Department to finish packing the dataset and the dataset documentation and complete the transfer lists to accompany the packed items. Before material is dispatched to NDAD, the Department should inform NDAD by telephone or email as to when the material is being dispatched and by what method. The transfer lists should be sent to NDAD with the data and documentation.
7. On receipt NDAD will acknowledge receipt of the dataset and dataset documentation. As work on the dataset progresses this will be followed up by the issue of two further receipts. A "Stage One" receipt is issued when NDAD has fully checked the content of the data received. By issuing a "Stage One" receipt NDAD confirms that the data received is readable and that sufficient documentation has been received to allow the data to be processed and a finding aid to be written. A "Stage Two" receipt is issued when NDAD has completed all its work on the dataset.

## Who needs to be involved within the Department

It is likely that there will be a number of staff within the Department, possibly across a number of sections, who will need to be involved at various stages prior to, during or following, the transfer of the dataset to NDAD.

- The Departmental Record Officer or a nominated deputy;
- The data owners i.e. those who have some sort of say as to who is allowed to access/use the data and for what. There may be more than one section and/or section uses the data on a day-to-day basis for administrative work but the data was collected by another section or is separately used by statisticians to provide data for policy or other management decisions;
- Some form of 'data ownership' may also reside with an external organisation, for example a market research company who collected the data and carried out initial analyses or an external contractor for the entire project;
- Departmental IT staff;
- External IT contractor.

## The preservation / security of your data

Data within NDAD has been selected by TNA for permanent preservation; this is achieved by:

- Converting the data to a standard, non-proprietary format;
- Checking, re-writing and replacing the media as required;
- Transferring the data from new to replacement media when hardware or software developments lead to obsolescence;
- Converting or creating metadata for access and descriptive purposes.

The data is held securely at all times and a number of mechanisms are in place to ensure that closed data cannot be accessed, except by authorised staff. It is possible to arrange for Departmental staff to have access to their own closed data.