

Preservation, Generative Knowledge, and the Record

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First: What's CRL doing in this arena

Strategy framework + FY26-27 initiatives

- Part I: initiatives we can begin in FY27 to **evolve our service model** and **reinforce our stewardship commitments**
- Part II: emerging issues that the board needs to advise on, that could bear on the future services and identity of CRL



FY2025 – 26

Serials processing system...

Licensing working group ...

Large-scale digitization
model terms

FY2026 – 27

... into production

... AI in the scholarly
ecosystem working group

“AI in the anatomy of the
library” + call for test cases

- e.g. digital post-
processing

FY2028 →

AI in the anatomy of a
library: pilot projects 1... n
+ Evaluations

[and at least one surprise...]

AI Testbed

[AI governance + executive
support prototype]

Notable work to date

Large-scale digitization in the AI era:

Discussion document and model terms

- www.crl.edu/large-scale-digitization-ai-era



Serials analysis + item record creation system in production

Watch these spaces for news:

- www.crl.edu/news
- <https://www.linkedin.com/company/center-for-research-libraries>



Second: Why I think the future is fantastic

- AI is the most thoroughly new information technology I have worked with in my career, from cuneiform to the present
- There is something LAMs do that AI fundamentally cannot do
- We get to figure that out



Probabilistic AI systems can produce accurate information but cannot preserve the underlying record or guarantee its authority and provenance.

AI increases the volume of claims requiring validation → independent stewards of authoritative sources becomes more important.

This technology, capable of retaining and regenerating knowledge, reframes the longstanding preservation role of our institutions



How does preservation happen?

- People
- Care about
- Things



How does preservation happen?

- **People:** need access and have agency
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- Things



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- Things:

How does preservation happen?

- People: need access and have agency
- Care about: interact with—listening, looking, reading, researching, remixing—and commit their time and treasure to
- **Things:** 'objects' that have a consistent form(at) and affordances, susceptible to technical preservation methods

The rift and the responsibilities

- LAMs give people a venue to care about things and create the organizational structure necessary to do technical preservation and manage resources (time and money) of patrons and staff, so 'things' can persist
- LLMs augment people's agency, give people new modalities for caring about or interacting with things, and may execute some technical preservation process
- LLMs cannot maintain an object with a consistent set of affordances: that is a rift between deterministic and probabilistic functions

So what's a LAM to do?

- Be deliberate about understanding our essential roles
- Understand how the role we play in provenance relates to the value created by AI systems
- Identify the coalition that has mission alignment and resources to support preservation, based on shared recognition of value
- Create the structures, within our organizations and across our profession, so our own use of AI teaches us about the capabilities, roles, and responsibilities of LAM professionals and AI systems.



Thank you!

