Speech by

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Good afternoon. It's a pleasure to have been invited to speak to you.

Over the next 30 minutes or so, I'd like to do three things:

First, set out my vision of a Digital Public Space. I see it as an open, digital environment that would put the needs of the public first and foremost. It would make the vast wealth of our nation – the UK's Collective Abundance – accessible. It would permit, encourage and even require contributions from the whole of our society. It will be a place where the national Conversation thrives, where all contributions are welcomed, where every story, no matter who tells it has value.

To achieve this it will be vital to guarantee that everybody has affordable access to this digital environment, so that when it's all brought together, the resulting Digital – Public – Space will ensure that the benefits of digital technologies are well and truly shared and appreciated by everyone.

Second, I'd like to tell you how we could begin to build the Digital Public Space by priming the pump with the massive wealth of archive material which many of the UK's public institutions are already sitting on, using it to both to enrich our lives and stimulate the UK economy.

Third, I'd like to tell you why I think the BBC is ideally positioned to drive forward the Digital Public Space, working in coalition with a

wide range of public and private partners, and with people the length and breadth of the UK.

Let me first of all talk about my vision of the fully developed Digital Public Space.

Since coining the phrase some years ago, I've tried a variety of ways of explaining exactly what I meant by it. As a result it has come to mean different things to different people – fellow travellers as it were — but, of course, that's the way these things go.

The Digital Public Space as I envisage it, is a virtual "ecosystem" in which a number of different concepts come together.

At its simplest level of description, the 'Digital Public Space' is just that: a space, a realm, a lapse in time. My dictionary has two interesting definitions — space as an area designated for a particular use' (as in picnic space) or space as in 'a multi-dimensional expanse containing the entire material world and its events' (as in Star Trek). In my way of thinking the Digital Public Space is a composite of both definitions.

Yes, it's a multi-dimensional expanse, which contains a vast amount of material records of a massive amount of the world and its events. And yes, it's designated for a particular use — to deliver benefit to the public.

Thus far that could sound like the Web, or at the very least The Internet in general. So what's the difference?

The clue is in the word "Public". The Internet is a digital space and it does deliver plenty of public benefit. But what's different about the 'Digital Public Space' is the underlying intent – the 'application' of the medium, rather than the underlying technical fabric.

Designing something that serves a purpose is very different from just letting the medium grow without purpose. It's the difference between the BBC and broadcasting, between Radio 4 and radio.

By the way, when I say public benefit I'm not excluding profit-making enterprises. But I do mean a Space that enables companies of *every* kind to build value, not just the few – contributing to the greater good of the UK as a whole.

And as we are all too aware, the internet changes everything it touches, usually in quite fundamental ways. The BBC is no exception.

Let me describe two of the more significant impacts the Internet has had on the BBC.

First, there's the issue of permanence. Things no longer 'need' to disappear after a certain period of time. Material that once would have flourished briefly before languishing under lock and key or even

being thrown away — can now be available for ever. The possibilities are endless — everything from the outtakes of Billie Whitelaw in a Radio 3 production of Waiting for Godot to the very first production notes for the London 1948 Olympic Marathon. All could be available with a few key strokes, to you and every single one of your fellow citizens with access to the Internet.

It's currently impossible to access material like this of course without knowing it's there in the first place, or at least without having access to the metadata – the catalogues, for instance. And even once you 'do' know it's there you still have to overcome the complex rights issues, and any number of other time-consuming and costly restrictions.

That is why the Digital Public Space has placed the permanent availability of publicly-funded media and its associated information as its founding principle.

There are, of course, many other issues besides the huge one of exposing the metadata that must be resolved before the system can offer a frictionless exchange between participating organisations and it genuinely works to the benefit of its users.

These include: consistent cataloguing; data mapping; rights frameworks, both moral and commercial; geographic and chronological tagging; authentication; provenance; image permanence; and so on.

In some respects, the toughest issue by far is bringing together the public sector behemoths that hold the bulk of the nation's culture and heritage in their archives. The challenge is to get them to agree and then work together to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes on behalf of themselves and public that they exist to serve.

And in the world of the internet, the second big challenge for the BBC is that it can no longer guarantee affordable, universal access to the media – free at the point of use. The thing your Licence Fee is actually for.

Now this is a thorny issue to address and could easily be the subject of an entire speech of its own. To put the issue in context, let me take you back to the origins of the BBC.

It was the BBC's aspiration from the beginning to be universal, and it was its vision of egalitarianism that set it apart. From the outset, Lord Reith and his fellow architects of the Corporation understood the need to ensure that the benefits of the medium could be shared by every single citizen of the UK.

Alongside this, they designed the BBC so that it would be largely be free from direct political or commercial considerations.

Before the creation of the BBC, to appreciate, say, Dickens you needed at the very least to know how to read – and in the 1920's not

everyone could do that. To get to the benefit of a public lecture delivered at the University of Manchester, you needed to be physically on the campus. To get the best seat at the theatre or the opera or a concert, you needed to be first in line and have enough money to pay for it.

Broadcasting, as a medium in its own right, had the potential to remove many of these barriers. Because of the way the BBC was developed, with clear intent and forward planning, it fulfilled the early promise to Inform, Educate and Entertain EVERYONE, equally and without systemic privilege or favour. No matter who you were, or where you lived, or how rich you were.

Through the creation of the BBC everyone, on payment of a modest licence fee, could have access to a common – and vast – record collection, the entire works of Shakespeare, impartial news and current affairs, the funniest comedians, the brightest thinkers. It enabled the nation to speak to itself, in wisdom and in ignorance, from coast to coast and through one generation to another.

The BBC created the capacity to reach everyone in the UK – wherever they were, at the same moment in time. What made the BBC unique was that implicit commitment to reach Everyone. The ubiquity of the medium was – in part – the message.

All of this underpinned by our distinctive, and continuing, mission: to Inform, Educate and Entertain.

All anybody needed back then was access to a suitable receiving device – in the first instance a radio, later a television set – and some electricity.

The Internet changes all of that and much, much more.

A receiving device – whether it's a PC, an iPad, a smartphone or some other device – and some electricity, is nowhere near enough any longer. Access is controlled by a wide array of intermediaries. It's often conditional and mostly charged for.

And even then there is no guarantee that your specific combination of hardware, software, ISP, identity assurance provider, user tariff, geographic location, record of previous behaviour or future credit rating will permit you to share your photos, download that song, send a video to your friend whether they're in Bolton or Buenos Aires.

In addition to the complexity of accessing material, something else has fundamentally changed too, especially since the advent of Web 2.0. – The machines are watching us more than we are watching them.

Until the digital age, viewing and listening were largely unrecorded activities mainly within the control of the individual. Anonymity and serendipity were features not bugs!

In the internet–driven world, the BBC simply cannot guarantee that you will always be able to access its radio or television programmes and web output – no matter how brilliant and desirable they might be.

In fact, there are large and growing number of moving parts between the BBC and the Licence Fee Payer that may, intentionally or otherwise, actively prevent that access.

But for society as a whole, and for each of us as individuals in particular, getting to the BBC only part of the picture. The issue is much, much bigger than that.

We need to take a stand. A substantial change in thinking and policy is required if we are to prevent a collapse in the social capital brought about by the hard-won guarantee that every citizen has the right to know about and contribute to democratic debate and to the political sphere. Some form of guarantee of access is also crucial – *absolutely crucial* – for the development of education, culture and enterprise in this digital era.

Access to Public Service media is currently a basic right and one that must be preserved.

We need to bring about an 'organisation of resources' and for that I believe there are two approaches. One is to give a public body – new or existing – the remit and resources to deliver these guarantees. The other – and the one I think I favour – is a collaborative effort between all interested parties to organise their currently disorganised resources around a common purpose. Bottom up rather than top down. I think this is our best shot at ensuring the benefits of the internet are maximised and delivered to all of us as citizens – regardless of race, colour, creed, physical mobility, ability to pay, where we live, or how we access the web.

Whichever route we take, the organising force behind the Digital Public Space must have the trust and confidence of the public that it serves and it must deliver on enduring, non–negotiable commitments to transparency, accountability and independence. It should decentralise rather than control. It must be based on the principles of openness and shared development rather than proprietary and closed systems. It should create a legacy for the future measured not in years, but in decades and more.

It must be affordable for the BBC at a time when its licence fee income is falling in real terms. And it must find a way of appealing to those eight million people in the UK who are not online.

To my mind, these are the core components of the 'organisation of resources' that needs to be at the heart of an open, accessible, Digital Pubic Space.

Pulling this all together, the first two things the Digital Public Space would be built upon are:

First, an ever expanding store of permanently accessible digital media and its supporting data – along with appropriate policies, protocols and conditions to enable its widest possible use – and I'll try to show how our archives can create the foundations for this.

And second, the guarantee of universally equivalent, public access for all, through an appropriately managed environment to facilitate discovery, retrieval, consumption, critique, correction, augmentation and creative endeavour. These issues are however, principally to do with the infrastructure of delivery and they're not going to be the focus for our discussion today because I want to concentrate on the material itself

So there it is – the Digital Public Space: an ever expanding store of permanently accessible, public domain media assets and data and the guarantee that everyone, without regard to ability or disability can access and contribute, free of political or commercial concern. OR, looked at another way, a multi–dimensional expanse, designated for a particular use, containing the entire material world and its events.

Let me turn now to my second theme.

Where to start? How do we prime the pump? How do we reach a so called 'tipping point'?

The fact is, the UK is currently sitting on a rich seam of raw material in the form of publicly-owned or publicly-controlled assets, principally in this case, archived media and its associated rights and metadata.

I believe that exploiting this resource could power a whole new economy and assure the UK of a leading role in the digital world of the future.

The UK's public sector owns or controls a wealth of assets which have been built up over many decades, centuries even, going all the way back to the Domesday Book.

These assets have a number of distinctive characteristics:

- There's an awful lot of them. In the UK we have over 2,500 museums and galleries – many of which maintain unique and irreplaceable archives and libraries. Yet very few have the people with the digital skills or have the resources to liberate their value – either for paid or unpaid access. And apart from

our 6 National Libraries, there are a further 1,000 academic libraries and of course over 4,000 public libraries.

- They are largely still mainly in analogue form. The overwhelming majority of the UK's assets have yet to be digitised. And it is pretty much unimaginable that there will ever be enough public money to digitise them all or even a significant proportion of them.

- They incorporate a remarkable diversity of material – ranging from documents to 3D objects, from books to films, from paintings to microfiche. From century to century, from nation to nation, from prince and from pauper.

- They are overwhelmingly in English. An obvious point but one that is especially pertinent to UK businesses, when the number of English-speakers in the world stands at over 500 million.

- What's more, it's all high quality and authentic, collected and catalogued by experts in their field. There's very, very little that is of no value at all in there.

I believe that a strategic approach to converting these assets to digital formats and then developing an ever expanding range of ways to legitimately access and exploit these assets would create entirely new industries, providing for highly skilled jobs and new opportunities for entrepreneurs. It would have profound implications

for how we, across the UK and beyond, could experience and participate in culture, education and citizenship.

This new economy could help us shift away from what political parties of all persuasions describe as our over – dependence on financial services. It could help drive innovation right across the whole of the UK economy, making us a true global leader in the digital world and, along the way, opening up previously unimagined worlds of discovery for people of all ages to enjoy.

I like to think of this resource as the UK's Collective Abundance: the material that our public institutions and organisations have been rigorously collecting and cataloguing for centuries. And which of course they continue to ingest day in, day out.

Traditionally, organisations maintaining public – sector archives do so on *behalf* of the public, reflecting the fact that only bodies of scale have historically had the capability and resources to build and maintain such archives.

This – publicly backed infrastructure not only created expertly–maintained archives. It also created arbiters of cultural value – people who decided, on the public's behalf, what was, and was not, worth recording or retaining.

Now, in an online world where conversations can evolve without an evident controlling force, the currency of the expert is somewhat

diminished, even if it isn't completely devalued. So called 'users' may, individually, or collectively know far more about the materials that sit in those archives. As a result, we are beginning to see these relationships change, and we can expect a Digital Public Space to accelerate this change.

Let me offer you an example of what I mean.

The BBC alone creates over a billion pounds – worth of "new" 'archive – able' material every year. That's about a million quid's worth every eight and half hours.

In the past our archivists also had to play the roles of curator, business manager and executor – deciding what and what not to keep – almost entirely driven by financial constraints; the costs of storage, cataloguing, preservation and so on, measured against the likelihood and subsequent value of any reuse. So, they only kept what they believed the business needed – not what they may have, by other measures, otherwise valued and retained.

But by redefining these constraints, the framework governing the decisions they make changes – and so, of course, do the range of benefits that they can deliver.

I've been talking about archives, but in truth, the word "archive" really doesn't remotely do justice to the wealth of buried treasure sitting there waiting to be exposed to sunlight. Just think for a

moment about the actual material that's held by organisations in the public domain. Material that all of us, in principle, have the right to access.

There are the Big Beasts of the jungle; The British Library, and the National Libraries in Scotland and Wales, The British Film Institute, The British Museum. The Imperial War Museums – here in Manchester and in London. The Tate Galleries in different parts of England. The Public Record Office, the Office for National Statistics. And many, many more. And of course the BBC.

Let me tell you a bit about the BBC's own archive to help you get a sense of the scale and substance of what's in our collections alone.

The BBC has around 6 million photographs, 4 million copies of sheet music, miles – literally miles – of letters, research files, reports and programme information, financial records and biographies. We have a complete record of everything that has ever been broadcast – whether we still hold a copy of it or not – thanks to our recent digitisation of The Radio Times.
We have one of the largest record collections in the world. We have national and international news reports for every day for the past 70 years. And that's without mentioning the programmes themselves, radio and as well television, local as well as national, and of course, the web pages – all this covering just about every topic under the sun.

The value of these materials lays in their context, the fact that they all reside together. It would be plain stupid and myopic to strip out the "most commercial valuable" bits in the belief that somehow that's the best way to deliver public value.

But as well as the Big Beasts such as the BBC, there's a whole menagerie of smaller animals in the jungle, also holding records and assets of great public value, from local history societies to individual collectors and enthusiasts.

It is here that very often we can trace, for example, our grandfather's war record or our favourite teacher and who else they may have inspired. The story of your village or your local sports team. These are histories of ordinary people or things – history seen from the bottom – up, not top – down.

And in addition to all that richness, also contributing to the National Abundance, is what you might call your personal information. Your trace in the digital world. Things you'd like to know about yourself, but don't necessarily want to share with others. Some of this is held by public bodies, some held by commercial businesses. Everything from your school reports to your health records. Your pictures and your tweets. What you've bought. Where you've been. Who you've seen. Your likes and dislikes. Again, your personal history as understood by you from the bottom – up.

In the current online world, personal data are no longer considered as belonging to the individual. Instead they are treated as freely acquired assets to be retained and traded by commercial organisations, regardless of the value taken from, or subsequently accruing to, the individual originator of that data.

But if the Digital Public Space is to really work effectively we need to ensure that people are happy to make their personal data available, so it can be used, repurposed, remixed. But at the same time they must be confident that their data are protected exactly as they wish. No ifs no buts.

I'm sure you will agree, even from this glimpse at the depth and richness and sheer scale of this national resource, that the UK's archives are a unique and priceless source of almost limitless information, education and entertainment. The overwhelming majority is lying dormant, waiting to be liberated and put to better use by enterprising and inventive contributors – contributors like you, millions of citizens across the UK, and indeed companies, from the smallest digital start – up to long – established multinationals

The reality is that neither private nor public sector can afford to undertake this all on its own. It has to be done hand in hand, finding a common purpose through shared enterprise.

While the public sector has a great many of the assets, the private sector has a great many other, vital things to offer, things which

aren't nearly so freely available in the public sector – capital of course, but also the freedom and desire to innovate.

The key question is this – How?

The over–arching challenge is to create models that are capable of both delivering public value and offering commercial opportunities. That's the area we are going to explore in the break–out groups.

For a start, a huge amount of the material – the assets and their associated information – is trapped within inert, analogue formats. Books and photographs, tape and film, pieces of paper in filing cabinets.

So digitisation on a mass scale is absolutely imperative as a first step. Some of this is taking place anyway. In the case of the BBC, for example, we've recently completed the task of digitising the complete collection of The Radio Times, more than half of our Radio archive and a substantial volume of our Television one.

And of course, all of our new output will be completely digital, from beginning to end.

Let me set out some of the challenges facing us that we will explore later on today:

1. How can we best deliver mass digitisation when public resources are in very short supply?

2. What kind of material should we prioritise for such mass digitisation?

3. What kind of discovery engines do we need? What sort of processes will we need to make all this accessible? How will it be visually presented?

4. How could the commercial sector motivate members of the public to contribute freely, carrying out what can often amount to unpaid commercial activities without making them feel unrewarded and, worse, exploited?

5. How are we going to recruit and manage a new skilled workforce? What are tomorrow's skills and might we create the best conditions for them to develop?

6. How can we convince rights owners not to fear this revolution in access but to welcome it, demonstrating how they will benefit through increased commercial return?

The reward for success is huge. We'd end up with at least four incredibly valuable things.

First, previously inert materials get put back into the public domain in digital form.

Second, skilled People. Not just for the short – term but transferable skills that can be applied to other enterprise both within and outside the UK

Third, opportunities to innovate. The freedom to experiment, the freedom to succeed. Both for commercial gain but also for the public good.

And fourth, a return flow of funding to reinvest in further digitisation and data processing to produce a continuing supply of new material to inspire a virtuous circle of ideas and innovation.

Success would also point the way to a new, appropriate rights framework – one that would allow all of these things to happen without degrading or reducing the absolute value of rights and in many cases increasing them.

Many of the solutions we are looking for already exist, in whole or in part, although they are often active only in the isolated operating models of many of our public bodies. If ways can be found to make these disparate bodies work collaboratively in the service of common goals, then the rate of adoption and the speed of change could be massively increased.

Take for example the ERA licence which governs the educational use of copyright material. – the licence made available by the Educational Recording Agency. If it could be applied not just to programmes captured at the point of broadcast, but extended to include a far wider range of material including archived and even non – broadcast media. There's no reason why it can't be and, if it were, the volume and quality of digitised materials it would make available for teaching and research would increase a hundred – fold over night.

Taking things like this that are already there and purposefully joining them together with others, such as the JANET education and research network, would build a new industrial environment.
This would have immense benefits for learning at every stage of life, for our shared heritage, for, businesses, especially SMEs, and for the development of informed democracy throughout the land.

The kind of change I'm suggesting – driven by bringing existing things together and creating something that is about much more than the sum of its parts – has many precedents. For example the invention of moveable type took existing components of language, typography, the letter press and trees reconstituted as paper and created the printing industries. And then we provided universal access by undertaking wholesale literacy campaigns in order that everyone might benefit from, and participate in, literate society.

So similarly The Digital Public Space would create a capability and a fully participating society resulting in both commercial returns as well as continually generating new Public Value.

A wonderful quality of this archive material is that it often gets more useful and more valuable the more it's used and the more connected it is to other assets and their metadata. The more links there are, the more valuable the system becomes. In this way, the benefits start to grow exponentially, rather than just at an incremental rate.

And so to my third and final point, why is the BBC taking a leading role in pushing the Digital Public Space?

There are a number of reasons. Let me run through some of them.

First of all, it fits well within the BBC's remit and is consistent with all six of the 'Public purposes' of the BBC, the rules we live by, not least by helping to 'Deliver to the public the benefit of emerging communications technologies and services' – our sixth purpose in full.

Second, this is, in part, an exercise involving setting standards and establishing standards is what we've always done. One of our fundamental roles was to establish the engineering standards that allowed radio and television to work as broadcast media. Not just for BBC's own output but for other broadcasters too.

Third, we have the necessary expertise at the scale needed. The BBC is among the very few public institutions that have a substantial, world class engineering and digital media capability.

Fourth, we have been collecting vast amounts of material and records of all kinds for many decades and we have developed pan – media librarianship and data handling skills to extract the best from them.

Fifth, because the BBC needs to be able to access and its own archives quickly and easily, we are already developing connected systems that allows us to find, retrieve and resolve any usage conditions for the millions of items of media we are hold, whether they were generated 50 years or five hours ago. In other words, we're doing a lot of the type of work needed already.

Clearly, the BBC is taking a leading role in promoting the Digital Public Space but I can't emphasise enough that this needs to be a movement, a collective effort. Achieved 'with' the BBC, not 'by' the BBC.

This is a time of fantastic opportunity for the BBC and all those who want to work with it. The baleful influence of the Corporation's fiercest enemies – naming no names – is in sharp, seemingly irreversible decline. Public trust in the BBC continues to ride high – far, far higher than trust in politicians or print journalists, for example, and much higher, I suspect, than other emerging titans of the online world.

The departing Director General leaves the Corporation in good shape, with a licence settlement which, in this age of austerity, should still enable the BBC to deliver powerfully on its mission. IF it can rise to the opportunities and challenges of the digital age I've outlined.

I am absolutely convinced it can deliver. Deliver, in fact, more powerfully, and more effectively than ever before. Stimulating economic growth, creating skilled jobs while enriching the quality of life for every one of us – in ways that were previously unimaginable

The BBC, more than any other single organisation in the UK, sits on the North Sea Oil of the digital world in terms as it wealth of archival assets. But it can only exploit those assets if works in partnership with others, both those who have assets of their own, and those that don't but have other things that the public sector can't deliver.

So I'd like to conclude with a call to action. Become a Digital Public Space advocate. Talk about the 'DPS'. Most importantly think about the possibilities it may open up for you.

Because the public, all of us, have the capacity – I would argue, even a duty – to help reinvent public service organisations in a way that enables us to use the powers of technology to further the development of democracy, social justice and learning.

And in so doing, to create the conditions for a more enlightened future which is shaped not by the self – serving power of a few, but by the generous wisdom of the many.

Thank you very much.