24.01.2012, 'Digital Preservation: What I wish I knew before I started', UCL, London
Report from Rebecca Volk

This half day conference was an interesting consideration of what the speakers wished they had known about digital preservation before they began working in this field. William Kilbride began the afternoon by identifying key challenges and skills required for digital preservation. Dave Thompson followed this by highlighting that archivists already have the necessary training to deal with issues of digital preservation. Although Adrian Brown had a vast array of flowcharts to show, he declared that our biggest tool is our brain which is good at handling variation unlike digital workflows which are highly sensitive to variations. Andrew Fetherston emphasised the need for good relations with IT departments and acknowledged the difference in levels of resources archives will have for digital preservation. He also introduced the idea of 'taking time to smell the digital flowers'. Finally, Helen Hockx-Yu shared some of the difficulties associated with archiving webpages, particularly now that these are increasingly dynamic not simple html. She stated that a hybrid of curatorial and technical skills was required. The day concluded with a panel sessions providing the opportunity for some questions to be raised.

The OAIS module was, as to be expected at a conference dealing with digital records, displayed several times, but the speakers were determined to show that this is not a new concept rather it is new terminology to describe familiar processes. Throughout the afternoon, need for collaboration and (ongoing) action were highlighted as crucial. William Kilbride had declared that the mission of the day was to show that digital preservation was not scary and I feel this was achieved and done with a great deal of humour. It was empowering to repeatedly hear that archivists already have the means of dealing with digital preservation as archivists already have the tools to deal with data and digital records are simply data in a different format.