

Proposal for a community owned registry of digital preservation tools

Proposed by Paul Wheatley, SPRUCE Project Manager, for ANADP at IDCC, 7/12/2012

The problem

Finding an appropriate digital preservation tool to solve a particular challenge is not easy. Many organisations and individuals have created a considerable number of tool lists, registries and catalogues (see for example: <http://wiki.opf-labs.org/display/SPR/Digital+Preservation+Tools>). In fact there are so many of them that it's impossible to know where to start, and difficult to find useful information. Almost all of the existing registries have few entries, and minimal detail about the tools. They all feature the same well known tools like JHOVE and DROID that we all know about already. Most of them also feature some unique and incredibly useful entries, buried in the rest of the data.

Our expertise has been smeared thinly across the web. As a reference resource for our community (particularly for those new to our community) these registries are unhelpful at best. As organisations we are competing with each other, and in doing so, failing the digital preservation practitioners who need our help.

An approach to solving the problem

A more sensible approach would be to pool our knowledge in one place and build a really comprehensive registry of tools that anyone in our community can contribute to. I propose creation of a community owned tool registry (if need be, at a neutral URL/location), that interested organisations would buy into, and replace their own tool registries with. I have agreement in principle for participation from the Library of Congress, the Digital Curation Centre and the Open Planets Foundation (organisations with 3 of the largest and best existing registries).

How would it work?

The new community owned registry would:

- Provide descriptions of tools, links to source code and executables, and links to experiences in using the tools (so others can learn where and when the tools could be best applied)
- Be wiki based, allowing anyone in the community to contribute to it and maintain it
- Have tags for each tool, allowing different views onto the data to be tailored for organisations with different needs/foci.
- Be labelled as a **community owned resource**. Small icons of participating organisations who support the community (and expose it on their own sites) would be permitted

Participating organisations would:

- Provide their requirements for a community tool registry
- Merge their own tool registry data with the community registry
- Link to, expose (a view onto) and promote the community registry from their website
- Delete their own registry and agree not to set up any new project owned registries
- Contribute any effort they have in adding new tools over time, to the community registry

How would it help?

It would:

- Provide a valuable resource for our community and help us solve our DP challenges
- Raise awareness of existing tools, reduce the waste of duplicated tool development and encourage new developments to enhance existing tools rather than inventing new ones.
- Make it easier for us to maintain our information about tools and not go the way of PADI
- Provide a concrete and practical way for this community to communicate and collaborate