

Date: Tuesday 4th April 2006

Venue: [The Innovation Centre, York Science Park](#) , York

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The DPC held a briefing day on the OAIS model on 4th April 2006 at the York Innovation Centre. The purpose of the day was to examine the model and provide an informal but in-depth look at the practical application of the Open Archival Information System [OAIS] model in various UK institutions. OAIS is a high-level reference model which describes the functions of a digital archive and has been used as a model for a number of digital archiving repositories. It is now a recognized and highly-prominent international standard.

There were four presentations in total, all of which presented interesting case-studies and examples of OAIS implementation in a variety of institutions, giving a valuable overview of how it has been interpreted and applied.

Najla Semple, Digital Preservation Coalition, began the day with an overview of OAIS and her experience of implementing the model at Edinburgh University Library in 2002 ([Overview of OAIS](#) [PDF 1MB](#)).

She gave a summary of the pilot project and how she used the model to digitally archive the online University Calendar. Each of the six OAIS processes were examined and used as part of the archival workflow. She also gave an overview of the detailed OAIS metadata scheme that was implemented.

Jen Mitcham, Curatorial Officer at the Archaeology Data Service [ADS] presented next ([Working with OAIS](#) [PDF 2.6MB](#)).

Her approach to OAIS was different from that of Edinburgh University Library as ADS already have a digital archive up and running. At ADS they have applied the model to their existing digital archive, which is both an interesting and practical way to approach the model. Her talk identified which areas of her organization the model could be applied to, and she clarified this by including photographs of the actual staff involved in each of the OAIS processes. The issue of registration and access to online archives was debated.

Andrew Wilson, Preservation Services and Projects Manager at AHDS spoke in the afternoon (

[Sherpa-DP and OAIS](#)

[PDF 300KB](#)

) about the use of OAIS in the Sherpa DP project

<http://ahds.ac.uk/about/projects/sherpa-dp/>

. They are using a disaggregated model for implementing the model throughout the university-based institutional repositories and he indicated that they will share an AHDS preservation repository. He then initiated the question, 'What does OAIS compliance mean?', an interesting question with regard to institutions setting up their own archives. He touched on the OAIS audit process developed by RLG and what this will mean for future implementation of the model. A certification process might lead to the assumption that the model will have to be implemented in a certain prescriptive way and perhaps this goes against the 'open' spirit of OAIS. Some of the processes are 'deliberately vague' therefore they shouldn't be set in stone as to how one applies them. This issue initiated much lively debate amongst the delegates.

The final presentation of the day was a joint effort by Hilary Beedham of the UK Data Archive and Matt Palmer of the National Archives ([Mapping to the OAIS](#) [PDF 500KB](#)). They gave an interesting insight into two archives that are both assessing their existing organizational structure against the OAIS model. Interestingly, they both arrived at similar conclusions and found certain shortcomings with OAIS. A couple of areas that they struggled with were management of the Dissemination Information Package, as well as the metadata model which they thought could perhaps be made more detailed to include access controls and IPR concerns.

Matt also pointed out that it is fairly easy to be compliant with OAIS as most of the functions and processes are core to any digital archive. Both the TNA and UKDA Designated Communities are wide-ranging and they indicated that it might be the case that the model assumes a homogenous user community. However, this point was disputed by the audience as indeed the issue of the Designated Community is a very important feature of OAIS and establishing who you are preserving the information for is crucial. The Representation Information metadata field assumes that you will include an appropriate detailed technical description according to who will read the data in the future.

Hilary Beedham concentrated on their recently published report, 'Assessment of UKDA and TNA Compliance with OAIS and METS Standards' http://www.jisc.ac.uk/uploaded_documents/oaismets.pdf . The JISC-funded report was written partly to assist regional county-councils apply the model and simplify it.

The discussion at the end of the day proved very fruitful, and overall conclusions were as

follows:

- That it was really useful to have some real-life examples and case-studies.
- OAIS vocabulary and terminology is now recognised as really useful across a range of institutions. The value of having OAIS-compliant repositories will also enable a 'seamless transfer' of data between archives.
- While the model may be vague in its prescription, it certainly indicates what to think about when setting about creating a digital archive.
- One delegate suggested that the starting point should be to look at your own organization first, analyse the processes involved and apply OAIS processes accordingly.
- A practical guide as to how to set up an OAIS repository would be very useful, especially one which indicated different communities and organizational-specific interpretations. This guide could ideally take the form of 'OAIS-lite'.