Results of the NDSA Digital Preservation Staffing Survey

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ABSTRACT

This poster will present the results of a survey that is being conducted by the Standards & Practices Working Group of the National Digital Stewardship Alliance (NDSA). The purpose of the survey is to gain insight into current and ideal practices, nationally and internationally, in staffing, scoping and organizing digital preservation programs. It will be targeted for response by organizations that are currently responsible for digital preservation, whether that responsibility is fulfilled in-house or outsourced to a commercial, non-profit, or consortial provider.

Categories and Subject Descriptors

K.6.1 [**Project and People Management**]: Staffing, Training, H.5.3 [**Group and Organization Interfaces**]: Organizational design

General Terms

Management, Measurement

Keywords

digital preservation, NDSA, organization, staffing, survey

1. INTRODUCTION

Organizations establishing or scaling up digital preservation programs are faced with many staffing, scoping and organizational decisions. For staff, how many are needed? What skills, education and experience should they be looking for? What types of positions should they create? Should they hire new staff or retrain existing staff? And how should the program be scoped? What functions should be included directly in the program versus provided by other parts of the organization or outsourced or provided through collaboration with other organizations?

A recent post to the digital-preservation@jiscmail.ac.uk mailing list by the director of the Yale University Library demonstrates the value of knowing how other organizations are answering these questions.

"Yale is looking to create a position in the Library responsible for digital preservation, . . . We are in the process of creating a draft job description so I am really interested in seeing job descriptions from those institutions, libraries or museums, that have such a position in place. We are also looking at where that position lives. Is it part of the preservation dept, IT, or some other dept or unit? I would be most appreciative of any information regarding such positions."

This project was designed to shed light on how organizations responsible for digital preservation are addressing these staffing, scoping and organizational questions. It is being conducted by members of the National Digital Stewardship Alliance (NDSA) Standards & Practices working group.

The NDSA is a collaborative organization composed of over 124 government agencies, educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, and commercial companies. Membership is open to any organization committed to the preservation of the nation's digital cultural heritage. The NDSA was founded in 2010 as an initiative of the National Digital Information Infrastructure and Preservation Program (NDIIPP) at the Library of Congress. Members participate in one or more working groups: Innovation, Infrastructure, Content, Outreach and Standards & Practices. Within the working groups, projects such as the one described here, can be initiated at any time by members.

2. THE SURVEY

Several members of the Standards & Practices working group discovered that they shared a common interest in knowing how organizations are staffing and organizing digital preservation programs, so that they could improve their own programs. A brief poll of the group's members revealed a number of additional people in the group who wanted to know the same things and were willing to work together on a survey in the belief that the information would be valuable not only to the group, but also to the broader community.

Over the course of two months in the spring of 2012, the members used Google docs to collaboratively design the survey questions. It was then transferred by a member to a web-based survey tool, using a Qualtrics instance hosted at Harvard University. Qualtrics provides the ability to publish previews of surveys, so members were able to review and provide additional feedback on the look and behavior of the survey as it would appear to a person filling out the survey.

The survey asks a series of questions related to the nature of the institution, the scope of the digital preservation program, and the number and types of positions responsible for carrying out digital

preservation work. It also asks about the organizational structure of the program: is there a dedicated digital preservation department, and if not, are the responsibilities for this work centralized in another department or decentralized in other parts of the institution? It asks which functions are done in-house and which are outsourced, and what the future plans for these functions are. Finally, the survey asks whether the institution is satisfied with the current organization in an attempt to find out not just how organizations are approaching digital preservation now, but what approaches are perceived as working well. In addition, there is a provision in the survey to reference or send related organizational charts or position descriptions.

The survey will be distributed in late June 2012 to multiple national and international mailing lists associated with digital preservation. The survey will remain open 1-2 months, depending on the number of responses received after the first month. The results will be analyzed using the Qualtrics software in the August-September 2012 timeframe and will be presented as charts and graphs on the poster.

3. RELATED WORK

A related survey by Engelhardt et al. (2012) for the Digital Curation Vocational Education Europe (DigCurV) project focused on digital preservation and curation training needs. It included questions about the number of digital preservation staff, hiring of new digital preservation staff, training existing staff and the relative importance of particular skills. The majority of the respondents came from Europe - only 56 respondents came from the US. While we will also target an international population, we are aiming for a larger US sample size. Where there is overlap between the two surveys we can compare the results to see if similar results were obtained.

A survey by Nelson et al. (2012) for the Association of Research Libraries asked about the number of staff and how new staff were obtained, except the question included staff collecting as well as managing digital material, and it restricted the material to born-digital content. Our survey focuses on digital preservation staffing only, and for all digital content the organization is preserving.

4. REFERENCES

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