The UNESCO PERSIST Content Task Force

Guidelines for the selection of digital heritage for long-term preservation

Ingrid Parent 15 August 2016
Content Selection Guidelines – the context

- **December 2013 PERSIST meeting** – Roadmap for three task forces.

- **The Content Task Force** was created to provide guidance to memory and cultural institutions on selecting digital material for long term preservation.

- **UNESCO**: UNESCO Guidelines are not legally binding. Member states are invited to apply them as the baseline or best practices.
Content Selection Guidelines – the context (continued)

- The **Content Selection Guidelines** are designed primarily for libraries, archives and museums.

- A Generic Framework: for general application (with advice on specific application).

- Audience: aim at a diverse audience including professionals and administrators who deal with digital materials and plan to prepare a policy on selection of digital materials for long-term preservation.
Background – how did we get here?

- ‘The Paradox of Selection in the Digital Age’ -- T. and B. Van der Werf (August 2014)
- Survey on existing digital selection policy – W. Helmus (April 2015)
- The Content Task Force created a working group of experts to draft the Guidelines for the selection of digital heritage for long-term preservation in April 2015
- Extensive consultation throughout 2015 – including a very useful session at WLIC2015
Why are the Guidelines important?

- Heritage is at risk of being lost forever
- Ensure survival of digital heritage for the next generations and beyond
- Encourage national institutions to use selection Guidelines for their digital heritage preservation strategy
Challenges we encountered

- Different terminology used by librarians, archivists and museum professionals
- Diversity of the heritage community - Guidelines to be applied by libraries, archives, and museums of all shapes and sizes
- Different professional focuses and priorities:
  - **Libraries** – issues relating to legal deposit, e-publications, harvesting websites and social media sites, and short-term vs. long-term use
  - **Museums** – digital heritage is primarily information about physical holdings; metadata, research information, digital surrogates, administrative records; also born-digital art, etc.
  - **Archives** – authenticity of records, early selection and transfer, reappraisal, costs, regulatory restrictions on access and use
Focus of the Guidelines

• Understanding the problem: proliferation of digital information and preservation costs of ever-changing digital formats and carriers makes selection essential

• Overarching principles on how to assess value of digital materials, how to prioritize and what to select for long-term preservation, access and use.
Focus of the Guidelines (continued)

- Selection should be legally compliant, cost-effective and technically feasible
- The role of national institutions and shared responsibilities among institutions, non profit and private sector organizations
- Importance of metadata
- Selection based on **significance, availability** and **sustainability**
The UNESCO/PERSIST Guidelines

http://www.ifla.org/node/10315

The UNESCO/PERSIST Guidelines for the selection of digital heritage for long-term preservation

By the UNESCO/PERSIST Content Task Force

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We would like to thank the writers of the Guidelines

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And all of you for your input and comments!
Promotion and translations

• We have been promoting the Guidelines actively across the world (e.g. ICOM conference, the IFLA PAC Centres)

• We want to encourage you to use them and let us know what works and what doesn’t

• We are collecting case studies on the implementation of the Guidelines

• The Guidelines are currently available in English, French and Arabic and UNESCO is working on further translations

• There will be a review process (by the Memory of the World International Advisory Committee) and we will be working towards a next edition for late 2017 – for this we need your implementation feedback
Questions, Comments, Case Studies and Suggestions

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