

AUSTRALASIA PRESERVES

A DIGITAL PRESERVATION COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

William Kilbride from the Digital Preservation Coalition states that digital preservation is a problem for people, created by people and addressed through people. The global digital preservation community is highly collaborative, but many of the community organisations and activities for digital preservation are heavily centred around Europe and the Americas. Australasia Preserves is a digital preservation community of practice for the Australasian region with current members from a wide range of domains across Australia and New Zealand. Community activities cover diverse interests and areas working with digitised and born-digital materials, encouraging participation and input from a wide variety of people and organisations including libraries, archives, records, information technology, government, and universities.

Formed in February 2018 following the inaugural meeting organised by the University of Melbourne Scholarly Services Digital Scholarship team, Australasia Preserves has provided an opportunity for sharing digital preservation knowledge and expertise by practitioners, managers, educators, students, and enthusiasts. The community fosters opportunities for professional development through an active online forum, monthly virtual meet-ups, locally organised events, networking opportunities and working groups.

There were three face-to-face meetings held in 2018 that were hosted by the University of Melbourne, the State Library of New South Wales and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. With a focus on Australasia, it has been critical to try and provide an opportunity for members from across the region to participate through live streaming and recordings where possible.

Feedback has been an important driver, with participants indicating from the beginning that practical hands-on training is highly desired. This was first explored through the development of a Digital Preservation Carpentry lesson, delivered in the Carpentries style as a workshop at the International Digital Curation Conference 2019. Feedback from attendees and the workshop team indicated areas in which the workshop content and format could be improved. This has led to the formation of a working group and development of the concept of Digital Preservation




Australasia Preserves at the State Library of NSW, 26 July 2018. Photograph by Joy Lai, courtesy State Library of NSW

Australasia Preserves illustration by Matthew Burgess



Essentials, a series of workshops and lessons covering various functions and aspects of digital preservation work. This content will be aimed at those who want to move from theoretical knowledge of digital preservation to practical skills, and who want to understand the reasoning behind tools and technology choices for handling digital materials. In all lessons, digital preservation concepts will be tightly coupled with experimentation with open source tools. This is aimed at clearly detailing the principles behind what digital preservation requires to inform the tool choices needed to perform various tasks.

With an active online forum and a diverse community from a wide range of social, cultural and professional backgrounds, a Code of Conduct was developed at the end of 2018 to ensure a harassment-free learning environment and community of practice for all. With social guidelines and an anti-harassment policy, this was designed as a template that could also be used by hosts of Australasia Preserves activities.

Every organisation dependent on digital materials has digital preservation needs and the success of Australasia Preserves highlights the desire and benefits for cross-sector collaboration to tackle these complex challenges. For more details, go to (australasiapreserves.org). 

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