UNESCO PERSIST Policy Working Group

Terms of Reference (2016-2017)

Version 6 April 2016

Aim of PERSIST

Digital documentary heritage has critical importance for humanity as it has become a key resource for knowledge creation and sharing. Our society is changing from an industrial society into an information society. Nevertheless, we have not yet been able, publicly or privately, to find sustainable economic solutions to achieve 'continuity of content'. Enhancing the sustainability of the Information Society is a shared responsibility of public and private parties. The main parties to act on this responsibility are Governments, Memory Institutions in the broadest sense of the term, and ICT industry. UNESCO has a convening power on a global level to bring these parties to the table. PERSIST, a Unesco-programme under the Memory of the World-banner, aims to create a platform to support the dialogue among these parties in order to enhance the continuity of content.

Aim of the PERSIST Policy Working Group

PERSIST has three Working Groups: Technology, Content & Best Practices and Policy. The aim of the Policy WG is to identify emerging and existing policies and strategies on digital preservation of documentary heritage at both Governments and Memory Institutions (defined as: libraries, archives, audio-visual archives, museums and new types of data managing institutions) and to promote the outcome and impact of these policies and strategies.

Policies are a prerequisite for effective digital preservation. They clearly state principles, values, and intentions, specify how the policy is monitored and who is responsible for its maintenance, provide links to related policies, and indicate the process for reviewing, including frequency of review. The benefits of having a policy for digital preservation in place include assisting with planning of a coherent digital preservation program and publicly indicating that digital preservation is handled in a professional way.

It is Unesco's duty to help to crystallize the views of its member states and formulate appropriate policies. This is the context and the direction of the draft UNESCO Recommendation concerning the preservation of, and access to, documentary heritage in the digital age, which invites Member States to develop policies, mechanisms and criteria for selecting, acquiring and preserving documentary heritage of enduring value. This Recommendation was adopted at the 38th Session of the General Conference in October 2015. The Policy WG will support Unesco in this duty.

Activities of the PERSIST Policy Working Group

In the next two years the PERSIST Policy Working Group will focus on four main activities:

1. *Survey of existing national policies and strategies*
   Setting up and coordinating a survey among policy makers and memory institutions to map countries and institutions where digital preservation policies are emerging or already in place.

2. *Guidelines for implementation of the MoW Recommendation from the 2015 General Conference*
The Policy Working Group will support the Unesco MoW Secretariat in Paris to create Guidelines that Unesco Member States can use to put the *Recommendation concerning the preservation of, and access to, documentary heritage including digital form* (as published in November 2015) into practice.

3. The Do's and Don'ts (and Why's) of Digital Preservation (or: DPforAll Guide, Digital Preservation Starter's Guide)
The Policy Working Group will make an effort to create communication materials about digital preservation for world-wide use among policy makers in order to encourage them to create and sustain policies for digital preservation.

4. Model National Digital Preservation Strategy
Finally, the Policy Working Group will try to develop a model that policy makers can use to conceive and implement their own policy frameworks.

The first two actions will take place in 2016, the latter two will take place in 2017.

Composition of committee:
The PERSIST Policy Working Group will consist of the following persons in the period 2016-2017:
- Robert Buckley (United Arab Emirates National Archives) (chair)
- Iskra Panevska (UNESCO)
- Julia Brungs (IFLA)
- Marco de Niet (Digital Heritage Netherlands)
- Stein van Oosteren (Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
- Ulla Bøgvad Kejser (Danish National Library)
- Vincent Wintermans (Netherlands national Commission for UNESCO)

Timeline for 2016-2017:

May – September 2016	PERSIST Survey on policies and strategies	Contracting a third party to do the survey
May – December 2016	Working on Implementation Guidelines	Provide support and input for Unesco MoW Officers
January - July 2017	Create DPforAll Guide	User-friendly publication on digital preservation for policy makers
August – December 2017	Model National Digital Preservation Strategy	Provide a concrete tool for policy development in the area of digital preservation