Archiving web resources: issues for cultural heritage institutions

International conference, National Library of Australia, 9–11 November 2004. Early-bird registrations close 31 July

The international conference on archiving web resources, to be held at the National Library of Australia from 9 to 11 November, has attracted contributions from some of the world's leading practitioners and policy-makers in the area of digital preservation. The purpose of the conference is to explore how digital archiving and preservation issues are being addressed, to highlight important projects and to identify areas requiring further research. The provisional program and registration details are available at the conference website [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 presented and demonstrated.

So far, twenty overseas speakers have agreed to participate in the program. They represent a range of institutions including the Library of Congress, the Research Libraries Group (RLG), the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR), Online Computer Library Center (OCLC), the national libraries of Canada, France, Germany, Sweden, Norway and the Netherlands, the national archives of Canada, the United Kingdom and the USA, and Cornell and Leiden universities. In addition, a number of distinguished Australian speakers are included in the program.

Some of the speakers representing significant overseas digital archiving and preservation activities are Caroline Weigandt, deputy managing director at the Bibliotheque nationale de France; Adrian Brown, manager of the digital preservation department at the UK National Archives; Laura Campbell, associate librarian for Strategic Initiatives at the Library of Congress; Dr Wim van Drimmelen, director of the Koninklijke Bibliotheek; and James Michalko, chief executive officer of the Research Libraries Group (RLG).

The Bibliotheque nationale de France is researching approaches to selective harvesting of web resources and to collecting 'deep web' resources. They were also instrumental in establishing the International Internet Preservation Consortium (IIPC) in 2003. The aim of the IIPC [http://www.netpreserve.org] is to provide a collaborative mechanism for the development of tools and standards to support digital archiving and preservation. Members include national libraries and the Internet Archive. At the conference, Ms Weigandt will speak about the work of the IIPC, whose steering committee will meet in at the National Library of Australia during the conference week.

The UK Central Government Web Archive, a selective collection of UK government websites, will be the focus of the paper presented by Adrian Brown. The project, developed by the National Archives of the UK in association with the Internet Archive, aims to harvest fifty-one websites, carefully chosen as a representative cross-section of the 2500 UK government websites currently in existence. The initial contract for the project is for one year, as the project is part of a wide-ranging investigation that will allow the UK National Archives to develop a long-term digital archiving strategy. Mr Brown's presentation will cover selection policies, methods of acquisition, websites as records, providing public access, long-term preservation as well as the practicalities of running a web-archiving program.

Laura Campbell, associate librarian for Strategic Initiatives at the Library of Congress, is responsible for the National Digital Information Infrastructure and Preservation Program (NDIIPP) [http://www.digitalpreservation.gov], which will be the subject of her presentation. NDIIPP is a major collaborative project which involves institutions from the private and public sectors, including RLG, OCLC, and CLIR, all of which will also be represented at the conference. It seeks to provide a national focus on important policy, standards and technical components necessary to preserve digital content at the national level. NDIIPP is supported by Congress with a funding allocation of US$100 million.

RLG will be represented at the conference by the chief executive officer, James Michalko, who will provide an overview of the major issues facing cultural institutions which accept responsibility for providing on-going access to digital content. RLG is an international, not-for-profit membership organisation of libraries, archives and museums that work together on issues associated with information access and management. Its strategic priorities include an active digital preservation research program which focuses on standards, new models and shared experiences. RLG's work in the area of digital repository certification, a vital component of digital preservation infrastructure, has had a major impact internationally on the thinking associated with digital repository management. Another RLG representative, Ms Robyn Dale, will speak about her work in this area.

The Koninklijke Bibliotheek (National Library of the Netherlands) is another leader in the digital archiving field. The national librarian, Dr Wim van Drimmelen, will talk about the library's collaboration with IBM to develop a digital information archiving system that is central to the library's e-Depot strategy. He will also cover their current research programs addressing permanent access solutions.

The international conference on web archiving is the first of its kind to be held in Australia. The conference is part of the National Library of Australia's contribution to the work plan of the IFLA Conference of Directors of National Libraries (CDNL) Alliance for Bibliographic Standards, an international national libraries group working together on standards issues relating to information management and access. The conference acknowledges the importance of international collaboration and information sharing in the challenging area of digital archiving and preservation.

This promises to be a stimulating and informative conference. Do not miss your chance to attend: the maximum number of registrations that can be accepted is 300.

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