
Digital preservation is an area that presents unique challenges due to the field’s relative youth and its rapid evolution. This book will inform institutions and professionals hoping to implement or improve their digital preservation programs by sharing insights gained by those engaged with digital preservation projects, tools, and strategies in recent years.

The book is divided into six parts that address the topic from different angles. The history of digital preservation and a high-level overview of the theories behind its tasks and challenges are covered in part 1. The second part discusses a number of strategies and approaches for developing digital preservation programs and policies, including the relationship of the digital preservation plan to the collection development policy and tips for selecting a digital preservation system. Part 3 includes case studies from two institutions describing their experiences with implementing digital preservation programs and systems. Different material types often present distinct challenges to digital preservation; experiences with a few of these types, including e-books and mobile device content, are examined in part 4. In part 5, examples of several collaborative digital preservation projects and programs are considered. Finally, part 6 discusses digital preservation and copyright, including strategies for completing copyright reviews for digital projects and applying rights statements to digital materials.

For those new to digital preservation, or those seeking a refresher, Baucom’s first chapter, “A Brief History of Digital Preservation,” provides an excellent overview of important milestones. The emergence of the field is discussed in the context of the enormous increase in the number of digital objects that accompanied the rise of the personal computer and the internet in the 1990s. Milestones in the field’s history include the development of models such as the Open Archival Information System (OAIS) model, documents describing the characteristics and criteria of a Trusted Digital Repository, and programs like the National Digital Information Infrastructure and Preservation Program at the Library of Congress. The chapter also highlights important international efforts and breakthroughs in places such as Australia and Europe.

In chapter 3, “Digital Preservation Policy and Strategy,” authors Madsen and Hurst provide a framework for those seeking to begin or revisit digital preservation in their organizations. They suggest breaking up digital preservation materials into three parts: strategy, policy, and operations documents. Using this three-tiered method increases the likelihood that the documents will be frequently used, referred to, and adhered to. Additionally, this approach to digital preservation, which encourages having clear goals and intentions from the beginning, can lead to more productive discussions with stakeholders and users about how to make content more preservable. Furthermore, it provides the opportunity to have these conversations early in the digital content’s life cycle.

Part 3, “Digital Preservation at Individual Institutions,” offers case studies from Miami University Libraries and the University of Utah. At Miami University, a Digital Preservation Committee performed an inventory and assessment of current digital preservation activities, which informed a determination of the organization’s preservation needs and an evaluation and recommendation of digital preservation solutions. The institution’s experiences with implementing the recommended solutions are described and followed by a discussion of challenges faced and plans for the future.

At the University of Utah, a focus on digital preservation began with the creation of a new digital preservation archivist position. This position determined collections with long-term preservation needs, developed a digital preservation policy, and led efforts to investigate and implement a new digital preservation system. An appraisal/selection guide was also developed to help determine which collections needed to be digitally preserved. Future plans include completing the ingestion of legacy content into the digital preservation system and training additional users on using the system. Case studies from additional institutions would have supplemented this part of the book nicely due to the invaluable benefits of learning from others’ experiences.

Parts 4 and 6, addressing preservation of different material types and copyright respectively, cover two common areas of difficulty in digital preservation. For example, chapter 12, “Mobile Device Data Preservation for Cultural Institutions,” discusses unique challenges to preserving born-mobile data, such as privacy concerns, inability to make use of command-line utilities and tools, and the lack of relevant literature and training on handling this content in cultural heritage settings. Copyright is often another complicating factor in the digitization and preservation of collections. Chapter 17, “Copyright Conundrums: Rights Issues in the Digitization of Library Collections,” provides an examination of the copyright law landscape and common mistakes. Resources, models, and example workflows for performing copyright reviews are provided. The chapter concludes with an overview of the standardized rights statements developed by the Digital Public Library of America and Europeana.

A number of collaborative digital preservation projects and programs are described in part 5, including Community
Lots of Copies Keep Stuff Safe (LOCKSS) Networks, the Digital Preservation at Oxford and Cambridge (DPOC) project, and APTrust. The announcement at the end of 2018 that the Digital Preservation Network (DPN) would cease operations suggests that the cultural heritage community must continue to learn from such efforts in order to make them sustainable. Therefore, the projects and programs described in this section will aid in a consideration of what has worked well in a variety of settings.

Overall, Digital Preservation in Libraries provides ample food for thought when considering digital preservation at one’s own institution. It is accessible to both those new to the field and those with backgrounds and specialties in other areas. Practical strategies and frameworks are provided for tackling what are frequently daunting and complex tasks. Readers will benefit from case studies describing the experiences of those at other institutions who have sought to achieve similar goals. A recurring theme in the book and throughout the history of the field is the importance of collaboration and sharing to successful digital preservation efforts. Institutions will undoubtedly continue to learn from and build upon past collaborative efforts as they continue forward with the shared goal of ensuring that digital content is preserved for future generations.—Anna Goslen (goslen@email.unc.edu), University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

References