

GUIDELINES FOR THE SELECTION OF DIGITAL HERITAGE FOR LONG-TERM PRESERVATION:

What, Why, When

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Abstract – The PERSIST Content Task Force, under the Preservation Subcommittee of UNESCO Memory of the World, offers this workshop based on the 2nd edition of the UNESCO Guidelines for the Selection of Digital Heritage for Long-term Preservation. This ninety-minute workshop is geared to an audience of practitioners of digital preservation. It will be informal, allowing for active exchange among the workshop participants and leaders. The content of this workshop will include an overview of the UNESCO PERSIST programme, a look at how the Guidelines have been used in the past, an introduction to the updated edition of the Guidelines and key concepts, and an interactive discussion on how they can be applied in professional practice. This workshop will bring the publication of the 2nd edition of the Guidelines to the attention of practitioners working to preserve digital information and provide an opportunity for a lively discussion on practical applications in a range of memory institutions.

Keywords: Selection, Digital Preservation, Institutions, Guidelines, Tools

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I. OBJECTIVE

The workshop's objective is to introduce the Guidelines for the Selection of Digital Heritage for Long-Term Preservation and introduce the key points that the Guidelines cover. It will also touch on how the Guidelines can be used as a basis on which to elaborate more specific selection policies that fit national and/or institutional contexts. Further, it will provide guidance and advice to participants about digital resources that should be preserved for long-term access.

II. WORKSHOP CONTENT OUTLINE

The workshop is planned to open with an introduction to the UNESCO PERSIST programme, the Guidelines, and the impetus behind their creation. This would be elaborated with examples of how the Guidelines have been used in advocacy for national- and institution-level policies on the selection of digital heritage for long-term preservation. With this as context, we will then elaborate on our process of updating the guidelines,

including a look at what was chosen for inclusion and why, followed by an introduction to key concepts, with a focus on the selection criteria and decision tree, working through specific examples for context. The floor will then be opened to delegates to ask questions, share their perspectives, and engage in a discussion on how the guidelines might be used in their areas of work

III. BACKGROUND AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The origin of these Guidelines was a UNESCO Memory of the World conference held in 2012 in Vancouver, Canada, which gathered over 600 global participants from cultural institutions, governments and the information industry to discuss digital information, its safekeeping, and continued access to these digital resources [1]. One of the conclusions of the conference was that there was a lack of information and guidance on what digital items should be kept for posterity, given the fact that the volume of digital information was almost incalculable

As a result, the PERSIST project was established in 2013 and formed three Task Forces. The Content Task Force, consisting of members from UNESCO, the International Council on Archives (ICA) and led by the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) was created to develop guidelines to assist practitioners and decision makers in making informed decisions about what digital resources should/must be kept for long term access.

The result was the publication “Guidelines for the selection of digital heritage for long-term access” which was launched in 2016 and widely used for training and advocacy purposes around the world. In terms of advocacy, IFLA has used the guidelines as a basis on which to advocate for the necessity of creating strategies to ensure the long-term access to digital heritage, including at sessions of the World Library and Information Congress (2017, 2018, 2019). With UNESCO, the Guidelines have been promoted for greater adaption regionally, featuring in meetings conducted in Germany, Tunisia, Qatar, and South Korea. The guidelines are available in 9 languages and have been downloaded over 600 times from the IFLA website alone.

Five years is a long time in the digital ecosystem, and it was felt necessary to bring the Guidelines up to date. ICA, The International Council of Museums (ICOM) and IFLA representatives, as well as other experts, developed the second edition of the Guidelines, to be officially launched in September 2021.

The 2nd edition will be officially launched during the 2nd Memory of the World Global Policy Forum to be held in Paris on 21-22 September 2021. It carries over the core criteria for selection introduced in the first edition: significance, sustainability, and availability, as well as a decision tree to help users make selection decisions.

Given the complexity of digital preservation, the new edition has been expanded to two parts: “Part 1: The Impact of Digital Preservation on Selection Decisions” and “Part 2: A Deeper Look at Collecting in the Digital Environment”. Part one introduces readers to the unique challenges of digital preservation, the considerations they must make when setting up a selection policy, and tools they can use to guide these decisions.

Part two takes an even deeper look at digital preservation, exploring institution-specific considerations for practitioners in museums, archives, and libraries, and offering an extended chapter on the impact of the legal environment on selection decisions.

New to this edition are several appendices, offering an even deeper dive into specific forms of digital material.

The PERSIST Content Task Force acknowledges the vast array of digital material, and the many different contexts in which selection decisions are made. Therefore, the Guidelines are not presented as a “one-size-fits-all” solution, but rather a starting point to communicate key concepts and tools that practitioners might consider in their own context.

REFERENCES

- [1] International Conference: “Memory of the World in the Digital Age: Digitization and Preservation”, UNESCO.
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