

DPE/Planets/nestor joint training event 'Principles of Digital Preservation: a hands-on approach' report

The first DPE/Planets/nestor joint training event, 'Principles of Digital Preservation: a hands-on approach', was held in Vilnius on 1-5 October 2007. It was organized by the DPE partner, Institute of Library and Information science of Vilnius University, in cooperation with colleagues from the Planets¹ and nestor² projects. The aim of the training event was to introduce the principles of digital preservation, and to explain the key needs and challenges in this area.

The event took place at the Martynas Mazvydas National Library of Lithuania. Nearly thirty practitioners and researchers from seven countries attended, representing libraries, archives and a variety of other institutions from the cultural heritage sector. The event followed the structure of seven half-day sessions, with each covering a specific aspect of digital preservation. Sessions consisted of introductory lectures, followed by group work, presentation of results and discussion. The different professional backgrounds and experiences of participants allowed for interesting debates and provided the possibility to share experience of specific digital preservation issues. In addition to the sessions participants were provided with access to online training materials before and after the course, including recommended reading, questions and exercises. This allowed for the development of knowledge and skills beyond the issues covered during the event.

This first day started with a general introduction to digital preservation by Stefan Strathmann, who explained the key issues with a focus on the challenges in this relatively new area. Michael Day's afternoon presentation dealt with the Reference Model for an Open Archival Information System (OAIS), an ISO standard (ISO 14721:2003) that has a major influence on the development of digital preservation initiatives. The second day began with an introduction to preservation metadata, again by Michael Day, who spoke about the term metadata, metadata standards, their importance, and functions with reference to the OAIS Information Model and other initiatives. Manfred Thaller's session then provided a thorough understanding of file formats and significant properties which are currently considered as most useful for long term preservation.

Wednesday started with Stefan Strathmann's session on trusted repositories, which introduced the nestor Catalogue of Criteria for Trusted Digital Repositories. Hans Hofman and Christoph Becker then gave a presentation on the Preservation Planning Process and Planets, discussing the different steps of the planning process, requirements for preserving digital objects, various components, and how the work of the Planets project relates to these issues. The final session was entitled 'Identifying essential characteristics of digital objects: the Planets approach' and covered the Planets methodology of evaluating preservation strategies, building on the overview provided in the previous session. In addition to these valuable and informative classes participants enjoyed a visit to the Virtual Library Creation Department at the National Library of Lithuania, where they were introduced to its decisions on digitisation and storage of digital information.

On Thursday and Friday students and lecturers participated in the international conference³ "Communication of memory in archives, museums and libraries: the interaction of science, policy and practice" held at Vilnius University. This provided an excellent opportunity to listen to the outstanding speakers and participate in further discussions on digital preservation in Europe.

¹ <http://www.planets-project.eu>

² <http://www.langzeitarchivierung.de/>

³ <http://www.kf.vu.lt/atmintis/en/index.php?m=1>

Away from the training sessions a number of social activities were organised. Participants were invited to a welcome reception the evening before the course, as well as being treated to a dinner and unforgettable late night 'ghost tour' of Vilnius. Several social evenings provided further opportunity for exchange of ideas and networking.

The first DPE/Planets/nestor training event was a great success, with participants gaining new knowledge and having the opportunity to discuss their newly acquired skills and apply them to real-life examples. Feedback was extremely positive and attendees were particularly impressed by the hands-on approach of this training event, which focused on exercises and practical work that drew upon their own experiences and work contexts. The event was highly praised with the majority of participants expressing a desire to attend other training events in the future. The next course planned will be the joint DPE and nestor Winter School 2007, which will take place 11-15 November 2007 in Gernrode (Germany). This event will focus on practical solutions for digital preservation issues. It will be held in German. For more information please visit the nestor webpage⁴. Other future events will be advertised through the wepreserve website⁵.

⁴ http://nestor.sub.uni-goettingen.de/winter_school_2007/index.php

⁵ <http://www.wepreserve.eu/>