

Response to Digital Britain: The Interim Report

Introduction

1. The **Digital Preservation Coalition (DPC)** is a not-for profit membership organisation whose primary objective is to raise awareness of the importance of the preservation of digital material and the attendant strategic, cultural and technological issues. It acts as an enabling and agenda-setting body within the digital preservation world and works to meet this objective through a number of high level goals. Its vision is to make our digital memory accessible tomorrow.
2. The Digital Preservation Coalition welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Digital Britain Interim Report. We seek opportunities to work more closely with the Digital Britain team in refining and delivering the digital strategy that their Interim Report delineates.
3. We support the broad conclusions of the Interim Report in identifying the essential architecture of the government's digital strategy. In particular we note the considerable contribution that production and re-use of digital content makes to the British economy. We are encouraged in our response by the Government's previously stated view that the contribution of the creative industries to the UK economy must move from the margins to the mainstream of economic policy.
4. In summary, our response is to call for **greater clarity and consideration of digital legacy, especially where this pertains to content**. This can be achieved through greater collaboration between the producers of content and those memory institutions – principally but not exclusively data services, archives, museums and libraries – charged with curating and preserving this generation's digital legacy.
5. It is our contention that appropriate **consideration of the long-term of digital content will deliver long-term competitive advantage** into the UK economy.
6. We seek **opportunities for knowledge transfer** between those who already have skills in the long term curation and preservation of digital content (such as the DPC membership) and the creative industries producing new content.

Digital networks

7. We note and welcome attention paid to the development of a new generation of network infrastructure for the UK. The extension and embedding of high capacity networks for home and business are as essential to the development of the economy.

8. The value of high quality digital content will increase as access to it becomes easier. The transformation of network capacity implies a concomitant growth in the consumption creation and re-use of digital content. This presents an opportunity and challenge for the long-term.
9. The proliferation of new content suppliers means that the UK will need to be more sophisticated and more widely skilled in the curation and preservation of digital content if it is to have a lasting impact on the economy. So, in parallel with the expansion of the network, the UK requires to build capacity for preservation and curation of digital content.
10. This can in part be achieved through refinement and planned investment in the skills and resources required to preserve digital content. We believe that this represents an opportunity for knowledge transfer from DPC members to the creators of digital content.
11. We note that paradigm shifts in broadcasting have historically been moments of unplanned loss of content. We call for broadcasters to examine the risks to content in their planning for migration to new platforms.

Digital Content

12. We note and welcome the attention paid to issues surrounding digital content, especially the discussions about the creation of digital content.
13. We note, in the words of the Blue Ribbon Task force on Sustainable Digital Preservation and Access , that *'access to data tomorrow requires decisions concerning preservation today'* (2008, 1).
14. Experience shows that preservation and curation of digital content is facilitated by early intervention. Dependable access can to some extent be built in at the point of creation, while digital archaeology is expensive and impractical on the large scale. In short digital legacy planning ought to become business as usual.
15. We believe that there is an opportunity for meaningful knowledge transfer between DPC members and the creators of content to enhance the durability of their content.
16. The effective exploitation of intellectual property happens over decades not years. Consequently, we believe the report's ambitions to provide greater clarity for intellectual property management needs to be positioned in a framework where the content remains fit for purpose over decades.
17. While the DPC has no particular view on the detail of the intellectual property issues in the report, it is keen to ensure that intellectual property laws do not act as a barrier to appropriate preservation activities.

18. Consideration must be given to the rights, responsibilities and legal protections of those engaged in the long term preservation of our digital heritage.
19. We note and welcome the discussion of new business models for digital content. This underlines the importance of effective exploitation of legacy content to create revenue streams. This is facilitated by more careful consideration of long-term access.
20. While we want businesses to thrive, we call for more effective planning to support preservation and access to digital resources from businesses that fail.

Universal Connectivity

21. We note and welcome the aspiration that everyone in the UK should be able to participate in the digital economy. We note again the implication for content creation and distribution and what this means for ensuring a cultural legacy (see point 8-10).

Equipping everyone to benefit

22. We note and welcome the concern with digital skills articulated in the Interim Report.
23. We note that digital preservation is a relatively new discipline. Better long-term planning and exploitation of digital content will best be achieved by investing in people, specifically by ensuring that the right parts of the workforce have access to appropriate training and career paths.
24. The UK has made a significant contribution in the development of digital preservation and curation. This contribution provides a competitive advantage for the creative industries and cultural heritage sector, and creates an opportunity for knowledge transfer between DPC members and content creators.

References

Blue Ribbon Task force on Sustainable Digital Preservation and Access (2008) *Sustaining the Digital Investment: Issues and Challenges of Economically Sustainable Digital Preservation (Interim Report)*

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