

version 2.0 Neil Beagrie 8/1/01

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to provide a briefing for individuals and institutions attending a summit to discuss digital preservation and the formation of a UK Digital Preservation Coalition. The aim of the Coalition is envisaged as developing a UK digital preservation agenda within an international context.

Venue and Arrangements

The summit is being hosted by JISC and the British Library and facilitated by JISC Digital Preservation Focus and the NPO. It will be held in London at the British Library (Euston Road) on Tuesday 16 January starting with lunch between 1:30 - 2PM and concluding by 4 PM. Please report to the main enquiry desk to collect your visitor pass ask for Josie Johnson (National Preservation Office) in the BL. NPO staff will escort you to the meeting venue (meeting room K). The meeting is being chaired by Lynne Brindley Chief Executive of the British Library and Reg Carr chair of the JISC Committee for Electronic Information. A range of individuals has been invited to the summit as representatives of key strategic organisations and potential members of the Coalition and/or individuals from allied sectors with relevant expertise and interest in its development. Numbers have been restricted to facilitate discussion at the summit but it is recognised that further consultation and discussion with other individuals and organisations should follow on from the meeting.

1. Introduction

Electronic resources form an increasingly large part of our cultural and intellectual heritage. In addition to electronic publications, the Web, and e-commerce, there is an array of new UK initiatives and legislation, from Modernising Government to the Freedom of Information Act, which is putting an onus on public organisations to provide access to, manage and archive their information in electronic form. In the research arena, there are also significant developments particularly in the sciences towards very large primary research data sets in electronic form e.g. in genomics or earth sciences.

There are significant challenges associated with ensuring access and preservation of these materials into the future. Electronic resources regardless of whether they are created initially through digitisation or are "born" digital are threatened by technological obsolescence and physical deterioration. With content from international publishers, increasing globalisation and sharing of resources, and the involvement of a range of libraries, archives, services, and cultural heritage organisations, our ability to preserve access to these electronic resources into the future depends on the collaboration and engagement of a wide range of stakeholders.

National institutions and services, and individual local institutions increasingly need to raise awareness of digital preservation, and develop capacity, skills and expertise to administer or manage for the long-term intellectual and cultural assets they have developed in digital form.

These institutions have recognised the value of collaboration in addressing digital preservation. Establishment of a Digital Preservation Coalition was the principal recommendation of the Warwick II digital preservation workshop held in March 1999, which had representation from a wide range of sectors, institutions, and practitioners in digital preservation. The Warwick II workshop also made a number of recommendations for work to be taken forward by the proposed Coalition. These recommendations are provided as an appendix to this paper together with other recommendations for future work from the JISC/NPO digital preservation research studies.

There are a number of reasons why institutions at Warwick wished to establish a Coalition. First, attendees recognised they needed a collaborative effort to get digital preservation on the agenda of key decision-makers and funders in terms that they will find persuasive and understand. Secondly, projects and initiatives are proliferating and the institutions themselves felt there would be significant value in developing the umbrella organisation to help coordinate and keep a watching brief and monitoring role on their behalf. Thirdly, despite sectoral differences it was felt that most of the technical and some organisational issues remain the same for all organisations. There are therefore significant synergies and mutual self-interest in collaboration. At the same time the efforts of individual institutions and sectors can be leveraged and co-ordinated through collaboration to achieve wider national benefits. Finally, it was felt that the Digital Preservation Coalition could tap additional skills and funding and help address and contribute to development of national strategies, infrastructure and skills in digital preservation.

Concrete action towards the establishment of the Coalition is now in progress. In June 2000 JISC established a post within the DNER and appointed Neil Beagrie to provide a focal point for digital preservation activities within JISC and the higher and further education communities, and to help establish and support the Coalition proposed at Warwick. Although the exact remit, shape and programme for the Coalition will be resolved in consultation with proposed members, a draft outline of the Coalition and its remit and work is rehearsed here for further discussion at the summit.

2. Draft Manifesto for the Digital Preservation Coalition

The aim of the Digital Preservation Coalition is to develop and pursue a UK digital preservation agenda within an international context.

In order to achieve this aim, members of the Coalition agree to:

- Actively support the UK Digital Preservation Coalition and define its shape as an independent and inclusive body.
- Commit to the development of a digital preservation strategy at the national level, and in an international context, spelling out stakeholder roles and responsibilities.
- Promote a concerted and co-ordinated effort to get digital preservation on the agenda of key stakeholders and funders in terms that they will understand and find persuasive.
- Act in concert to make arguments for appropriate and adequate funding to secure the nation's investment in digital resources and ensure an enduring global digital memory.

- Commit to working collaboratively and internationally to address shared challenges in digital preservation.
- Commit to promoting and disseminating information and openly sharing outcomes so that we can all learn as quickly as possible, from mistakes as well as successes.
- Work collaboratively to identify shared needs and promote training and current awareness in digital preservation.
- Orchestrate efforts to collaborate in research and development and implementation strategies for archiving significant Web sites as a record of our digital inheritance.
- Identify, support and commission future work, research studies and projects to further the aims of the Coalition.
- Ensure that the Coalition liaises and develops links with allied and related organisations within and outside the UK.

3. Next Steps and Programme of Work for the Coalition

Initial momentum for the Coalition would be best initiated by a small group of key stakeholders and potential partners. The aim should be to establish the Coalition as soon as practicable during 2001 with a manifesto, constitution, and a timetable and programme of activities and responsibilities to deliver its aims. Potential tasks for the Coalition have been identified at Warwick and elsewhere (see appendix) but would need to be reviewed, prioritised and supported. These tasks themselves may divide into new activities and maintaining and developing previous or existing work.

The Coalition could be seen as operating on three levels: activities undertaken individually by member institutions and sectors but accomplished and co-ordinated in line with their commitment to the principles and actions in the manifesto; a small core set of coalition activities of common interest and benefit to all its members supported by resources from its membership; and a series of collaborative projects which would be taken forward with project funding drawn from a variety of sources. Within these levels it's also worthwhile to recognise potentially different scales of activity, operating both at the level of major national initiatives (e.g. the BL digital library store, archiving significant web sites etc.) but also at a more modest level. This could include for example: identifying key forums where DPC papers might be presented; establishing Powerpoint presentations for use by DPC members for varying needs, e.g, "scholarly" presentations, popular presentations (putting some effort into the latter might be a particularly worthwhile investment of effort); or encouraging joint papers, etc.. All fairly modest in themselves but could have a tremendously beneficial cumulative effect in terms of harnessing resources, and widening participation and awareness.

This structure of individual institutional activities, core collaborative activities, and collaborative projects, recognises that the interests of different institutions and sectors will overlap but will not be identical. Each will have a unique profile, peer groups (other national libraries, national archives, etc) and interests. The Coalition must add value for its members, be sufficiently flexible to accommodate this diversity, maximising the potential benefits from this for its members, and minimising potential risk. The proposed structure will maximise opportunities for

external funding of major collaborative projects whilst keeping core activities supported by the membership to a sustainable and realistic level.

The Preservation Management of Digital Materials Workbook (pre-publication draft available at <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/dner/preservation/> [September 2007: disabled as the link is no longer active]) produced with research funding from the Re:source and in kind funding and contributions from JISC and a wide range of organisations involved in the advisory group and case studies, provides a good example of current collaborative effort and benefits. Future development and maintenance of the workbook and programmes associated with it would be potential examples of core activities for the Coalition in terms of training and awareness or maintaining and developing existing work.

Projects can also support the aims of the Coalition and its members and can provide a mechanism for extending core activities. An example of a project which can address an institution's need to maintain a corporate record of its own website or web materials and at the same time provide shared sectoral and national benefits is a feasibility study and pilot project for archiving the UK web. As scholarly communication, government and education move online, the need for further work and research in this area becomes essential. A number of web archiving projects have now been undertaken in other countries most notably the Pandora project in Australia, and expertise exists within the UK and beyond to initiate and sustain a similar project which could develop expertise, guidelines and contribute a key component for a national archiving strategy.

4. Constitution and membership of the Coalition

It is envisaged the Coalition would be established by a core strategic group of partners with support from JISC Digital Preservation Focus and would evolve as a membership organisation. Commitment to the manifesto and active participation to achieve its aims would be a key requirement for membership of the Coalition. The levels of active participation required for membership would need to be defined either in terms of commitment to roles and responsibilities, and staff participation and/or funding for collaborative activities. Partners involvement with and contribution to the Coalition is likely to vary and a number of membership levels could be defined for example board membership, associate membership, and international or collaborative members. Potential members and allied organisations include the BL, JISC, the other UK national libraries for Scotland and Wales, Resource, PRO, CURL, research and digitisation funders, publishers, services, NPO, and library consortia such as RLG. Although focused on the UK, membership could include international organisations with an interest in the UK or international partners co-operating with the Coalition.

Discussions have already taken place between the JISC, BL and the National Preservation Office (NPO) management committee on collaboration between the proposed Coalition and the NPO. Further discussion on the relationship will now take place following completion of the current NPO review and as part of the preparations for the launch of the Coalition.

A range of options exists for the constitution of the Coalition including establishing it as a separate entity or hosting it for legal and administrative purposes within one of the member

organisations. These options would need to be explored by the founding group.

5. Organisation and management

It is suggested that the work of the Coalition should be managed by a Digital Preservation Board nominated by its members and supported by an Advisory Group consisting of individuals with expertise in digital preservation drawn from the UK and overseas. In addition to the board and advisory group the future work of the Coalition could be substantially aided by the establishment of ad hoc working parties or task forces drawing expertise from across its membership to address specific issues and actions.

The development and initial work of the Coalition following the summit could be overseen by an advisory group whose membership could be drawn from the former Digital Archiving Working Group, the Cedars board, and additional members representing organisations potentially subscribing and contributing to the work of the Coalition. The composition of the board in the longer term would be determined by the constitution agreed by its membership.

Core programmes and resources for the Coalition should ideally be agreed on a three-year rolling cycle with delivery of corporate objectives being achieved by staff secondment and contracts on a full-time or part-time basis, and/or consultancy.

Appendices

Recommendations from the Warwick II Digital Preservation Workshop March 1999

- Establish National Digital Preservation Coalition
- Establish International Digital Preservation Forum
- Advise creators of good practice
- Establish capacity of problem
 - expertise
 - range of types
 - volumes
- Undertake RLG type survey for UK
- Tackle absence of trained people
- Undertake accreditation function for digital archives
- Policy development
- Prepare EU funding bid
- Develop cost/benefit analysis model
- Address rights issues/access
- Promote awareness and training
- Promote information/exchange
- Investigate/recommend physical integrity of storage media
- Undertake Pandora type web preservation project for the UK

Recommendations for future work from the JISC/NPO Digital Preservation Studies (summarised by M Feeny in Digital Culture,1999)

- Raise awareness among:
 - Universities
 - Organisation & centres
 - Data creators
 - Software industry
- Encourage communication & collaboration between organisations and sectors
- Develop guidelines pertaining to standards & best practice
- Investigate strategies for funding a preservation centre or network of preservation centres
- Develop criteria for approved data archives
- Develop a check-list to determine cost and complexity of preservation
- Conduct further research into:
 - Preservation of dynamic data resources (eg websites)
 - Data loss case histories
 - Systematic collection of hardware and software documentation
 - Develop a media quality index
 - "Digital Archaeology/Data Recovery" technologies
- For legal deposit
 - Develop co-ordinating body for allocation of digital publications