

ENGAGING DECISION MAKERS

An Executive Guide on Digital Preservation

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Abstract: The Executive Guide on Digital Preservation provides practitioners with a combination of generic and specific messages and motivators designed to communicate with senior executives, legislators and budget holders, as well as decision and policy makers with a view to embedding the value of digital preservation at the core of every organization.

Keywords: advocacy, engagement, awareness, executives, senior management

Conference Topic: 4. Building Capacity, Capability and Community

I. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WORK

While, as a practice, digital preservation is growing and becoming more widely understood, within any organization this understanding is likely to be limited to pockets of practitioners and the colleagues with whom they regularly interact. More frequently, the same practitioners will find themselves lacking resources and funds to support their activities, because awareness of or support for digital preservation is not present at executive level. Advocacy is, therefore, an essential part of digital preservation.

The Digital Preservation Coalition (DPC) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) [Executive Guide on Digital Preservation](#) [1] (the Guide) provides practitioners with a combination of generic and specific messages designed to support communications with senior executives, legislators, budget holders, decision and policy makers with a view to embedding the value of digital preservation at the core of every organization.

II. OBJECTIVES

A senior level advocate in an organization will champion digital preservation on behalf of the

practitioner, but engaging executives is a challenge.

The Guide is a set of resources to help those responsible for the preservation of digital materials inform senior members of their organizations about the importance of digital preservation, the risks faced from inaction and the opportunities preserving digital materials can create.

Users of the Guide may belong to memory and heritage institutions, commercial organizations, government bodies and not-for-profits. The development of the Guide is supported by (UNESCO) whose member states each have a role in implementing the UNESCO *Recommendation concerning the Preservation of, and Access to, Documentary Heritage Including in Digital Form* [2]. In order to support the UNESCO member states, and all organizations, in their mission to preserve our digital heritage the Guide aims to be as broad reaching as possible. It does, however, recognize that even within the same sector or state, every organization is different, has different priorities, risk factors and motivators. It therefore presents a set of generic and sector specific statements, which may be selected and tailored by individual organizations to assist in their internal advocacy work and in the application of the UNESCO recommendations.

III. STRUCTURE

Interactive and customizable, the Guide is an online and accessible collection of resources, available to all free of charge, and contains:

- Generic statements defining digital preservation in a range of clear, non-jargon terms which may be understood by various organization types

- Information relating to digital preservation in specific sectors and organization types
- A summary of the importance of digital preservation generally and specifically
- Key motivators for digital preservation which may be relevant to different organization types
- Risks and opportunities related to digital preservation
- Downloadable and customizable templates
- Useful links to related and relevant resources
- Statistics and evidence to be used in supporting the case for digital preservation

Each statement is associated with an organization type for which it might be most relevant. Currently the Guide contains statements which have been created for (and by):

- Archives
- Businesses
- Higher Education and Research
- Libraries
- Museums and Galleries

Each statement is also associated with a set of organizational 'motivators.' Based on the DigCurV Executive Lens on Digital Skills [3], the motivators are issues that are important to an organization, and likely to be the things Senior Executives are most concerned about. The Guide identifies the following motivators:

- Accountability
- Authenticity
- Business Continuity
- Compliance
- Corporate / Cultural Memory
- Costs
- Reputation
- Revenue
- Security
- Technology

Users may interrogate the content by organization type, motivator or by browsing all statements before inserting into customizable PowerPoint or Word templates alongside evidence to support digital preservation, by way of statistics and case studies.

IV. DEVELOPMENT AND USE

The Guide is a community developed and community owned resource. The statements which make

up the Guide have been contributed by volunteer members of the DPC which represent just a small portion of the global digital preservation community.

Nevertheless, it is hoped that the Guide will be relevant to an international and cross-sector audience as much of the information is widely applicable and spans organization types and geography.

Information contained within the Guide may be used to create and deliver the message about digital preservation in the most relevant and appropriate format for a user's organization.

Some of the statements contained within the Guide may be applicable to more than one organization type. These statements are presented as just one way of communicating the importance of, and risks, opportunities, and needs associated with digital preservation. However, as each organization and the content it manages is different, it is expected that users will need to customize the messages, selecting the most appropriate statements presented.

Once the messages contained within the Guide have been tailored for use within a specific organization, these customized messages are welcomed as updates for inclusion in future iterations of the resource, and their re-submission into the Guide is encouraged.

V. CONCLUSION

The Guide is a living and evolving resource which, with the submission of subsequent statements tailored to other organisation types, will continue to grow and be relevant to the digital preservation community. This evolution is aligned with the fact that advocacy is not one *single* action, it is a lifecycle of actions and activities which must be repeated continuously in order to be successful.

Recognizing the nature of this challenge, the DPC sees the benefit in sharing resources like the Guide which forms part of a suite of resources which are available free of charge and for the entire community – members and non-members alike. The Guide, and these other resources, support the entire advocacy lifecycle and aim to relieve some of the burden in engaging with decision-makers and executives on digital preservation.

REFERENCES

- [1] Executive Guide on Digital Preservation, DPC:
<https://www.dpconline.org/our-work/dpeg-home>
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- [3] DigCurV Executive Lens on Digital Skills, DigCurV:
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