

# Digital Preservation at Oxford and Cambridge

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

## What is holding us back from change?

Posted on [20 July, 2017](#) by [Sarah](#)



— There are worse spots for a meeting. Oxford. Photo by: S. Mason

Every 3 months the DPOC teams gets together in person in either Oxford, Cambridge or London (there's also been talk of taking a meeting at [Bletchley Park](#) sometime). As this is a collaborative effort, these meetings offer a rare opportunity to work face-to-face instead of via Skype with the endless issues around screen sharing and poor connections. Good ideas come when we get to sit down together.

As our next joint board meeting is next week, it was important to look over the work of the past year and make sure we are happy with the plan for year two. Most importantly, we wanted to discuss the messages we need to give our institutions as we look towards the sustainability of our digital preservation activities. How do we ensure that the earlier work and the work being done by us does not get repeated in 2-5 years time?

### **Silos in institutions**

This is especially complicated when dealing with institutions like Oxford and Cambridge. We are big and old institutions with teams often working in silos. What does siloing have an effect on? Well, everything. Communication, effort, research—it all suffers. Work done previously is done again. Over and over.

The same problems are being tackled within different silos; this is duplicated and wasted effort if they are not communicating their work to each other. This means that digital preservation efforts can be fractured and imbalanced if institutional collaboration is ignored. We have an opportunity and responsibility in this project to get people together and to get them to talk openly about the digital preservation problems they are each trying to tackle.

### **Managers need to lead the culture change in the institution**

While not always the case, it is important that managers do not just sit back and say “you will never get this to work” or “it has always been this way.” We need them on our side; they after often the gatekeepers of silos. We have to bring them together in order to start opening the silos.

It is within their power to be the agents of change; we have to empower them to believe in changing the habits of our institution. They have to believe that digital preservation is worth it if their team will also.

This might be the ‘carrot and stick’ approach or the ‘carrot’ only, but whatever approach is used, there are a number of points we agreed needed to be made clear:

- our digital collections are significant and we have made assurances about their preservation and long term access

- our institutional reputation plays a role in the preservation of our digital assets
- digital preservation is a moving target and we must be moving with it
- digital preservation will not be “solved” through this project, but we can make a start; it is important that this is not then the end.

## Roadmap to sustainable digital preservation

Backing up any messages is the need for a sustainable roadmap. If you want change to succeed and if you want digital preservation to be a core activity, then steps must be actionable and incremental. Find out where you are, where you want to go and then outline the timeline of steps it will take to get there. Consider using maturity models to set goals for your roadmap, such as [Kenney and McGovern's](#), [Brown's](#) or the [NDSA](#) model. Each are slightly different and some might be more suitable for your institutions than others, so have a look at all of them.

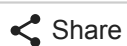
It's like climbing a mountain. I don't look at the peak as I walk; it's too far away and too unattainable. Instead, I look at my feet and the nearest landmark. Every landmark I pass is a milestone and I turn my attention to the next one. Sometimes I glance up at the peak, still in the distance—over time it starts to grow closer. And eventually, my landmark is the peak.

It's only when I get to the top that I see all of the other mountains I also have to climb. And so I find my landmarks and continue on. I consider digital preservation a bit of the same thing.

*What are your suggestions for breaking down the silos and getting fractured teams to work together?*

---

### SHARE THIS:



This entry was posted in [collaboration](#), [digital preservation](#), [project update](#) by [Sarah](#). Bookmark the [permalink](#) [<http://www.dpoc.ac.uk/2017/07/20/what-is-holding-us-back-from-change/>].

## About Sarah

Digital Preservation Specialist - Outreach and Training:  
Bodleian Libraries, Oxford University

[View all posts by Sarah →](#)

This site uses Akismet to reduce spam. [Learn how your comment data is processed.](#)