

Archiving web resources: issues for cultural heritage institutions

International conference, National Library of Australia, 9–11 November 2004

An international conference on archiving web resources will be held at the National Library of Australia from 9 to 11 November. As reported in the last issue of *inCite*, the conference will feature presentations from some of the world's leading practitioners and policy-makers in the area of digital preservation.

The conference program is an exciting one for anyone with an interest in whether and how today's web-based information resources can be expected to survive. (A short answer seems to be 'maybe, but only by prompt and appropriate action'.) The conference aims to explore why web-based resources are important, and what it is about them that needs to be preserved, before looking at how the critical issues are being addressed both conceptually and in real implementation projects. An important objective of the conference is to identify areas that require further research.

The provisional program and registration details are available at the conference website at <http://www.nla.gov.au/webarchiving/>.

An information day will be held in conjunction with the conference on 12 November at which specific digital archiving tools and approaches will be demonstrated.

As noted in the announcement in the previous issue, overseas speakers on the program represent a range of institutions including the Library of Congress, the British Library, the Research Libraries Group (RLG), the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR), the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC), the national libraries of Canada, France, Germany, Sweden, and the Netherlands, the national archives of Canada and the United Kingdom, and Cornell, Harvard, Leeds and Leiden universities. Distinguished Australian speakers include Professor Malcolm Gillies of the Australian National University, Mr Paolo Cherchi Usai, the recently appointed director of the National Screen and Sound Archive, Dr Robin Batterham, chief scientist of the Commonwealth, and networked artist Melinda Rackham.

Mr Hans Liegmann of Die Deutsche Bibliothek is project manager for the NESTOR Project, which aims to build an infrastructure to ensure the long-term archiving and availability of digital resources in Germany. The NESTOR network is defining approaches to certifying archives, selecting digital resources for archiving, and policies and work structures needed to manage their long-term availability. A critical issue for NESTOR is the allocation of responsibilities for managing different kinds of resources.

The National Library of New Zealand is also building a national infrastructure to cap-

ture and keep their national digital heritage, warding off 'digital amnesia'. In May 2004, the New Zealand government announced funding of \$24 million for the National Library of New Zealand Te Puna Matauranga o Aotearoa, to allow it to create a trusted digital repository, working with all those creating and managing digital materials. The national librarian of New Zealand, Ms Penny Carnaby, will speak to the conference about their web-archiving strategy and the implementation of legal deposit.

While national institutions in many countries are attempting to build national collections of web resources, using a variety of approaches that will be compared at the conference, there are also some very significant global collections being built within specific disciplines. One of the most interesting of these is the Digital Archive for Chinese Studies (DACHS), founded by Mr Hanno Lecher, head librarian of the Institute of Chinese Studies at Leiden University in the Netherlands, who will also speak at the November conference. The aim of the Archive is to identify, archive and make accessible internet resources relevant for Chinese studies, with special emphasis on 'social and political discourse as reflected by articulations on the Chinese internet'.

While the conference will primarily focus on policy and strategic issues, these include a number of critical technical challenges. Two speakers who have undertaken to present sessions that look at these challenges from a strategic perspective are Mr Paul Wheatley of the University of Leeds, and Dr Brian Lavoie of OCLC. Paul Wheatley was a key member of the CEDARS and CAMiLEON collaborative research projects into digital preservation in the UK and the USA. These projects explored a number of approaches to the challenges of reliably representing digital resources once their original means of access had been superseded. Brian Lavoie has served on a number of international working groups trying to hammer out realistic definitions of the metadata that will be required to manage archived digital resources. Both speakers will present overviews of directions and remaining challenges in their topic areas.

This international conference on web archiving will be a stimulating and informative opportunity to find out what is happening, and to play some part in influencing the way cultural institutions take responsibility for keeping web resources accessible. The National Library of Australia encourages early registration as the maximum number of registrations that can be accepted is 300.

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