

## iPres 2011, 8th International Conference on Preservation of Digital Objects

Singapore, 1<sup>st</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> Nov 2011

### About the event

From 1 to 4 November 2011 the annual iPres conference on the Preservation of Digital Objects took place at the National Library Board in Singapore. The NLB and the Nanyang Technological University had spontaneously offered to host the conference after this year's earthquake in Japan forced the relocation and they did a wonderful job. You can find the programme at <http://ipres2011.sg/pages/programme-overview> and the papers and presentations should become available shortly.

Angela Dappert represented the DPC and various DPC and TIMBUS members were present in their own right – Adrian Brown (Parliamentary Archives), Andrew Jackson (British Library), Antonio Ciuffreda (U. Portsmouth), Daryll Mead (National Library of Scotland), Laura Molloy (HATII), Leo Konstantelos (U. Portsmouth), Neil Grindley, (JISC), Paul Wheatley (British Library), Tim Keefe (Trinity College Dublin), Andi Rauber, Christoph Becker, Daniel Simon, Goncalo Antunes, Jose Barateiro, Jose Borbinha, Mark Guttenbrunner, Stephan Strodl (TIMBUS), ...

These notes are intended to provide an informal briefing for members of the DPC not able to attend the event. For an authoritative and comprehensive report readers are encouraged to contact the organisers of the event and the speaker directly.

### Presentations and discussion

#### Tutorials

The conference started off with two half-day tutorials – one on Web Archiving, and one on Preservation Metadata and PREMIS. Both tutorials gave excellent introductions to the general issues, followed by in-depth discussions of issues in specific implementations. Both of the PREMIS implementation reports from the National Digital Heritage Archive (NDHA) of the National Library of New Zealand and from Professional Services at the National Library Board of Singapore highlighted the limitations that they had to overcome in their use of PREMIS in the Rosetta implementation.

#### Keynote Speeches

Seamus Ross, professor at the iSchool at the University of Toronto gave an opening keynote on “Digital Preservation: Why should today's society pay for the benefit of society in future?” and emphasised creating an information curation cultural behaviour, even if the benefits are unproven and unknown. Mick Newnham, Manager of Conservation, Preparation and Research at the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia presented on “Preserving motion picture film: so much to do, so little time...”, and Ross Wilkinson, Executive Director, Australian National Data Service spoke on “Opportunities & Challenges of Preserving Research Data”. You can enjoy Inge Angevaere's blogs about these presentations at <http://digitaalduurzaam.blogspot.com/>.

## The Main Programme

There was a noticeable shift in topics from last year's to this year's iPres programme. There were 3 sessions on preserving from hand-held data carriers, a topic that had been largely excluded in previous years. There also was a focus on software environment, data research environment and whole process preservation - away from file preservation. There were papers on fine-tuning previous approaches, such as simulating the effect of preservation action scenarios on the repository, or determining the most important significant characteristics so that you don't waste efforts on ones that make little difference. Emulation received a significant amount of attention and has moved towards making it usable to the practitioner, as illustrated by the KEEP project. There was a focus on disaster recovery. Participants started to look at the boundary between business continuity management and digital preservation concluding that one without the other is of no use. The conference was originally planned to be hosted in Japan and the original hosts provided a poignant example. They had lost large quantities of digital material because the replicas were held in the same area as the preservation copies; the data carriers and storage units were not salvageable from the mud that flooded the buildings; and regional collection items had not been preserved at a national level. There was also great interest in using preserved data to determine disaster response or to use data to recognize the risk and to ward off disasters. Whole business process recovery is a strong focus of the TIMBUS project which presented work on sensor data preservation.

## Workshops

The programme was rounded off by workshops. I attended the one on "Steps Toward International Alignment in Digital Preservation" which aimed to progress the discussion, in my opinion, at too high a level. For example, there was no agreement on what a digital preservation infrastructure comprises and which of its components might need to be aligned.

To me, the discussion brought out what was also noticeable in the general conference programme. We do not have clear agreement what digital preservation is, and without it, it is hard to agree on how to align one's approaches. In the conference there was a relatively large number of topics that I personally would not have labelled as digital preservation issues, amongst others, for example, whether making research data available leads to more publications (or vice versa, for that matter) or how to decide which web content to archive (unless it is driven by the preservability of the archived material) or how to ensure that you have collected all pertinent information from a disaster in order to be able to learn from it later on. These are very interesting questions, but they don't advance our ability to preserve for the long-term. Is this trend towards "related" digital preservation issues a sign that we have moved to business-as-usual on the core issues or is it a sign that we are redefining our scope, or did we never have such a very clear understanding of our scope?

## About this document

Version 1	Written on day	1-4/11/2011	AD
Version 2	Distributed	8/11/2010	DPC members, TIMBUS project