

Digital Preservation at Oxford and Cambridge

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

DPASSH: Getting close to producers, consumers and digital preservation

Posted on [28 June, 2017](#) by [Sarah](#)

Sarah shares her thoughts after attending the DPASSH (Digital Preservation in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities) Conference at the University of Sussex (14 – 15 June).

[DPASSH](#) is a conference that the [Digital Repository Ireland](#) (DRI) puts on with a host organisation. This year, it was hosted by the [Sussex Humanities Lab](#) at the University of Sussex, Brighton. What is exciting about this digital preservation conference is that it brings together creators (producers) and users (consumers) with digital preservation experts. Most digital preservation conferences end up being a bit of an echo chamber, full of practitioners and vendors only. But what about the creators and the users? What knowledge can we share? What can we learn?

DPASSH is a small conference, but it was an opportunity to see what researchers are creating and how they are engaging with digital collections. For example in Stefania Forlini's talk, she discussed the perils of a content-centric digitisation process where unique print artefacts are all treated the same; the process flattens everything into identical objects though they are very different. What

about the materials and the physicality of the object? It has stories to tell as well.

To Forlini, books span several domains of sensory experience and our digitised collections should reflect that. With the Gibson Project, Forlini and project researchers are trying to find ways to bring some of those experiences back through the [Speculative W@nderverse](#). They are currently experimenting with embossing different kinds of paper with a code that can be read by a computer. The computer can then bring up the science fiction pamphlets that are made of that specific material. Then a user can feel the physicality of the digitised item and then explore the text, themes and relationships to other items in the collection using generous interfaces. This combines a physical sensory experience with a digital experience.

For creators, the decision of what research to capture and preserve is sometimes difficult; often they lack the tools to capture the information. Other times, creators do not have the skills to perform proper archival selection. Athanasios Velios offered a tool solution for digital artists called [Activity](#). Activity can capture the actions performed on a digital artwork in certain programs, like Photoshop or Illustrator. This allows the artist to record their creative process and gives future researchers the opportunity to study the creative process. Steph Taylor from [CoSector](#) suggested in her talk that creators are archivists now, because they are constantly appraising their digital collections and making selection decisions. It is important that archivists and digital preservation practitioners empower creators to make good decisions around what should be kept for the long-term.

As a bonus to the conference, I was awarded with the 'Best Tweet' award by the [DPC](#) and DPASSH. It was a nice way to round out two good, informative days. I plan to purchase many books with my gift voucher!



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From digital preservation to cultural preservation. One allows access, the other takes access to engagement, use & identity. [#dpassh2017](#)

Sarah Mason @DigitallySarah

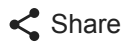
It's not just #digitalpreservation but culture preservation. Not just through access to objects, but to interact, engage & use them. #DP0C

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[See Sarah Mason's other Tweets](#)

I certainly hope they hold the conference next year, as I think it is important for researchers in the humanities, arts and social sciences to engage with digital preservation experts, archivists and librarians. There is a lot to learn from each other. How often do we get our creators and users in one room with us digital preservation nerds?

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