

# Born-digital personal archives: a case study from the British Library

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# digital memories and realities – digital lives

From *Foucault's Pendulum*, by Umberto Eco (trans. William Weaver)

“...I could have deleted the first draft. I left it to show the “is” and the “ought”, that accident and necessity, can co-exist on the screen. If I wanted, I could remove the offending passage from the screen but not from the memory, thereby creating an archive of my repressions while denying omnivorous Freudians and virtuosi of variant texts the pleasure of conjecture, the exercise of their occupation, their academic glory.”

“... meeting the challenges (and realizing the opportunities) of the born digital will require close cooperation and communication among a triad of stake-holders: authors and other content creators; archivists and information specialists; and finally scholars ...”

Matthew G. Kirschenbaum, ‘Tracking the changes’, *The Cambridge Companion to Textual Scholarship* (CUP: 2013), p. 271

# Some suggested reading

- Brent Lee, 'Issues surrounding the preservation of digital music documents', *Archivaria*, 50 (2000), 193-204.
- Elizabeth Berndt-Morris and Sandi-Jo Malmon, 'Surveying composers: methods of distribution, discoverability, and accessibility of their works and the corresponding impact on library collections', *Fontes*, 67/2 (2020), 81-98.
- Kent Underwood, 'Scores, libraries, and web-based self-publishing composers', *Notes*, 73/2 (2016), 205-240.
- Richard Chesser and Rupert Ridgewell, 'Non-print legal deposit and music in the UK: a progress report', *Brio*, 56/2 (2019), 87-95.
- Amelie Roper, 'From print to digital: first steps in collecting digital music publications in UK legal deposit libraries', *Alexandria*, 30/1 (2020).
- Axel Teich Geertinger, 'Turning music catalogues into archives of musical scores – or vice versa: music archives and catalogues based on MEI XML', *Fontes*, 61/1 (2014), 61-66.

- Stephanie Akau, Janet McKinney and Rachel McNellis, 'Preferred preservation formats for digital music scores: a survey of university music faculty', *Notes*, 79/4 (2023), 495-523.
- Library of Congress, [Music notation: preferred preservation formats for digital scores](#) (accessed 30/07/2023).
- Ross Feller, 'E-sketches: Brian Ferneyhough's use of computer-assisted compositional tools', in *A handbook to twentieth-century musical sketches* (ed. Hall and Sallis), CUP (2005).
- Matthew G. Kirschenbaum and Doug Reside, 'Tracking the changes', in *The Cambridge Companion to Textual Scholarship* (ed. Fraistat and Flanders), CUP (2013). [covers the Jonathan Larsen archive at the Library of Congress]
- Twila Bakker, 'Floppy disks and FireWire drives: towards an understanding of the shifting nature of musical sketch material', *STM-SJM*, 99 (2017), 21-35.
- Twila Bakker, 'Steve Reich's *Counterpoints* and computers: rethinking the 1980s', in *Rethinking Reich* (ed. Gopinath and Siôn), OUP (2019).

# Digital archival collecting at the British Library

BRITISH LIBRARY

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**The Observer**  
Andrea Levy

## Andrea Levy's notes on Mary Seacole brought to light by IT experts

The writer's scripts for a TV series about the nurse were among those recovered from her old computer by the British Library



Vanessa Thorpe  
Sun 2 Jul 2023 15.00 BST

f t e

Andrea Levy in 2005. Photograph: David Levenson/Getty Images

Had it been made, the television drama would have begun with a middle-aged Mary Seacole, the British-Jamaican woman who nurses hundreds of British soldiers during the Crimean war, introducing herself to staff at the

Digital Lives project (2007-2009)

Some collections with a digital component:

- Authors (Andrea Levy, Ronald Harwood)
- Poets (Wendy Cope, David Gascoyne, D. M. Thomas)
- Playwrights (Harold Pinter)
- Scientists (Sir John Houghton, Anne McLaren, John Maynard Smith)
- Publishers (Golgonooza Press)
- Organisations (US-UK Fulbright Commission Archive; Oral History Society Archive)

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2023/jul/02/andrea-levys-notes-on-mary-seacole-brought-to-light-by-it-experts>

# Brian Elias

- Born 1948, Bombay (now Mumbai)
- Studied at the Royal College of Music
- Later studied privately with Elisabeth Lutyens
- Best known for writing the music for Kenneth Macmillan's ballet, *The Judas Tree*



Brian Elias: *Doubles* for orchestra (2009). BBC Symphony Orchestra, cond. Jiří Bělohlávek



# A hybrid archive

- First tranche of Brian Elias's archive was acquired by the British Library in 2005 (MS Mus. 1123-1156)



- Subsequent deposits catalogued as MS Mus. 1848 – including born-digital material





# Capture

For Brian Elias's archive (on Mac Mini):

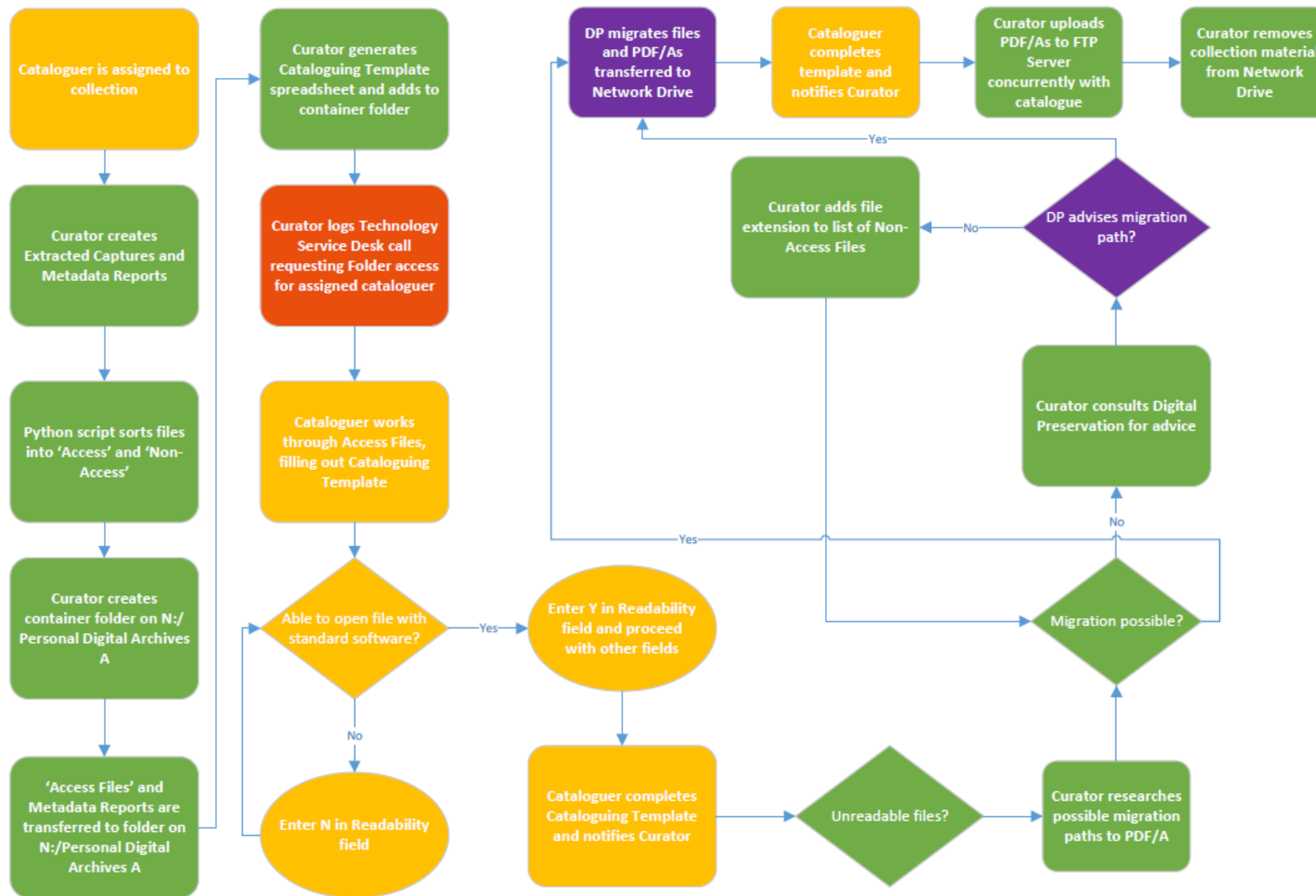
Carbon Copy Cloner: <https://bombich.com/>  
(<https://www.macupdate.com/app/mac/7032/carbon-copy-cloner>)

For Windows PCs:

FTK Imager software: <https://www.exterro.com/ftk-imager>

# Personal digital archives - cataloguing workflow

BRITISH LIBRARY



# Cataloguer spreadsheet

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► **Add MS 89202/11: McLaren: Books and press cuttings (1902-2006)**

▼ **Add MS 89202/12: McLaren: Born-Digital material (1988-2006)**

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- Add MS 89202/12/3-3: 02-Untitled CD (2002)
- Add MS 89202/12/4-4: 03-Anne\_McLaren\_June (2002)
- Add MS 89202/12/5-5: 04-CSH Stem Cells 02.ppt (2002)
- Add MS 89202/12/6-6: 05-japan2002 (2002)
- Add MS 89202/12/7-7: 06-tsunoda1 (2002)
- Add MS 89202/12/8-8: 07-tsunoda2 (2002)
- Add MS 89202/12/9-11: 08-McLaren\_Cambridge\_2002 (2002)
- Add MS 89202/12/12-12: 09-untitled (2002)
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- Add MS 89202/12/14-14: 11-Brno\_presentation\_2003 (2003)
- Add MS 89202/12/15-15: 12-Untitled CD (2003)
- Add MS 89202/12/16-16: 13-Untitled CD (2003)
- Add MS 89202/12/17-17: 14-CSH2003 (2003)
- Add MS 89202/12/18-18: 15-students2003.ppt (2003)
- Add MS 89202/12/19-108: 16-NEW 'simpozij\_biologija\_opf\_files' (2003)
- Add MS 89202/12/109-109: 17-Skreb:Zagreb (2003)
- Add MS 89202/12/110-110: 18-Lawson.ppt (2004)
- Add MS 89202/12/111-111: 19-Warsaw2004 (2004)
- Add MS 89202/12/112-112: 20-FrozenArk.ppt (2004)

▼ **Add MS 89202: Supplementary Anne McLaren papers (1902-2007)**


- **Add MS 89202/1: McLaren: Notebooks and biographical papers (c**
- **Add MS 89202/2: McLaren: Writings (1952-2007)**
- **Add MS 89202/3: McLaren: Correspondence, reviews, revisions an**
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- **Add MS 89202/5: McLaren: Conferences and presentations (1959-**
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- **Add MS 89202/7: McLaren: Project reports, grant applications and**
- **Add MS 89202/8: McLaren: UK and EU working groups (1974-200**
- **Add MS 89202/9: McLaren: Institutions and organisations (1965-**
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# Access

- Access is currently limited to the computer terminals in the Manuscripts Reading Room
- An FTP server provides readers with access copies of files
- Usually PDF, or TIFF image files
- However these are not currently linked to catalogue records – readers need to find material in the catalogue first and then find relevant material in the born digital collection space

# Questions for the future

- **Acquisition:** purchase, uniqueness, what is in scope (collecting policies and relationship with non-print legal deposit)
- **Capture:** being able to adequately capture material from new versions and emerging technologies
- **Processing:** quantities of material and metadata levels; sensitivity checks; relationships within the catalogue and archival structure
- **Access:** meaningful access
- [and not to forget digital preservation!]

**Thank  
you**

**Please feel free to get in touch!**

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