Realities of Digital Preservation – What are the Concerns and the Practice?

Kim Schroeder
Wayne State University
In 2011 I conducted a survey via professional listservs (AMIA and SAA) and Survey Monkey asking what were archivists' greatest concerns regarding obsolescent and digital formats. Of 129 respondents, I saw a wide range of concern.
## Breakdown of Concerns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Broad Formats</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Video All Formats</td>
<td>29.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Files All Formats</td>
<td>20.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discs All Formats</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio All Formats</td>
<td>11.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film All Formats</td>
<td>7.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photo All Formats</td>
<td>3.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Tapes All Formats</td>
<td>2.20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Breakdown of Concerns

![Bar Chart]

Number of Responses

- Files
- Cassette
- Tape
- Vinyl/Records
- Half-inch
- Beta
- H-8
- VHS
- Z
- Misc
- Word Processing
- AVI
- Video Files
- Image Files
- Digital Video Codec
- Misc
- Floppy Discs
- Hard Drives
- Zip Discs
- CDs
- Laserdiscs
- Syquest
- DAT
- 35mm
- 16mm
- Misc
- Slides
- Filmstrips

Categories:
- Audio
- Videotape
- Digital Files
- Discs
- Data Tapes
- Film
- Photo
Breakdown of Concerns

• Top Formats
  – Floppy Discs
  – ¾” Videotapes
  – Word Processing Files

• Not to be Overlooked
  – “Miscellaneous” Videotape and Digital Formats tied with Word Processing Files just to show the wide disparity of need.
  – This was a self-applied term and may mean they do not know what the format is or it is rare enough that they can only term it “Miscellaneous”.
Breakdown of Concerns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% Archive unable to read/play/open</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 5%</td>
<td>41.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10%</td>
<td>34.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-20%</td>
<td>11.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-35%</td>
<td>9.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-90%</td>
<td>3.20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• What to do?
• In 2013, Lance Stuchell, Digital Preservation Librarian from UM Libraries and I began a Regional Digital Preservation Practitioners Group who we affectionately call (RDPP).

• We targeted the Southeastern Michigan (Detroit)/Ann Arbor/Toledo/Lower Ontario area.

• This group meets each quarter to discuss practical solutions and demonstrate tools in use at member institutions.
Issues of Practice

Concerns raised from the first meeting included:

• Metadata:
  How much is needed? What is needed? How do we deal with migration and permanence?

• Storage:
  What do we do with removable media? How do we store digital collections?

• Access & Outreach:
  How do we educate users? How do we promote digital collections? How do we provide access to users? How do we negotiate fair use?

• [Link](http://digitalpreservationpractitioners.wordpress.com/2013/05/17/minutes-from-april-meeting/)
• Concerns raised from the first meeting included (con’t):

• Resource Sharing: Collaboration and pooling of resources come up often, but does not happen frequently. It would be great if the group took this one where it makes sense. Policies would be a good place to start, if people are able to share them.

• Digital Preservation Failures: There is a need for a space to talk about projects that go wrong in order to encourage learning from others’ mistakes.

• Other Concerns Mentioned: Education and resources for professionals; new forms of data; digital curation, acquisition, and appraisal; digitization workflow processes; born digital items; disaster planning

• http://digitalpreservationpractitioners.wordpress.com/2013/05/17/minutes-from-april-meeting/
First Needs in Practice

• From a survey of the participants of the RDPP they feel that their missing pieces are:
  – Lack of inventories to use for comprehensive planning.
  – Lack of knowledgeable staff to focus on steps needed. Spirit is willing but finding training specific to their collection need is a challenge.
  – Lack of IT support.
Next Steps

• RDPP Self-Assigned “Homework” to look at the NDSA Levels of Digital Preservation and ascertain how they can work for their institution.

• More work within the meetings and outside to develop more knowledge of tools that are affordable from an install, maintenance and learning curve perspective.
Continued Outreach

• NDSA Outreach Committee has been working hard to reach out to current members in order to communicate issues and resources.
• This needs to be done on a regional basis as well.
• Mid-Michigan is holding a RDPP meeting next week.
• Some of my distance students have offered to begin similar groups in Washington and Alabama.
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• Contact me for continued research into how we are implementing the practice of digital preservation.

• Kim Schroeder

• ag1797@wayne.edu