



Digital Preservation in State Government Best Practices Exchange 2006

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

Summary of the “Preservation of Digital Assets” Sessions Compiled by Druscie Simpson, Manager of the IT Branch at the N.C. Archives

There were four exchange sessions devoted to the topic of preservation of digital assets. Between these sessions there were nine presentations by speakers representing the North Carolina State University NDIIPP funded GIS project, the Kansas State Publications Archival Collection, The Illinois State Library’s electronic Documents Initiative, Colorado State Publications Library’s migration project, Kentucky Dept. of Libraries and Archives’ collaborative project with the San Diego Supercomputer Center, the Wyoming State Library’s depository program, Montana State Library’s OCLC Digital Archives project, the Arizona State Library, Archives, and Public Records’ Memory Project, and the Utah State Library’s pilot project to collect digital state publications using SirsiDynix Horizon Digital Library.

The discussion in these sessions highlighted four areas of concern. The largest topic for discussion was the issue of targeting or identifying and acquiring digital information that is often complex and time sensitive. This ranged from GIS material, such as vector data, maps, and aerial photographs, to records of the Governor’s office. There was a lot of discussion as to whether one should capture all of the content, the context (look and feel), and or the structure of the digital record. Not all participants are considering saving “everything” relating to a digital record. While many appeared to agree that saving the record exactly as it was upon creation was important, it was the consensus that the saving of the information was the priority concern. The majority of the exchange sessions stressed the importance of educating the content producers as to how to identify what was important to save. For example, several sessions dealt with the preservation of Governor Office records and how to deal with everything being “dumped” on the archives after the fact to the office that only wanted to save select things with an eye to future political advancement. Another topic discussed at length was just who the partners for preservation should be. Again, it was repeated that the content producers themselves should be involved in the preservation process, beginning the process by them identifying what was to be saved and continuing through to the providing access stage. Another partner identified in several sessions were vendors. Several sessions mentioned the important of getting the buy in of vendors, which would increase the opportunity of incorporating preservation needs into various document management applications. The range of vendors went from Microsoft to Endeavor Infosystems, Inc. to OCLC and to various open source applications such as DSpace and Hmail. It was also discussed how essential it was to get departmental and state Information Technology departments involved. Finally, the issue of migration was discussed. This is where a lot of unresolved issues emerged. For example, what formats can be preserved? Most video formats are proprietary, so can we save them as they are? What are the implications to converting email to text or XML format instead of the proprietary format they are transmitted in? Should we migrate directly to an open source format, even it is makes access and usability less user friendly or have multiple versions of the same record,

depending upon the purpose? While several participants are already migrating to various open source formats, they admitted to other issues arising as to access, complex original file formats, etc.

Within the Preservation exchange systems, certain themes appeared that also appeared in other exchange topic sessions. The issue of educating the content producers and the content managers kept reoccurring. Whether it was relating to the creation of the actual record, the metadata for that record, or the storage of the record, it was important that all who “touched” the record be aware of the importance of their participation in the preservation of the record. This education also included the importance of working collaboratively within your agency, as well as with other institutions or corporations to develop systems and standards that would result in richer solutions than a lot of homegrown solutions.