

## **Sustaining Collaboration Among Community-Supported Digital Preservation Services and Planning for Continued Impact**

Educopia Institute, partnering with six members of the Digital Preservation Services Collaborative (LYRASIS, APTrust, Texas Digital Library, Chronopolis/UC San Diego, CLOCKSS, and MetaArchive), requests \$149,990.00 for an 18-month National Leadership Grant for Libraries (Planning Grant category, aligning with the National Leadership Grant for Libraries goals of improving the ability of cultural heritage institutions to provide broad access to their collections and strengthen their ability to work collaboratively for the benefit of the communities they serve) to study the need for values-driven, community-supported distributed digital preservation service options, and to propose a service model for collaboration that ensures the continued availability of these options. This model will delineate where partners must either combine service efforts or remain independent for the sake of variety, efficiency, and sustainability at the field level.

**Project Justification:** Over the last two decades, community-supported digital preservation services have become a critical piece of digital stewardship infrastructure, empowering and building the capacity of libraries and archives to preserve their digital collections. In alignment with the Digital Preservation Declaration of Shared Values,<sup>1</sup> which works to establish and maintain trust and accountability with key stakeholders,<sup>2</sup> members of the Digital Preservation Services Collaborative take varied approaches to meeting the needs of their users, operate within different administrative and technological infrastructures, and utilize a range of governance and engagement models.<sup>3</sup> Services that offer organizations opportunities for practitioner-led governance and open-source cooperation, while balancing documented equity challenges endemic to volunteer labor, are integral to strengthening field-level capacity for effective digital stewardship. Community-supported digital preservation services are operating in a landscape where universities and other cultural heritage institutions are increasingly outsourcing their digital stewardship infrastructure to cloud-hosted service providers marketing “turnkey” preservation solutions, effectively ceding control over their digital collections and metadata to third-parties whose incentives may be misaligned with the needs and realities of stewardship organizations. Despite these market trends, many stewardship organizations are still seeking affordable services that meet their requirements, align with their values, and allow them to exercise sufficient control over their content and infrastructure in order to provide long-term access to their collections. By designing a roadmap for a collaborative, values-driven digital preservation service model informed by practitioner needs and institutional requirements, **this project will aim to address documented sustainability challenges associated with community-supported or shared services,<sup>4</sup> while simultaneously increasing choice and opportunity for cultural heritage institutions, accommodating the diversity that exists within these institutions.**

**Project Work Plan:** The goal of this project is to collect and synthesize information about practitioner needs, institutional requirements, and service models that will inform a roadmap for implementing a collaborative service model after the conclusion of the grant period. Project partners (Hannah Wang, Bill Branan, Bradley Daigle, Courtney Mumma, Sibyl Schaefer, Lydia Tang, and Alicia Wise) will form a core group of service providers that will gather requirements and engage in strategic planning activities throughout the project. The criteria that are developed for the roadmap will allow this core group to broaden the call for other service providers to get involved in the future implementation phase. All partners will sign agreements outlining the scope of their participation, and all will receive honoraria for their contributions to the project. The project will also engage a consultant to facilitate strategic planning discussions and assist the partners in creating actionable steps for future implementation.

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<sup>1</sup> More context and the collaborative’s declaration of shared values can be found at [https://dpscollaborative.org/shared-values\\_en.html](https://dpscollaborative.org/shared-values_en.html). The declaration was issued in the spring of 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Lin, D., Crabtree, J., Dillo, I., et al. (2020). The TRUST Principles for digital repositories. *Scientific Data*, 7(1), 144. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41597-020-0486-7>

<sup>3</sup> Hall, N., & Boock, M. (2017). *Environmental Scan of Distributed Digital Preservation Services: A Collective Case Study*. <https://ytechworks.lib.vt.edu/handle/10919/82769>

<sup>4</sup> Schonfeld, R. (2018, December 13). *Why Is the Digital Preservation Network Disbanding?* The Scholarly Kitchen. <https://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2018/12/13/digital-preservation-network-disband/>

The project will be organized into three overlapping phases of work: Recruitment, Requirements Gathering, and Strategic Planning. During **Recruitment**, the Project Director and partners will recruit an advisory board and independent consultant. The intent for the advisory board, which should demonstrate a wide range of expertise in sustainable collaborative business models and strategic planning, is that it will advise on Requirements Gathering and Strategic Planning, while also outliving the planning phase and advising on future implementation. The project will recruit a consultant based on their expertise on non-profit finances and business models, as well as their ability to facilitate diverse stakeholder groups through complex decision-making processes. During **Requirements Gathering**, the Project Director and consultant, in consultation with the partners and advisory board, will develop a stakeholder survey, interview protocols, and framework for comparing partner service offerings. The Project Director and partners will distribute the survey and administer the interviews. In analyzing this data, the Project Director, under guidance from the partners, will refine current understanding of libraries' and archives' need for values-driven, community-supported distributed digital preservation service options, and the capabilities and drawbacks of current service offerings, building on previous research and environmental scans.<sup>5</sup> During **Strategic Planning**, the Project Director and consultant will work with partners to identify which elements of their technology, governance, strategic planning, advocacy, and administrative infrastructure should be merged as part of the collaborative service offering, and which should remain separate and unique in order to promote variety, efficiency, and sustainability. This phase will include one project-funded kick-off meeting and partner-funded closing forum - the project team and partners have extensive experience with virtual facilitation and are prepared to switch from in-person to virtual events if needed and reallocate any travel and event funds to increased participant honoraria, accessibility measures, and strategic communications. This phase will culminate in a white paper and roadmap, detailing findings and recommendations for implementation.

**Diversity Plan:** The field of digital preservation is plagued by diversity issues on multiple levels: collections under- and misrepresent historically marginalized viewpoints, digital infrastructure is too costly for under-resourced institutions, and practitioners operate within a professional culture of digital preservation that upholds discriminatory systems of privilege.<sup>6</sup> By centering a set of shared values that empower communities of practitioners, the project aims to engage in a collaborative, bottom-up process that brings multiple stakeholders into the big tent of planning for the future of digital preservation. The project team and partners plan to recruit a diverse set of stakeholders to take part in the survey and interview process, drawing from not only current users of their services but also from users who may view these services as out-of-reach or impractical. Additionally, the project team commits to making all major digital deliverables accessible.

**Project Results:** This planning project will result in a roadmap based on the needs of preservation practitioners and collecting institutions, with the aim of creating a cost-effective, community-supported, values-based model for fulfilling their digital stewardship missions. The health of the digital stewardship field and market hinges on having a broad selection of robust services available to cultural heritage institutions. Community-supported approaches have a wide range of implications for sustainability, technical resiliency, and long-term stewardship, which include training practitioners in the technological and administrative infrastructures involved in digital preservation, relationship- and expertise-building across the sector through meaningful collaboration, and advocating for equitable, open-source solutions.

### Budget Summary

The requested project budget of \$149,990.00 includes project staff salaries (34%); project team travel (3%); participant support costs (13%); event costs (5%); supplies, subscriptions, and accessibility (6%); and contracts to support a strategic planning consultant, strategic communications, event hosting (31%); the remaining amount will go towards indirect costs.

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<sup>5</sup> Examples of previous research and environmental scans include: [The Digital POWRR Project](#), Hall and Boock's [Environmental Scan of Distributed Digital Preservation Services and Models: A Collective Case Study](#), ITHAKA S+R's [IMLS-funded research project on the effectiveness and durability of digital preservation and curation services](#), and [Educopia's Comparative Analysis of Distributed Digital Preservation Frameworks](#).

<sup>6</sup> Blumenthal, K.-R., Griesinger, P., Kim, J., Peltzman, S., & Steeves, V. (2020). What's Wrong with Digital Stewardship: Evaluating the Organization of Digital Preservation Programs from Practitioners' Perspectives. *Journal of Contemporary Archival Studies*, 7(1). <https://elischolar.library.yale.edu/jcas/vol7/iss1/13>