Using DROID to profile your file formats

Are we still managing our digital files as if they were paper?

digital information **matters**
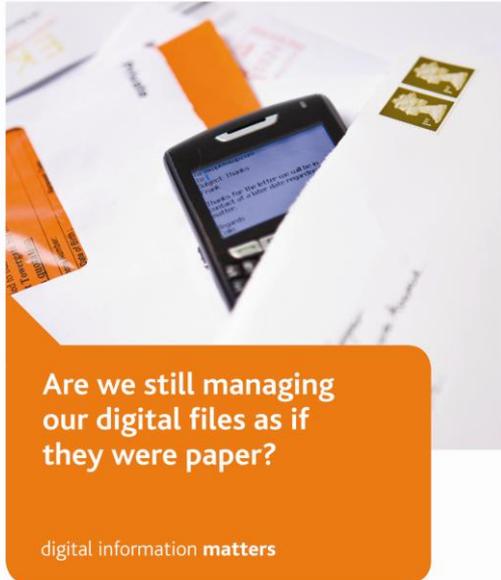
Profiling your file formats helps you to manage your information more effectively. It helps you to identify risks (and therefore plan mitigating actions). It can also help you to save money, for example by supporting data reduction.

DROID is a free profiling tool, developed by The National Archives.

About DROID

DROID stands for Digital Record Object IDentification. It's a software tool that will help you to profile a wide range of file formats. For example, it will tell you what versions you have, their age and size, and when they were last changed. It can also provide you with data to help you find duplicates.

Using DROID to manage digital continuity

Digital continuity is the ability to use your information in the way that you need, for as long as you need. Digital continuity management requires you to understand what information your organisation holds and what technology is needed to support it. DROID helps you to evaluate both areas.

You can also use the information you get from DROID to help you to make decisions about what data to keep and how it needs to be accessed. This may enable you to reduce the amount of data you hold, so that you work more efficiently and cost-effectively.

DROID also enables you to identify information which may be at risk of losing its digital continuity. For example, it might highlight that you have a number of files in Word 95/6.0 format. Combine this with other knowledge about your technical environment and the value of your data in order to determine the appropriate actions to take on these files.

What will DROID tell me?

You can use DROID to understand your assets in a variety of different ways. For example:

- You can produce a full list of everything you've got, where it is, and what format

it is in, including the version of the format used. DROID identifies over 200 different formats, including most document, audio, video and image files in common use.

- You can produce summary reports, for example to see how many different file formats you use and how many files are in each format. You can use this to assess whether you hold a lot of information in formats that are no longer supported by your existing technology, and to identify formats that may require active intervention going forwards to ensure digital continuity.

- You can produce a report that displays files according to the year they were last modified. This may prompt you to assess the business value of any information that hasn't been modified for several years.

How does DROID work?

DROID can scan individual files and directories, or entire repositories holding millions of files.

It recognises files using 'signature' information provided by digital preservation researchers at The National Archives.

This information is updated regularly, so DROID can recognise an increasing number of different file formats.

How do we install it?

DROID has been designed so you can install it with minimal impact on your systems. It is written in Java and is platform independent. DROID does not depend on any software being already installed on your system and it can be uninstalled by simply deleting it.

DROID is provided under a BSD licence, which means that it is open source, and you can download and run it without restriction completely free of charge. Only The National Archives can make changes to the authorised version.

You may need to ask your IT provider to set up appropriate permissions on your repositories so that DROID can access them.

Next steps

Additional guidance on how to use DROID, and a free download of the software. are available from:

nationalarchives.gov.uk/droid