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Emerging Standards in digital preservation

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Abstract

This presentation will give an overview of two surveys carried out in 2004-2005 on behalf of ICABS by the Koninklijke Bibliotheek (KB), the national library of the Netherlands, and by the National Library of Australia (NLA).

One of the objectives of ICABS, as formulated in its mission statement, is to advance understanding of issues related to long-term archiving of electronic resources, including the promotion of new and recommended conventions for such archiving.

This objective is taken up by the KB, in close co-operation with the NLA.

The draft version of both reports will be available for review by the ICABS partners by the end of May. The final reports will be available in June 2005.

KB survey

In the 2004-2005 period the KB conducted a survey on the use and development of standards in digital archiving in the international library world. This has resulted in an overview of the current state of affairs in digital preservation in 15 national libraries.

Main focal points in the survey were the use of standards in the operational safe place environments (a state of affairs survey of initiatives on electronic repositories), and the state

of affairs on, and needs for permanent access strategies (such as migration and emulation). The survey also gives an overview of current national and international projects. Research has been carried out by means of desk-research, interviews and analysis of new developments.

The survey of the KB can be seen as a continuation of two earlier surveys. This is on the one hand the research of Neil Beagrie from 2003 at the request of the Library of Congress and the Council on Library and Information Resources (*National Digital Preservation Initiatives: An overview of developments in Australia, France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and of Related International Activity international activities*) and on the other hand the outcome of the research by the PREMIS (PREservation Metadata Implementation Strategy) Working Group in 2003, of which the results were published in 2004 (*Implementing Preservation Repositories For Digital Materials: Current Practice And Emerging Trends In The Cultural Heritage Community*).

The KB report will consist of two parts. Part one contains a general introduction, including an analysis of the current state of affairs at 15 national libraries. Part two contains the elaborate overviews per library.

Each overview is divided into six paragraphs:

1. General
2. The electronic repository
3. Preservation strategies
4. Current projects
5. Other institutions
6. Recent developments

The general paragraph contains information on the recent developments concerning deposit laws for electronic objects (on-line and off-line); on the embedding of digital preservation activities (building of the repository and research) in the library organisation; on the way digital preservation activities are financed and on the status of the electronic repository.

The second paragraph on Electronic Repositories contains information on: provided services; depositing; software and OAI; materials; metadata and metadata schemes; access.

Part three, on Preservation Strategies, describes which strategies are currently applied in the processing of digital objects and what the plans for the future are.

The part on Current Projects gives an overview of current projects and working groups in which the national libraries are involved or in which they participate (national and international projects).

The part Other Institutions gives an overview of other institutions that are active in the area of digital preservation of the country involved, divided into libraries, museums, archives, audiovisual institutions and miscellaneous.

At Recent Developments, the 'latest news' is given in the area of digital preservation. These are facts that do not fit in any of the other paragraphs, yet are worth mentioning.

For paragraphs 1, 4, 5 and 6 information that is accessible through the website of the libraries is used first. Paragraph 2 and 3 are based information from the surveys that at the time have been used for PREMIS, enhanced with the information from the websites. All topics are then completed and made topical, based on information gathered by phone or email.

The selection of the libraries is determined as follows: 1. the ICABS partners; 2. National Libraries that participated in the PREMIS survey; 3. National Libraries known to be active in the area of digital preservation.

The sixteen libraries involved in the research are (in alphabetical order) the national libraries of: Austria, Australia, Canada, China, Denmark, France, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, UK, and USA.

NLA Survey

The Survey of the NLA presents an overview of current available guidelines, standards and codes of practice for the preservation of digital materials.

The availability of useful guidance is a critical issue for many wishing to undertake preservation of digital materials. The NLA survey was undertaken as a first step in assessing whether suitable guidance is available, and to increase its visibility to those who may need it. The assessment was based on the PADI (Preserving Access to Digital Information) international subject gateway, and was limited to English language sources only.

The NLA survey looked at currently available guidance documents for preserving 12 different kinds of digital materials, likely to have enduring value. These materials ranged from online web-based materials to digital art, scientific datasets to electronic games. The survey also looked at the relevance of guidance documents to 8 different preservation-related processes, from taking responsibility for digital preservation, to maintaining the means of providing access.

In each category, guidance sources were divided into categories based on their degree of focus on digital preservation. Thus, some citations were considered to be primary sources of guidance, while others that were considered to be less current, less authoritative, focused on local needs, or embedded in non-guidance documents, were also identified and assessed.

The survey also looked at the availability of ongoing avenues of maintaining current awareness, such as PADI, discussion lists, training providers and established digital preservation programs that freely provide information about their activities.

The report on this survey will contain an analysis of the state of guidance in general, and against each of the specific topic areas surveyed. After commenting on some factors that work against the emergence of universally satisfactory guidance - including the still immature development of proven digital preservation methods - the analysis will suggest there are some guidance sources of wide applicability that will meet many needs, but there are many areas in which further guidance is sorely needed. Suggestions for the currently most useful sources in each category will be included.

The report will also include some discussion of where future guidance might come from, and the kind of environmental factors that might encourage its appearance. The NLA has identified some wellsprings of guidance that have produced a steady stream of help over a number of years, and the report aims to reflect on why this is so.