



Book Review -- Adrian Brown's *Practical Digital Preservation: A How-To Guide For Organizations Of Any Size* (Chicago: Neal-Schuman, 2013)

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Abstract

Book review of *Practical Digital Preservation: A How-To Guide for Organizations of Any Size*, by Adrian Brown (Chicago: Neal-Schuman, 2013).

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Adrian Brown. *Practical Digital Preservation: A How-To Guide for Organizations of Any Size*. Chicago: Neal-Schuman, 2013. 336p. \$88.

Practical Digital Preservation, which won the 2014 Netherlands Coalition for Digital Preservation (NCDD) Award for Teaching and Communications, is an easy-to-follow guide for preserving digital objects. With a focus on best practices, and drawing from his own experience as assistant clerk of records for the Parliamentary Archives in London, author Adrian Brown guides his readers through everything from making the case for digital preservation to providing access. Brown divides the book into ten chapters (the introduction numbered among them) that build on one another in taking a systematic approach to digital preservation. Each chapter ends with a summary of key points and a bibliography. In addition, Brown includes a glossary and an appendix of systems, tools, and services.

The introduction begins by debunking the myths that digital preservation requires a large budget and extensive technical knowledge, can be put off until later, and can only be addressed by international organizations. Brown argues instead that the minimal requirements are motivation and means, and that due to an abundance of mature, affordable, and readily available tools, digital preservation is now more feasible for smaller institutions. Chapter Two outlines the first steps to digital preservation, which involve building your business case. The keys here, Brown writes, are understanding your institution's circumstances and creating both a digital-preservation policy and a digital-asset register. In Chapter Three, the author explains how to identify and

catalog an institution's functional, non-functional, and service requirements based on the stakeholders involved.

In Chapter Four, Brown discusses models for implementing digital preservation, outlining the pros and cons of each. The first option is to do nothing, but as Brown notes, inaction often proves costly in the long-term. Other models include the minimal repository, in-house solutions, open sourcing, commercialization, outsourcing the service, partnership, and private approaches. He also discusses training needs, the concept of trusted digital repositories, and the digital preservation maturity model. Brown provides a case study for each model. Among those discussed are the minimal approach used by English Heritage in the United Kingdom, the commercial off-the-shelf approach of the Wellcome Library, the outsourced approach taken by Greater Manchester Archivists Group, the hybrid approaches of Burritt Library and London School of Economics Library, and the collaborative model by MetaArchive Cooperative. Brown provides other case studies in each chapter describing the various parts of the digital life cycle and preservation processes.

The fifth chapter moves on to the selection and acquisition of digital objects. It emphasizes working with depositors and legal representatives to make informed decisions about the transfer of digital objects. For instance, Brown insists that transfer standards be realistic for depositors. The sixth chapter covers the specifics of accessioning and ingesting digital objects, focusing in particular on documentation, standards, and quarantine procedures. Here Brown advises creating a solid, efficient

accession and ingest process as a foundation for future preservation.

The next two chapters focus on description and preservation. To make the digital preservation process more efficient and less costly, Brown offers practical advice. He suggests that institutions use automation as much as possible for ingest, accessioning, and description. He also proposes realistic metadata standards, which involve carefully considering what metadata is needed, what can be extracted automatically, and where the clear needs for preservation lie within any collection. The book closes with a chapter on possible trends for the future, with Brown's predictions for preservation tools and services, representation information registers, storage, and training. He sums up the chapter by saying that the greatest challenge for digital preservation will be to embed it into regular Information Technology processes and personal-computing functions.

In contrast to other books on digital preservation, such as David Giarretta's *Advanced Digital Preservation* (Springer, 2011), this guide targets the non-specialist rather than those trained in information technology. Defining basic terminology and employing a conversational tone, Brown avoids unnecessarily complex discussions of technology and utilizes a transparent logic in his organization. The book is also international in scope, with resources from various countries and institutions cited and provides practical strategies and case studies for a wide range of situations. It is particularly useful for institutions with few resources available for digital preservation. While the author freely admits that the book isn't comprehensive (for example, he does not delve deeply into forensics or dealing with data

sets) it is hard to quibble with the coverage. The author provides a solid introduction to digital preservation, one suitable both for practitioners and students.

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