CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT TOOLS FOR DEVELOPING CAPACITY AND SKILLS

A Tutorial

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Abstract – The ability to apply a carefully considered and well implemented approach to continuous improvement of digital preservation capabilities can greatly benefit practitioners when looking to set and achieve objectives. This tutorial aims to provide attendees with the skills and tools to develop and implement a methodology for continuous improvement at their organization using resources developed by the Digital Preservation Coalition. This will include assessing maturity with the Rapid Assessment Model and auditing skills with the Competency Framework and Audit Toolkit.

Keywords – Maturity modelling, skills, good practice, continuous development, benchmarking

Conference Topics – Sustainability: Real and Imagined, Digital Accessibility, Inclusion, and Diversity, From Theory to Practice.

I. INTRODUCTION

Digital preservation cannot be a static activity. Ensuring the longevity of digital content requires proactive management and maintenance of the organizational and technological infrastructures we deploy. But how best to structure this management and maintenance to ensure its success?

Since the early days of digital preservation, the community of practice has sought ways to benchmark an organization's capabilities. An audit and certification approach was the original method championed, however, in recent years the more flexible approach of maturity modelling has started to gain popularity. A maturity model provides a framework for assessing the level of capability of an organization across defined areas relating to policy, processes, procedures, and infrastructure. Maturity models allow an organization to understand their current capabilities, set future targets, and plan for developments to meet those targets.

As part of their member support activities, the Digital Preservation Coalition (DPC) has created a number of resources to facilitate the continued development of digital preservation capabilities within an organization. These include the DPC Rapid Assessment Model[1] (DPC RAM) and the DPC Competency Framework[2]. These two resources are the focus of the proposed tutorial.

II. SUMMARY OF THE TUTORIAL

This aim of this tutorial is to empower practitioners by providing them with the tools and skills required to plan, advocate for, and assess their progress with developing digital preservation capabilities within their organization.

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[1] https://www.dpconline.org/digipres/implement-digipres/dpc-ram

[2] https://www.dpconline.org/digipres/train-your-staff/dp-competency

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It will begin by providing them with a solid understanding of the importance and benefits of a continuous improvement approach to benchmarking their digital preservation capabilities. Following this, attendees will be introduced to and led through two practical exercises:

1. Using DPC RAM to assess an organization's capabilities with reference to policy, processes, procedures, and infrastructure.
2. Carrying out either an individual or organizational skills audit using the DPC's Competency Framework and Audit Toolkit.

As well as practical exercises, attendees will be encouraged to engage with live polling to allow benchmarking of digital preservation maturity of the organizations represented within the tutorial cohort.

The tutorial will finish with an overview of other DPC resources that can help practitioners with planning and advocating for their digital preservation activities.

III. CONTENT OUTLINE

The following is a draft outline of the tutorial content, including proposed timings:

1. Intro. to Continuous Improvement (c. 30mins)
    a. What is continuous improvement?
    b. Benefits of a continuous improvement
    c. Introduction to continuous improvement tools from the DPC
2. Focus on DPC RAM (c. 60mins)
    a. Introduction to DPC RAM
    b. Exercise: completing a DPC RAM assessment
3. Break
4. Focus on the DPC Skills Framework (c. 60mins)
    a. Introduction to the DPC Competency Framework and Audit Toolkit
    b. Exercise: completing a personal or organizational skills audit
5. Feedback and Wrap-Up (c. 30mins)
    a. Overview of DPC resources to support continuous improvement
    b. Tutorial feedback

IV. INTENDED AUDIENCE

This tutorial will benefit individuals and organizations from across many sectors who wish to assess their current digital preservation capabilities and plan for future developments. It will also benefit researchers wishing to incorporate an understanding of these processes into their work, and educators who hope to expand or enhance their curricula on the topics covered.

V. LEARNING OUTCOMES

Tutorial attendees will be able to:

3. Explain the importance of continuous improvement.
4. Plan their approach to continuous improvement.
5. Complete a DPC RAM assessment.
6. Describe the skills required for preservation.
7. Undertake a skills audit of digital preservation staff at their organization.

VI. SHORT BIOGRAPHIES OF ORGANIZERS

Sharon McMeekin is Head of Workforce Development at the DPC, which includes acting as managing editor of the 'Digital Preservation Handbook', and lead author and project manager of the Novice to Know-How training resources. Sharon is an archivist and experienced practitioner, has contributed to international training and development projects, and is a frequent guest lecturer for information management courses.

Jenny Mitcham is Head of Good Practice and Standards at the DPC where she engages in a range of projects to develop good practice resources for digital preservation. This has included a project working with the UK Nuclear Decommissioning Authority, during which she co-created DPC RAM. Jenny has worked in digital preservation for nearly two decades, having previously held roles at the Archaeology Data Service and the University of York.

Amy Currie is Training and Grants Manager at the DPC, where she works on the development of digital preservation training and skills projects and manages the Career Development Fund. She completed her PhD at the University of Glasgow in 2021, where she previously worked as a teaching assistant and co-convenor in the Information Studies department.