

THE AUSTRALASIA PRESERVES STORY

Building a digital preservation community of practice in the Australasian region

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Abstract - Building capacity through collaboration is essential to drive successful ongoing digital curation and digital preservation practice. This poster highlights the growth of the Australasia Preserves digital preservation community of practice, an initiative aiming to increase collaborative opportunities for varied institutions and individuals.

Keywords - Community of practice, Collaboration Conference Topics - Building Capacity, Capability, and Community; Collaboration: a Necessity, an Opportunity, or a Luxury?

I. INTRODUCTION

Australasia Preserves is an initiative in the Australasian Region (currently comprising Australia and New Zealand) that initially evolved from the University of Melbourne's Digital Preservation Project work [1]. Throughout 2018 and into 2019 the community has evolved and thrived, due to the enthusiasm and resourcing offered by many individuals and organizations (including state and national libraries and archives, universities, and cultural heritage organizations.)

This poster seeks to generate discussion and solicit input from the iPRES community about how to build on the initial progress and success of this community initiative, particularly with regard to the question: how do grassroots communities of practice continue to grow and provide value to a wide range of varied domains, especially when facing considerable organizational and geographic boundaries?

II. THE BIRTH OF A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

To enable and support collaborative knowledge

sharing and to build a community of practice in Australasia, irrespective of organizational affiliation, the Digital Scholarship team within Scholarly Services at the University of Melbourne organized a half-day inaugural event in Melbourne, Australia, in February 2018 [2]. This event featured speakers from across Australia and New Zealand to launch "Australasia Preserves" as an open community of practice. This community evolved, by attendee demand, into an online forum to maintain and expand the connections made. The result is an active forum of over 200 members across a range of domains.

III. ENABLING COMMUNITY GROWTH

Collaborations and partnerships are increasingly essential to enable sharing of digital preservation knowledge, expertise, and technology infrastructure (such as storage, or shared services), especially when facing issues around resourcing. To carry on the momentum generated from the inaugural launch event of Australasia Preserves, during 2018 the University of Melbourne devoted time and resources to host monthly online meet-ups for the community, with a variety of speakers on relevant digital preservation topics.

In addition, two local face-to-face events were organized in partnership with other organizations. In July 2018, the State Library of New South Wales organized and ran the monthly meet-up in Sydney, providing resources and support to live-stream and record the event for those who could not attend in person [3]. In November 2018, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) organized and hosted the monthly

meet-up for World Digital Preservation Day, titled “Digital Preservation for Everyone,” in conjunction with the Australian Academic and Research Network (AARNet) who provided the live streaming and recording support for this event [4]. The ability to live stream and record events is essential to contribute to growing a community of practice for digital preservation in Australasia, particularly due to the considerable geographical dispersion in our region.

Based on a very active year of community events, a 2018 “highlights” document was produced, to further share and promote the benefits of engaging in this community initiative [5].

IV. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND OUTPUTS

At the inaugural launch event, there was discussion on the idea of developing “digital preservation carpentry” lessons. These lessons would be taught in the Library Carpentries style [6], focussing on hands-on activities and experimentation with tools to manage content for long-term preservation.

Throughout 2018 more discussion and activities [7] revealed the importance of ensuring that digital preservation concepts were tightly coupled with tool experimentation, so that essential elements such as authenticity and integrity could be clearly demonstrated. We also created a survey [8] to find out what people were most interested in learning

A small group of Australasia Preserves members put together a trial workshop for digital preservation carpentry [9] at the 14th International Digital Curation Conference in early February 2019 [10]. This workshop was well received, with many suggestions for further improvements.

After reflections on the trial workshop were shared at the February 2019 monthly meet-up for the community, the idea to create a working group for digital preservation education arose from the discussion. This working group has now been formed (with members from Australia and New Zealand) to finalise the work undertaken to date on digital preservation carpentry, and to more broadly explore how to develop openly accessible Australasian-focussed training materials.

Also at the 14th International Digital Curation Conference, the Australasia Preserves community participated in the IDCC Unconference [11], running two sessions. The aim of these sessions were to brainstorm topics and ideas for the community to engage with during 2019. We also discussed the challenge of sustainability for communities of practice, and various issues in digital preservation.

In 2018 Australasia Preserves established an annual international award, “Best Digital Preservation Song and Dance for World Digital Preservation Day” [12], with the reigning champions from 2018 [13] preparing to defend their title in 2019.

Also particularly of relevance to the information professions (professions that can on occasion be overly excited by the provision of baked goods), the Australasia Preserves community is honoured to have among its ranks the (unofficial) baking champion of the world, Kirsten Wright, who has produced various spectacular delicacies to celebrate Australasia Preserves milestones – evidence that community growth can be greatly enhanced by coming together over cake [14].

As the Australasia Preserves community has grown, we put in place a community code of conduct to ensure everyone feels welcome to join and participate [15]. We have also developed a Briefing Pack to better share the value of what this community is bringing to digital preservation practice in our region [16], to help advocate for ongoing support for the community, and to drive membership so that more people can come together to share digital preservation knowledge and experience.

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