

Minnesota Digital Library
<http://www.mndigital.org>
Digital Preservation Investigations

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The mission of the Minnesota Digital Library (MDL) is to provide enduring, open access to a growing body of digital content that documents Minnesota's history, heritage, and culture. A long-term goal of the Minnesota Digital Library is to ensure preservation of digital assets so that they are available into the future for Minnesotans to view and study and enjoy their cultural heritage.

The Management Team of the Minnesota Digital Library needed to implement a system to preserve the assets represented in its repository, Minnesota Reflections (<http://reflections.mndigital.org>), and sensed a common need among other cultural heritage repositories. We also saw an opportunity to provide a large-scale content preservation service for Minnesota. We sought to explore a common infrastructure strategy that would support a shared digital preservation service. Preserving the material in Minnesota Reflections would be our pilot project.

At a January 2010 meeting, MDL stakeholders agreed to begin building a prototype of a digital preservation service that would be collaborative and meet the needs of MDL's primary partners (Minitex and the MDL, University of Minnesota Libraries, and the Minnesota Historical Society) and that would be flexible enough to eventually extend to other organizations in Minnesota.

Our work started with a detailed digital preservation needs assessment focusing on preserving image files. Consultant Eric Celeste conducted the assessment, which involved inputs from numerous current and prospective stakeholders and concluded the project with a report released August 4, 2010: "MDL Digital Preservation Demonstration Project: Digital Image Preservation Needs" (<http://www.mndigital.org/projects/preservation/>). This assessment positioned the MDL to take the project into its next phase – prototype and demonstration.

In the second stage of research, the MDL investigated the technical and organizational potential of a scalable digital preservation program and a service for cultural heritage stewardship across Minnesota. We worked with a reputable partner, the HathiTrust Digital Library, through the auspices of the University of Minnesota Libraries' partner status with HathiTrust. Our project had a well-scoped focus on ingest of image data, an avenue of mutual interest between the MDL and HathiTrust. Consultant Eric Celeste's report of the MDL/HathiTrust Image Prototype Project is also available at the Preservation page of the MDL website cited above.

Most recently, in the third stage of research, the MDL contracted with Eric Celeste, and Katherine Skinner, executive director of Educopia Institute, to investigate some of the larger and well-known digital preservation services options that were considered as holding the potential for helping the MDL

provide for cultural heritage stewardship across Minnesota. This follow-up project focused solely on preservation, not access, and was designed to provide the MDL with a comparative analysis of a number of preservation alternatives so that we could make the best possible choice for a Minnesota preservation solution. The report of this third stage of investigation is now available on the Preservation page of the Minnesota Digital Library's website.

The MDL Management Team, which oversees the MDL's daily operations, has discussed these findings in some depth. Through these discussions, the Management Team is using this information to plan a specific implementation strategy, which will be presented to the MDL Advisory Board at a meeting in fall 2011.

Questions can be directed to:

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