A Path to Open & Accountable Digital Preservation Collaboration

2M, Wednesday, May 17 • 3:30pm - 4:15pm
Courtney C. Mumma
MAS & MLIS, TDL Deputy Director

tdl.org
TDL Digital Preservation Services

DP Storage Infrastructure

- DuraCloud@TDL dashboard
  - Chronopolis and/or,
  - S3 and/or,
  - Glacier.

Resources + Interest Group + Consulting + Advocacy

https://www.tdl.org/digital-preservation/
Digital Preservation Services Collaborative (DPSC)

- Loose collective of community-based digital preservation service providers
- Support a variety of digital preservation approaches
- Authored and adhere to the Declaration of Shared Values

https://dpscollaborative.org/
DPSC Declaration of Shared Values

- Collaboration
- Affordability & Sustainability
- Inclusiveness
- Technological Diversity
- Portability/Interoperability

- Openness & Transparency
- Accountability
- Stewardship Continuity
- Advocacy
- Empowerment
motivations for convergence (and a grant partnership)

- complex and diverse DP requirements
- short-term decision-making
- real and/or imposed resource scarcity
- commercial vendor ubiquity
- dearth of US DP leadership, advocacy and guidance
DPSC Planning Project:

Sustainable Community-Owned Partnerships in Digital Preservation

What: 18 month planning grant to recruit stakeholders and design collaborative service model

Why: More values-centered collaboration is needed

Who: Educopia Institute, APTrust, Chronopolis, CLOCKSS, LYRASIS, MetaArchive, and Texas Digital Library

How: Recruitment → Requirements Gathering → Service Modeling

DPSC Partners (“DipScooters”)

Alicia Wise, CLOCKSS
Bradley Daigle, APTrust
Courtney Mumma, TDL
Hannah Wang, Educopia/MetaArchive (Project Director)
Lydia Tang, LYRASIS
Sibyl Schaefer, Chronopolis/UC San Diego

Advisory Board

Tamar Evangelista-Dougherty (Smithsonian Libraries and Archives)
Rachel Frick (OCLC)
Geoff Harder (CARL)
Mary Lee Kennedy (ARL)
Harish Maringanti (University of Utah)
Carol Mandel (Distinguished Presidential Fellow at CLIR)
Nancy McGovern (Global Archivist LLC)
Thomas Padilla (Internet Archive)
Shrinking staffing and support

What are we trying to accomplish?

- Determine the best way to combine the efforts of DPSC members to work toward a common goal of providing community-supported, values-driven digital preservation services

- Design a collaborative and multi-tiered service model for distributed digital preservation
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Aug 2022 - Jan 2023 | ● Hired consultant  
                       ● In-person meeting  
                       ● Recruitment for the Advisory Board and Service User Group |
| Nov 2022 - June 2023| ● Partner information gathering  
                       ● End user survey + interviews  
                       ● Data analysis + synthesis  
                       ● Presentation of findings |
| May 2023 - Jan 2024 | ● Iterations on service model design  
                       ● Virtual forum  
                       ● Presentations + white paper |
Questions we asked
End user survey & Service User Group

- **Basic data gathering**
  - About the organization, its digital content, about DP within the organization

- **DP service providers**
  - Values considered when selecting a DP service provider; how vendors are held accountable; transparency

- **DP workflow**
  - Tools, systems, and services

- **Staffing levels**
  - FTE by role/expertise, supporting IT/technical staff, helpdesk, etc.

- **R&D priorities**
  - Commitment to contributing to/supporting open source projects and communities

- **Infrastructure requirements**
  - Org cloud migration strategy/journey; dedicated workstations for DP activities; specialized equipment

- **Advocacy strategies**
  - Where do messages about the value of DP need to come from to be heard by decision-makers?

- **Potential cost models**
  - Membership models vs. other fee arrangements; bundled vs. unbundled services
What do we want to understand better?

- The macro forces at play in digital preservation (US focus)
- The market landscape; customer expectations; competitor strategies
- What are the requirements of a future service model?
- What additional scaffolding might be required to realize the potential of this work?
Beginning observations: US DP landscape

- A fragmented market with minimal/no government support
  - community/consortium fatigue
  - library and archives roles re: preservation are muddled (digitization ≠ preservation)
  - education and DP approaches are inconsistent

- Not enough orgs with a cultural heritage missions are doing digital preservation
  - lack of knowledge/education
  - lack of prioritization
  - lack of resources

- Within orgs that DO have DP strategies, budgets are shrinking, buying approaches are misaligned to preservation needs, staff skill sets are being degraded
A collective way forward - service modelling

Align our story about why DP is good to what our members need and value
- Speak in a language they can understand
- Educate prospective members that digital preservation is NOT a product, but instead the ongoing orchestration of people, processes, and tools required for resilient preservation

Craft compelling educational content
- Articulate our value
- Articulate DP good practices
- Articulate what good governance looks like, and how a buyer can evaluate
A collective way forward - service modelling

Target and tailor to specific institutional roles with influence and responsibility in the purchasing process

- Define the shapes of a receptive user and create simple tools to identify them
- Develop strategies for engaging receptive buyers to influence and shape the buying process

Make it easy to do business with us

- Explore ways to offer a more seamless E2E experiences across our capabilities
- Explore strategies for integrating new partners who can fill gaps in our offering
- Explore strategies for offering a “single invoice” to a prospective buyer and figuring out a seamless experience behind the scenes
**advocate & lead with values**

Digital preservation staff deserve support from leaders in the field.

Expert **staff should drive decision-making** on digital preservation priorities and practice.

Institutions should **sufficiently fund** DP programs.

Success is not market share. **Collections are not capital.**

We cannot **shop** our way to DP success.
get involved

dpscollaborative@googlegroups.com

https://dpscollaborative.org

Virtual event to discuss further TBD

Copy for Comments - Declaration V3
accountability

Who does your digital preservation service provider ultimately answer to?

Our motivation for digital preservation is based on a collective understanding of enduring values across digital heritage organizations. This is in contrast to motivations based on accountability to shareholders in for-profit business models.

These services commit to sharing information on data loss and lessons learned so that the entire community can benefit, improve, and adapt. This is key to an active preservation philosophy.
openness & transparency

How do you know service providers are doing what they promise?

We believe that digital preservation services that limit their public documentation or require non-disclosure agreements run counter to the core nature and needs of the digital preservation and broader cultural heritage community.

We embrace open source software that is openly documented and adaptable to changing needs. Proprietary software relies on software documentation which is not externally verifiable and can have unknown long-term implications, and this limits its exposure to local adaptation and broader community input.

“Free” digital preservation options may have fine print details in their documentation that substantially puts content at risk.

[draft suggested text from community member] Service providers commit to publicly sharing financial statements to demonstrate good stewardship and viability as preservation partners.
stewardship
continuity

How important is this to you when you are evaluating DP service providers? To your organization? Is there a discrepancy? Why?

Digital preservation is a collective commitment we make together as digital information, heritage and evidence workers. Any service provider should operate as if they will not be around forever, actively planning for the persistence of the content over time should they collapse. Collaborating with other like-minded organizations is a critical component of providing this continuity of preservation.

Change is part of the landscape and can ignite better stewardship practice: business models can change and challenges that arise can often mobilize the community to develop new solutions.

Groups like the Digital Preservation Services Collaborative work closely together and collaborate across our various communities rather than directly compete with each other. This provides a broader solution set to the community rather than direct competition for profits and members.

The collaboration of our organizations helps decrease the risk of our individual stewardship promises. Our practices are not profit-driven, we place the value of preservation above potential short-term losses.
portability/
interoperability

Do you know the cost of accessing and/or moving your materials? Do you have an exit plan?

Tools and standards should interoperate and connect with each other. As data to be preserved increases and platforms and tools for digital preservation evolve or sunset, being able to “speak a common language” is imperative for sustainable long term preservation.

Making connections between and among our services is key to addressing our community’s needs. Digital preservation services should be focused on interlocking services rather than competitive philosophies.

We are actively discussing how collaborations will allow us to focus and specialize on specific challenges of digital preservation rather than each service competing for the same market share. We see the need to develop services that can be agile and free from vendor lock-in for storage solutions or other dependencies.

Digital preservation needs to be validated and assured by multiple methods. Developing software that interacts with various systems but still provides the end user with the required assurance is a core component of our services.

Service providers have a responsibility to their communities to make sure their data is portable and that their distributed infrastructure can interact and interoperate.

Services should have clear exit strategies for users.
Different types of heterogeneity - geographic, technical, and institutional - require different types of solutions. Is there one type of heterogeneity that is easier to build into systems and practice? Which is the hardest type to design for?

It is good practice that digital preservation be technologically distributed across different infrastructures, software platforms, and geographies to avoid single points of failure.

Dominant technology monopolies have little interest in the priorities of a relatively small community of users in cultural heritage institutions. There is a risk that a lack of interest could result in loss of valuable content when we rely solely on one provider. Backwards compatibility is a very high priority for cultural heritage institutions, while the for-profit sector constantly pushes forward with acceptable levels of obsolescence.
empowerment

Does your organization trust and rely on your DP expertise to make choices about its tools and practices?

A core philosophical tenet of these services is to foster, develop, and enhance the necessary skill for digital preservation rather than outsource that knowledge.

As professionals who develop and maintain preservation technology we rely on our active and engaged community to confirm we are building and sustaining useful, stable, and good practice guided services.

The organizations who acquire, describe, and provide access to digital content are those who know how and at what level to preserve that content best. Preservation decisions can have significant and irreversible effects on the types of access that can be provided in the future. These decisions should be made by a preservationist equipped with the required knowledge and empowered to decide which preservation path to take based on the materials at hand, not because they are the default setting in a software program.
affordability & sustainability

What are your biggest sustainability concerns and challenges around digital preservation?

Digital preservation requires sustained operational funding in order to ensure the longevity of preserved content. This means that digital preservation is expensive for organizations, while also involving heavy investments of labor and technological infrastructure that draws significantly on our natural resources and contributes to climate change.

Community-based, mission-driven digital preservation service providers have a responsibility to mitigate the financial, social, and environmental costs of this resource-intensive work, and to balance organizational needs for affordability with the long-term sustainability of the technologies and service models that we elect to use.

Affordability and sustainability are paramount in digital preservation, which is premised on the long-term consequences of our decisions and actions, and we recognize that profit-motivated actions can be in direct opposition to these values.
How would you like to see digital preservation become more collaborative? What are the barriers to collaboration?

Resources for staff, services and software rarely increase. In fact, most cultural heritage institutions face budget reductions annually. Radical collaboration is necessary in order to successfully fulfill our mandates in the face of austerity measures.

Digital preservation practice suffers from a lack of diverse perspectives, and when we collaborate, we all benefit from multiple experiences from different contexts.

Digital preservation is resource intensive and contributes to global warming. Through collaboration, we can avoid unnecessary duplication.

We help create and continue to adapt and refine community standards such as Levels of Digital Preservation. This collaboration helps us all identify and address shifts in a timely manner.

Digital preservation is not a competition. As resources dwindle in cultural heritage institutions, we must actively share governance, expand collective understanding and engage with as many contributors and experts as feasible.
How would you like to see DP practice evolve towards inclusive practice?

The historical record is dominated by those with the power and resources to have their information preserved or deemed worthy of preservation. As this historical record becomes increasingly digital, preservation services and communities need to prioritize inclusion of the voices, rights, and recordkeeping practices of those that have been historically and deliberately marginalized.
While preservation might not seem as immediately attractive to stakeholders as acquisition and exhibition, preservation is the responsibility of cultural heritage institutions committed to acquiring and collecting digital content. It’s an ongoing cost that needs to be budgeted and considered, even after an organization folds.

Digital preservation requires a specific and specialized skill set for staffing and tool allocation. These are, in turn, guided by the necessary policy frameworks that enable the successful execution of an integrated preservation strategy.

The work is exciting and timely, requiring an expertise of legacy technology and formats while also operating on the cutting edge of emerging technology.

Cultural heritage leaders have a responsibility to provide preservation staff with enough resources so that it is feasible to sustain their mandates and to argue on their behalf when those resources are withheld.

Any service practicing in this space is obligated to address its complex and systemic weaknesses, human and technical, openly.