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People Profile: Martin Halbert

Editor

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of each member — our members learn how to run and operate their own preservation node for the network, building their internal knowledge of the preservation process. They also see opportunities to contribute to the software development efforts undertaken by the Cooperative.

The mission of the MetaArchive Cooperative is to support, promote, and extend our collaborative approach to distributed digital preservation practices. We have made our organizational model available to others as an example of how to create shared digital infrastructure. To this end, we not only run our own network, but also provide training and consulting assistance to other groups that wish to find similar preservation networks. We host workshops and make all of our documentation freely available to other collaborative projects and programs.

Unlike the public LOCKSS network, where participant libraries preserve journal content in which they all have a vested interest, the collections in the MetaArchive network are the unique holdings of each participating library and archive. In other words, MetaArchive’s members cannot rely on the incentive that drives participation in the public LOCKSS network — a shared body of content to which all subscribe and upon which all rely. Instead, the MetaArchive network requires a strong commitment between constituent institutions — each participates in order to preserve their own data in exchange for preserving other institutions’ data.

So what are the drivers in this PLN scenario? Topping the list are a strong sense of community engagement and a strong belief in the library’s cultural stewardship role. Our members share the conviction that libraries have a vested interest in preserving their own digital assets. Each has determined that they do not want to cede all of their digital preservation activities to external groups, and do want to participate in creating their own preservation solution. Building alone is a costly proposition, so these institutions have coupled their resources in order to achieve their preservation goals in a community-based effort.

To enable this, MetaArchive formed as a cooperative, not a vendor. MetaArchive’s members do not pay for services, but rather make an investment to create and sustain their own preservation infrastructure. The Cooperative is more than a technical solution for preservation. It also functions as a learning environment in which members gain experience in developing and enacting a full preservation plan for their assets. Each member both contributes to and benefits from the expertise and the technical infrastructure developed by the overall community. In keeping with these principles, membership fees are kept at the absolute minimum required for the operation of the Cooperative, and range from $300 to $5K per year, together with a fee of $2 every 3 years per 1 GB of content contributed. These

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