Plus ça change...?

Eight years after the end of the 4C project, what next for the Curation Costs Exchange?

Paul Stokes

Jisc
UK
Paul.stokes@jisc.ac.uk
0000-0002-7333-4998

Sarah Middleton

Digital Preservation Coalition (DPC)
UK
sarah.middleton@dpconline.org
0000-0002-7671-403X

Abstract – A poster describing the functionality of the Curations Costs Exchange and the Cost Comparison Tool (outputs of the 4C Project), how they've been used by the community, considerations underway regarding their future, the mechanism used to consult the community and (assuming the consultation and considerations are complete) their ultimate fate.

Keywords – 4C Project, Sustainability, Community consultation, CCEx, CCT

Conference Topics – Sustainability: Real and Imagined; We'er All in This Together.

I.   INTRODUCTION

The Curation Costs Exchange (CCEx) is a website [1] created as an output of the 4C project [2].

Understanding the type and magnitude of the costs relating to digital preservation ("digital curation")—both at the time of ingest into a preservation system and ongoing—is one of the thornier problems in digital preservation. The CCEx site addresses this problem. It has two main purposes. It provides information about some fundamental concepts relating to costing digital preservation and it provides a tool that allows registered users to analyse a breakdown of their own costs and make comparisons, either with their own previously entered data or with peer organisations (anonymised).

To these ends the site has 2 main branches, 'Understanding Costs' and 'Comparing Costs'.

1.   Understanding Costs

A signposting area that covers the underlying principles and problems associated with costing current and future digital preservation. The four core themes in this section are:

*   Basic cost concepts—What are the basics you need to know to get started with costing curation activities?
*   Cost models—Are there existing cost models that can help you describe your organisation's activities?
*   Cost drivers—How can you be sure that your costs are justifiable? What is that is compelling you to preserve?
*   Sustainability planning—What do you need to consider to sustain your organisation's investment in curation?

2.   Compare Costs

This area is where the interactive comparisons take place using the Cost Comparison Tool (CCT). Users are prompted for information about their institution, the nature of the digital assets, their preservation practices and resources, and their costs in a number of pre-defined areas.

The information is analysed and normalised in such a way as to allow comparisons, both with peers and with historical information previously entered by the user.

iPRES 2023

The tool allows users to analyse their costs in a standardised way as well as address the thorny question "how do my costs compare to those of my peers?"

2. THE FUTURE…

The CCEx was launched in 2014. Technologies (both web and preservation) have moved on since then and new (additional) concerns have arisen in the area of digital preservation (carbon cost for instance). There are new 'good practice' resources and methodologies available to be signposted.

Currently the interactive cost comparison area of the site (the CCT) is offline. The underlying web framework and modules need to be updated to restore functionality. It could be left in that state. However, there is still cost data in the system which could be updated and/or used by researchers if the appropriate permissions were obtained. It's also worth mentioning that even now, many years after the project concluded, 4C and its outputs are still being referenced in contemporary publications and products.

So, the members of the 4C post project consortium are currently considering the future of the CCEx and the CCT. Broadly speaking there are 4 options:

- Extract the data, back-up the site, and take it off line
- Do nothing—leave the CCEx site operating without the CCT
- Fix the basic problems that prevent the CCT from operating and then do nothing
- Redevelop the CCT to add new functionality

All of these options require the use of resources to a greater or lesser extent. If we're to invest those resources, we need to build a case to do so. With that in mind, we are seeking to gauge the community's interest in the CCEx and CCT by asking the following questions:

- Were you aware of the CCEx/CCT before now?
- Have you used the CCEx/CCT?
- If you've deposited data in the CCT, would you be okay with that data (suitably anonymised) being used as a resources for research purposes?
- Would you like to see the CCT brought back on-line?
- Would you like to see new functions added to the CCT? If so, what?
- Would you be prepared to commit funds to the maintenance/hosting of the CCEx?
- Would you be prepared to commit funds to the maintenance/development of the CCT? If yes, what would your preferred mechanism be?

3. THE POSTER

At the time of writing this survey and considerations regarding the fate of the CCEx and CCT are ongoing. This poster is intended to describe the evaluation process and ultimate fate of the site and tool.

4. REFERENCES

[1] Curation Costs Exchange—(https://www.curationexchange.org/)
[2] 4C Project—https://www.4cproject.eu/
[3] A more in-depth discussion of the CCEx, CCT and the underlying technology can be found in the 4C deliverable D3.3—Curation Costs Exchange Framework—https://www.4cproject.eu/d3-3-curation-costs-exchange-framework/