

Sustainability of a Preservation Repository for Public Broadcasting

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The sustainability of digital preservation repositories is a critical issue in today's troubled economy. Traditionally, in the United States, audiovisual preservation has been funded by grant money that comes and goes according to the availability of funds and the efforts of grant writers. In the digital era, this model will no longer work. As the public broadcasting system in the United States prepares to develop a system-wide solution to archiving the vast quantities of television and radio content of every imaginable format currently found in boxes, closets, vaults, and servers throughout a varied system, it faces a very daunting task. The creation of a preservation repository will require substantially more allocation of funds to archiving than ever before. Finding a new business model that will be sustainable throughout difficult times, and will encourage the participation of all stakeholders - hundreds of stations and distributors that have very different budgets, production workflows, and governance models - will take considerable effort, but it is feasible. Already, changes are starting to be made to the lifecycle management of public television productions in the digital era, just in order to get them to broadcast. These changes will naturally facilitate the development of a preservation repository simply by standardizing data management and workflow. There is no need for preservation to compete with funds for production or broadcast operations. And if it is done right, the benefits of preservation should ultimately outweigh the costs. This paper will discuss questions related to the development of a sustainable digital preservation repository for public broadcasting, including: - What are the issues regarding technology, digital object management, and organization viability that public broadcasting must face? - What possible governance models could the system employ that will satisfy its diverse membership? - What changes need to be made in the lifecycle of public broadcast productions in order to facilitate a sustainable preservation repository? - What possible revenue models could support a preservation repository of public broadcast material? This paper will also discuss a case study of the Preserving Digital Public Television project, a collaborative effort between the two largest public television stations in the US (Thirteen/WNET in New York and WGBH in Boston), the nation's largest distributor (PBS), and New York University. From 2004-2009 this consortium explored the preservation of born digital public television by establishing a prototype preservation repository at NYU. The cost points associated with building this repository will be presented, along with an analysis that discusses scalability and how future digital preservation efforts may benefit from these findings.