April 2009

Taking Charge: Preserving Our Digital Heritage Part II

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Recommended Citation
DOI: https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.2548

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Taking Charge: Preserving Our Digital Heritage Part II

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In the wake of a global economic crisis, few institutions are in the position to make new investments. Yet never has the need been greater for the research community to take action to ensure the long-term survival of our digital heritage. Each day brings with it the potential for irrevocable loss to our communal knowledge. Newspapers, publishers, banks, and other long-lived producers of information are disappearing at an alarming rate.

The challenges the economy poses to digital preservation for academia is only amplified by the outdated mode of stewardship employed by most university libraries. Historically, universities have operated without explicit collaborative agreements for saving the records of mankind. Clearly, this old way of preserving materials is ill-suited to the digital age. Indispensable lessons about the fragility of monolithic structures, coupled with the positive outcomes of collective digital preservation efforts, are presented in this volume.

The Library of Congress’ National Digital Information Infrastructure and Preservation Program (NDIIPP) has been working to build a network of digital preservation partners whose efforts will benefit the greater research community. Five of the seven extraordinary projects featured in this issue received funding from NDIIPP, including:

- Preserving Digital Public Television (PDPT)
- CLOCKSS
- National Geospatial Digital Archive (NGDA)
- PeDALS
- Data Preservation Alliance for the Social Sciences (Data-PASS)

Nearly all of the entities profiled in these pages — non-profit corporations, archives, publishers, and libraries — have been undeterred by the economic downturn and identified sustainable, low-cost methods to meet their needs. The entities highlighted here are moving ahead full throttle with innovative, collaboration-based digital preservation projects. Central to many of these projects is the importance of redundancy, as well as the mutual dependence of like-minded institutions working together to preserve the digital record.

One hopes these rich examples serve as models for institutions around the world, ensuring that academic treasures will be available for generations to come.

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