Digital Preservation Assessment: Readying Cultural Heritage Institutions for Digital Preservation

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Cornell Study

- 100 distinct institutions participating in NEH funding 2003-2005 workshops;
- 50% academic, 27% gov’t, 5.2% museum, 3.5% public libraries, 14% other
- Participants held 9-11 different formats
- 50% of attendees had developed policies; 30% implemented policies
- CD/DVD principle storage medium (90%), online 85%, 75% tape
- 59% of the institutions had staff charged with digital preservation responsibilities.
- 38% of institutions were funding programs with institutional funds
2005 NEDCC Survey Results

- 33.1% academic libraries; 14.5% archives; 9% art museums; 7.8% public libraries; 24.7% other
- Who’s responsible—66% institutions no one is responsible for digital preservation activities
- Continuing education—84% supported CE activities for digital preservation
- Preservation solutions—
  - 78% networked hard drives;
  - 65% removable magnetic media;
  - data is stored in-house
- Cause for concern: 30% have been backed up one time or not at all
On site visit Findings

- Issue of digital preservation is just now coming to the forefront of discussion and action
- Many institutions still at “Digital Project” vs. “Digital Program” stage
- Written policies and documented digital preservation practices are lacking
- Preservation/Conservation Staff are generally not directly involved in many of the digital initiatives
Key Findings-Digital Preservation

• Few have coordinated institutional approach to their digital initiative, especially in the areas of:
  – Standards (Imaging, Metadata)
  – Quality Control
  – Access
  – Promotion
  – Digital Preservation

• Lack of understanding of when institution has a ‘born digital object’ and then what strategy must be implemented to maintain those objects.

• DAM: Some projects see DAM as solution to digital preservation issues.
Findings-con’t

• CD/DVD major storage media; moving to networked servers
• Refreshing data on CD/DVD with lengthy periods between refreshing
• Quality control of master images – inconsistent at best
• Backing up is viewed as digital preservation
• Education is important before institutions start “doing” digital preservation
• Ability to advocate for digital preservation is lacking at many institutions
• Funding primarily through local funds and grants.
Policies

11. Does your institution have a WRITTEN policy or procedure document that addresses digital holdings in each of the following areas? (List the URL if a copy is on the Web; otherwise, please attach a copy.)

- Mission and goals: yes  no  being developed
- Collection development: yes  no  being developed
- Emergency prep’ness: yes  no  being developed
- Exhibitions: yes  no  being developed
- Preservation: yes  no  being developed
- Strategic planning: yes  no  being developed
- Public services: yes  no  being developed
- Rights and licensing: yes  no  being developed
Outsourced Repository question

68. Does the Repository have:  Yes  No  Don’t know
   A publicly available Preservation Plan?
   Have you reviewed the Preservation Plan?
   Contingency plans incase of emergency?
   Are you aware of what these plans are?
   Escrow arrangements for software
   If they do, do you have access to it?
   Off-site backup of the database?
   Separate professional staff supporting the digital repository?
   Authentication/authorization?
   Customer documentation?
   Customer administrative module?
   Usability testing?
   Migration strategy (may be part of preservation plan)
Survey question

69. How does the repository demonstrate that they are a financially viable organization?
   --Publicly available audit
   --Audit available upon request
   --Financial statement available upon request
   --Other, please specify

Are the repository’s business plans and practices transparent, and compliant with generally accepted accounting practices and auditable?

Do you have a contract or formal agreement?

73. What components does the contract cover? Yes No
   --Who has access to the digital objects and at what frequency
     --Delivery options
   --Preservation rights
   --Copyright
Type of recommendations

- Improved documentation—continuity planning, workflow processes, etc.
- Review digital preservation activities, including refreshing schedules, quality control, etc.
- Review system back-up procedures and implement offsite storage
- Review optical media utilization, including storage retrieval and duplication
- Incorporate preservation information into metadata
- 53% of the recommendations were discussed and 48% of the recommendations acted upon
So what does all this mean?

• Focus of long term preservation has been on the technology and standards, certification, etc. to build the infrastructure

• To make it reality we now need to
  – Expand advocates for long term preservation
  – Expand the knowledge base of professionals and practitioners
  – Move from digital project to digital program
  – Integrate preservation into all aspects of digital lifecycle
  – Develop best practices
  – Make policy examples available
Digital Curation Curriculum

• Education needs to be:
  – National programs are nice, but we need to move to the state and regional level
  – Professional and CE
• Needs to focus on:
  – Technology, standards and best practices
  – Policies, Tactical strategies (Development and implementation)
  – Workflow and Documentation—How to do it
  – Business planning—and all that it involves such as market research, financial analysis and planning
  – Continued emphasis on collaboration—particularly beyond the library or museum or campus
Conclusion

- Progress is being made on digital preservation particularly in technology, standards
- Increased awareness of importance
- Most institutions who are doing digitization, however aren’t doing the most basis of digital preservation readiness activities.
- We can lay the foundation for long term preservation by establishing policies, creating documentation, advocating for digital preservation even if we don’t have the funds to implement long term preservation solutions.
- Must be done as a collaborative effort, all but largest institutions don’t have the resources to go it alone.