University of Wisconsin–Madison Libraries
Framework for a Digital Preservation Policy
Approved by the Associate University Librarian–Digital Strategy, 2020-07-14.

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This document provides a framework for developing and organizing digital preservation policies for the UW–Madison Libraries. Its structure is based on an outline developed by Nancy McGovern and Anne Kenney, and is organized into sections corresponding to the “Attributes of a Trusted Digital Repository” in the report Trusted Digital Repositories: Attributes and Responsibilities.

Endorsement of the framework does not in itself commit the Libraries to carrying out all of its provisions, but this document will govern the development of digital preservation policies and the procedures enacting those policies.

1. Rationale

This framework is a guide for the development of a set of policies reflecting the UW–Madison Libraries' commitment to the stewardship and preservation of its digital assets. In aggregate, these assets form an important part of our cultural and scientific heritage, whose existence is at risk unless a formal commitment to their preservation is articulated, developed, and implemented. Furthermore, as a public institution we are responsible for protecting the significant investment in dollars and human effort we've made over the years in acquiring or creating our digital collections. While acknowledging the need for a corresponding framework for the preservation of physical content (most of which is already in place), this document does not attempt to address policies for the conservation and preservation of analog materials.

2. Administrative Responsibility

a. Purpose

The UW–Madison Libraries' mission statement includes preservation in its first clause:

“University of Wisconsin–Madison Libraries provide Leadership for the selection, organization, access, and preservation of sources of knowledge in all formats”.

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1 This document was written by Peter Gorman, with contributions from Jeanette Casey, Steven Dast, Scott Prater, and Andrea Rolich.
2 McGovern 2007
3 RLG 2002
4 UW–Madison Libraries 2014
This goal is also reflected in the Libraries' strategic planning goals and priorities:\(^5\)

"Develop collection and preservation strategies to support disciplines across subject areas and content types."

Preservation of our digital assets is crucial for the Libraries, in turn, to support the research and educational mission of the UW–Madison.\(^6\)

\(^b\). Mandate

- Preservation policies and activities are not self-contained, but act within a regulatory and programmatic environment that helps to shape the ways in which we operate. The University Archives, for instance, is mandated to collect and preserve certain materials related to our institutional history. The Libraries have also participated in grant-funded projects for which we have made commitments to the long-term sustainability of project content. These commitments need to be documented and incorporated into our preservation infrastructure.

- The Libraries’ preservation activities must observe federal and state law: copyright (including preservation exceptions in §108 and the Fair Use provisions of §107), the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA), the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), state records retention schedules, and any other applicable regulations.

- Finally, as part of a global community of librarians, researchers, and scholars, we should follow whenever possible international standards and best practices related to digital preservation.

\(^c\). Objectives

- Preservation is just one component of the Libraries’ collections infrastructure, and should therefore be coordinated closely with our acquisitions and collection management activities. Digital preservation policies must address the role of digitization in the preservation of analog materials as well as the preservation of digital surrogates and born-digital materials.

- Given its complexity and cost, digital preservation should be centrally planned and managed, even if specific activities are carried out throughout the library system. In this way, we can not only manage our expenditures most efficiently, but also ensure that regulations and mandates are being followed.

3. Organizational Viability

\(^5\) UW–Madison Libraries 2015

\(^6\) UW–Madison 1988
Not everything may be preserved, or preserved at the same level. Preservation policies must articulate potential levels of commitment (bit-only, format migration, etc.), and stipulate where and how the level will be encoded and documented. The policies must also clearly indicate what kinds of content will *not* be preserved, and the circumstances under which content may be withdrawn.

To the greatest extent possible, the libraries will adhere to international standards for formats, metadata, methods, and technologies, principally the Open Archival Information System (OAIS) Reference Model (ISO 14721).

Preservation processes are not necessarily focused in one unit; they are carried out throughout the library organization. Our policies must address which units bear responsibilities for digital preservation, and the specific staff positions involved.

The libraries will develop policies for the development and approval of the acquisition or creation of digital content. These policies should address both internal projects and those involving outside partners (e.g., faculty and other researchers), and should include criteria for prioritizing projects from a preservation standpoint.

Preservation policies should reflect the Libraries’ commitment to open access and unrestricted use wherever possible, while still conforming to copyright law, contracts, and privacy requirements. The policy will specify the circumstances under which content may be kept from public view, or restricted to particular groups.

In order to prioritize our efforts against potential and actual risks, we will develop a risk model for digital content.⁷

4. Financial Sustainability

Digital preservation cannot occur without institutional commitment and a sustainable funding model. The Libraries will document how preservation activities will be funded, whether through a budgetary commitment, an endowment, or other means.

The Libraries’ digital preservation efforts will not occur exclusively within the organization, but will leverage wherever possible partnerships with campus entities (e.g. Division of Information Technology, Office of the CIO, schools and departments), as well as national and international preservation efforts such as Portico, HathiTrust, and the Digital Preservation Network.

5. Technological and Procedural Suitability

⁷ For example, see Vermaaten 2012.
• The design of our digital preservation infrastructure will demonstrate a commitment to redundancy, including both technological and geographic distribution.

• For all hardware used in the preservation infrastructure, replacement criteria and schedules will be developed and documented.

• The use of any third-party services or collaboration partners will be evaluated according to their commitment to sustainability and standards. If any preservation content is hosted by off-campus services, there must be clear procedures for migrating the content to other platforms.

• Automated processes, conforming to digital preservation best practices, will be developed and implemented to ensure the integrity and usability of the preserved content over time, and alert curators of events that may put the content at risk.

• All procedures comprising preservation workflows will be thoroughly documented and periodically reviewed. Staff will be trained to follow these procedures and keep the documentation current.

• Digital preservation must maintain both the integrity of the intellectual content of objects, through either migration or emulation strategies, and their identity, through the use of persistent, repository-independent identifiers.

6. System Security

• All systems involved in the preservation workflow will meet or exceed campus IT Security requirements, policies, and procedures.

• The Libraries’ preservation repository will be considered mission-critical infrastructure, with appropriate levels of monitoring, response, and recoverability.

7. Procedural Accountability

• The libraries will conduct periodic audits or self-assessments to evaluate, measure, and adjust the policies, procedures, preservation approaches, and practices of the digital preservation program. The results of the assessment will be documented and acted upon.

• In order to be successful, this framework must be explicitly approved by the Libraries’ administration. The date and source of approval will become part of this document. A schedule will be developed for reviewing this framework and the policies, procedures, and roles it governs. All changes will be appropriately approved and documented.
8. References


