

# Digital Preservation: Are We Succeeding?

## Panel Debate

### ABSTRACT

The Programme Committee created a panel for this year's conference that was structured to generate introspection in the digital preservation community. The panel took the form of a debate between international figures and debated the question: Digital Preservation: Are we succeeding? The following are notes compiled from the event, rather than a summary and conclusion. A video of the event is available on the iPRES 2014 website.

### General Terms

infrastructure, communities, strategic environment, preservation strategies and workflows, specialist content types, digital preservation marketplace, theory of digital preservation, case studies and best practice, and training and education.

### Keywords

Evaluation, success, failure, digital preservation.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Programme Committee created a panel for this year's conference that was structured to generate introspection in the digital preservation community. The panel took the form of a debate between international figures and debated the question: Digital Preservation: Are we succeeding?

The participants were assigned to one side of the discussion: pro or con. Their arguments did not necessarily reflect their own professional stance on the question, but rather were designed to provoke the audience to consider their own stance on the question.

### 1.1 Debaters

The following were the debaters for the session.

#### Moderator

Shaun Hendy, *University of Auckland*

#### Pro

Ross Wilkinson, *Australian National Data Service*

Helen Tibbo, *University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*

Andi Rauber, *Technical University of Vienna*

#### Con

Seamus Ross, *University of Toronto*

Barbara Sierman, *National Library of the Netherlands*

Ed Fay, *Open Preservation Foundation*

### 1.2 Debate Agenda

As outlined in the agenda below, each debater was given three minutes to highlight the key arguments for their side. The floor was then opened up to the audience to ask questions of the debaters. Finally, the debaters were asked to list three things that they would like to see happen to either keep digital preservation succeeding, or to put it onto a path towards succeeding.

- Introductions
- Debate (3 mins each participant)
- Q&A from the audience
- Decision

- Top 3 things to help digital preservation follow a positive path
- Wrap up and final floor comments

## 1.3 Debate points

### 1.3.1 Andi Rauber

- Measurement of success – knowledge
  - We know much more about the issues
  - Solutions – big market for range of solutions
  - Jobs – creating new jobs – digital curation, data management, etc.
  - E-government another movement forward – we can guarantee persistence.

### 1.3.2 Ed Fay

- Where's the transparency across systems
- User experience – tools that don't just work
- No alignment with industry
- Siloed/isolated teams – still seen as fringe activity
- Missing the value argument – too abstract (preservation)
- Cross-domain requirements analysis
- Collaboration issues
- Enormous advocacy is needed

### 1.3.3 Helen Tibbo

- DP/DC as a field within 20 years (1995 start)
- Internet has been a key part of collaboration – not as much isolation – taking less time to develop
- Educational programs – graduate education, workshops, etc.
- Conferences have sprung up
- Field brought many people together
- Not perfect – but we are achieving success even with remarkably small budgets

### 1.3.4 Seamus Ross

- Depends on measures of success
- Really 25 years old from Hedstrom paper and Bearman paper in 1989
- Engaged researchers
- Models and frameworks there
- Recognize complexity of issues
- Created new knowledge and developed new policies
- Scalable, automated, ubiquitous solutions not there – integrated into system design
- Foggy and lacking in the solutions space
- Need more public imagination
- Digital preservation still a standalone/post-ingest activity
- Automation – much depends on ability to transform activities from niche research to large scale recognition

### 1.3.5 Ross Wilkinson

- Complexity problem can be broken down in objects with identification
- Persistent ID and locus for preserving things is important

- People who really need preservation to occur (senior people who have influence over dollars) are really caring
- Community of data archives who care is out there

### 1.3.6 *Barbara Sierman*

- Practical point of view - zipper
- After invention, it was more than 30 years before zipper became a commodity (buttons, hooks and eyes were around).
- Metaphor of zipper falling apart (removing zipper before washing, twice as expensive, rust, etc.)
- We don't have that time like the zipper
- Need large group of stakeholders, spending money on it.
- Three main issues
  - Unable to frame the message for a larger audience. Need better terminology (for management, but also for Europe for researchers, publishers, industry, etc.). Too much jargon.
  - Hiding our failures – we need a shift there
  - No proper toolkit - we should have that

## 1.4 Closing remarks

- Barbara – need more practical solutions (what can I do tomorrow? Except for collaboration)
- Seamus – wider recognition of the importance of preservation at all educational levels (e.g. grade schoolers on preservation of access to digital photos).
  - Automation of workflows and processes (similar to automotive industry)
  - More significance of appraisal and selection
  - Ensure digital preservation functionality is built into design and development – haven't made much progress
- Helen – people do collect and use data, but we haven't seen any recognition of stewardship functionality in these steps
- Ed – need better tools
  - Shared gap analysis and road mapping
  - More evidence on how much distributed software development costs

- Sophisticated understanding with public/private partnership
- Providing support for emerging skills – more easy to use tools, more internships, more demystifying problem
- More cross-domain collaboration (e-government, industry, GLAM, data management, etc.)

- Andi
  - Show us one domain/discipline where if you get 200 people in the room, and ask if they are happy with the tools
  - There is no perfect, stable state. There never has been
  - Move beyond cultural heritage domain – we have borne the burden of taking us where we are now. Other disciplines are benefiting from it now. Reach out to other industries to take on burden. Like ERPANET reaching out to pharmaceuticals, etc.
  - We need to adopt a new language
  - Dare to think beyond standard topics
- Closing remarks from Shaun
  - Definition of value –
    - Patents as example – public/private benefit – public gives you the private right to that innovation for public benefit
  - Collaboration
    - Roadmapping could drive collaboration (what challenges will we be facing in two years we need to face)
    - But is it even possible to roadmap when the world is changing so dramatically?
  - What's the buzz word? – big data question from Janet Delve
    - Embrace the buzz words and use them to your own benefit
    - Using them to tell our stories to the public/business/industry