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The Essential Nature of Digital Preservation February 24, 2021

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In the Eye of Beholder What's a Digital Preservation System Anyway?

Oya Y. Rieger
February 2021

NISO Plus 2021

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August 19, 2020


Exploring the Effectiveness and Durability of Digital Preservation and Curation Services

Announcing a New Research Project Funded by IMLS

Oya Y. Rieger

With generous funding from the Institute of Library and Museum Services (IMLS), we are pleased to initiate an 18-month research project to examine and assess how digital preservation and curation systems (DPCS) are developed, deployed, and sustained. Because our cultural, historic, and scientific heritage is increasingly being produced and shared in digital forms, libraries, archives, and museums are increasingly dependent on digital platforms to support the curation, discovery, and long-term management of digital content. Yet, some of these systems and tools have been shown to have substantial sustainability challenges. We will examine the business approaches of community-based DPCS and compare and relate them to strategies followed by commercial entities offering similar products. Also, our study aims to examine what it means for DPCS to be inclusive and accessible as they need to strike a balance between agility, inclusivity, and the diverse needs of users.

For the purposes of the study, we define DPCS as the tools and services used by cultural heritage organizations to undertake digital preservation and curation work. Examples include Archivematica, Cell Signalling Alliance (defunct), Chronopols, ContentDM, Digital Preservation Network (defunct), DuraSpace, Dryad, EPrints, Ephemera, Gwendolyn, HathiTrust, Inveni, LOCKSS/CLOCKSS, Malurto, National Public Library of America (DPLA), Portico, Rosetta, Samvera/Hydra, and Zenodo. Through a



Oya Y. Rieger
Senior Strategist

BLOG POST
January 14, 2021
[Maximizing and Assessing Engagement with Virtual Library Space](#)

BLOG POST
January 13, 2021
[Upcoming National Survey of Community College Library Directors](#)

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Project Goals

Examine and assess how digital preservation and curation systems (DPCS) are developed, deployed, and sustained.

- Analyze the business approaches of community-based and commercial initiatives
- Examine what it means for DPCS to be inclusive and accessible as they need to consider the diverse needs of users
- Expand our understanding of sustainability principles and contribute to design actionable recommendations to help the sector implement research findings



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Research Methodology

Case Studies

- Gather information from web and social media resources about technical, managerial, and socioeconomic aspects of the systems
- Conduct interviews with the DPCS leaders and contributors
- Gather materials that elucidate sustainability and reinvestment (financial statements, funding proposals, etc.)
- Interviews (and possible short survey) with users and non-users focusing on their experiences and perceptions

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What is digital preservation?

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Digital preservation involves the management and maintenance of digital objects to ensure the authenticity, accuracy, and functionality of content over time in the face of technological, administrative, and policy changes.

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Digital Preservation

In the Eye of the Beholder

- Although digital preservation is a well-established concept, it continues to be a situated and interpretive process, highly variable across different institutional settings.
- Depending on the institutional context, digital preservation can be seen in different ways such as:
 - retrieving information from legacy media
 - implementing microservices such as file format transformation
 - digitizing analog content for retention and online access

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Digital Preservation

Service Frameworks

- Expertise is increasingly fragmented as web archiving, digital curation, research data, repositories, and special collections are often placed in different library units without a common preservation mandate.
- There is confusion about the purpose and business models of existing and nascent preservation services and how they fit together in creating a comprehensive preservation service framework.



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We're all over the place with this as institutions of all sizes struggle with resourcing digital preservation.

Institutional repositories, curation systems, and digital preservation services, are all used interchangeably, sometimes in a confusing way.

Key terms such as "archiving" and "preservation" mean different things to different communities.

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What is a digital
preservation and
curation system?

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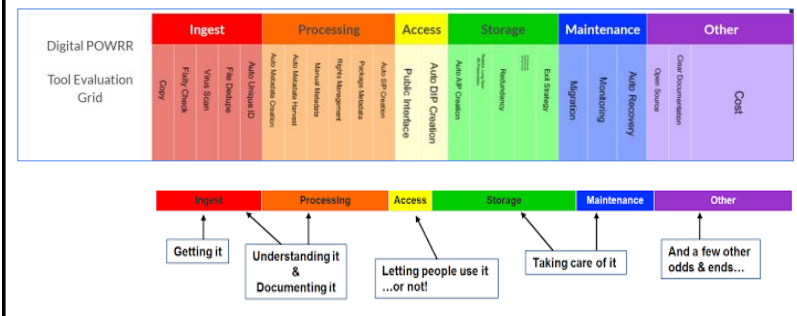
Digital Preservation and Curation Systems

Case Study Framework

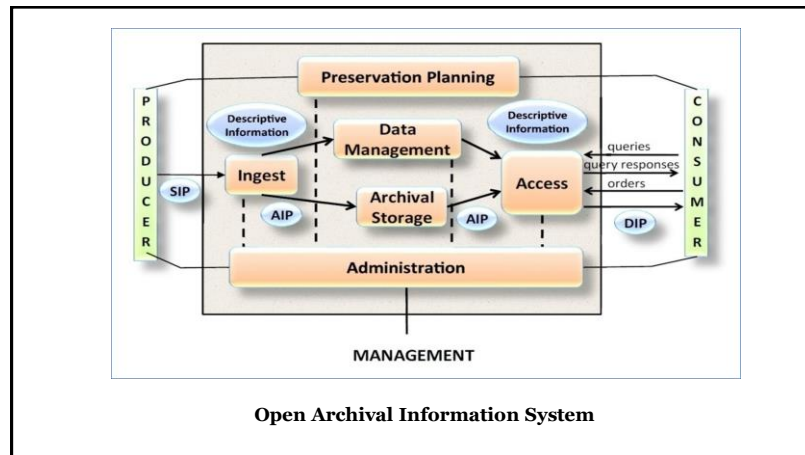
- Digital asset management software packages
- Long-term storage services
- Software as a service (SaaS) products

Rather than trying to adjudicate what does and does not “count” as digital preservation, we are studying the systems and services that cultural heritage organizations might use toward meeting digital preservation goals.

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Initial Interviews

Institutional Preservation Policy and Strategy

- Many institutions lack consensus on what collections they should preserve and the level of preservation needed.
- Decision-making on what to build in-house and what to outsource is critical for creating sustainable digital preservation policies.
- Institutions struggle to integrate disparate tools and systems to manage different collections for discovery, access, and preservation.

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Initial Interviews

Community vs. Commercial Products

- Understanding open source sustainability is an ongoing community effort as we see the development of different assessment tools.
- Institutions may feel a *values-driven allegiance* to community based systems but not all such products may be offered with the community's best interests in mind, while not all commercial products are shaped solely by the profit motive.

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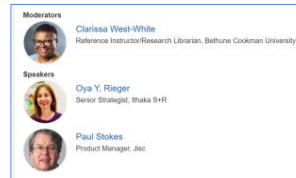
Initial Interviews

Developing Capital and Agility

- Limited examination of how community-based initiatives develop sufficient capital and agility to thrive in sectors that include commercial products.
- Limited sustained engagement with the funder community to consider how altered programmatic guidelines or investment strategies might improve outcomes.

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The Essential Nature of Digital Preservation



- What is digital preservation?
- What does it mean to use a preservation system?
- Why don't you have a preservation system?
- What's stopping you from having a system in place?
- What are the trends in cultural heritage organizations fulfilling their stewardship role?
- What are the potential areas of standard development in support of digital preservation?

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PORTICO

Portico Portico, a community-supported digital archive, preserves over 564,000 e-books and e-journals for future scholars.

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Thank you