

Conclusion

Over time, work to embed your digital preservation program into your organization through training, shared services, and clear demonstrations to leadership of why the program is valuable. This will help you insulate the program from being drastically affected by institutional change. When leadership changes, overall organizational resources grow or diminish, or services are discontinued, your digital preservation program will be affected. Having clearly established policies and procedures, along with leadership's support, will help to limit the adverse effects of these changes and boost your ability to request more resources as they become available. It is always important to plan for the worst case scenario. If, at any point, you no longer have the ability to maintain your program, you should have a clear exit strategy in place.

When planning for a total dissolution of your digital preservation program, you may need to consider internally produced digital materials and digital materials donated by an external content creator separately. The internally produced digital materials belong to the organization from the start, so no special consideration will need to be given to them beyond compliance with records laws. Externally produced donated content may have special clauses in the donation agreements that have specific requirements in the event that your organization is no longer able to steward these materials. Those requirements should be built into your exit strategy. Taking all of these

factors into account, research other institutions that may have the resources and be willing to accept your materials into their digital preservation programs. You may reach an agreement with one institution or several. Have a plan in place for the transfer of the materials, and keep the plan up to date as circumstances change at your home institution and the potential receptive organizations. I hope that you never need to use your plans, but it is better to have these agreements in place at the start than to have entire cultural heritage or institutional collections disappear.

I hope, through this report, I have made digital preservation less intimidating and mysterious. Digital materials will be available in the future only through active effort, and therefore it is critical to move beyond decision paralysis and into active preservation efforts. The hardest step you will take in this journey is the first one. After that, it will only get easier because, as with so many other skills we learn, practice is the key to success. As you move along your digital preservation journey, you will gain more expertise and confidence. You will also cultivate colleagues you can lean on for advice, technical support, and shared resources. Collaboration, internal and external, is vital to success because the very nature of digital materials, ever-evolving and mercurial, requires more expertise and resources to preserve than any one person or institution could ever develop on their own.