

Digital Preservation at Oxford and Cambridge

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

Visit to the Parliamentary Archives: Training and business cases

Posted on [3 August, 2017](#) by [ehalvarsson](#)

Edith Halvarsson, Policy and Planning Fellow at Bodleian Libraries, writes about the DPOC project's recent visit to the Parliamentary Archives.



This week the DPOC fellows visited the Parliamentary Archives in London. Thank you very much to Catherine Hardman (Head of Preservation and Access), Chris Fryer (Digital Archivist) and Grace Bell (Digital Preservation Trainee) for having us. Shamefully I have to admit that we have been **very** slow to make this trip; Chris first invited us to visit all the way back in September last year! However, our tardiness to make our way to Westminster was in the end aptly

timed with the completion of year one of the DPOC project and planning for year 2.

Like CUL and Bodleian Libraries, the Parliamentary Archives also first began their own Digital Preservation Project back in 2010. Their project has since transitioned into digital preservation in a more programmatic capacity as of 2015. As CUL and Bodleian Libraries will be beginning to draft business cases for moving from project to programme in year 2; meeting with Chris and Catherine was a good opportunity to talk about how you start making that tricky transition.

Of course, every institution has its own drivers and risks which influence business cases for digital preservation, but there are certain things which will sound familiar to a lot of organisations. For example, what Parliamentary Archives have found over the past seven years, is that advocacy for digital collections and training staff in digital preservation skills is an ongoing activity. Implementing solutions is one thing, whereas maintaining them is another. This, in addition to staff who have received digital preservation training eventually moving on to new institutions, means that you constantly need to stay on top of advocacy and training. Making “the business case” is therefore not a one-off task.

Another central challenge in terms of building business cases, is how you frame digital preservation as a service rather than as “an added burden”. The idea of “seamless preservation” with no human intervention is a very appealing one to already burdened staff, but in reality workflows need to be supervised and maintained. To sell digital preservation, that extra work must therefore be perceived as something which adds value to collection material and the organisation. It is clear that physical preservation adds value to collections, but the argument for digital preservation can be a harder sell.

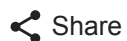
Catherine had, however, some encouraging comments on how we can attempt to turn advice about digital preservation into something which is perceived as value adding. Being involved with and talking to staff early on in the design of new project proposals – rather than as an extra add on after processes are already in place – is an example of this.



— Image by James Mooney

All in all, it has been a valuable and encouraging visit to the Parliamentary Archives. The DPOC fellows look forward to keeping in touch – particularly to hear more about the great work Parliamentary Archive have been doing to provide digital preservation training to staff!

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