



Digital Preservation in State Government Best Practices Exchange 2006

<http://statelibrary.dcr.state.nc.us/digidocs/bestpractices/index.html>

Summary of the “Organization: Central versus Federated” Sessions Compiled by Jennifer Ricker, Digital State Documents Librarian

Speakers from the Library of Congress and the states of North Carolina and Kentucky shared their insight in the two exchange sessions where organization was discussed. The focus of these sessions was the organizational framework of digital preservation programs and whether a centralized or federated structure proved more appropriate in certain situations.

Some of the major topics covered included the significant influence legal mandates related to digital preservation can have; the value of collaboration between archives, libraries and government records; and the merits of having redundant systems. With respect to legal mandates the participants were in agreement that such mandates make setting up a digital preservation program much easier. These mandates are useful in garnering support within the library and/or archives and can be effective as a means of encouraging other agencies to cooperate in providing digital materials. Not all mandates are accompanied by sustainable funding, but those that are will go much further in terms of launching a digital preservation program. Collaboration was another major discussion point in these sessions. While not all participants felt that collaboration was happening, all seemed to feel it is necessary. There was consensus that the digital preservation process is too complex and necessarily involves too many people to be accomplished by any one group working alone. It was also noted that there is a great deal of competition for digital project funding and it makes more sense to work together to get the funding than to compete for it. But while collaboration was seen as a necessity, there was no agreement on the appropriate breadth of collaboration, i.e., the extent to which a digital collection should be federated. There was also a lot of discussion about the need for redundant systems. Questions were raised about the amount of redundancy needed, the geographic disbursement of redundant systems, and whether or not these should be shared systems. There were many viewpoints shared on this subject indicating that best practices in this area have yet to be established.

Other challenges relating to the digital preservation process were also discussed. One challenge that emerged was the difficulty adapting current processes to fit the needs of a digital preservation program – from both a staffing and a workflow perspective. While no definitive solution was proposed, one participant suggested that perhaps getting fresh ideas from those not indoctrinated in the processes might lead to better processes. Another challenge that was raised related to getting everyone on the same page both in terms of vocabulary and processes. Participants recommended publishing and communicating standards, policies, and procedures as a potential solution to this issue.