For the Attention of Individuals and Communities

Digital memories disappear as personal and community content is at risk of loss

Personal legacies and community heritage could vanish without proactive preservation or support from social media and online platforms. Photos, videos and posts stored only on social media or online platforms are particularly at-risk of disappearing if those services shut down, change policies or delete old content.

Without action, years of personal history and digital identities could be removed, with usernames, profiles and personal digital content lost – rendering any online presence inaccessible. Unless we back up and preserve our data or platforms provide preservation support, there is no way to guarantee long-term access to personal content.

Community archives could suffer the same fate. Often a lack of funding and dependence on a small number of volunteers without a preservation mandate means that the digital legacy of years of activity is at risk of loss.

For First Nations and Indigenous communities, the mishandling of sensitive materials and a poor understanding of cultural access restrictions by collecting institutions creates distrust in official archives and risks the loss of cultural records altogether.

A new version of the _Global 'Bit List' of Endangered Digital Materials_, published today by the Digital Preservation Coalition, confirms that Digital Archives of Community Groups and Family or personal records are Critically Endangered, with others such as First Nations Secret/Sacred Cultural Material listed as Endangered, underscoring the urgency of digital preservation efforts to safeguard our digital legacies.

Describing digital preservation as a proven way to ensure continued access to digital materials for as long as necessary, William Kilbride, Executive Director for the Digital Preservation Coalition concludes that data loss is not inevitable but needs immediate action:

"Our family photos, community histories and cultural records are not trivial, they are the threads that connect generations. When platforms delete content or archives lack resources, those threads break, and our stories are lost. Digital preservation is how we protect these legacies, ensuring that personal memories and community heritage remain accessible, authentic and safe for the future."

The DPC's _Global 'Bit List' of Endangered Digital Materials_—or the _Bit List_—is a powerful call to action from the global digital preservation community. It highlights the digital content most at risk of being lost, based on real-world conditions and expert insight. By clearly identifying both the urgency of the threat and the value of the content, the _Bit List_ shines a spotlight on the digital materials that demand immediate attention to ensure their survival.

The Bit List entries relevant to the preservation of personal and community archives are**:**

Critically Endangered

- o Community-generated Content in Arts and Heritage

- o Data Posted to Defunct or Little-used Social Media Platforms

- o [Digital Archives of Community Groups](#)

- o [Family or personal records](#)

Endangered

- o [First Nations Secret/Sacred Cultural Material](#)

- o [Oral Histories](#)

- o [Born Digital Photographs and Video shared via social media or Uploaded to Cloud Services](#)