



CNI Project Briefing

Partnerships for Distributed Digital Preservation:

MetaArchive Cooperative

Summary: Most digital initiatives have not yet pursued the preservation of electronic resources in part because tested and ready solutions have not been available. Options are now beginning to emerge, including partnering with the MetaArchive Cooperative (www.MetaArchive.org), which has evolved from six universities focusing on the preservation of Southern digital culture into an international, self-sustaining non-profit membership organization.

The MetaArchive Cooperative was established four years ago as a regional initiative supported the Library of Congress National Digital Information Infrastructure and Preservation Program (NDIIPP). Today, the MetaArchive Cooperative is growing by helping other institutions deploy independent preservation networks and by welcoming new members to participate in the MetaArchive network. For example, two states have developed secure distributed preservation networks for unique resources based on the MetaArchive model, which uses modified LOCKSS software. Also, MetaArchive is collaborating with the Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (NDLTD) to establish the ETD (electronic theses and dissertations) preservation network.

Martin Halbert (Emory), Gail McMillan (Virginia Tech), and Mark Stoffan (FSU) will discuss how the MetaArchive Cooperative operates, share four years of lessons learned, and review documentation helpful to institutions that might want to consider joining the MetaArchive or establishing their own distributed digital preservation networks. They will discuss its Charter, Membership Agreement, and outreach documentation as well as the network's systems, policies, and procedures.

MetaArchive Compared with Other Efforts

- MetaArchive is a ***distributed digital preservation cooperative for digital archives***.
- MetaArchive is a ***cooperative*** not a vendor:

A *cooperative* (also *co-op*) is an organization that consists of a group of individuals who have joined together to perform a function more efficiently than each individual could do alone. The purpose of a cooperative is not to make profits, but to improve each member's situation and the situation of the surrounding society.
- MetaArchive is a collaborative association of cultural memory organizations (libraries, archives, museums, historical associations) with a nonprofit administration (MetaArchive Services Group).
- Members own all hardware and software assets.
- Membership fees go into a central pool for support of members' co-op activities.

New Content Archives Preserved in MetaArchive

"Archives" in the MetaArchive are thematically associated bodies of content that identify and articulate a shared collection focus to mobilize institutions to contribute to a shared preservation agenda. Some that are new:

- Electronic Theses and Dissertation: In partnership with the Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (NDLTD), MetaArchive is preserving ETDs of selected NDLTD members and will soon be offering preservation services to all NDLTD participants.
- African Diasporic Culture: Several MetaArchive members are preserving material on the history of the Transatlantic Slave Trade and other aspects of the African Diaspora.
- Literary Manuscripts and Rare Books: The Folger Shakespeare Library and many other MetaArchive members are preserving literary works of various kinds, ranging from the early modern period to today.



Membership Levels / Institutional Roles

- Contributing Member Sites (\$300/year + storage costs) are institutions that need digital content preserved, and therefore decide to ingest priority digital content into the MetaArchive preservation network. The preservation network acts for the common good to preserve the content repositied by the contributing sites.
- Preservation Member Sites (\$1000/year + storage costs) are MetaArchive members responsible for the ongoing activity of preserving digital content. At a minimum, every preservation site must have responsible staff and a node server on the preservation network. Preservation sites collectively comprise the preservation network.
- Sustaining Member Sites (\$5000/year + storage costs) are responsible for cooperative leadership activities (representatives serve on the Steering Committee), technical development of the computer SW/HW systems that enable the preservation network, and responsibilities of both Preservation and Contributing Members.

Process of Joining MetaArchive and Repositing Content

1. Conspectus Database enables collaborators to record metadata about collections for preservation decisions
2. Each new institution signs agreement to mutually preserve others collections securely
 - A "Plugin" is written for collections selected for preservation
 - Plugins are programs describing rules and structure for the "archival unit"
3. Either local staff or MetaArchive staff write these plugins and install them in the network
4. At least 6 dispersed sites are selected for repositing the archival unit
5. Caching process begins, with updates following if necessary

The Need for Collaborative Approaches

"The increased number and diversity of those concerned with digital preservation—coupled with the current general scarcity of resources for preservation infrastructure—suggests that new collaborative relationships that cross institutional and sector boundaries could provide important and promising ways to deal with the data preservation challenge. These collaborations could potentially help spread the burden of preservation, create economies of scale needed to support it, and mitigate the risks of data loss." - The Need for Formalized Trust in Digital Repository Collaborative Infrastructure, NSF/JISC Repositories Workshop (April 16, 2007)

The MetaArchive Cooperative is precisely such a new collaborative organization that crosses institutional boundaries to develop shared cyberinfrastructure to address the needs of small cultural memory organizations for preservation of local digitized content. The MetaArchive Cooperative has now been in operation for several years, and is rapidly gaining experience in how to marshal efforts among cultural memory organizations for distributed digital preservation. With the steady addition of new constituent members it offers an example of an effective strategy for organizing the efforts of disparate libraries and archives around digital preservation functions. It has become a center of excellence in private LOCKSS network implementations, now offering training and joining options for institutions seeking to apply such solutions. The founding members of the MetaArchive Cooperative look forward to a future of collaborating distributed digital preservation organizations for our shared global cultural memory, a future that can be sustained as a long-term social priority.