

Long Term Preservation & Legal Issues

Introduction

This working group is concerned with ensuring public access to, and preserving cultural memory within EU member states over the long-term. This must minimize the divide between paper and electronic documents, and embrace the different archival traditions of all members states, based on the sharing and exchange of experiences, and cooperation with other communities, such as, museums, libraries, IDA, and software companies.

It must proceed from the basis that electronic document management and digital preservation processes must be as automated as possible – this is necessary to minimise costs and allow full scale digital preservation to be feasible.

Legislation

Identify legislation with archival implications (e.g. Freedom of Information, Data Protection, Copyright, Privacy), create on-line database, and analyse differences and similarities.

Agree common terminologies relating to electronic documents and digital preservation.

Make recommendations for common legislative requirements, e.g. relationship between Data Protection and Freedom of Information laws, and for a legal watchdog function.

Identify and agree common authenticity criteria (e.g. content, context, structure, provenance, appearance, behaviour) as basis for setting standards for migration and other preservation actions. This will also allow agreement on what may be considered an 'original' document.

Issues relating to trust and authentication of documents must also be considered, e.g. digital signatures, certification.

National Archives can only provide guarantees for the authenticity of documents if they are able to set standards for the entire document lifecycle.

Legislation which has archival implications must therefore encompass the entire document lifecycle, including:

Creation: metadata created at point of document creation

Active use: metadata must accompany document throughout lifecycle and identify all changes via an audit trail.

Appraisal: information on disposal decisions

Transfer

Preservation

Accessibility: including finding aids.

Methods for automating the creation of metadata, and allowing harvesting and interoperability must be investigated.

Technical Issues

Share experiences to develop a common method of modelling the costs of digital preservation.

Need to emphasise that not all electronic documents are text-based' – national archives will also have to preserve more complex digital objects, such as multimedia and databases.

Need to particularly examine methods for preserving complex objects, such as dynamic websites, email, and the semantic web.

Need to clarify distinctions between publications and archival documents, particularly in the context of archiving websites.

It is essential that National Archives set the standards for long-term preservation, including migration, whether or not the actual processes are performed by the National Archives themselves, other public bodies, or commercial organisations.

Requirement for common, shared repositories of technical information to support digital preservation, such as file format registries. Examine how related projects, such as PRONOM, LDB and CARMEN can contribute to DLM requirements in this area.

Influence must be exerted on software developers to provide access for national archives to technical documentation relating to their products.

Technology watch – a watchdog function is required to identify technological changes and their archival implications, e.g. new communication channels such as SMS. Again PRONOM and other projects may be able to contribute to this.

Costs can be minimised by sharing experiences, automation, and developing shared resources.