Introduction

1. The Digital Preservation Coalition (DPC) is a not-for-profit membership organisation whose primary objective is to raise awareness of the importance of the preservation of digital material and the attendant strategic, cultural and technological issues. It acts as an enabling and agenda-setting body within the digital preservation world. Its vision is to make our digital memory accessible tomorrow.

2. The Digital Preservation Coalition welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Archives for the 21st Century Consultation Draft. We seek opportunities to work more closely with the consultation team in refining and delivering the strategy that the report delineates.

3. In particular we support the recommendation for a co-ordinated response to ‘the growing challenge of managing digital information’ with a responsive and strengthened workforce supported by strengthened leadership.

4. It is our contention that the UK already has a significant level of expertise in the field of digital preservation. Although sometimes daunting, the challenge of managing digital information is one that the UK is well placed to address.

5. The Digital Preservation Coalition is a cross-sectoral organisation with a distinctive capacity to explore, develop and deliver co-ordinated approaches to the management of the UK’s digital cultural legacy. We offer our support in delivering this element of the report’s recommendations.

6. There is a greater value and faster progress can be achieved through collaboration with organisations such as represented by the DPC’s members. We note the success and expertise of the DPC’s members in addressing the long term management and access to digital data. This has been based on:
   - empirical analysis of needs (such as the Mind the Gap Report);
   - definition of standards (such as DRAMBORA from the DCC and ‘Trusted Digital Repository’ from RLG);
   - development of frameworks to assess and plan for specific challenges (such as LIFE from the British Library or the Inspect project from CeRCH);
   - refinement of standards for specific contexts (such as Shaman from CDLR at Strathclyde University or)
   - development and sharing of tools and services (such as Pronom and DROID from the National Archives or the preservation hosting facility offered by UKDA)
• deployment of standards-based solutions across national institutions (such as the Digital Media Initiative at the BBC or the Trusted Digital Repository from the National Library of Scotland)

• offering of advice and training (such as the Digital Preservation Training Programme from ULCC and the DPC’s technology watch reports)

• recognition of long term value of digital data within policy and governance (such as RCUK’s data management and access working party or English Heritage’s insistence on digital archives from archaeology)

These are just a few examples of the work of DPC members.

7. We note that the report calls for ‘innovative cross-sectoral partnerships’ for investment. We believe that DPC members, with their wide and deep expertise, are well placed to deliver elements of this programme in partnership with existing archival and cultural institutions. This latent ‘capacity to improve’ will enhance the experience of the archive users.

8. We note and welcome the drive for comprehensive access to archival holdings through online delivery to citizens at times and places that suit them, and we welcome the renewed focus on cultural and learning partnerships. We note the investment that this may require in the creation of new content, and in the annotation of existing content. This compounds the need for more effective consideration of long term management of digital assets.

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