

The Economics of Sustaining Digital Information

Summary of the
Blue Ribbon Task Force on Sustainable Digital Preservation and Access
Anne Van Camp
August 10, 2010
SAA Research Forum

Task Force Sponsors



Thank you



Who's Involved: BRTF-SDPA Participants

Blue Ribbon Task Force:

- **Fran Berman**, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute [co-Chair]
- **Brian Lavoie**, OCLC [co-Chair]
- **Paul Ayris**, University College London
- **Sayed Choudhury**, Johns Hopkins University
- **Elizabeth Cohen**, AMPAS/Stanford
- **Paul Courant**, University of Michigan
- **Lee Dirks**, Microsoft
- **Amy Friedlander**, CLIR
- **Vijay Gurbaxani**, UC Irvine
- **Anita Jones**, University of Virginia
- **Ann Kerr**, Consultant
- **Cliff Lynch**, CNI
- **Dan Rubinfeld**, UC Berkeley
- **Chris Rusbridge**, DCC
- **Roger Schonfeld**, Ithaka
- **Abby Smith Rumsey**, Consultant
- **Anne Van Camp**, Smithsonian

Liaisons

- NSF: **Chris Greer, Lucy Nowell, Sylvia Spengler, Phil Bogden**
- Mellon Foundation: **Don Waters**
- Library of Congress: **Laura Campbell, Martha Anderson**
- NARA: **Robert Chaddock**

Staff and Students

- Task Force Administration: **Susan Rathbun**
- Communications: **Jan Zverina, Ben Tolo**
- Graduate Student Interns: **Lori Eakin, Liz Bedford**

Task Force and Beyond

- **Move the conversation** from the Blue Ribbon Task Force to the broader community
- **Do something now** – get ahead of the problem of digital data loss and degradation, create some urgency
- **Focus on concrete actions** for key common scenarios:
 - Research Data
 - Scholarly Discourse
 - Collectively-produced web content
 - Commercially-owned cultural content

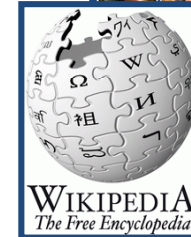
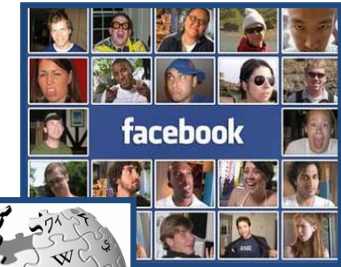
We Depend on Digital Information



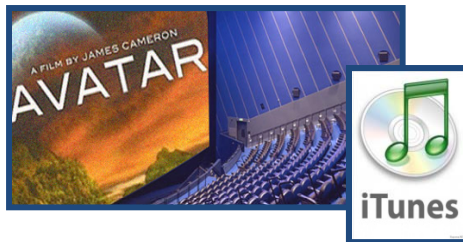
E-Government



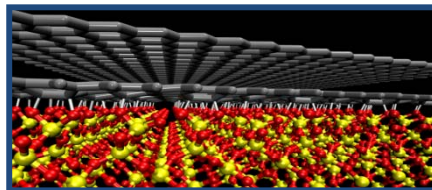
E-Business



Research and Education



Digital Entertainment



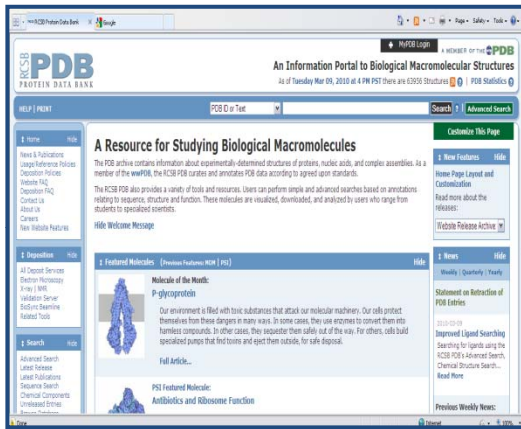
Communication and Information

Access to Information Tomorrow Requires Preservation *Today*

- **Digital Access and Preservation** is a technical, management, policy, regulatory, social, and **economic** problem
- Key issues to resolve:
 - **What should we preserve?**
 - **Who is responsible** for digital information?
 - **Who pays** for digital information and its supporting cyberinfrastructure?



How do we currently support access to digital information?



Federal grants



Advertisements



Pay per service



Subscription

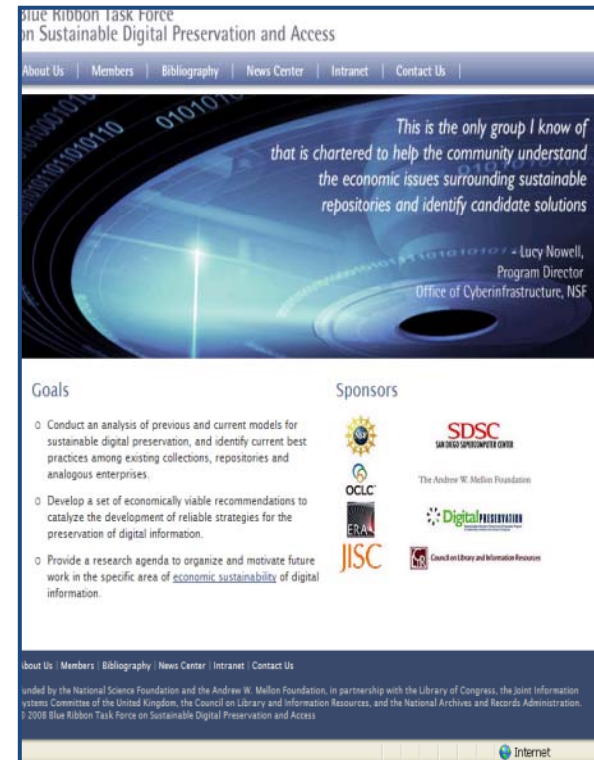


Donations, etc.

Focus on the Long-term: The Blue Ribbon Task Force on Sustainable Digital Preservation and Access

- **BRTF Charge:**

1. Conduct a comprehensive **analysis** of sustainable digital preservation
2. Identify and evaluate **best practices**
3. Make specific **recommendations for action**
4. Articulate **next steps** for further work



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BRTF Deliverables

December 2008: **Interim Report**

- Foci:
 - Understand current practices
 - Synthesize major themes
 - Identify systemic challenges



February 2010: **Final Report**

- Foci:
 - Structural analysis of 4 common scenarios
 - Recommendations and Actions
 - Next steps

“Economic Sustainability” requires ...

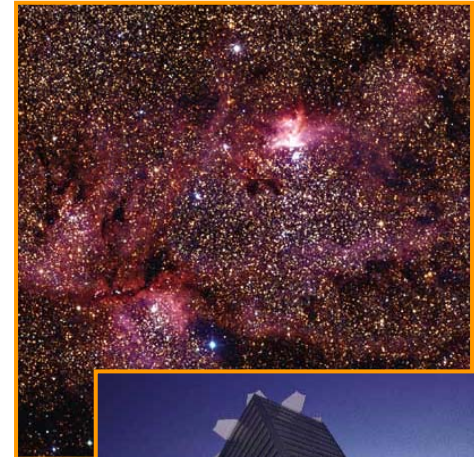
- **Recognition of the benefits** of long-term access and preservation
- **Incentives** for decision-makers to act
- **Means of selecting “valued” information** for long-term preservation
- Mechanisms to support **ongoing, efficient allocation of resources**
- Appropriate **organization and governance** of preservation and access activities



** From Blue Ribbon Task Force Interim Report*

What are the roadblocks? Systemic Challenges to Digital Preservation

- **Long-term preservation funded by short-term allocations**
- Lack of alignment between stakeholders, roles, and responsibilities
- **Inadequate institutional, enterprise and/or community incentives**



Alignment Challenges: The Stakeholder Problem

- **Many Stakeholders in digital preservation ...**

- Stakeholders who benefit from use of the preserved asset
- Stakeholders who select what to preserve
- Stakeholders who own the asset
- Stakeholders who preserve the asset
- Stakeholders who pay



- ***The greater the alignment between key stakeholder groups, the better the prospects for sustainable preservation***

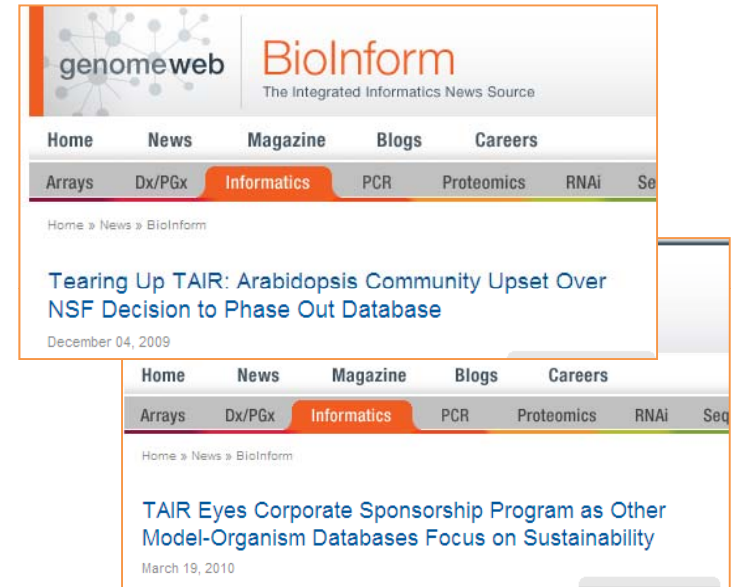
Challenges for Stakeholders

- **Prioritizing the value of digital preservation** over more pressing short-term objectives
- **Complacency that current practices are good enough**
- **Fear that digital access and preservation is too big to take on.** Digital preservation is as big as the Information Age and as small as the resources you have control over...



Funding and Incentives – Lessons Learned

- **Diversity of funding streams is critical**
- **Non-monetary incentives are important.**
 - Corporate recognition and reputation enhancement are also incentives
- **Multiple options to consider when selecting an economic model to support digital preservation.**
 - *Think out of the box:* Public-spirited, mission-driven institutions sometimes resistant to monetizing and charging for a “social good”



Key Finding

*“... sustainable economics for digital preservation is not just about finding more funds. It is about building an economic activity firmly rooted in a compelling **value proposition**, clear **incentives** to act, and well-defined **preservation roles and responsibilities.**”*

Four Areas of Focus

- Scholarly Discourse
- Research Data
- Commercially-Owned Cultural Content
- Collectively-Produced Web Content

Priorities for Near-Term Action

- Organizational
- Technical
- Public Policy
- Education and Public Outreach

Examples of Action

- **NSF** – new guidelines requiring data management plans for publicly funded research, May 2010
- **Library of Congress** – new organization creating a National Digital Stewardship Alliance, August 2010
- **University of Toronto** – building a new Digital Curation Institute in the iSchool, June 2010

Recommendations for Research

- **Selection** of digital material – what makes sense for long-term preservation?
- **Incentives alignment** – what works for different domains?
- **Funding models** – how to leverage economies of scale and scope and lower costs of preservation?
- **Stakeholder roles and responsibilities** – how to articulate these and bring them into closer alignment?

Recommendations for Archives

- Collaborate with other public and private institutions to address selection and preservation needs of digital materials
- Act expeditiously to reform copyright legislation
- Help build stewardship capacity
- Provide leadership in training and education
- Promote exemplars in preservation strategies and life-cycle management plans

Concluding statement

“There is an urgent need in all sectors of digital creation – public and private, cultural and scientific – for support in the near-term to model and test robust preservation strategies. All stakeholder communities must provide leadership and accept responsibility for the development of a common digital preservation infrastructure that is sustainable for generations to come.”

Resource Page

Blue Ribbon Task Force home

<http://brtf.sdsc.edu/about.html>

Includes publications, bibliography,
presentations, news coverage and much more