Library of Congress
Digital Preservation Newsletter

April 2012

NDSA Innovation Awards

As previously mentioned, the National Digital Stewardship Alliance Innovation Working Group asked: How can the digital stewardship community do more to recognize and encourage innovation in the community? Being composed of a diverse membership group with a shared commitment to digital preservation, the NDSA understands the importance of innovation and risk-taking in developing and supporting a broad range of successful digital preservation activities. Thus, we are extremely excited to announce the establishment of the NDSA Innovation Awards.

This slate of annual awards has been established to recognize and encourage innovation in the field of digital preservation stewardship. These awards highlight and commend creative individuals, projects, organizations and future stewards demonstrating originality and excellence in their contributions to the field of digital

Trophies. Courtesy of the Library of Congress LC-DIG-hec-02532

preservation. The program is administered by a committee drawn from members of the NDSA Innovation Working Group.

Nominations are now being accepted and you can submit a nomination via this quick, easy online submission form. You can also submit a nomination by emailing a brief description, justification and the URL and/or contact information of your nominee to ndsa@loc.gov.
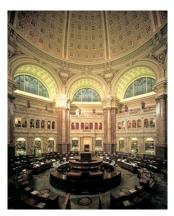
How Many Libraries of Congress Does it Take?

Photo by Michael Dersin

In July 2011, we wrote about the amount of data transferred to the Library of Congress and the likely sources of some of the public perceptions of the size of the Library's digital collections. And Matt Raymond of the Library posted an excellent overview of the size of the Library's collections in February 2009.

The use of "a Library of Congress" as a unit of measure is an "unusual units of measurement."

The ur-number seems to come from a 1997 report written by Michael Lesk titled "How Much Information Is There In the World?" In that report he provides the proposed calculation for the "size" of a digitized book, and the guesstimate that the Library had 20 millions books.

And that 10 TB figure is everywhere.

So, how many Libraries of Congress does it take to…? Or how many Libraries of Congress can be contained in…?

Check out some sources of public perceptions of the size of the Library's digital collections. And if you know any, add your own!

The Value of a Broken Link

What is the value of a broken link? For understandable reasons, many would say, "not much." While the destination-unaware nature of hyperlinks has facilitated the decentralized growth of the web, it has also greatly contributed to the perceived ephemerality of its contents.

A recent literature review of the extent of link rot in academic publications, for example, demonstrated broken link rates of 39-83%. Concerned, in particular, with this reality, the Modern Language Association prominently dispensed with the requirement that URLs be included in works-cited lists in the most recent revision of its handbook. It might be said that if

"Hello! My URL Is..." by Flickr user vasta

links are the currency of the web, then broken links are paper notes in a defunct coinage.

Nonetheless, there are at least two good reasons to conserve broken links: facilitating discovery of archived versions of a resource and providing metadata about the resource, whether or not it's available.

Read more about conserving broken links.

Becoming Digital

As the NDIIPP program name indicates, our mission is focused on digital preservation. That is, preserving material once it's in digital form. And by our own definition, digital preservation is "the active management of digital content over time to ensure ongoing access."

There is also a separate, but related, concept, addressed by the question, "How do items become digital to begin with?" The answer in short is, items are either "born digital" or they are converted through "digitization."

"Born digital" is basically an umbrella term for any item that existed originally in digital form.

And these items are now with us, and growing exponentially, on a daily basis! Some common examples are email and photos taken with a digital camera. Websites are also included in this category. (Or "web archiving," as we refer to it on an institutional level).

"Digitization," on the other hand, is the process of converting an original physical item into digital format.

Interested in learning more about the difference between digitization and digital preservation? Read more about it.

Images for Promoting Digital Preservation?

We do a fair amount of personal digital archiving outreach. Our main goal is to raise awareness that people who create and keep personal digital information need to take steps to ensure their data persists. We hit the point over and over that digital files are maddeningly apt to disappear due to a host of threats, including obsolescence, deletion, error, forgetfulness, accident and more.

We look for pictures to tell this story. This can be challenge because digital information is hard to

graphically represent. How many hackneyed iterations of streaming "1's and 0's" can we get away with, after all?

What do you think are the best images for promoting digital preservation? Let us know!

Osborne 1 full front, by wlef70, on Flickr