

Student Digital Preservation Day

Things I wish I'd been told before I started...

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Who controls the
past controls the
future. Who controls
the present controls
the past.

George Orwell, Nineteen Eighty-Four

Really, who knows what will happen...?



In September 1956 IBM launched the 305 RAMAC, the first 'SUPER' computer with a hard disk drive. The drive weighed over a ton and stored 5 MB of data.

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Here's a memory stick shaped like a plane!



I have six things I
wish I'd been told
before I started this
malarky...

1. The quest for world domination...

1. I wish I'd been told that one day archivists will rule the world.
2. Archivists have all the training to make decisions about selection, appraisal, arrangement, description & preservation.
3. They understand copyright, access, privacy.
4. Now they know how to recover the holiday snaps you accidentally deleted from your SD card!

2. Its not a technical problem...

1. I wish I'd known that digital preservation is not a technical problem; it's a social problem.
2. Many technical issues already have solutions, e.g. PLANETS\PLATO addresses many of the issues of migration.
3. The challenge is to move digital data into the future not just intact but in context & retaining its significance as research material.
4. This makes it a social problem.

3. What's the point?

1. I wish I'd had this clear a statement at the start.
2. Preservation without clear purpose serves neither the data nor the researcher.
3. The point of digital preservation is re-use of data.
4. Without understanding this we don't know how to preserve the data.
5. That's it. Re-use. The only reason we do it.
6. Simple.

4. Access, sweet, sweet, access...

1. I wish I'd been told that access is for life not just for Christmas.
2. If the point of digital preservation is re-use of data then the point of re-use is access. Long term access.
3. Preservation of data begins with the creation of data.
4. Creators of data are responsible for making data that can be preserved.
5. The role of archivists is to support this.

5. If only I'd known...

1. I wish I'd been told to train as an archivist.
2. Digital data shares a lot of characteristics with traditional archival material; being unique & requiring description & context in order to be understood.
3. Trained & professional archivists have 85-90% of the skills necessary to preserve digital data.
4. Archivists have of the skills to select, provide context, meaning & all of the skills work with creators.

6. The skills exist amongst us..

1. I wish I knew that the skills to work with data already exist amongst us.
2. The stuff of data is not new stuff, it's the stuff we've always had but on a new kind of paper.
3. Archivists have a duty of care to the future to engage with digital data not shy away from it or they are shirking professional responsibility.
4. Only with engagement will come the realisation that the skills to work with data were here all along.

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Now, lets go
write ourselves
some history...!

Thank you

Questions now, questions later...?

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