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Curation: A Global Collaborative Challenge

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Summary

This article provides some background to the Digital Curation Centre and concentrates on a brief overview of the aims of the 3rd International Digital Curation Conference to be held in Washington, D.C. this December, together with information on the array of prominent speakers.

Introduction

The UK Digital Curation Centre (DCC)¹ was set up in 2004 and is funded by two influential UK funding bodies: the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC)², whose mission is to provide world-class leadership in the innovative use of Information and Communications Technology to support education and research; and the e-Science Core Programme which is run by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC)³ on behalf of the communities of all the UK Research Councils. The role of the DCC is to provide a national focus for research and development into curation issues and to promote expertise and good practice, both nationally and internationally, for the management of all research outputs in digital format. Digital curation is about maintaining and adding value to a trusted body of digital information for current and future use; specifically the active management and appraisal of data over the life-cycle of scholarly and scientific materials.

Research and development are key DCC activities with the R&D teams working to transform research-led innovation into tools and services that will enhance the take-up and implementation of digital curation practice. In addition to research and development, the DCC is involved in gathering and disseminating information about international research and development activity in the fields of digital curation and preservation. As part of this remit the DCC has been involved in the setting up of an annual international Digital Curation Conference. The first two events were held in the UK, but this year the DCC has announced that the 3rd International Digital Curation Conference entitled : “Curating our Digital Scientific Heritage: a Global Collaborative Challenge” will be held on December 11-13, 2007, at the Renaissance Hotel, Washington DC, USA.

The conference will be held in collaboration with the US National Science Foundation (NSF)⁴ and the Coalition for Networked Information (CNI)⁵. This partnership between the DCC, NSF and CNI represents an important step forward, bringing together international research and development in the field of Digital Curation.

Day One

The first day of the conference will focus on emerging strategy, collaboration and policy implementation and will open with a keynote address from Professor John Wood. Professor Wood, formerly the Chief Executive of the Council for the Central Laboratory of the Research Councils (CCLRC) will from late summer 2007 be taking up the position of Principal of the Faculty of Engineering, Imperial College London. Professor Wood has a strong background in engineering, with a career comprising numerous public and industrial appointments in the UK and worldwide. He is a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Engineering, Chair of the European Strategy Forum for Research Infrastructures and was Chair of the Office of Science and Technology's Foresight on Materials panel from 1997 until 2001. He joined the CCLRC in 2001.

Following the keynote address there will be a session focusing on four national

¹ <http://www.dcc.ac.uk/>

² <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/>

³ <http://www.epsrc.ac.uk/>

⁴ <http://www.nsf.gov/>

⁵ <http://www.cni.org/>

perspectives on curation including a UK perspective presented by Drs Astrid Wissenburg, Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), a US perspective presented by Dr Chris Greer, National Science Foundation (NSF), a European perspective presented by Mario Campolargo, from the European Commission and an Australian view from Dr Rhys Francis, Australian eResearch Infrastructure Council.

The afternoon will feature a session on sustainable access to the records of Science and will comprise a series of case studies from a range of different domains e.g. Arts and Humanities, Biomedicine and Physical Sciences as well as a range of individual roles e.g. a practising scientist, a library and information scientist, a data centre manager. The aim of presenting this range of perspectives will be to seed discussion and to move towards the drafting of a “Curation Manifesto” as an output from the Conference – such a document would represent a true measure of international co-operation and collaboration. The day will finish with a keynote address from Professor Dan Atkins, Director of the Office of Cyberinfrastructure at the NSF. Professor Atkins, a distinguished computer scientist, formerly a Professor in the School of Information in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, made major contributions to high-performance computer architecture, and led the design and construction of seven experimental machines including some of the earliest parallel computers.

Day Two

The second day will open with a keynote address from Professor Carole Goble. Carole Goble is a full professor in the the School of Computer Science at the University of Manchester, UK, where she has co-led the Information Management Group since 1997. She has worked closely with life scientists for many years and is the Director of the myGrid Project, the largest UK e-Science pilot project. She is also the co-director of the e-Science North West regional centre and has an international reputation in the Semantic Web, e-Science and Grid communities. The keynote address will lead into the second day of the conference which will be dedicated to research and will feature peer-review papers. The Call for Papers was released in May 2007 and includes 5 major topic areas:

- Sustainability and collaboration;
- Access to, and re-use of, curated data;
- Object lifecycles;
- Preservation for long-term access;
- Tools and techniques.

All papers must be submitted by August 15, 2007. Full details about the call and all other aspects of the Conference are available⁶.

The conference will close with a summing up from Clifford Lynch. Clifford Lynch has been the Director of the Coalition for Networked Information (CNI) since July 1997. CNI, jointly sponsored by the Association of Research Libraries and EDUCAUSE, includes about 200 member organizations concerned with the use of information technology and networked information to enhance scholarship and intellectual productivity.

Prior to joining CNI, Lynch spent 18 years at the University of California Office of the President, the last ten as Director of Library Automation. Lynch, is an adjunct

⁶ See <http://www.dcc.ac.uk/events/dcc-2007/>

professor at Berkeley's School of Information. He is a past president of the American Society for Information Science and a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the National Information Standards Organization (NISO). Clifford Lynch currently serves on the National Digital Preservation Strategy Advisory Board of the Library of Congress; and serves on the National Research Council's committee on digital archiving and the National Archives and Records Administration. He has played a key role in the last two International Digital Curation Conferences providing an invaluable overview of conference threads and emerging topics as well as apposite questions about challenges for the future.