

Preserving State Government Digital Information Minnesota Historical Society

Developing a Preservation Plan

A preservation plan should address an institution's overall preservation goals and provide a framework that defines the methods used to reach those goals. At a minimum the plan should define the collections covered by the plan, list the structural requirements of the records, list best practices and standards that are being followed, include documentation of policies and procedures related to preservation activities, and determine staff responsibility for each preservation action. It is important to remember that preservation activities are not static and the preservation plan will need to be reviewed and readdressed on a regular basis to remain viable and useful.

The costs of preservation will be a major factor in the development of your plan. To some degree costs will help determine the level of your preservation efforts. Often there is not enough money available to preserve all electronic records for the long-term. Understanding financial resources allows you to make informed decisions on what to preserve. Without this understanding even the best laid preservation plans will fail.

The Electronic Resource Preservation and Access Network (ERPANet) divides costs into four major categories: technical infrastructure, financial plan, staffing infrastructure, and outsourcing costs.¹ Technical infrastructure costs include equipment purchase, maintenance, and upgrades necessary to keep networks online and adjust to software and hardware obsolescence. A solid financial plan must be backed up with a commitment to long-term funding. Staffing costs include the costs of hiring and training employees. Any services that are outsourced will have a direct effect on your preservation costs. Costs also depend on the record format, level of security required, and the length of time the materials need to be preserved.

A cost-benefit analysis should be done to analyze each aspect of your workflow to determine the most cost-effective method of preserving identified records that need to be preserved. If funding is limited or changes over time, you may need to reanalyze and possibly scale back the amount of materials you are able to preserve. Choices will have to be made. Your retention schedules, needs and risk assessments will be able to help you make these decisions. "Although the costs of preserving digital materials might be high, the cost, consequences and implications of not having a digital preservation policy may be higher and in some cases they could affect the feasibility of the preservation."²

When developing a preservation plan, there are many models that can be used as a guideline. A few of these models include:

¹ ERPANET. Erpa Guidance: Digital Preservation Policy Tool. Electronic Resource Preservation and Access Network. September 2003. <http://www.erpanet.org/guidance/docs/ERPANETPolicyTool.pdf>

² ERPANET. Erpa Guidance: Digital Preservation Policy Tool. Electronic Resource Preservation and Access Network. September 2003. <http://www.erpanet.org/guidance/docs/ERPANETPolicyTool.pdf>

- Digital Preservation Policies Study Part 1: Final Report October 2008³
- Northeast Document Conservation Center Digital Preservation Policy Template⁴
- Digital Preservation Policy Tool⁵
- Preservation Management of Digital Materials: The Handbook⁶
- OCLC Digital Archive Preservation Policy and Supporting Documentation⁷

In addition, specific examples of completed preservation plans can be found online and cover a wide range of topics from how to preserve historical sites and buildings to preserving digital objects.

The following outlines the basic structure of a digital preservation plan and highlights the common points from the resources above.

- I. *Purpose Statement*: Why are you writing the preservation plan? Why is digital preservation important to your institution?
- II. *Relation Statement*: How does the document relate to others across the institution? Does it compliment current records management policies?
- III. *Objective Statement*: What are the goals of digital preservation? Are the goals based on a specific project or do they reach the institution level? What are the overarching goals of your preservation program? You may want to include both short- and long-term goals.
- IV. *Periodic Review Statement*: How often will the preservation plan be reviewed? Is it based on a schedule or on an event that triggers review? Record what changes are made, who made them and when. This will help ensure your preservation plan is sustainable over time.
- V. *Descriptive Statement*: What materials will be preserved? What will not be preserved? What formats are supported? How long will each category of records be preserved? How will access be provided? Who has access to the records? Where are files stored? What hardware and software are being utilized?

³ Beagrie, Neil et al. *Digital Preservation Policies Study Part 1: Final Report October 2008*. Charles Beagrie Limited for JISC. 2008.

http://www.jisc.ac.uk/media/documents/programmes/preservation/jiscpolicy_p1finalreport.pdf

⁴ Northeast Document Conservation Center. *NEDCC Digital Preservation Policy Template*.

<http://www.nedcc.org/resources/soda/downloads/SoDAExerciseToolkit.pdf>

⁵ ERPANET. Erpa Guidance: Digital Preservation Policy Tool. Electronic Resource Preservation and Access Network. September 2003. <http://www.erpanet.org/guidance/docs/ERPANETPolicyTool.pdf>

⁶ Neil Beagrie and Maggie Jones. *Preservation Management of Digital Materials: The Handbook*. Digital Preservation Coalition. November 2008. <http://www.dpconline.org/advice/preservationhandbook>

⁷ Online Computer Library Center. OCLC Digital Archive Preservation Policy and Supporting Documentation. Online Computer Library Center. August 8, 2006.

<http://www.oclc.org/support/documentation/digitalarchive/preservationpolicy.pdf>

VI. *Implementation Plans*: A set of plans that explain the overall details of a preservation plan including...

- a. *Staff responsibilities*: What staff position is responsible for ensuring the preservation plan is carried out?
- b. *Financial responsibilities*: Who is responsible for the long-term monetary sustainability of preservation activities including changing technologies, necessary staff, storage space, physical media, and what is required for following set preservation strategies? How will these goals be achieved and sustained?
- c. *Record Requirements*: What metadata is required? What metadata standard is being used? What file formats are accepted? What file sizes are accepted? What is the file structure? Include descriptive information about content and context.
- d. *Access and Use Restrictions*: Are the records public or non-public? Are there any restrictions based on intellectual property rights? Include specific restrictions in the plan? Provide attribution statements if necessary.
- e. *Best Practices, Standards*: What best practices are being followed? For what records? What standards are being followed? For what records? What metadata standard is being followed? What file format standards are being followed? Naming conventions?
- f. *Risk Management*: Understand the risks of your digitization plan including what risks your chosen file formats might pose, what risks the acts of migration might pose, and what risks there are to your IT infrastructure. Have a disaster plan that includes disaster recovery procedures in case of a disaster.
- g. *Stakeholders*: Who uses your digital files? Who is dependent on them? Do you work with others? Do others deposit files?
- h. *Preservation strategies*: Define what is being preserved... content, content and structure, relationships between documents... Define the type/s of strategies being used to preserve the files such as migration or conversion and how often these strategies are to be carried out? Is there a time schedule or do triggers determine when files are migrated? Do you use outside services? For what? What are their procedures and processes?
- i. *Storage Requirements*: What type of storage environment is necessary? What media type/s will be used for storage? Are files backed up? How often? With what process? Where are files stored? If offsite storage is being used, include information on the contracts and the vendor's requirements for file formats etc...
- j. *Quality Control/Security Measures*: What methods will be used for quality control? How often will integrity checks be made? How? What processes are

you using to ensure the trustworthiness of the files? How is their authenticity and integrity preserved? How will provenance be tracked? How are access and use restrictions controlled? Are audit trails and logging activity processes necessary to ensure trustworthiness? What other security measures are being taken? Who is responsible for maintaining such processes?

- VII. *Glossary*: A glossary of terms may be useful if people who are unfamiliar with digital preservation will be accessing the preservation plan.