Abstract – The dawn of Trustworthy Digital Repository Certification under the ISO 16363:2012 standard is on the horizon. Across the digital preservation community, institutions are eager to learn more about the processes of preparing for and undergoing an ISO 16363 audit from an accredited third-party organization. As the first ISO 16363 audits in the world have been performed, repositories want to learn value and benefit that certification provides. This panel features representatives from three different repositories representing three countries with distinct collections, designated communities, organizational infrastructures, and unique challenges. Institutions represented on the panel have either recently achieved certified or are currently undergoing an ISO 16363 audit. This panel will explore each repository’s experience during, leading up to, and following certification. The panel will include a representative from the accredited external auditing body who has performed these audits to respond to audience questions about the audit process. Panelists from repositories will present varying perspectives on the future of digital repository certification, the role of digital preservation standards, and approaches to implementation. All panelists will present arguments, concerns, and criticisms regarding the ISO 16363 standard and existing methods of repository assessment.

Keywords – repository, trustworthy, standards, audit, certification

Conference Topics – Exploring New Horizons

I. INTRODUCTION

As of March 2019, two digital repositories have received certification under the ISO 16363:2012 Audit and Certification of Trustworthy Digital Repositories standard. Only one auditing body, the Primary Trustworthy Digital Repository Authorisation Body, Ltd. (PTAB) has publicly announced their accreditation to perform such audits[1]. Though the digital preservation community has recognized the importance of standards and best practices for over two decades, now that an ISO 16363 certification process is in place, a relatively small number of repositories have initiated an external audit. Those repositories which have pursued certification represent diverse collections and designated communities, and this diversity presents unique challenges for the audit and audit preparation activities. Based on their experience with the audit and certification process, these early adopters are eager to share their perspective about the horizon of digital repository certification and standards including a discussion of the feasibility and value of an ISO 16363 for various types of digital repositories and organizations.

II. INSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVES

This panel features representatives from the United States Government Publishing Office (GPO),
the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts
National Cultural AudioVisual Archives (NCAA), and
the European Organization for Nuclear Research
(CERN). Each of these repositories have either
received certification or are in the process of being
certified under the ISO 16363:2012 standard. Also
represented on the panel is the British Library, an
institution which has performed a self-assessment
against repository standards but currently does
not intend to pursue ISO 16363 certification. Each
of these organizations have specific institutional
missions and stakeholders. These varying insti-
tutional contexts prompted different, yet similar,
reasons for pursuing or not ISO 16363:2012 certi-
fication. Representatives from each organization
will discuss which assessment methodology was
the most appropriate for their institution and
goals. Panel questions will be presented from two
alternating members of the panel in order to allow
for full participation in responding to prepared
questions, as well as facilitated questions from the
audience.

For each of these institutions, the implemen-
tation and operation of a standards-based digital
repository is one of their key responsibilities. Preparing for the ISO 16363:2012 audits and self-as-
sessments entailed significant preparation and
training. Each panelist will share information about
their preparatory activities including the benefits
of attending an ISO 16363 training course. Panelists
will also reflect on challenges to performing the
audit, the criticality of institution-wide support,
and audit planning.

Panelists will discuss how their repository
benefitted from their certification experience.
Representatives will also explore the ways in which
their organization has improved or changed work-
flows and processes as an outcome of the audit, how
certification has impacted stakeholders or design-
nated community members regarding the repository
and its role, and how each repository measures the
success of their audit. In addition, for those reposi-
tories that have achieved certification, the panel will
do discuss their next steps to maintain certification
and how they view the future for their repository
post-certification.

III. EXPLORING THE DIRECTION OF
ISO 16363:2012

In addition to the three institutional repositories
represented on this panel, PTAB, an auditing body
and contributing author to the ISO 16363:2012 stan-
dard, will provide perspectives on the historical
development of the standard and the ISO certifica-
tion process. PTAB will reflect on feedback received
in regards to the standards and the certification
process and how, as auditors, they believe that
formal repository certification will impact digital
preservation and broader institutional missions,
communities, and nations.

Each repository will have the opportunity to
share assumptions they had prior to the certifica-
tion process and how their experience working with
the auditing body might inform their preparation
for future surveillance and re-certification audits in
order to maintain certification. Repository represen-
tatives will share their perspectives on ways in which
ISO certification and the implementation of these
standards may be impacted by major policy direc-
tives, such as national efforts for open access, access-
sibility, transparency laws or other legal mandates.

Through a series of facilitated questions
and responses, the repositories will respond to
frequent arguments against ISO 16363 certifica-
tion. Participants on the panel will be prompted
to consider the appropriateness of ISO 16363
certification as compared to tiered approaches
to assessment, such as the WDS/RDA repository
audit method, or peer-to-peer assessment models.
Panelists will respond to whether or not the certi-
fication will be able to maintain relevance if more
repositories are not participating in ISO 16363
audits and if the certification is ultimately successful
in establishing reputation across the digital preser-
vation professional community. Is the ISO standard
too complex or comprehensive to be practicable for
most institutions? Are ISO 16363 audits truly effec-
tive and rigorous enough to evaluate long-term trust
in institutions with organizational infrastructure and
funding models which are complex, interdependent,
and changing? Panelists will consider the costs of
certification versus the costs of risk associated with
unreliable preservation systems. How would the ISO audit be impacted by reliance on third-party software services, enterprise technology dependencies, or even geographically distributed systems? The audience will have the opportunity to question panelists, including representation from PTAB, about the audit experience, or more broadly, the suitability of assessment for their individual situations. Representation from the British Library allows the audience to gain perspective on ways in which repository managers can evaluate and improve their institutional practices successfully without pursuing ISO certification. Additionally, panelists will review the certification process and share feedback on how digital preservation standards could be more applicable and approachable to other repositories interested in pursuing assessment and certification under ISO 16363.

References