Book Notice

Practical Digital Preservation: A How-To Guide for Organizations of Any Size. ADRIAN BROWN. Chicago: Neal-Schuman, an imprint of the American Library Association, 2013. xvi, 336 pp. ISBN 978-1-55570-942-6.

While the literature in the area of digital preservation is rich, *Practical Digital Preservation: A How-To Guide for Organizations of Any Size* distinguishes itself from the more recent literature by providing extensive and easy-to-follow directions at a very practical level for digital preservation implementers. As a developer and custodian of a digital archive, I greatly appreciate this approach. The book provides, in simple, practical steps for archivists, librarians, records managers, and anyone else interested in digital preservation, all they need to know about establishing a digital preservation program. It will assuage worries about not having everything perfectly in place from the very beginning or not having the answers to all the technical challenges that one might encounter. Moreover, the book shows that the lack of one perfect solution does not mean that we should not start the process of moving toward digital preservation.

Another strong feature of the book is the extensive use of case studies that provide the reader with real-world contextualized implementations, distilled through the author's many years of experience in the field of digital preservation (Brown was the former head of preservation and access at the Parliamentary Archives in London before becoming the acting director in April 2013; prior to that, he served as head of digital preservation at The National Archives from 2005 to 2009). These case studies amply demonstrate the book's main point that "digital preservation is a practical proposition for all" (p. 17).

The book is organized into ten chapters, and by and large, the order of the chapters follows the typical succession of the all-encompassing activities needed to move toward a digital preservation service for both born-digital and digitized content. Each chapter ends with a short conclusion and/or key points. I found it pleasantly surprising to see that the glossary was placed at the beginning of the book, providing the reader, from the start, with a list of very specialized terms, acronyms, and concepts associated with digital preservation.

The first chapter addresses the intended audiences – "smaller memory institutions" and "institutional archives and libraries" (p. 3) – and demystifies the most common digital preservation misconceptions, such as "can only be tackled by national bodies," "requires huge budgets," "requires deep technical knowledge," and "can be left until next year to tackle" (p. 5). The second chapter is significant because it underlines the importance of developing a digital preservation policy. Digital preservation is about more than just technical preservation; it is about institutional commitment to provide organizational and resource support for digital preservation, as well as technology. Ensuring that a policy is in place, no matter who initiates the process – administrators or implementers – has a ripple effect within the organization, guaranteeing institutional commitment. While there are no case studies included in this chapter, the author lists fifteen examples of digital preservation policies, along with tools and templates from various types of organizations.

Chapter 3 guides the reader through the very important step of identifying functional, non-functional, and service requirements, a necessary prerequisite for "developing a useful, practical and sustainable digital preservation capability" (p. 61). Several possible approaches available for digital preservation services are presented in Chapter 4. These range from developing an in-house program to more than one solution, such as cloud storage, MySQL database, PREMIS Creation Tool from Statistics New Zealand, Metadata Extractor from the National Library of New Zealand, BagIt, and custom scripts, or getting involved in regional/consortia digital preservation programs.

Chapters 5 and 6 concentrate on the ongoing activity of acquiring content. The author identifies four stages: selection, transfer, accession, and ingest. Chapter 5 addresses the selection and transfer stages and examines legal considerations – which may not be at the forefront of digital preservation discussions but are nevertheless very important – as well as technical considerations, such as infected files, large volumes, and unusual formats. Chapter 6 deals with the accession and ingest stages, looking specifically at the accession workflow that ultimately enables new digital objects to become part of the repository.

Directions on describing digital objects, how to decide on metadata standards for your organization, and how to obtain, store, and manage metadata are covered in Chapter 7. This chapter highlights the need for associating metadata with the actual digital objects and emphasizes the significance of metadata and metadata standards for interoperability. Three case studies show uses of metadata standards at the UK Parliamentary Archives, the London School of Economics and Political Science Library, and the Wellcome Library.

Digital preservation is complex given the different formats, media, environments, and contexts in which digital objects can deliver their content, and it consequently presents many challenges. To help readers recognize and handle these challenges, Chapter 8 includes a discussion about digital information and actual technical preservation activities, such as migration, emulation, bitstream

preservation, and logical preservation, with a focus "on practical, cost-effective approaches suitable for smaller organizations" (p. 194).

Ultimately, the goal of digital preservation is to make sure that people can access the content preserved. Chapter 9 addresses not only the technical challenges surrounding interfaces, discovery, and persistence of access but also conditions for access and restrictions of access. The book ends with a glimpse at future tools and services, the growth of preservation as a service, trends in research, and an overall view of digital preservation as an integral part of any organization's culture.

Practical Digital Preservation: A How-To Guide for Organizations of Any Size is an excellent resource for any archivist interested in digital preservation, in particular those who are either considering or are in the beginning stages of implementing a digital preservation program. While the book can be vastly informative for administrators involved in developing policies, it will also support archivists and digital preservation practitioners in the process of re-examining existing policies, procedures, and practices in order to maintain a successful digital preservation service.

<div align="right">

Gabriela Mircea
McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario

</div>