



PART 1

Read the text below and answer questions 1–13.

PRESERVING THE PAST IN PIXELS: THE RISE OF DIGITAL HERITAGE

A

Museums, archives, and research institutes have always tried to slow the decay of fragile objects, but the digital turn has expanded what “preservation” can mean. High-resolution imaging, 3D models, and online repositories allow collections to be copied, studied, and shared without repeated handling of originals. Yet digital heritage is not simply a technical upgrade. It changes who can encounter cultural materials, what gets prioritised for recording, and which institutions define authenticity. In practice, digitisation involves choices about selection, description, and presentation, so it inevitably reflects power: what is captured, what is omitted, and whose interpretation is foregrounded.

B

Digitisation can democratise access in ways that would have been impossible a generation ago. Scholars no longer need to travel to consult a manuscript, and the public can explore collections outside opening hours and beyond national borders. During crises—conflict, natural disaster, or sudden building closures—digital surrogates can also serve as insurance, preserving at least some record when physical access is disrupted or objects are threatened. However, “access” is not evenly distributed. Bandwidth limits, paywalls, language barriers, and platform design can exclude the very communities whose heritage is being displayed. As a result, a project that increases global visibility can still reproduce local marginalisation.

C

The methods used to create digital heritage vary widely, and the technical choices can shape what users believe they are seeing. Two-dimensional materials such as photographs or maps are often captured through calibrated photography or flatbed scanning. More complex artefacts may be recorded through photogrammetry, structured-light scanning, or laser scanning such as LiDAR, producing dense point clouds that are converted into 3D meshes and textured surfaces. At every stage, metadata curation matters: curators must record provenance, capture conditions, colour calibration, resolution, and processing steps. These decisions influence interpretability, because a model is not only an “object” but also a dataset: it can highlight micro-scratches and tool marks, or it can smooth them away depending on settings and software.

D

Questions of authenticity become sharper when a copy is encountered more frequently



than an original. A digitised sculpture may appear cleaner than the physical artefact if noise reduction removes speckling or if missing fragments are reconstructed. For that reason, many curators argue that transparency about process is as important as visual fidelity. Users may need access to multiple versions: raw scans, minimally processed models, and interpretive reconstructions that explicitly indicate where evidence ends and restoration begins. In digital heritage, the ethical issue is not that enhancement is always wrong, but that unlabelled enhancement can silently change meaning by presenting an idealised object rather than a historical one.

E

Ownership and consent are equally contested, especially when collections contain sacred objects, human remains, or culturally sensitive knowledge. Digitising such materials and publishing them online can feel like a new loss of control, even if the physical object remains in a museum store. In response, some institutions develop consultation protocols and access restrictions, or use “cultural licenses” that specify who may view, download, or reuse digital files. These frameworks attempt to treat digitisation as a relationship rather than a one-off transaction, recognising that communities may accept documentation but reject unrestricted circulation.

F

A further irony is that digital heritage can be more fragile than the physical items it aims to protect. Storage media fail, platforms disappear, and what is readable today can become inaccessible tomorrow through digital obsolescence. Long-term stewardship therefore requires redundancy, documentation, and routine file migration into maintained formats, alongside checks that files remain complete and uncorrupted. This work is expensive and continuous, yet funding is often short-term and project-based, leaving collections vulnerable once a grant ends. As a result, the “scan-and-upload” model can create a misleading sense of security if institutions do not plan for decades of maintenance.

G

Digital heritage also changes research and public interpretation. Computational tools—pattern recognition, text mining, or 3D measurement—allow scholars to compare large collections and detect relationships that would be hard to see manually. But there is a risk of bias: researchers may over-focus on what is already digitised, because materials that are costly to scan or difficult to classify remain invisible online. At the same time, participatory projects invite volunteers to transcribe records, tag images, or add local narratives. This can enrich context and diversify viewpoints, but it also raises questions about moderation, reliability, and how institutions share authority over the past. The most



responsible programmes therefore treat digital heritage as ongoing stewardship: building access while acknowledging limits, trade-offs, and obligations to communities.

Questions 1–4

Choose the correct heading for each paragraph.

List of Headings

- i How online access can widen participation while still excluding some groups
- ii Why technical capture is also an act of interpretation
- iii When a “better” copy creates new authenticity dilemmas
- iv Negotiating consent and control for sensitive cultural materials
- v Why long-term digital stewardship requires continuous maintenance
- vi Digitisation as a shift in power: selection, access, and authenticity
- vii How digital methods are reshaping scholarship and public contribution

1 Paragraph A

2 Paragraph B

3 Paragraph C

4 Paragraph D

Questions 5–9

The text has seven paragraphs, **A–G**. Which paragraph contains the following information? Choose the correct letter, **A–G**. **NB** You may use any letter more than once.

5 A warning that research may become biased toward materials that are simplest or cheapest to digitise.

6 An example of the public adding transcriptions, tags, or alternative narratives to collections.

7 The idea that digitisation alters the politics of preservation, including selection and access.

8 A reference to digital copies serving as protection when physical access is disrupted.

9 A method of limiting or conditioning online access after consultation with communities.



Questions 10–13

Choose **TRUE** if the statement agrees with the information given in the text, choose **FALSE** if the statement contradicts the information, or choose **NOT GIVEN** if there is no information on this.

10 The passage suggests that digitisation can reduce handling of originals, but it still requires decisions about what to record and how access is organised.

11 The passage states that LiDAR is the cheapest method for digitising complex artefacts.

12 The passage states that long-term digital preservation needs ongoing work such as file migration and documentation, and that short-term funding can create risks.

13 The passage suggests that crowdsourced contributions are always accurate because institutions can guarantee careful checking.

Answer Key

1. vi

2. i

3. ii

4. iii

5. G

6. G

7. A

8. B

9. E

10. TRUE

11. NOT GIVEN

12. TRUE

13. FALSE