

Digital archives: what to do

Kate Fernie

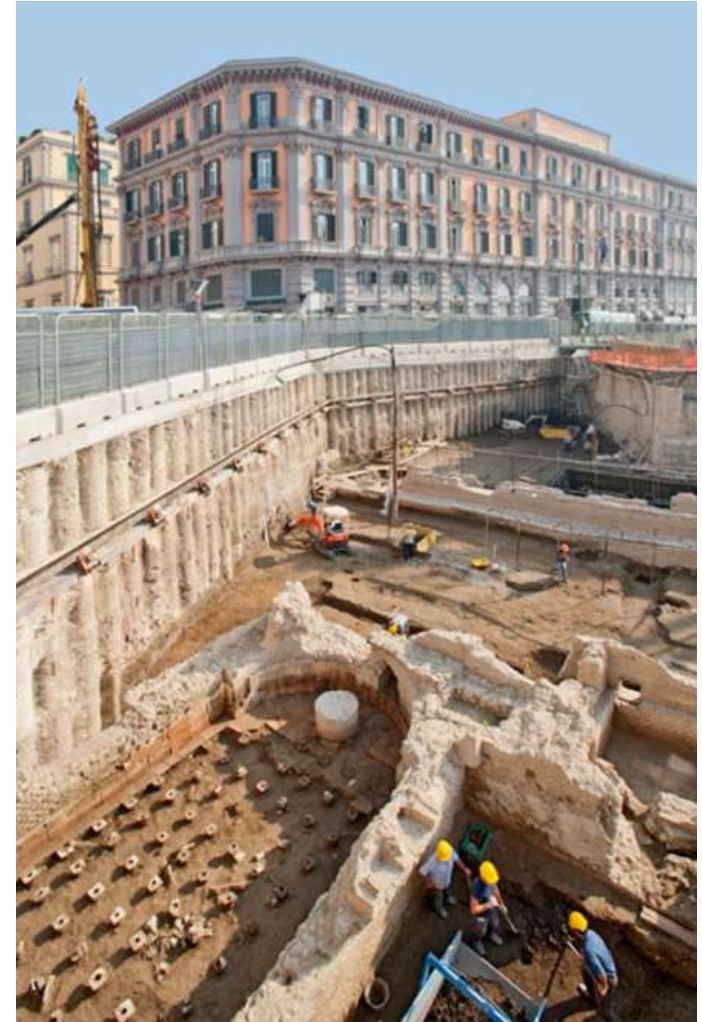


Archaeology is digital!

The use of computers has become routine:

- For recording on site (survey, contexts, etc.)
- Post-ex analysis (spreadsheets and datasets)
- Reports and drawings are born digital

Most archaeological archives now have a digital component

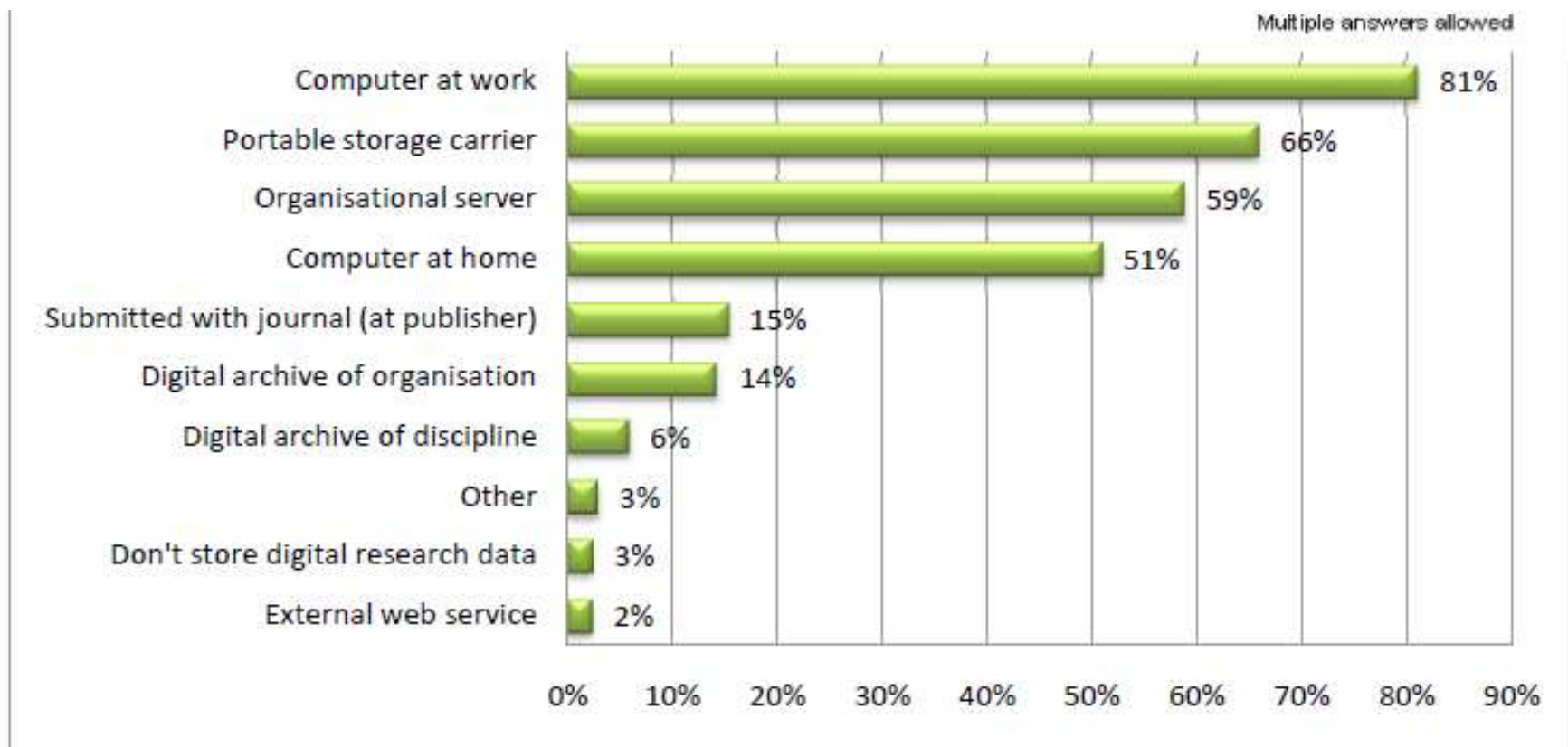


Why is it so important to preserve digital data?

- Archaeology is destructive
- The record archaeologists create is a resource for future research
- The data you capture may be the only record of heritage assets



Where do you store your data?



The results of this 2009 survey of researchers are probably still fairly typical (PARSE.Insight)

Warning!

- Tapes, discs, CDs and DVDs have a finite life
 - They degrade over time and specific types go out of use
 - They can easily be damaged and data is easily over written
- Hardware becomes obsolete



5.25" Floppy



My lithics report is here, on a CD



What to do

Everyone has a part to play:

- Development management archaeologists
- Archaeological contractors
- Museums



We all need to

- Recognise data is as fragile as the archaeological record we excavate
- Stop archiving data as objects rather than computerised information
- Raise awareness of what's involved in digital preservation



DM archaeologists

- Specify that data management plans and OASIS reporting are put in place in WSIs
- Recommend standards and best practices
- Specify the deposit of digital data with a Trusted Digital Repository (ADS)
- Talk about the costs of digital archiving and make sure they're understood

Archaeological units

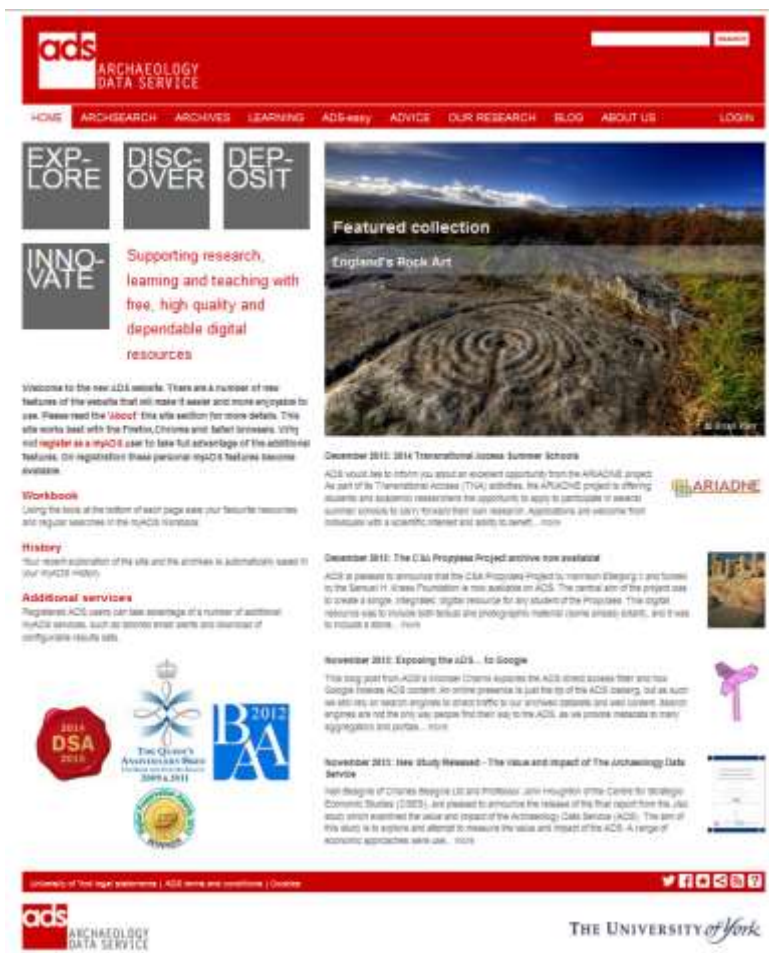
Put in place a data management plan and implement it!

The plan should cover:

- The data you will be creating
- How this will be documented (the standards to follow; the naming conventions to use)
- Where data will be stored during the project
- Who is responsible for data security and backups
- Obtaining permission from the owners of the IPR to preserve and distribute the data
- Where data will be deposited after the project

Museums

- Stop accepting CDs and DVDs in documentation boxes (or otherwise)
- Specify the deposit of digital data with a Trusted Digital Repository (ADS)
 - Point to the ADS cost calculator for digital data
- Talk to ADS about access to digital data from units and researchers working in your collecting area



Mission

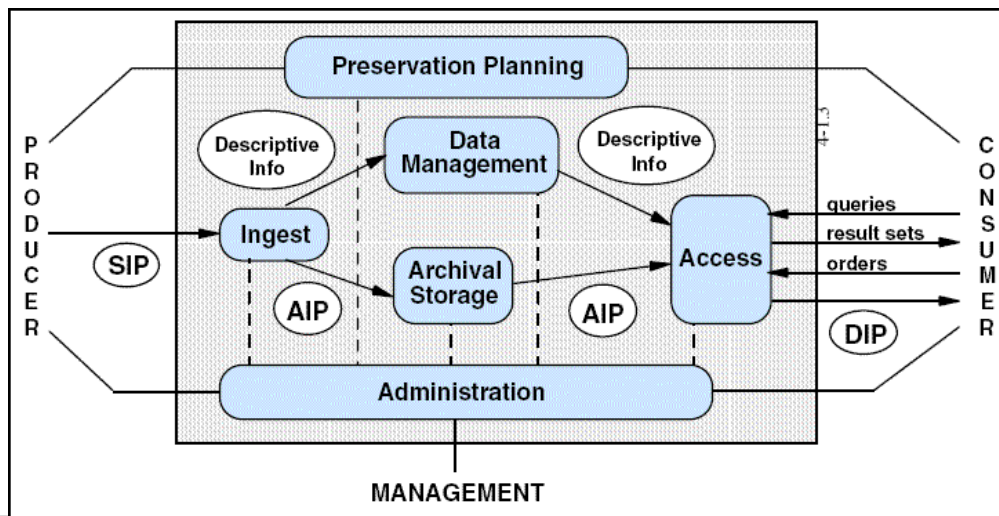
Supporting research, learning and teaching with free, high quality and dependable digital resources

- Digital preservation
- Free access to data via the Internet
- Guidance and support for data creators
- Founded 1996
- Department of Archaeology, University of York
- Guides to Good Practice
- Digital Preservation Coalition Decennial Award 2012



Why are we recommending ADS for preservation of digital data?

- ADS holds a Data Seal of Approval
 - It follows the Open Archival Information System (OAIS) reference model
 - Accepts the responsibility for preserving data and making it available to the archaeology community



Datasealofapproval.org

What does ADS hold?

Archives

- 20,000+ Grey Literature reports
- 400+ Project Archives
- 18 Journals and Series
- 6 specialist bibliographies
- Doctoral Theses

Archsearch

- Over a million records (NMRs, HERs, ++)

Specialised websites

- England's Rock Art

The screenshot shows the ADS website interface. At the top left is the ADS logo and name. A navigation menu includes HOME, ARCHSEARCH, ARCHIVES, LEARNING, ADVICE, OUR RESEARCH, BLOG, ABOUT US, and LOGIN. A search bar is located at the top right. Below the navigation is a 'BROWSER BASIC' sidebar with filters for WHAT, WHERE, and WHEN. The main content area shows search results for 'English Heritage NMR Excavation Index for England' with three entries: ABBEY FIELDS ABBEYMEAD, AINSBROOK SITE, and APPLEGARTH WEST OF ST ANDREWS CHURCHYARD. Each entry includes a brief description and location. A 'RESET QUERY' button is visible above the results. On the right side of the page, there is a vertical banner for 'EXTERNAL ADVANCED MAP'.

- Depositors have a landing page for their collections within the ADS site
- Pilot projects with both contractors and museums
 - Site archives: reports, images + original data

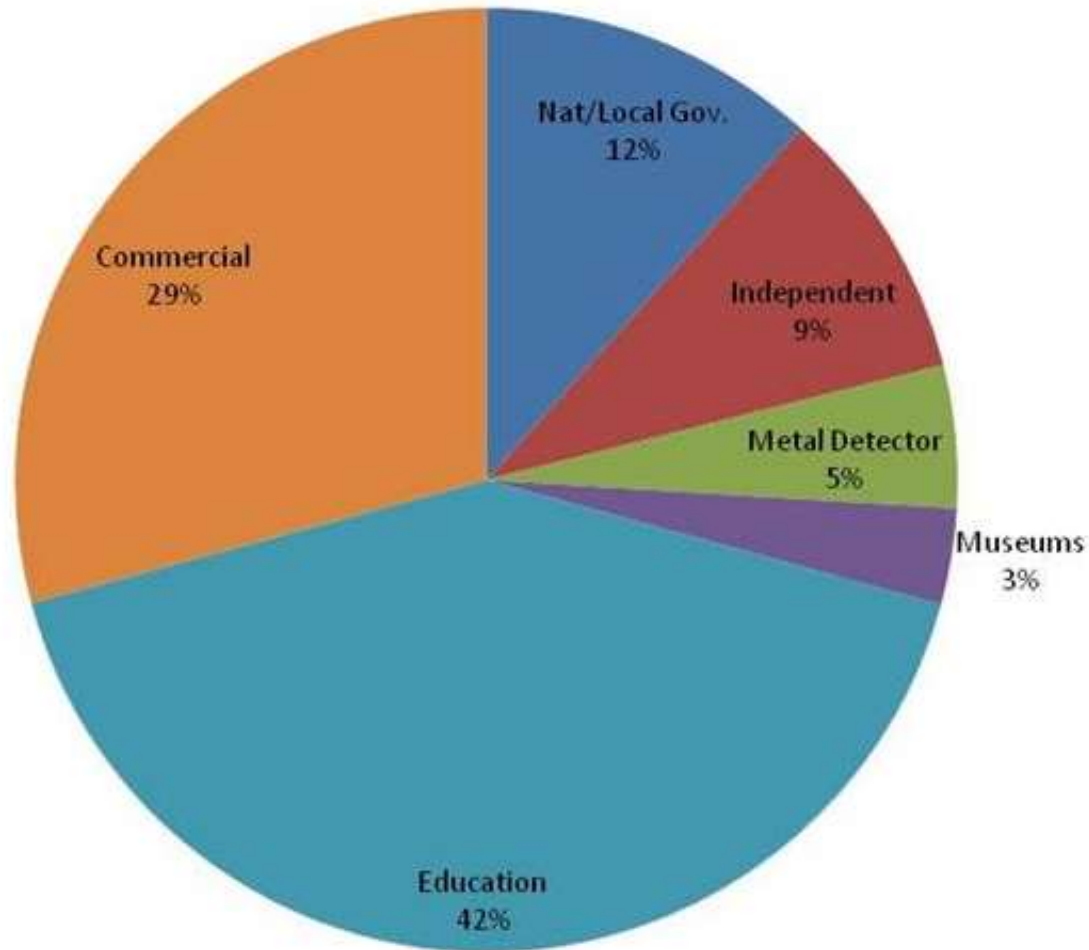
The screenshot shows the ADS website interface. At the top, there is a blue header with the ADS logo and a search bar. Below the header is a navigation menu with links for HOME, ARCHSEARCH, ARCHIVES, DEPOSIT, LEARNING, ADVICE, RESEARCH, ABOUT US, BLOG, and LOGIN. A secondary menu lists categories: ALL, JOURNALS AND SERIES, GREY LITERATURE, PROJECT ARCHIVES, BIBLIOGRAPHIES, and THESES.

The main heading is "Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon Collections". On the left, there is a "Homepage Archives" section with the "DevonMuseums" logo and contact information for the Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon. A "Send a-mail enquiry" button is also present.

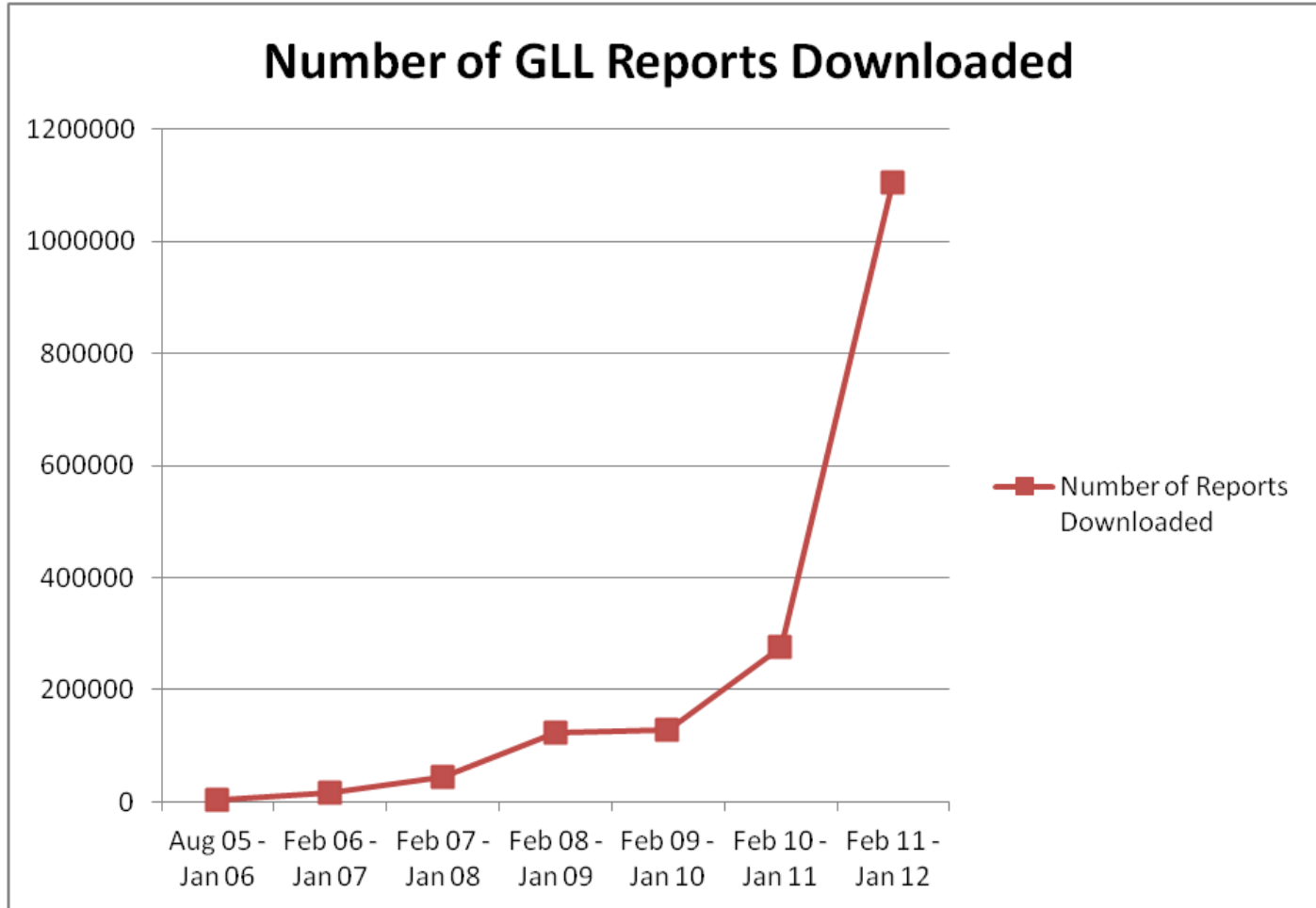
On the right, under "Available archives:", a notice states that 5 archives have been added. Below this, three archive entries are displayed, each with a thumbnail image, title, dates, release date, and collection DOI. Each entry also features the "AC archaeology" logo.

Thumbnail	Title	Dates	Released	Collection doi
	The Former Showground at Holsworthy, Devon (OASIS ID: acarchae2-82830)	24 August 2010 - 31 August 2010	15 March 2013	10.5284/1018191
	South Yeo Farmhouse (OASIS ID: acarchae2-160456)	24 August 2010 - 31 August 2010	03 September 2014	10.5284/1027512
	Northam Burrows HELS archaeological survey (OASIS ID: acarchae2-167239)	30 September 2013 - 12 December 2013	26 May 2015	10.5284/1031217

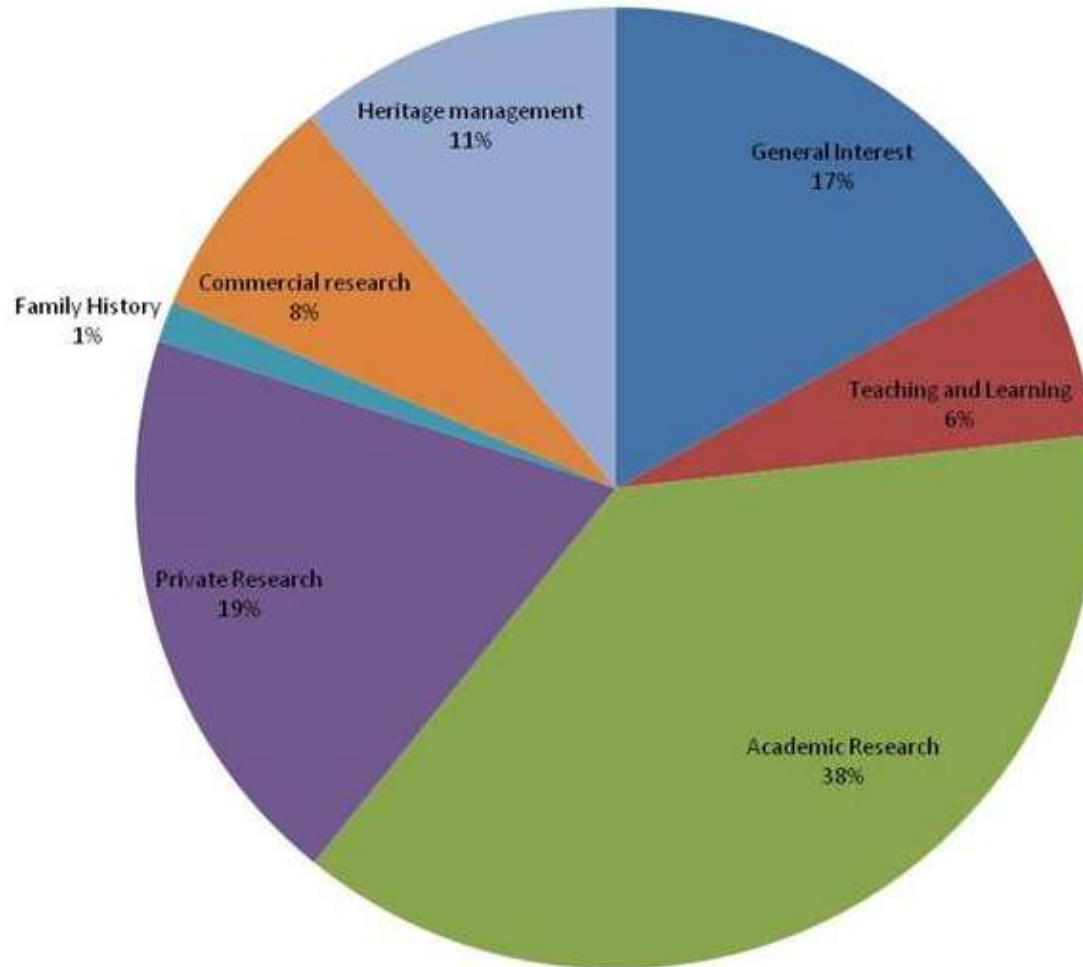
Who is using the ADS?



Use of grey literature reports



What is ADS data used for?



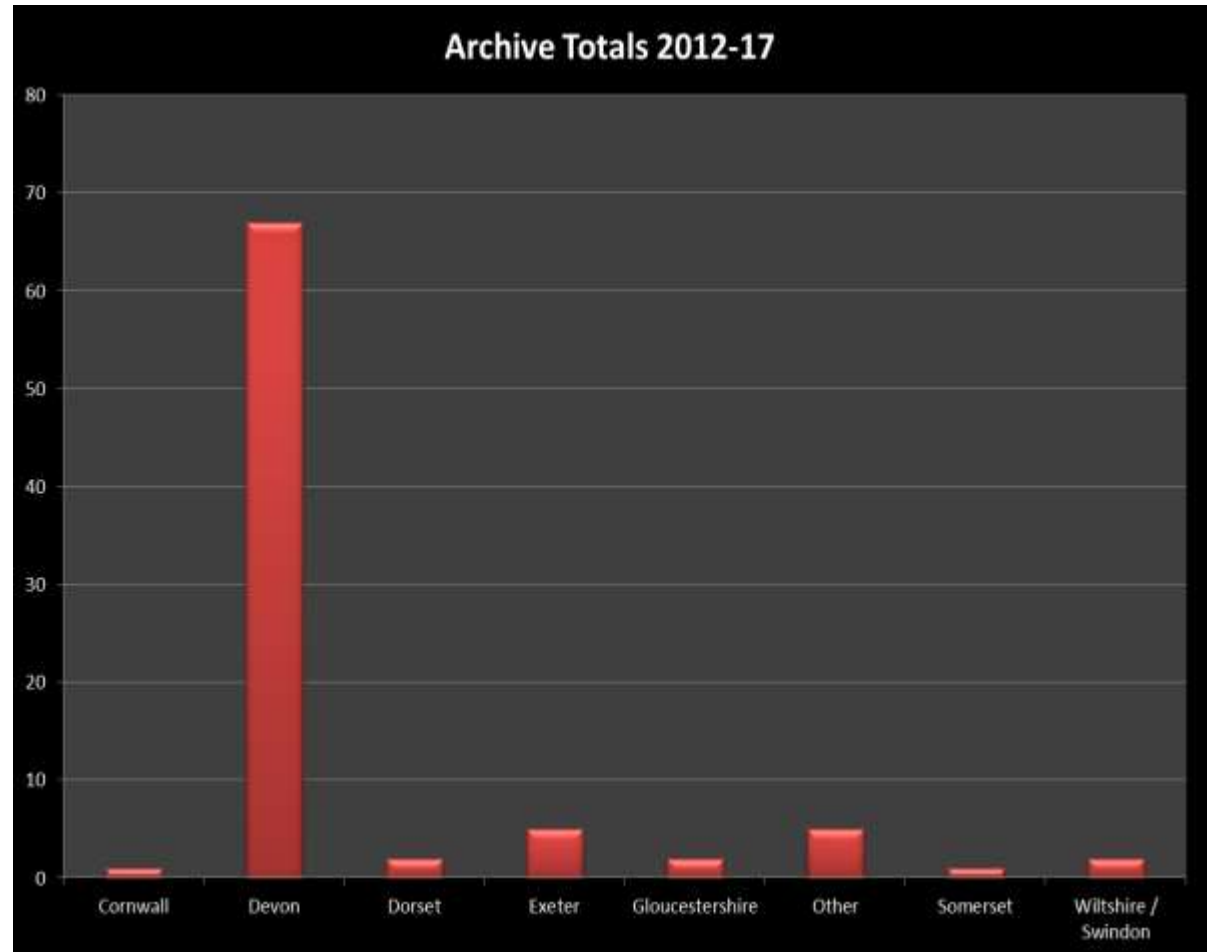
Grounds for Optimism...

- **Digital Archives in Devon**
 - Built into WSI specifications since 2012
 - Over 60 archives deposited
 - Makes a clear difference...



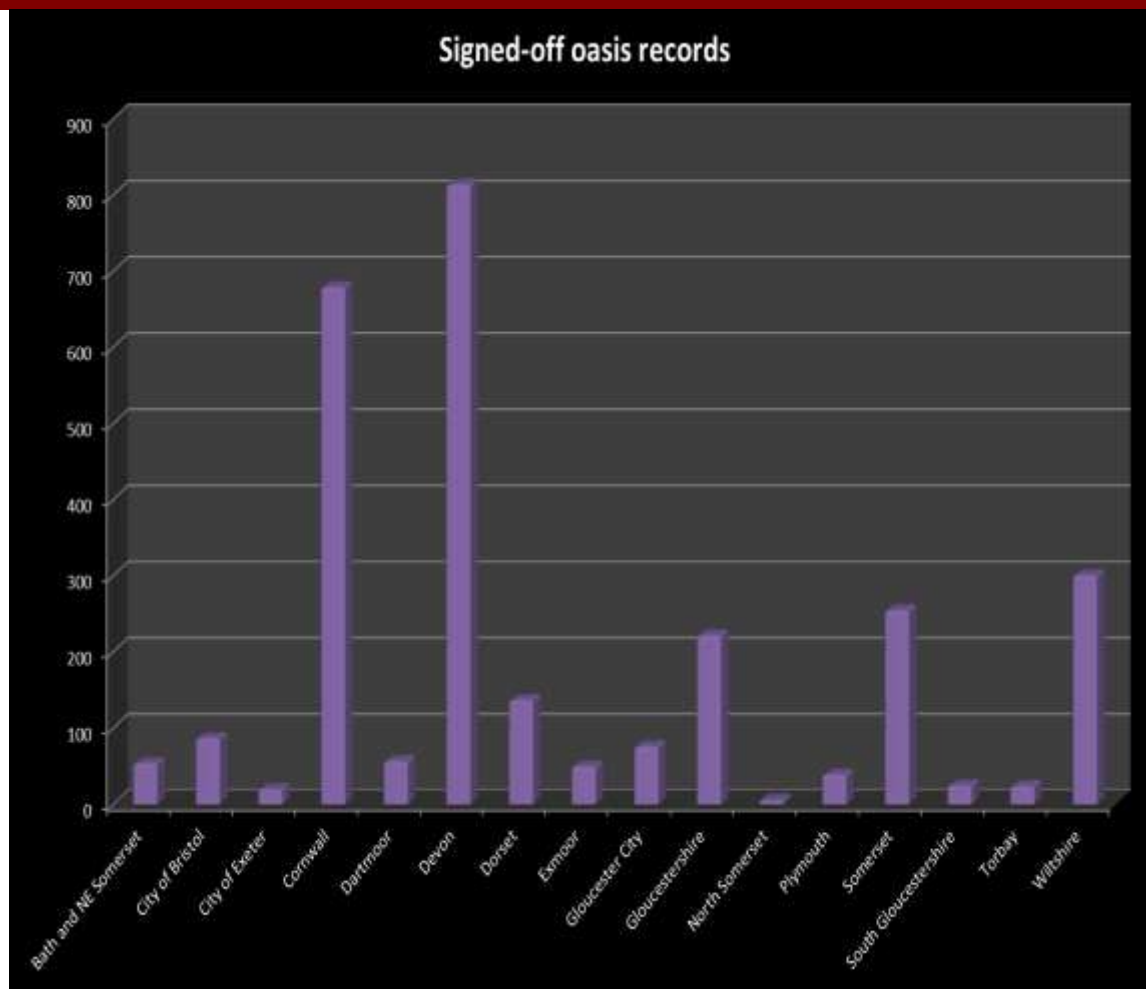
Deposits 2012-17

- Cornwall – 1
- Devon – 60+
- Exeter - 5
- Dorset – 2
- Gloucs – 2
- Somerset – 1
- Wiltshire & Swindon – 2



..but we're not quite there yet!

- The number of investigations reported on OASIS is significantly higher
- After taking into account investigations that would not have generated an archive (desk-based assessments, HE research reports, etc.)
- The figures suggest there are digital archives



Digital archives: what to do

summing up



Conclusions

- Remember that digital data is fragile
- Follow standards and best practices
- Stop archiving CDs and DVDs as objects
- Deposit data for archiving with a Trusted Digital Repository (ADS)
- Build the costs into projects up-front using costing tools e.g. ADS Calculator, email collections@ads.ac.uk (for large projects).

Any questions?

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