Smithsonian Institution Archives

NDSR Project	**Time-based Media Art: Specialized Requirements for Trustworthy Digital Repositories**

Goal Summary

To identify the specialized digital curation requirements of time-based media art (TBMA) and establish a benchmark of best practices in order to produce a recommendation of modified specifications for trustworthy digital repositories that will meet the needs of time-based media art and conform to the established national and international standards for trustworthy digital repositories (TDR).

Specific Goals / Objectives

To document the specialized requirements that time-based media art imposes on a trustworthy digital repository.

To produce best practices and implementation guidance appropriate for galleries, museums and archives.

To participate in the application of that guidance at the Smithsonian Institution's archives and art museums.

Timeframe & Deliverables

Overall - 8 months

Months 1 through 4 – research and document the digital curation requirements of time-based media art through conversations with art curators, artists, digital curators and authors of the international standard for audit and certification of trustworthy digital repositories and associated readings. Deliverable: Report of findings

Months 5 through 6 – description of recommended components of a TDR capable of handling digital elements of TBMA's and the recommended workflows for curators, conservators and archivists responsible for their stewardship. Deliverable: Report of Recommendations for TDR Configuration and Curatorial Workflows

Months 7 through 8 – planning as part of a collaborative team within the Smithsonian to apply the recommendation in the context of the Smithsonian's federated organizational and IT structure, including its centralized digital asset management system and other available systems. Deliverable: Detailed Project Plan

Resources Required

1 Mentor (Ferrante), 1 Resident

Access to select staff from within the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery, Freer Sackler Gallery, and Office of the Chief Information Officer.

As needed, contacts with other related organizations who have a demonstrated interest and expertise in digital curation and/or the care of time-based media art. Examples for digital curation include: Maryland Institute for the Humanities, the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Indianapolis Museum of Art; San Francisco Museum of Art; Guggenheim Musuem of Art, and the Tate.

Context

Time-based media art (TBMA) that includes digital content requires a unique approach to trustworthy retention and curation that differs from more typical digital records and objects. Digital TBMA content functions in a very specific and prescribed manner unique to each piece of art. Such content, for example, may be popular digital formats rendered with specific equipment, or original programming, or objects rendered in a non-conventional manner. When artists creating TBMA use digital content, it is often in fashions that go "against the grain" of what might be expected or foreseen by software developers let alone archivists and curators. These "aberrant" behaviors, which might signal a breakdown in one context may in fact be generally essential to preserve if we are to respect the intention of an artist.

In light of this context, what has come to be normal expectations and standards for digital record

preservation in a more typical archival setting is insufficient to ensure appropriate and trustworthy digital retention. Further clarification and refinement of existing criteria for trustworthy digital repositories is essential if sustained access is to be achieved. Therefore special attention and effort must be given to identify the body of unique requirements to be addressed when establishing a trustworthy repository for time-based media art, integrate them with the existing definitions and standards, and explore their application in a consortium setting.

The Smithsonian Institution Archives serves as the institutional memory and record manager of the largest museum, gallery and research complex in the world. It works closely with all aspects of the Institution's cultural heritage, research and administrative units. It has demonstrated leadership in the archival, conservation and digital curation arenas within the Institution and at the national and international level. Several Archives staff members serve as mentors and educators to graduate students, interns, fellows and professional colleagues.

The Archives' electronic records program is responsible for the preservation and curation for a great variety of digital records and objects in over 300 collections. In the course of this stewardship, it collaborates with other organizations on the research and development of tools and techniques need to address digital curation's more difficult challenges. Its staff are regularly engaged in standards and best practice initiatives at national and international levels.

To assure the best outcome of this residency, the Archives mentor will facilitate and nurture the resident's access to gallery curators and conservators, archival staff, and key IT personnel at the Smithsonian as well as to similar figures at other organizations so that the three deliverables will truly benefit the larger professional communities as well as the galleries archives and IT groups at the Smithsonian.

Required Knowledge and Skills for Residents	The successful resident will have a graduate degree in Library and Information Science, Applied History, Arts Administration or equivalent from an accredited institution of higher education. Additionally, the successful candidate will have the following:

General Knowledge

- Archival, curatorial or artifact conservation principles

Specialized Knowledge or Experience

- Application of digital preservation and curation and/or digital asset management practices
- XML, including experience creating XML files
- Descriptive metadata schema such as MARC, MODS or Dublin Core or their equivalent

Technical Experience

- Use of both Microsoft Windows and Apple Macintosh computers
- Use of office productivity software such as Microsoft Office and Adobe Acrobat
- Use of graphical design or imaging systems

Preferred Knowledge or Experience

The following skills are preferred but not required:

- Use of audio and video software programs, including knowledge of related file formats and their characteristics
- Use of library or museum collection information systems
- Familiarity with trusted digital repository characteristics and certification criteria