POWRR Team

FROM THEORY TO ACTION

A Pragmatic Approach to Digital Preservation Strategies and Tools

Project Sponsor

In Fall 2011, the Digital POWRR (Preserving digital Objects With Restricted Resources) Project received a National Leadership Grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). Project members include archivists, curators, librarians, and a digital humanist from five academic institutions in the state of Illinois. We also benefit from a Board of Advisors comprised of six public and private sector professionals with expertise in the field of digital curation and preservation.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Cultural heritage practitioners who lack the advantages of specialization that come with a larger staff and budget feel overwhelmed by the many facets of digital preservation. Professionals in these situations do not know how to take the next steps from awareness to action, and so the risk to their collections remains unmitigated. What can individuals do to move beyond understanding the need for digital preservation and towards effective stewardship of digital collections?

GOAL

To investigate scalable and practical solutions, including potential business and implementation models, that would provide equitable access to digital preservation for smaller or under-resourced institutions.

METHODOLOGIES

Survey to understand our communities' range of digital object creation and storage practices

Inventory the extent and current state of collections we create or directly control

High-level analysis of 60+ DP tools and services, compared to POWRR created rubric known as the Tool Grid; http://digitalpowrr.niu.edu/tool-grid

In-depth evaluation of six digital preservation tools/strategies* to examine suitability for existing resources

Gap analysis of current institutional practices compared to our desired paths of progress

LIMITATIONS

We are all academic institutions in one state. We proposed our project based on an existing consortial relationship. We are disseminating our findings broadly and feedback across practitioner and organizational types indicates that our findings are beneficial.

Our final report to the IMLS will contain an assessment of our dissemination activities based on IMLS-directed criteria. Our project as a whole is undergoing external review.

KEY FINDINGS

Digital preservation (DP) cannot be viewed as one decision that will last for centuries or even decades. This view leads to inaction. There is no one-size-fits-all answer for all of our institutions or even for different digital collections within our care.

We can make progress towards the effective preservation of digital materials by understanding that DP is an incremental process that is achievable with discrete, cumulative activities:

- **inventory and analyze** content to determine specific needs with a rubric like NDSA's *Levels of Preservation*,
- use a **simple processing tool** like the DataAccessioner to collect sufficient metadata for current storage and future transfer,
- explore **robust technical solutions** with the understanding that more than one tool or service may be preferable,
- know that **planning and advocacy** are just as important as directly managing material—educate and build relationships within your institution, and
- seek **"communities of practice"** outside of your organization. Peers at large and small institutions may be able to collaborate on basic curation activities.

We do not have to face our challenges alone!

***Consult our white paper for product developer recommendations and for detailed analyses of our tool and workflow testing on …**

archivematica · DuraCloud · Internet Archive · Curator's Workbench · MetaArchive Cooperative · Preservica

DELIVERABLES

Case studies containing reports on six digital preservation tools/strategies* for varying institutional workflows

Tool analyses contributed to international effort known as COPTR (Community Owned digital Preservation Tool Registry)

Customizable templates for educating peers and institutional stakeholders

Business models and legal frameworks for creating partnerships across institutional types

Updates commissioned for v. 0.3.1 now available at http://dataaccessioner.org — Duke Data Accessioner

Tutorials and training program to aid practitioners in moving "From Theory to Action"

Reports and deliverables available under Creative Commons license on main POWRR site at http://digitalpowrr.niu.edu/ or on the project wiki at http://powrr-wiki.lib.niu.edu/

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