

CULTURAL HERITAGE: A MOVING TARGET

The LIBER Manuscript Librarians Experts Group's
Questionnaire on Born Digital Materials

Background

More and more, cultural heritage material is born digital and stays digital – and disappears

Manuscripts, research notes and results, diaries, letters (emails), etc.

What to select? How to preserve? How to circulate?

At the LIBER Manuscript Librarians Expert Group's Conference, Rome, May 2010, a session was dedicated to born digital material

Our users expect that libraries can handle the transition from paper to digital, including all imaginable hybrid variants

The challenge has been real for more than a decade

Preliminaries

Decision taken to review the state of art on bd among LIBER libraries at the Manuscript conference in Rome in 2010.

Thanks to Susan Thomas (Bodleian, Oxford), to Jutta Weber (SB, Berlin), and to Ramses Peters (Nijmegen UL)

An online questionnaire in 5 parts (ca. 60 questions) was publicised and opened for input in april 2011

Answers to the questionnaire

Number of answers in the online system: 159

However:

Numerous 'duplicate' answers (29)

Many very incomplete answers (97)

Retained answers: 33

18 Countries represented

- Austria
- Belgium
- Czech Republic
- Denmark
- Estonia
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Greece
- Ireland
- Italy
- Lithuania
- Netherlands
- Poland
- Republic of Ireland
- Slovenia
- Sweden
- UK

Types of libraries

13 National libraries (39%)

16 University libraries (48%)

4 Special libraries and other (12%)

5 Parts of the Questionnaire

- A. Policy
- B. Strategy
- C. Holdings and infrastructure
- D. Staffing and skills
- E. How can LIBER help ?

A. Policy

Active: 7 (21%)

- Actively collecting with other institutions: 3 (9%)
- Actively collecting: 4 (12%)

Passive: 26 (88%)

- Accepting samples collections: 7 (21%)
- Passively receiving: 10 (30%)
- Turning away any born digital: 4 (12%)
- No answer: 5 (15%)

B. Strategy

High priority: 8 (24 %)

- Major steps: 5
- Some projects: 3

Medium priority: 7 (21%)

- Som staff trained: 0
- Action planned in medium-term: 7

Low priority: 18 (55%)

- Discussed: 9
- Not discussed: 4
- No answer: 5

C 1. Holdings: Obsolete formats

Lib. accepts digital material in obsolete formats 15 (45 %)

- Always 1 (3 %)
- Usually 3 (9 %)
- Sometimes 11 (33 %)

Lib. mostly rejects such material 18 (55 %)

- Lib. accepts only material in current formats 3 (9 %)
- No digital material accepted 3 (9 %)
- No answer 12 (36%)

C 3. Holdings: Sources

- Whole computers: 5
- CDs and DVDs: 18
- Flash media: 2
- 3,5" floppy disks: 12
- 5,25" floppy disks: 9
- 8" floppy disks: 1
- Digital tape: 5
- Other media (email, file transfer, etc.): 7

C 4. Holdings: Formats

- Word-processing formats: 15
- Websites: 7
- CAD files: 2
- Email archives: 5
- Databases: 6
- Image files: 15
- Sound files: 9
- Video files: 5
- Other formats: 3

C 5. Holdings: Storage systems

- Digital Asset Management System: 6
- File server: 14
- We make copies on CD/DVD/external hard disk: 5
- We store the original data only: 7
- We use third-party system: 3

C 2. Holdings

- Over 1 million files: 1 (3 %)
- 259,000 – 1 million files: 1 (3 %)
- 5,000 – 25,000 files: 2 (6 %)
- 101 – 5,000 files: 5 (15 %)
- Less than 100 files: 8 (24 %)
- No answer: 16 (48 %)

D 1. Staffing and skills (born dig.)

- We have experts on our permanent staff: 9
- We have expert project staff: 5
- We have some staff aware of some issues: 12
- No staff aware of the issues: 3
- Handling of bd material is outsourced: 0

D 2. Experts "available"

Could you provide names and contact details of staff working in this area in your library?

13 names, with emails, have been provided

E. How can LIBER help ?

Webpages and information exchange ? - 20 Yes

Training sessions for LIBER library staff ? - 21 Yes

Meetings to facilitate collaboration ? - 17 Yes

Bursaries for attendance at 3rd-party courses ?
- 10 Yes

Conclusions

- Substantial interest among LIBER members (ca. 130 out of 400 have touched the questionnaire)
- National libraries lead and must lead the way
- No clear terminology or comparable statistics of born digital holdings
- Poor awareness of long-term preservation issues
- Strong support for LIBER engagement / leadership
- Strong support for working in co-operation with other libraries face the challenges

How can LIBER SCHCP proceed ?

- *Distribute* information on the LIBER website, e.g. refer to the "futurearchives blog": <http://futurearchives.blogspot.com>
- *Promote* attendance of meetings and workshops on bd material (See the next slide)
- *Convene* a workshop for experts, focusing on national and/or transnational collaborative efforts within the domain of born digital material (To be announced later)

Conferences and workshops with focus on or including the born digital challenge

2011, July 29-31: London (Welcome Collection Conference Centre): DPC briefinf day: Preserving Emai: Directions and Perspectives (www.dcponline.org/events/details/)

2011, Sept. 24-25: Halle (UL): Workshop on ...

2011, Nov. 24-25: Stockholm (RL): Nordic workshop on digital archives

2012, Paris (BNF)s, 29-31 May 2012: 5th LIBER Manuscript Librarians Expert Group: 5th Conference conference

2012 (To-be-announced): LIBER SCHCP Workshop on Digital Curation