

The International Journal of Digital Curation

Issue 1, Volume 5 | 2010

Editorial

Chris Rusbridge, Independent Consultant

Kevin Ashley, Digital Curation Centre

July 2010

This journal “is published by UKOLN at the University of Bath and is a publication of the Digital Curation Centre”, as the footnote to its web presence tells us. Changes at the DCC do therefore have an influence on the journal (although I hasten to add that the journal is primarily driven by its authors, editors and [Editorial Board](#)). Since the last issue there have been some important changes at the DCC, primarily a change of Director as of April 2010, when Kevin Ashley came into post, following the retirement of the previous Director (Chris Rusbridge) that month. How will that affect *IJDC*? Kevin Ashley has some thoughts on this...

Changes, to the extent that they occur, are likely to be gradual and to be extensions of those already set in train. Chris remarked in the previous editorial on staffing changes that have had an impact on the production process. We’re looking to make further improvements here and to learn from others publishing on a similar scale. We also want to continue to move *IJDC* to a self-sufficient mode of operation. *IJDC* came into existence because of the DCC but ideally it will continue to exist independently – but always with the DCC’s encouragement and support. Part of the reason for this is that the DCC’s attention has to be focussed where its funders direct, which may mean that at times it cannot focus on areas of interest to readers of the journal. Yet for the journal to have maximum impact, it must have a more consistent range of interest.

The DCC now has an increasing interest in directly supporting service provision for institutional research data management. This means that the proposed *IJDC* section on practitioner issues is increasingly likely to be seen in future issues.

Many things will not change, though. The mix of peer-reviewed and general articles, and the composition and expertise of our editorial board are successful elements that I have no intention of tinkering with. As a result, I believe the quality of papers will remain consistent. One unintended consequence of the change of director at DCC is that this issue is appearing later than it would otherwise have done – it took longer for me to learn this aspect of the job than I intended. It’s not an effect I intend to replicate with future issues, and the next is already well in train.

Turning to this issue, as promised we have the remaining seven peer-reviewed papers from the International Digital Curation Conference in December 2009. Among the peer-reviewed papers we also have three papers selected from those given at iPres 2008 and two papers selected from those given at iPres 2009 (with more planned for a future issue.) Since conference papers for these iPres meetings were reviewed only in abstract, these papers were first subject to an editorial test against *IJDC*'s criteria, and were then peer-reviewed, in some cases after extension by their authors. This process does take more time than we would wish; we were hoping to publish the iPres 2008 papers in the last issue, but unfortunately that was not possible. We believe these papers are still well worth publishing, despite the delay since their subject matter was first discussed.

In addition we include four general articles: [Donnelly et al](#) from the DCC describing plans for a tool to help build Data Management Plans, [Hitchcock et al](#) from iPres 2008 on building smarter storage for repositories, and [Abrams et al](#) from iPres 2009 on the California Digital Library's emerging micro-services approach to curation tools. Each of these topics has gained widespread attention and interest in the past year and these articles are both good introductions for those new to the ideas and useful foundation material for those already involved in the conversations.

With 11 peer-reviewed papers there is not space here to mention them other than very briefly. [Rosenthal](#) gives us a stark reminder that bit preservation is not (and will never be) the "solved problem" that is so often casually assumed, and suggests some policy directions for improving our current state. [Minor and colleagues](#) report on one major effort to address this and other preservation issues, the Chronopolis effort.

Two papers ([Guttenbrunner et al](#) and [Woods and Brown](#)) address aspects of emulation, a necessary but difficult approach for preservation of some digital objects. Woods and Brown consider the important issue of independent understandability of systems and information preserved through emulation, whilst Guttenbrunner et al look in more depth at video game preservation – a task which will undoubtedly bring its own issues of understandability and cultural context in the future. With video games now reportedly a bigger industry than feature films their importance as cultural artefacts cannot be denied, but we face real risks that their preservation will pose problems far more challenging than those presented by early, flammable nitrate film stock.

One of the two papers by [Matthews et al](#) addresses issues for software preservation, for which emulation is one amongst a set of possible strategies. Software preservation is also likely to be a key supporting technology for many other types of preservation, including research data, the history of computing and videogames. The other [Matthews paper](#) with a different set of colleagues addresses a model for scientific metadata oriented towards large scale facilities. On the Arts and Humanities front, [Benardou and colleagues](#) from the European DARIAH effort use the CIDOC CRM to look at information requirements, at a rather higher level.



Looking at repositories themselves, [Dobratz et al](#) report on a small German study on the relevance of quality management standards for trusted digital repository audit – a topic which we know concerned the members of the RLG/NARA working group on this topic and on which more work would be welcome. Risk is critical in all preservation, and [Barateiro and his Portuguese colleagues](#) discuss risk management approaches not simply to repositories but to an entire planned solution for digital preservation within an organisation. Crucially, they relate their work to developing ISO standards on generic risk management frameworks. [Caplan et al](#) look at interoperability between repositories, proposing a Repository Exchange Package. ‘Interoperability’ can encompass many things, as the [2009 international repositories workshop](#) and the [DL.org](#) projects have illustrated. Caplan and colleagues focus on one important aspect of it: the ability to move content between repositories, carrying and preserving information which needs to survive such changes. They come up with valuable findings, including the discovery that a technique which works for a single transfer may fail after three or more inter-repository transfers of the same content. [Schmidt and colleagues](#) from the PLANETS project propose an approach to preservation workflows in distributed environments.

Finally, [Underwood](#) looks at assisting automated preservation through metadata extraction using semantic techniques and grammars which recognise the form of a document and make conclusions on how to recognise such elements as names, addressees, dates and topics. The tests in Underwood’s work were applied to US presidential papers but the techniques are applicable to a wider variety of work, and bear relation to work done on scientific literature to recognise and mark up elements such as protein and gene names.

So, there is a great deal to digest in this issue with papers on theory and practice, on the specific and the general, and we commend it to you.