
This is a very useful and much needed compendium of advice for organisations of all sizes, targeted at individuals with varying skill sets and access to resources. The opening chapter makes this clear by sketching three scenarios: a young archivist in an English county records office, a university librarian in the USA and a national archivist in East Africa. The common ground for these scenarios is an awareness of the need for active digital preservation, but not knowing how on earth to proceed. The book aims to provide that guidance. The author explains that a few years earlier he would have begun by explaining at length the need for digital preservation, but that he now feels that the very real risk of a digital dark ages is so widely accepted that justification is no longer necessary. That is doubtless a correct assumption for those motivated to read this book but sadly probably does not apply yet to all our professional colleagues.

However, by dispensing with the need for explaining why awareness of digital preservation concerns is necessary, Brown does provide more scope for detailed and practical implementation guidance. He has succeeded in his stated aim of providing sufficiently detailed advice for those working with the technology, while making it possible for those requiring more of an overview just to dip into the content; each chapter concludes by summarising the key recommendations made on the chapter topic. Brown includes a number of case studies - a very effective way of demonstrating the practical utility of the guidance. These case studies really do provide something for everyone, as they range from, for example, the description of a collaborative model developed by six US libraries to an account of the author's efforts to recover his undergraduate thesis that had been created and stored on now obsolete hardware and software.

One quibble is the importance accorded to the development of a digital asset register, which reflects a life-cycle approach to information. An over-emphasis on inventory would be counter-productive and of dubious value in achieving digital preservation objectives. Reading the discussion of asset registers in Chapter 2, rather than relying solely on the template in the appendix, will, one hopes, help ensure that does not happen.

The author has an impressive track record in digital preservation: previously head of the Digital Preservation team at the UK National Archives, a founder member of the Planets project and director of the Digital Preservation Coalition. This pedigree provides his writing in this book with the authority that can only come from practical experience and immersion in the domain. In conjunction with a very readable and accessible writing style, the book lives up to the promise of the title.

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