



## Record DNA

# Reconceptualising the life of digital records as the future evidence base

An international multidisciplinary research network

Prof Julie McLeod & Dr Elizabeth Lomas



Arts & Humanities  
Research Council

#RecordDNA @RecordDNA  
<https://RecordDNA.wordpress.com>

# Aim

Bring together practitioners and academics from multiple disciplines to:

1. problematise the current concept of the digital record and work towards a reconceptualisation that more adequately facilitates its management
2. identify what research is needed to ensure the future digital evidence base is usable to best effect through time



# Objectives

1. To explore how the digital has put the traditional concept of the record at risk
2. To identify the different stakeholder perspectives on what constitutes a record, concerns about and needs for the evidence base
3. To critically explore the DNA of a digital record and the implications of the digital era for the usability and functionality of the future evidence base
4. To identify the key issues and challenges and propose a research agenda, informed by practice and multiple stakeholder perspectives, to address them



# Activities

- **Workshop 1:** identifying key issues & perspectives about the future usability of the digital evidence base
- **Crowdsourcing:** wiki surveys about risks to the digital evidence base & components of a digital evidential record
- **Workshop 2:** dissected the digital record DNA, articulated a vision of the 'ideal useable digital evidence base' & identified research & practice needed to deliver the vision
- **Crowdsourcing:** survey about research & practice/development agenda
- **Final event:** sharing findings and finalising a research agenda



# Record Risks

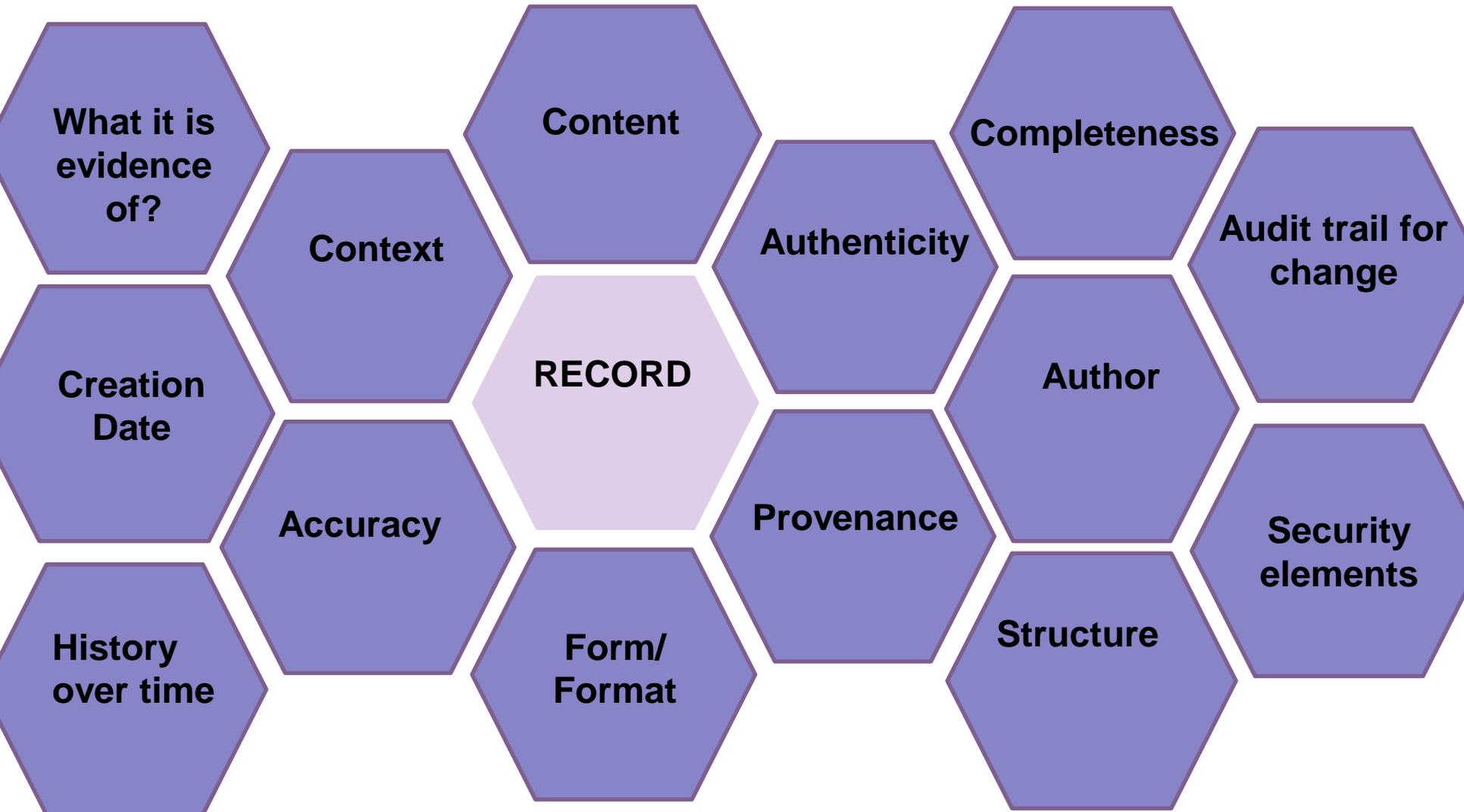
## Wiki Survey: **8299** votes on **57** ideas

1. The exponential growth of digital records; particularly as there confusion as to what to keep and what to dispose of
2. Loss of intelligence around where important information is stored
3. How to mitigate the risk that corrupt or missing technical metadata could render digital content meaningless however 'perfectly' preserved
4. Lost data connections - a digital record is composed of linked components that may break down through time
5. Adapting to changing technology over time. It may get done once, but repeatedly updated to new technology, maybe not



# RecordDNA Components

## 7745 votes on 89 ideas



# Traditional Evidential Record ...to the email

The image shows a screenshot of an email interface with several elements annotated by arrows pointing to labels on the right. The email content includes a header with 'Microsoft Corporation [US]' and a URL, a subject line 'What is Digital – ID1041', a sender profile for 'Lomas, Elizabeth' with a timestamp 'Today, 21:04' and a recipient 'Julie Mcleod <julie.mcleod@northumbria.ac.uk>', a 'Sent Items' section with a note 'This message was sent with high importance.', a salutation 'Dear Professor McLeod', the main body text 'Digital is the same as paper there is no difference!', a sign-off 'Kind regards Elizabeth', and a full contact address for 'Dr Elizabeth Lomas, Senior Lecturer in Information Governance' at 'University College London'.

Annotations on the right side of the screenshot:

- Ownership**: Points to the URL in the browser address bar.
- Date**: Points to the timestamp 'Today, 21:04' next to the sender's name.
- Recipient**: Points to the recipient's name and email address 'Julie Mcleod <julie.mcleod@northumbria.ac.uk>'.
- Content**: Points to the main body text 'Digital is the same as paper there is no difference!'.
- Authorship**: Points to the sender's full name and title 'Dr Elizabeth Lomas, Senior Lecturer in Information Governance'.





# Infographics

Aimed at academics, students & professionals the different visions and perspectives on the nature of a record are intended to spark debate, discussion, research and processes for the maintenance of the digital evidence base through time



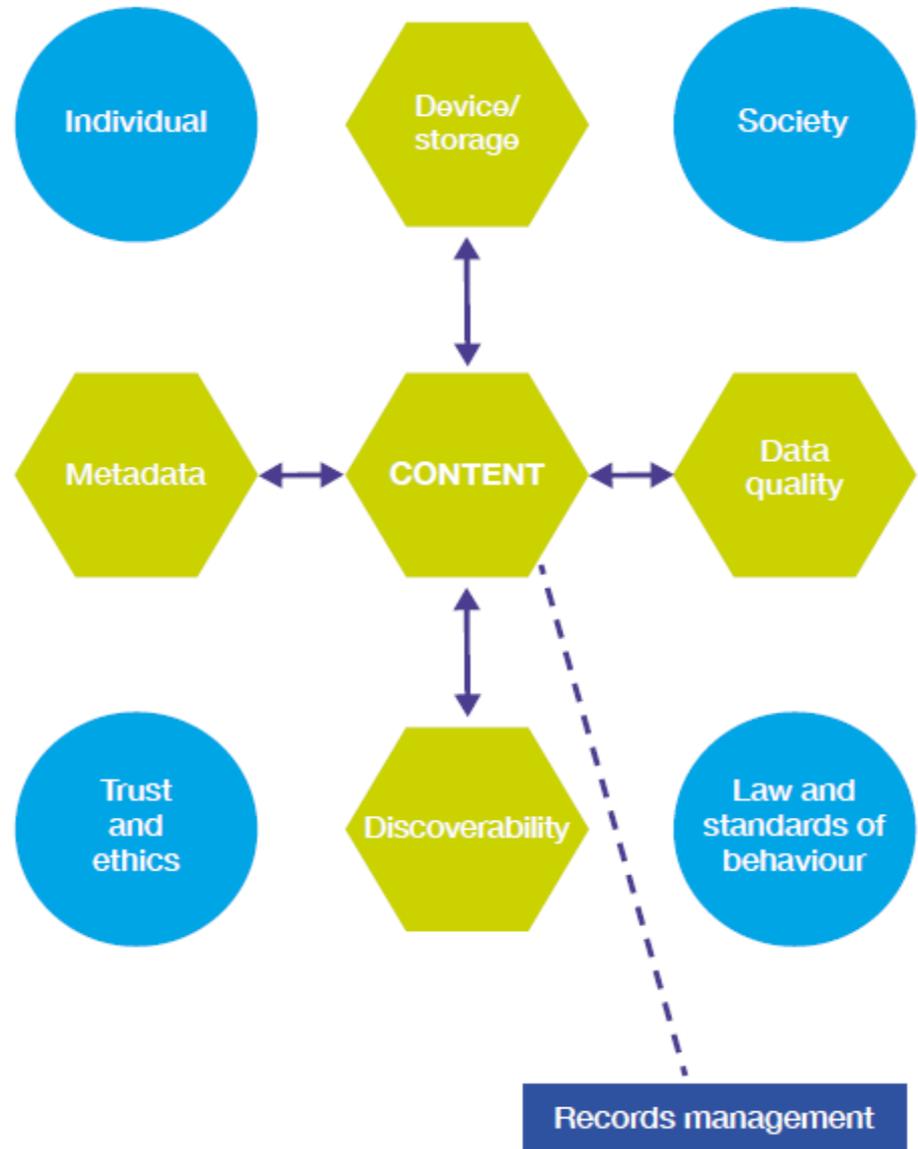
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# What research & practice is needed?

## Workshop 2: **95 questions/topics**

Exploring mutual relationships that support trustworthiness among archival institutions, creators and users. Creators, curators & consumers!

What are the ethical implications of the archives as an access mediator (graded access) in a digital world?

How do we present 'technical proofs' to humans to get humans to trust machine/AI? Which attributes do people trust and how does this vary with beliefs/culture?

Scale: the problem of managing, preserving and using data and records in quantities beyond human capabilities

To look at LIS information literacy frameworks for Archives



# What research & practice is needed?

## Workshop 2: **95 questions/topics**

Exploring mutual relationships that support trustworthiness among archival institutions, creators and users. Creators, curators & consumers!

What are the ethical implications of the archives as an access mediator (graded access) in a digital world?

How might psychological/behavioural characteristics of the different roles in the management of digital records affect achieving the ideal digital evidence base?

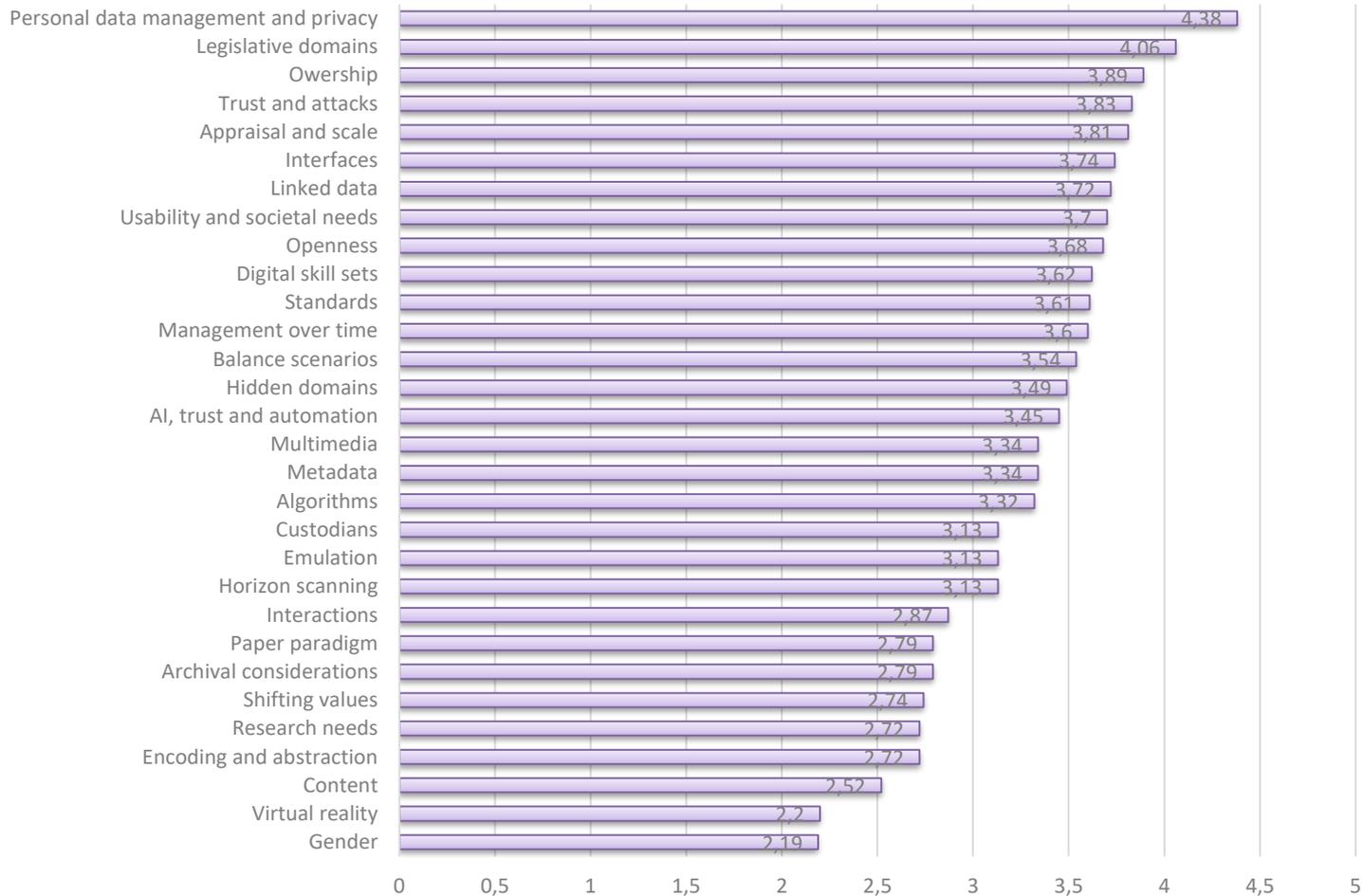
To access information through time [in an affordable manner]

To look at LIS information literacy frameworks for Archives



# Prioritising the research agenda

## Survey: Priority of research themes (Weighted average)



5=An international research priority

4=A high priority with relevance across disciplines and/or domains of practice

3=A high priority with relevance to a particular discipline or domain of practice

2=An interesting area of research for the longer term

1=Not a priority

# Nature of the research & practice agenda

Philosophy of evidence in digital records

**blue sky**  
fundamental,  
no assumptions

How might psychological/behavioural characteristics of different roles affect achieving the ideal digital evidence base?

How do we implement appropriate data protection policies & practices into digital RM?

strategic  
*potential practical use*

applied  
*knowledge > product, process, technology*



# Infographics

## Research themes

- People issues
- Technology
- Policy and processes
- Ethics, rights & legal issues

RecordDNA

DEVELOPING  
AN R&D  
AGENDA TO  
SUSTAIN  
THE DIGITAL  
EVIDENCE  
BASE  
THROUGH  
TIME

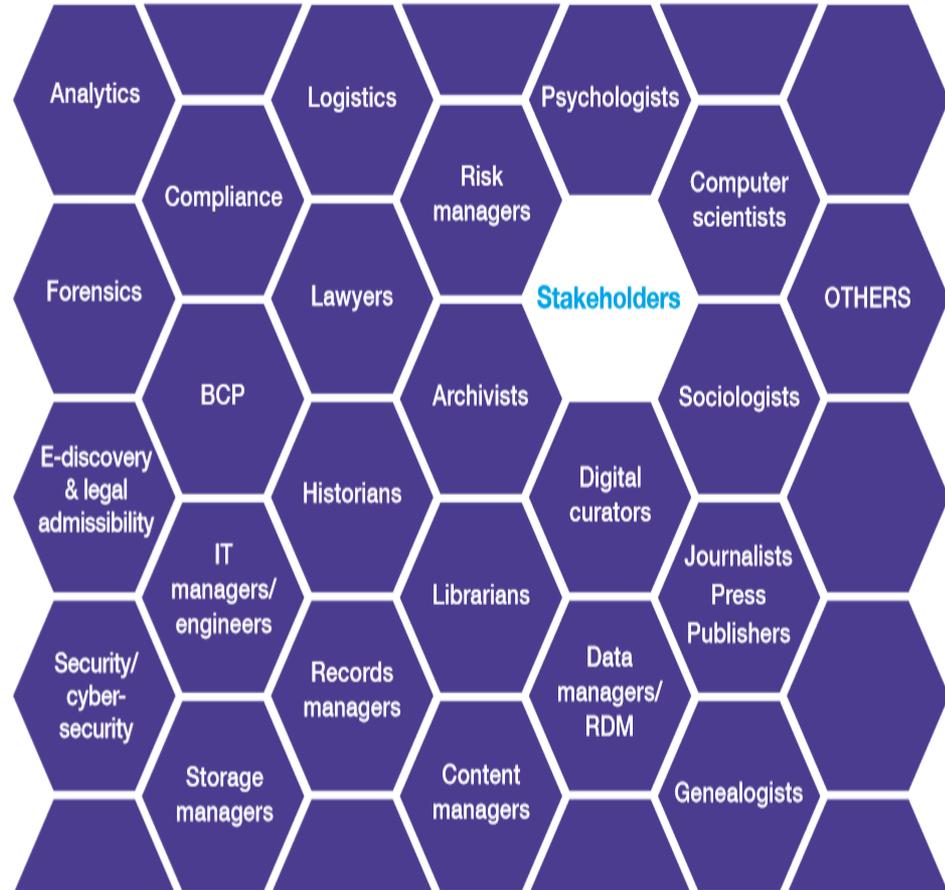


Northumbria  
University  
NEWCASTLE

# Infographics

## Collaborators

- Stakeholders
- Citizens
- Academics
- Professional practitioners



# Infographics

Aimed at information creators to help them understand the choices and actions that need to be made to control, sustain and understand their digital footprint through time

## YOU AND YOUR DIGITAL FOOTPRINT

### Do you know where you are leaving your digital footprint?

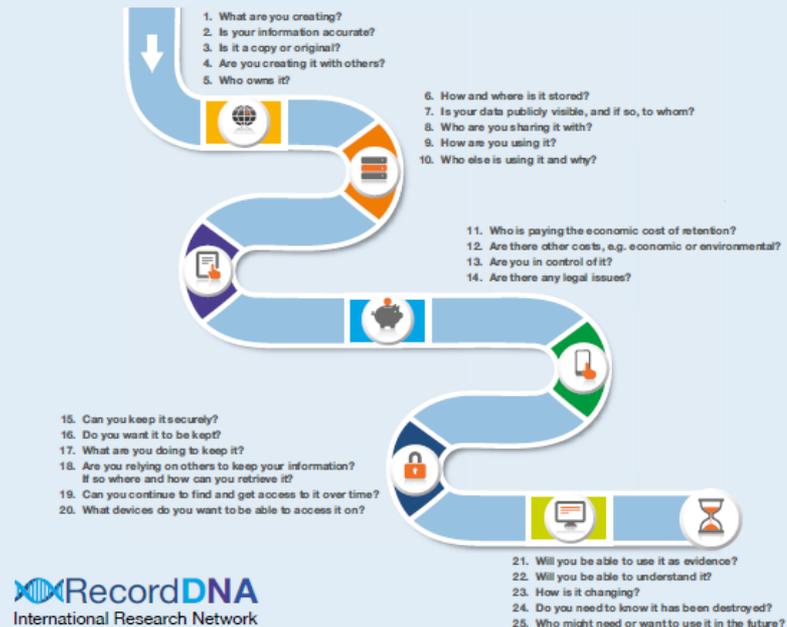
Every device we use captures some digital evidence.

- What digital devices do you have? A mobile phone, a tablet, a laptop, a wearable device, a home assistant?
- What platforms, systems and services do you use? An Internet Service Provider, social media, office software, apps, search engines, online banking, online retail, cloud services? How much control of your information do you have when using these?
- What are you creating and storing with these devices and services? Data, information, photos, videos?

We all rely on information captured as records in our daily lives. We use it for social activities, as proof of who we are and what we do, to capture events, research our family history or prove we have made payments. In business we use it to inform decision-making, hold individuals and organisations to account, to demonstrate transparency, to innovate, to research the past and 'stand on the shoulders of giants'. But in the digital world our information, our records, our digital evidence base is at risk, because of the challenges we face in how it is created and captured, how we preserve it as evidence, and how we access and use it in the context of constant change.

- Can you guarantee you will be able to access your original and authentic records/footprints in the future and be able to use them?
- Are you managing it or relying on others? Who are they?

Answer the questions below to find out how much you know about your digital footprint and how well you're safeguarding it for the future. Then decide what other steps you need to take to manage it to meet your needs today, tomorrow and further into the future.



  
International Research Network

RecordDNA is a Northumbria University and UCL led international research network bringing together academics, practitioners, users and systems developers to develop a new cross-disciplinary network of stakeholders with wide ranging expertise to explore the question 'In the digital era what is the concept of the record and what implications are there for the usability of the future the evidence base?' Through this work we hope to aid the maintenance of the digital evidence base through time.

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Northumbria University  
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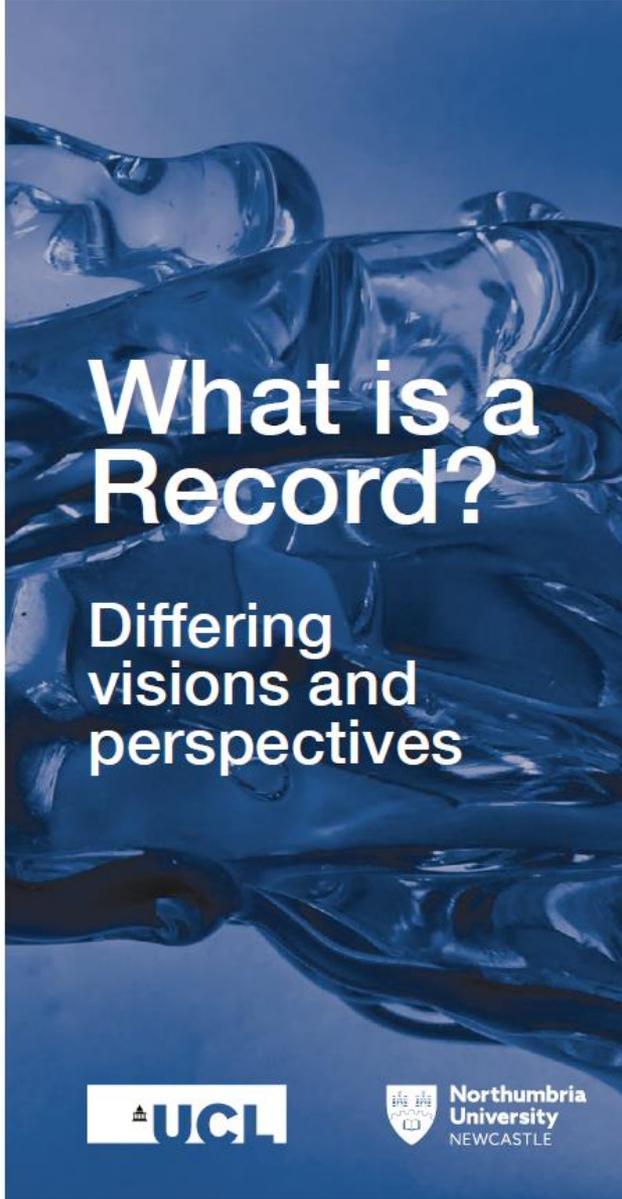
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RecordDNA



## What is a Record?

Differing  
visions and  
perspectives





## **Record DNA**

**Reconceptualising the life of digital records as the  
future evidence base**

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@RecordDNA

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