

# Challenges and benefits of a collaboration of the Collaborators

## How can we learn and benefit from experiences and set next steps in international collaboration

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### ABSTRACT

From the very beginning, the importance of collaboration in digital preservation was emphasized by many professionals in the field. Facing the rapid technological developments, the growing amount of digital material and the growing complexity of digital objects, it seems clear that no one institution can do digital preservation on its own. Digital preservation related tasks and responsibilities concern multiple spheres of competence, and over the last two decades, a network of relationships has grown between the stakeholders involved.

Collaborations, from the start, were often driven by research and development issues and framed within large-scale national and international projects delivering usable results for organizations.

In 2002, the DPC was founded as a “collaborative effort to get digital preservation on the agenda of key decision-makers and funders” (Beagrie, 2001). Similar intentions led to the foundation of nestor (2003), NCDD (2007), and NDSA (2010). OPF (2010) and PrestoCenter (2012) were set up as international competence centers. Overall, these organizations serve as platforms for training, knowledge exchange and the study of specific preservation related issues.

These organizations are mainly established to be an advocate and catalyst for cross-domain collaboration in digital preservation. Being networks of competence for digital preservation in which libraries, archives, museums and experts from other domains work together to ensure the long-term preservation and accessibility of digital sources. As is stated perfectly in DPC's mission:

We enable our members to deliver resilient long-term access to digital content and services, helping them to derive enduring value from digital collections and raising awareness of the attendant strategic, cultural and technological challenges they face. We achieve our aims through advocacy, workforce development, capacity-building and partnership.

A logical next step, at least on a national level, is to establish a collaborative infrastructure in which to preserve all relevant digital data from the public sector. To achieve this, we need more than just collaborative storage facilities. Crucially, knowledge and manpower are required to ensure proper management of these facilities. Furthermore, solid agreements must be reached about our various responsibilities: which tasks ought to be performed by the institutions themselves, and which can be carried out in collaboration with others.

The level of maturity in digital preservation, where now some basic principles are established, will also contribute to this development. Collaboration is crucial to achieve this, on a national and cross-domain level, but also on an international level. Therefore the organizations focusing on collaboration are increasingly seeking collaboration with each other. NCDD and DPC are already working together based on a friendship agreement, as do DPC and nestor and DPC and NDSA. OPF has a Memorandum of Understanding with DPC and in the near future with nestor and NCDD.

As the collaboration between the collaborative organizations is starting to come about, this seems the right time to discuss the opportunities we have in joining these forces and being more effective in our work.

In this panel we want to report about the challenges and benefits that we experience in our collaborative efforts. We will encourage the audience to add their experiences with initiatives like ours. We will furthermore ask input from the audience, what issues should we prioritize? From which activities does the community profit the most? Should we focus on practical solutions or on policy making (or on both)? NCDD, DPC, NDSA, Nestor, OPF and PrestoCentre all have their own communities, programs, ideas and communications which form the basis for their activities. These could be expanded to a “collaboration of the collaborators”. The panel will present some ideas for such a collaboration and it will invite the preservation community to bring in ideas and issues for next steps in international collaboration.

The proposed session will be jointly organized by DPC (William Kilbride), nestor (Sabine Schrimpf), OPF (Joachim Jung), NDSA (Micah Altman and Nancy McGovern) and NCDD (Marcel Ras).

Beagrie, 2001: Neil Beagrie: Towards a Digital Preservation Coalition in the UK. *Ariadne*, Issue 27, March 2001. <http://www.ariadne.ac.uk/issue27/digital-preservation/>

## **Keywords**

Digital Preservation, community building, collaboration