

# Digital Preservation at Oxford and Cambridge

A collaborative research project to evaluate and provide sustainable recommendations for our digital preservation programmes

## ARA Conference Round up: Day 1

Posted on [23 September, 2016](#) by [Sarah](#)

*These are some excerpts from Lee's detailed conference report on the 2016 ARA Conference in London. It ran from 31 August to 2 September and included two full days of sessions devoted to conversations on digital preservation. His full conference report is available for download at the end of this blog post.*

It has been three weeks since the last cup of tea was self-served, the last morsel of cake consumed and the sincere goodbyes to fellow colleagues said at the annual ARA Conference, held at Wembley. Many delegates left with minds crammed with new ideas, innovations and practical lessons to use back at work. I left with the strong impression that digital preservation within the recordkeeping community in the UK and Ireland has become part of the 'mainstream' in recordkeeping practice across a variety of sectors. The recordkeeping community has moved on from wanting to know what digital preservation is to how it get involved and preserve digital collections for future generations.

### **Some highlights from the sessions on Day 1 are:**

- Mike Quinn reminded delegates that they needed to remain flexible in relation to digital preservation challenges, nothing is

guaranteed: [Apple ending support](#) for the .MOV file format demonstrated that.

- Matthew Addis noted that “apathy is the digital record killer,” so starting from somewhere simple and working from there is the best way to tackle the digital preservation ‘problem’. Addis observed that lots of organisations seem to suffer from a “digital preservation paralysis” and fear getting it wrong. However, he advised those assembled that “doing nothing is the worst choice”.
- Kristy Lee’s “simple but vital” advice was to understand where your organisation is in terms of digital preservation work and work out what it is you want to do with digital preservation. She found Adrian Brown’s maturity models quite useful for that.
- The E-ARK project is coming to an end, but has done interesting open source tool development for implementation of specifications that are scalable, modular, robust and adaptable. Find out more about the project and its December conference [here](#).

The afternoon panel session, “*Would like to know more*” – *Digital preservation training and professional development*, was a particularly interesting discussion for the Outreach and Training Fellows. It summarised the findings of the ‘Digital Archiving and Preservation Training Needs Survey’ led by the University of London’s Computer Centre (ULCC) in collaboration the Digital Preservation Coalition (DPC) and the Digital Curation Centre (DCC). Ed Pinsent also neatly presented the findings of the needs survey:

1. People want to learn about strategy and planning, not exclusively DP theory, not exclusively IT;
2. People are clear that Digital Preservation training will bring them benefits directly related to their job/organisation/collections;
3. People want to learn by doing;
4. Everybody wants to know more; and
5. Everyone wants to feel *confident* about digital preservation. ‘Confidence’ was not a word that was used in the wording of the survey, but looking through the qualitative data it was a reoccurring word.

To conclude the session, Stephanie Taylor advised that for digital preservation training, there was no ‘magic answer’ or a ‘right path’

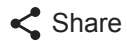
in providing training. You do have to accept that ongoing review and starting from anew is a part of the practice.

For the Digital Preservation at Oxford and Cambridge project, these conclusions and lessons from the ULCC led survey will certainly be interesting to compare once the initial Training Needs Survey has been carried out at the two respective institutions.

*Lee's full ARA Conference write-up can be read [here](#).*

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