

Press Release Number Two - 27th September 2007

Accolade for new tool to save digital archives for future generations

27 September 2007

An innovative tool to analyse and identify computer file formats has won the 2007 Digital Preservation Award. DROID, developed by The National Archives in London, can examine any mystery file and identify its format. The tool works by gathering clues from the internal 'signatures' hidden inside every computer file, as well as more familiar elements such as the filename extension (.jpg, for example), to generate a highly accurate 'guess' about the software that will be needed to read the file.

Identifying file formats is a thorny issue for archivists. Organisations such as the National Archives have an ever-increasing volume of electronic records in their custody, many of which will be crucial for future historians to understand 21st-century Britain. But with rapidly changing technology and an unpredictable hardware base, preserving files is only half of the challenge. There is no guarantee that today's files will be readable or even recognisable using the software of the future.

Now, by using DROID and its big brother, the unique file format database known as PRONOM, experts at the National Archives are well on their way to cracking the problem. Once DROID has labelled a mystery file, PRONOM's extensive catalogue of software tools can advise curators on how best to preserve the file in a readable format. The database includes crucial information on software and hardware lifecycles, helping to avoid the obsolescence problem. And it will alert users if the program needed to read a file is no longer supported by manufacturers.

PRONOM's system of identifiers has been adopted by the UK government and is the only nationally-recognised standard in its field.

The judges chose The National Archives from a strong shortlist of five contenders, whittled down from the original list of thirteen. The prestigious award was presented in a special

ceremony at The British Museum on 27 September 2007 as part of the 2007 Conservation Awards, sponsored by Sir Paul McCartney.

Ronald Milne, Chair of the Board of Directors of the Digital Preservation Coalition, which sponsors the award, said:

"The National Archives fully deserves the recognition that accompanies this award."

For more information on the two tools please see: the [PRONOM Technical Registry](#) and [Digital Record Object Identification \(DROID\)](#) file format identification.

Notes to Editors

- The £5000 Digital Preservation Award is sponsored by the Digital Preservation Coalition. This prestigious award recognises achievement and encourages innovation in the new and challenging field of digital preservation - simply put, preserving things whose very existence depends on computers.
- The Digital Preservation Coalition was established in 2001 to foster joint action to address the urgent challenges of securing the preservation of digital resources in the UK and to work with others internationally to secure our global digital memory and knowledge base. For further information, see www.dpconline.org
- The Conservation Awards are the UK's leading awards for the preservation of cultural heritage. They are sponsored by Sir Paul McCartney and supported by key organisations in conservation and collections care: the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA), English Heritage, the Institute of Conservation (Icon), the Digital Preservation Coalition (DPC) and the National Preservation Office (NPO).
- For more information on the other short listed partnerships, see www.conservationsawards.org.uk
- Details of the 2007 judges are available online at www.dpconline.org/graphics/awards/2007panel.html
- The National Archives is at the heart of information policy - setting standards and supporting innovation in information and records management across the UK, and providing a practical framework of best practice for opening up and encouraging the re-use of public sector information. This work helps inform today's decisions and ensure that they become tomorrow's permanent record. The National Archives is also the official archive for England, Wales and the

central UK government, containing 900 years of history from Domesday Book to the present, with records ranging from parchment and paper scrolls through to recently created digital files and archived websites. Increasingly, these records are being put online, making them universally accessible. For more information, see www.nationalarchives.gov.uk

Press Release Number One - 5th June 2007

THE 2007 CONSERVATION AWARDS - DIGITAL PRESERVATION AWARD Short-list Announcement Today

- 5 June 2007 -

The Digital Preservation Award of £5,000 is sponsored by the Digital Preservation Coalition. This prestigious Award recognises achievement and encourages innovation in the new and challenging field of digital preservation - simply put, preserving things whose very existence depends on computers.

Short-listed for the Digital Preservation Award are:

1. LIFE: The British Library.

LIFE (Lifecycle Information for E-Literature) has made a major contribution to understanding the long-term costs of digital preservation, an essential step in helping institutions plan for the future. Its methodology models the digital lifecycle and calculates the costs of preserving digital information for the next 5, 10 or 100 years. Organisations can apply this process to understand costs and focus resources on those items or collections most in need of them.

<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/life/1/conference.shtml>

2. Web Curator Tool software development project: National Library of New Zealand & The British Library.

The web is a huge and interconnected digital asset with which we are all familiar, and one in which material changes and disappears with frightening regularity. Conscious of this problem, the National Library of New Zealand and The British Library worked together in an international collaboration to build this tool, which supports selective and thematic web-harvesting by collaborating users in a library environment. Swift development over just 10 months enabled it to be released as free software for the benefit of the international web-archiving community in September 2006, from webcurator.sourceforge.net.

<http://webcurator.sourceforge.net/>

3. Active Preservation at The National Archives - PRONOM Technical Registry and DROID file format identification tool: The National Archives of the UK.

One of the fundamental challenges of digital preservation is to understand the technologies required to access digital information, and plan the actions we will need to take to ensure continued access in the future in the face of constant technological change. Is the software needed to read this document still supported by the supplier, and is the format of this digital movie still readable by most computers? PRONOM is a unique and innovative online service which helps to answer questions like these and includes a knowledge base of technical information about over 600 file formats and 250 software tools, which has been developed by The National Archives to answer these challenges.

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/aboutapps/pronom/puid.htm>

4. PARADIGM (The Personal Archives Accessible in Digital Media): Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, & John Rylands University Library, University of Manchester.

Personal archives are important components of cultural memory, but inexperience in curating their modern counterparts - e-mail, digital photographs, online calendars, blogs and many more - puts the survival of today's personal histories at risk. The diversity and volatility of digital technology far exceeds that of any medium that creators, archivists and researchers have previously worked with. The Paradigm project has worked with politicians, archivists and researchers to investigate these challenges in an exemplar project so that the archives of significant contemporaries can continue to enrich our history.

<http://www.paradigm.ac.uk/>

5. Digital Repository Audit and Certification: CRL, RLG-OCLC, NARA, the DCC, DPE and Nestor.

As the number of organisations, both public and private, preserving digital information increases, it becomes important to be able to assess how well they are doing and how well-prepared they are for the unknown challenges of the future. The Trustworthy Repositories Audit and Certification (TRAC) Criteria and Checklist (maintained by the US Center for Research Libraries), the nestor project's Criteria Catalogue and the Digital Repository Audit Method Based on Risk Assessment (DRAMBORA) published by the Digital Curation Centre and DigitalPreservationEurope present complementary methods for the self assessment, audit and certification of digital repository infrastructures.

<http://www.repositoryaudit.eu/>

All the short-listed projects will give a presentation to the Digital Preservation Award judges on 19 June. The winners of the Conservation Awards 2007 will be announced at the British Museum on 27 September.

- Ends -

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The Digital Preservation Coalition was established in 2001 to foster joint action to address the urgent challenges of securing the preservation of digital resources in the UK and to work with others internationally to secure our global digital memory and knowledge base. For further information see the website at: <http://www.dpconline.org>

2007 Judges

Kevin Ashley (Chair of the Judging Panel), Head of Digital Archives Department, University of London Computer Centre.

Michael Day, Research Officer at UKOLN, University of Bath.

Helen Hockx-Yu, Programme Manager, Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC).

William Kilbride, Research Manager, Glasgow Museums.

Andreas Rauber, Associate Professor, Department of Software Technology and Interactive Systems (IFS), The Vienna University of Technology.

Chris Rusbridge, Director, Digital Curation Centre (DCC).

Helen Shenton, Head of Collection Care, the British Library.

Dave Thompson, Digital Curator, Wellcome Library.

See the Digital Preservation Coalition website for further information on the judges:

<http://www.dpconline.org/graphics/awards/2007panel.html>

