



NDSR Project Title Taking Action to Mitigate Format Obsolescence

Goal Summary Develop a process for creating and enacting Format Action Plans at the Library of Congress.

Specific Goals / Objectives Survey and interview Library of Congress staff from several departments about the digital formats in use, analyze the risk to formats. Study format action plans in use at other organizations. Work with Library staff to develop a template for an action plan for the most at-risk formats. Develop actual format action plans with Library staff.

Timeframe & Deliverables

1. **Phase One (months 1-4): Interview and survey.** The NDSR resident will study existing surveys and design an information collection project to inventory the formats in use at the Library, noting their risk factors. The resident will work closely with OSI and LS staff to identify key organizations and individuals in the Library from where to gather this information. Results from the survey will be analyzed and the resident will deliver a report of the overall picture of digital format use at the Library of Congress, highlighting formats that are at particular risk.
2. **Phase Two (months 5-6): Creation of Action Plan Template.** The NDSR resident will work with OSI and LS staff to iteratively develop an action plan template. Format action plans in place at other institutions can serve as a starting point. The LC format action plan should focus on practical short-term and long-term actions that ensure the file or file contents are kept accessible.
3. **Phase Three (months 7-9): Complete Format Action Plan.** The resident with consultation of Library staff will, using the previously created template, develop Format Action Plans for at least three different formats. The formats for which an action plan is completed will be selected by the resident and Library staff based on the format's risk factors and Library priorities.

Resources Required No special resources are required beyond a standard office and computer set-up.
1 Resident, 2 mentors and access to designated Library of Congress staff.

Context The Library of Congress is working toward establishing digital preservation guidelines and best practices that reflect the latest research findings and industry trends and practices. This outcome is outlined in the Library of Congress strategic plan and is being executed by the Digital Preservation Working Group, a collaborative effort between staff from the Office of Strategic Initiatives and the Preservation Directorate of Library Services. For the past year, a working group has been compiling and reviewing relevant policies, standards, and workflow descriptions to inform the preparation of guidelines for the preservation of the Library's digital materials.

A life cycle approach to the management of digital materials ensures their preservation and long-term access. There are actions and decisions to be made at each phase of the life cycle that will mitigate the risk of loss of and/or damage to digital materials. Decisions made at the time of creating a digital file are crucial to its longevity. If non-standard formats are chosen or low-quality



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

resolutions are specified, the digital resource will have limited use into the future. When converting to digital forms, standard formats should be used. When resources allow, the highest resolutions should be considered. When creating born-digital documents, consideration should be paid to using a standard or widely adopted format. Digitization guidelines that support the preservation of digital materials and information about sustainable digital formats are available but specific preservation strategies are not aligned with specific formats in use at the Library of Congress.

The NDSR resident will work within the digital life cycle context as defined by the DPWG to create at least three format action plans for the digital formats most at-risk at the Library of Congress. A format action plan is a specific preservation strategy for a file format in the collection.

*Required
Knowledge and
Skills for Residents*

- Awareness of and interest in digital file formats
- Ability to communicate clearly and effectively in writing, meetings and interviews
- Ability to understand the technical aspects of digital file formats and their software dependencies
- Awareness of [digital format sustainability](#) factors and issues and digital preservation in-general

*Preferred
Knowledge or
Experience*

- Knowledge of survey and information gathering methodologies
 - Experience in a digital library, archive or related heritage environment
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