Digital Impact Policy

Audio Version Available

At Open Source Arts (OSA) we are welcoming, inclusive and open space, and we believe in 'Welcome' as a practice that we must take with us into everything we do. We aim to engage communities to create better places for themselves to live in, whilst encouraging creativity, environmental and social sustainability.

We believe in LEADing as we **L**et **E**very **A**ction **D**emonstrate our recognition that changes towards a low carbon, sustainable, equitable world is not only necessary but possible. We too recognise that Leeds is not an island and that our actions have international implications, and that all our actions must address their international impact and ensure justice for all.

For these reasons we have produced this policy to lay out how OSA can act to ensure that our digital and online practices are responsible and do not cause excessive damage to the environment. This includes ensuring they are environmentally sustainable and climate friendly, whilst also ensuring that any offsetting measures promote equality and diversity, protect the wellbeing of people worldwide and provide social value.

The policy is structured as follows

1. What is the impact of the digital world?
2. Our Commitments
3. Scope
4. Actions
5. Monitoring
6. Review

1. What is the impact of the digital world?

We often feel detached from the online digital world and that they have very little real world impact. Yet, the reality is very different. Every digital action we take has an impact on the 'real' world. Every email we send, every search we do, every document we download requires energy and causes the production of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

Research has found that 3.7% of all global GHG emissions can be traced back to the devices we use, the internet and the systems that support them – a percentage similar to that of the airline industry.

Moreover, the digital world includes the devices we use, such as laptops and smartphones. These are all manufactured using materials extracted from the natural world, including lithium, gold and zinc to name a few. The mining practices to extract these materials lead to a number of negative environmental

and social impacts ranging from the release of toxic pollutants to dangerous working conditions.

E-waste is also a huge contributing factor to the negative impacts of the digital world. This is the waste produced when electronics and devices are disposed of. It is thought that globally we generate 40 millions tons of e-waste a year - equivalent to 800 laptops every second - with a massive 87.5% of it going to landfill and accounting for 70% of all toxic waste worldwide.

The Open Source Arts' team is always growing and online working is becoming increasingly important. This means our work involves lots of emails, online browsing, social media, and storing things in the cloud. It is thought that an average office worker's use of IT systems leads to the production of 788 kg of CO2e, which is equivalent to driving 1,926 miles or charging 100,540 smartphones.

2. Commitments

Open Source Arts is therefore committed to recognising and limiting the impact its digital activities have on the planet and demonstrating that changes towards a low carbon, sustainable, equitable world is possible as well as necessary.

We are committed to...

- Minimising our contribution to the environmental impact of the digital world.
- Minimising GHG emissions that come from our digital activities.
- Encouraging conscious digital usage.

3. Scope

This policy is intended to apply to all digital practices at Open Source Arts and should be used by all team members to guide their online working.

4. Actions

As the impacts of the digital world encompass both hardware and online actions this policy and the recommended actions will reflect this.

a. Hardware

To reduce the environmental impact of the hardware we use we must as a team endeavour to use the devices we already own for as long as possible to prevent having to purchase new items. This will also include repairing devices where possible, through services such as the Repair Cafe Leeds.

At the end of a device's life to reduce the negative environmental impacts and further contribute to toxic waste they must be disposed of properly. This includes taking them to registered e-waste recycling schemes (such as https://www.recycle-more.co.uk/home) or locations listed here.

When in need of a device we should always try to buy second hand, refurbished or from an outlet. This way we are reusing devices that may otherwise become e-waste.

b. Device Use

There are some actions we can take when working on digital devices, like our phones or laptops, that will reduce the amount of energy they use and reduce the emissions associated with them.

Firstly, dimming the monitor. By reducing the brightness of your monitor from 100% to 70% can save up to 20% of the energy being used. Another way to reduce energy usage of an item is to use 'Snooze Mode' and use this with a short interval such as five minutes. Using this will mean that your device will go into power saving mode whilst you are not using it and save energy, as well as helping to improve security.

Finally, when charging try to unplug and turn off plugs when power is no longer needed as chargers can continue to drain power even when not attached to the device.

c. Online Behaviours - email

There are a number of actions we can take when working online to reduce the amount of data we use which in turn reduces the level of energy required as data centres and servers must be run to provide this data.

The first of these is altering our email habits. The average email leads to the generation of around 4g of CO_2e with larger emails continuing images causing up to 50g - this adds up to an average 135kg of CO_2e over the course of a year.

To reduce this we can try to send fewer emails by going to talk to team members who are in the space rather than sending an email. Avoid sending that 'thank you' email to other team members - however, this is not advised for people external to the team as they are key to building relationships. You can also delete unneeded emails to reduce the amount of data stored in your email account.

d. Online Behaviours - browsing

We have found that over the course of a year, as a team, our online browsing and general internet use alone will lead to the production of 78.4 kg of CO2e - which is equivalent to 356 miles of driving.

Videos have one of the greatest impacts and therefore should only be used or watched when necessary and given full attention.

Another positive option for browsing is to use a browsing extension called Ecosia. This tracks your searches and plants a tree for every eight searches. This is very similar to offsetting and is a way of using online working to try to contribute positively to the environment.

However, it is important to note that offsets and tree planting is not a perfect solution due to issues with the claiming of land for tree planting from indigenous cultures and the production of monocultures.

e. Online Behaviours - video calling

Video calling, similar to streaming a video, is very energy and carbon intensive with one hour of video calling producing 157.3 g of CO_2e.

To minimise the contribution of video calling to our carbon footprint we should choose to use video calling platforms Gather Town or Microsoft Teams over Zoom, as research has shown that they are responsible for fewer emissions - with Microsoft being net zero.

It is also important that for daily check-ins and outs that any team members in the space together share a video call.

f. Social Media

Posting and scrolling on social media also has a carbon impact. It has been found that the average user scrolls for 28 minutes daily which produces emissions equivalent to driving a car 166 metres - adding up to the equivalent of 37 miles driving over the year. This requires our use of social media to be intentional and productive.

Moreover, Open Source Arts' own research has found that on average across Facebook and Instagram around 90 images were posted each month which would lead to 2.6 kg of CO_2e over a year. With the addition of sending images on WhatsApp this would rise to nearly 2.75 kg.

To reduce this impact we must choose to be selective about the images we choose to share in WhatsApp groups as well as on Instagram and Facebook. This may include choosing to only share one image instead of two or three, or being selective and only sharing the best images over WhatsApp.

g. **Cloud Storage**

One of the main contributors to Open Source Arts' digital impact is the use of cloud storage, such as Google Drive and email accounts. It has been found that 1GB of data stored in the cloud leads to 1.19 kg of CO_2e emissions.

This quickly accumulates. Our research has found that if each team member held just 2GB of files related to work in the cloud and 1GB of emails it would lead to around 43kg of CO_2e - equivalent to powering an LED light bulb for 102 hours.

To mitigate this impact we must delete files that are held in cloud storage that are no longer needed. This includes videos and images as well as word, spreadsheet and presentation documents. Emails that are no longer needed should also be cleared from accounts.

This will initially help to reduce Open Source Arts' digital footprint and then continue to keep it low into the future.

6. Steps for Implementation

a. Action Plan

Communication of this policy across the team is the first step towards allowing it to be utilised in order to reduce Open Source Arts' digital impact and create positive impacts.

Secondly, support can be provided to the team to help them adapt to any changes they may need to make to their digital behaviours as well as any applications that may be required.

Finally, we will work to share any successes more widely to encourage other organisations to consider their digital footprint and online impacts.

b. Monitoring

Monitoring will include using key progress indicators (KPIs) to measure the level of carbon emissions generated from team behaviours as well as assess any positive changes. The KPIs used will include the impact of:

i. Digital Browsing
ii. Device Use
    1. Hours used
    2. New Device Purchases
iii. Cloud Storage
iv. Social Media
v. Website Impact

c. Review

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that practices reflect the values and aims of Open Source Arts. Reviews will be there to allow for assessment of the effectiveness of the policy and its implementation.

Next review is due August 2024.