

An implication of the rapid evolution of storage media and file formats and the risks of technology obsolescence is the necessity of maintaining a register of hardware and software capacity in the institution and preservation metadata to enable a formal process of "technology watch". The degree to which this will be necessary will vary according to the degree of uniformity or control over formats and media that can be exercised by the institution. Those with little control over media and formats received and a high degree of diversity in their holdings will find this function essential. For most other institutions the IS strategy should seek to develop corporate standards so that everybody uses the same software and versions and is migrated to new versions as the products develop. Deborah Woodyard ([Woodyard 1999](#)) describes how preservation metadata was gathered by the National Library of Australia to determine what hardware and software were required by its digital holdings. A list of hardware and software available in the NLA was also developed and maintained. This is used to flag potential changes in technology and the requirement to retain hardware and software still needed by the collection until migration has occurred.

Failure to implement an effective technology watch or IS strategy incorporating this will risk potential loss of access to digital holdings and higher costs. It may be possible to re-establish access through a process of "digital archaeology" (see [Preservation Strategies](#)) but this is likely to be expensive compared to pre-emptive strategies.

A retrospective survey of digital holdings and a risk assessment and action plan may be a necessary first step for many institutions, prior to implementing a technology watch.

Good preservation metadata in a computerised catalogue identifying the storage medium (3.5 in floppy disk, DVD etc.), the necessary hardware (IBM PC compatible, Apple Mac), operating system (Windows 95, NT, Dos 3.0 etc.) and software (e.g. Word 6) will enable a technology watch strategy.