

Digital Preservation at Oxford and Cambridge

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

iPres 2016: outreach, competencies and training

Posted on [12 October, 2016](#) by [Sarah](#)

iPres 2016 in Bern, Switzerland was an excellent opportunity to talk to practitioners and managers in the digital preservation field and begin to talk about the DPOC project. Here is a round-up of useful ideas from the Outreach and Training Fellows, Lee (Cambridge) and Sarah (Oxford).

iPres was an excellent opportunity to share ideas and ask questions; we have made great contacts and returned to the UK full of new ideas to trial in the project. Here are some of the best outreach, training and skills-related learnings that we got out of iPres 2016:

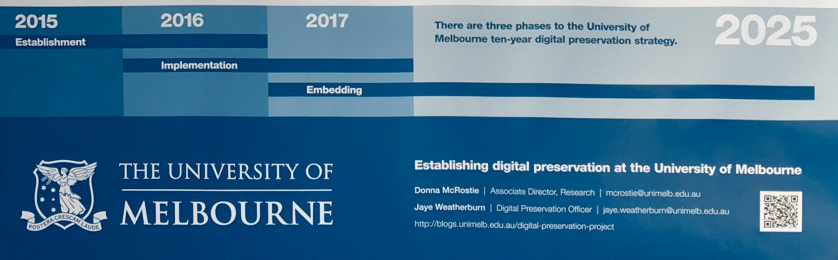
- **In-house training: Keep it short and refresh it regularly.** Before the conference even started, we sat down to dinner with some colleagues from the British Library and chatted about their in-house training programme. They were full of useful tips about the value of running shorter awareness training sessions. We're hoping to have the opportunity to see some of their training in action someday.
- **Research data stewards: find the gaps and helping them understand the value of preserving unique research data.** Jeremy York (University of Michigan) delivered a paper

on [measuring the stewardship gap in research data management](#). His research can be seen [here](#). The most interesting result was the disparity between the importance of the research data and the intention to preserve it—research data was deemed of high value, but there were no plans to preserve the data beyond the project. The question we must ask ourselves is: what training and support can we offer to help researchers understand how (and why) to preserve valuable research data?

- **Technical skills in digital preservation: important or role specific?** Previous NDSR residents undertook a project to [establish core competencies for a digital steward](#). The core competencies outlined from the findings were: technical skills, professional output responsibilities communication skills, research responsibilities, project management responsibilities and knowledge of standards and best practices. The research concluded that while those were the core competencies, skills were niche and role-specific, especially technical skills. It was interesting that communication skill and knowledge of standards and best practices were two competencies often viewed as essential where technical skills were not—soft skills still matter in digital preservation. The research can be accessed [here](#).
- **Outreach and training: changing office culture to promote digital preservation.** [Jaye Weatherburn's \(University of Melbourne\) poster](#) got Lee and I talking about the importance of creating the right office culture when starting a digital preservation programme. Getting the message out about the importance of safeguarding digital assets, translating current expertise into future roles and the importance of using different messages for faculty and students. Jaye said in her poster introduction that “it’s about migrating the attitude as well as the bits.”

Our 10-year Strategy for Digital Preservation

We are working across four distinct areas to affect change.



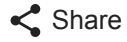
- **Outreach: it's an ongoing task.** [Workshop 12 on writing a business case](#) had interesting discussions on outreach during breakout groups. One comment was that outreach doesn't happen once in an organisation, but it happens all the time, forever; it happens upwards, sideways and down. Another comment was about getting staff to commit to digital preservation through showing them the value of a hybrid (physical and digital) archive; many of the skills are the same. And rather than having them in opposition, they should work together to augment each other. Many people who work with physical material (such as Conservators) will still have an important role to play with digital objects.

We're looking forward to taking some of these learnings and applying them to our training needs assessment over the next few

months. We'll also be continuing with our outreach efforts (after all, it is always an ongoing effort) using some of the ideas suggested.

Stay tuned for more conference discussions from the Policy & Planning Fellow, Edith.

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