STACKTRACE // News from Software Preservation Network

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October 2018
Special Edition

This Special Edition STACKTRACE is intended to showcase SPN's efforts and invite readers to engage with our newly released Software Preservation Network Prospectus. The Prospectus chronicles SPN's accomplishments, articulates our plans for the future, and provides guidance on how to join and support our community.

THE FUTURE OF SPN

Since 2015, SPN has worked to create a space where organizations from industry, academia, government, cultural heritage, and the public sphere can contribute their skills and capabilities toward collaborative solutions that will ensure persistent access to all software and all software-dependent objects. A dedicated and growing community of practice has formed around SPN as we provide a platform for project-based and programmatic efforts to align. Some of our most recent and notable initiatives include Fostering a Community of Practice: Software Preservation and Emulation Experts in Libraries and Archives (FCoP), Scaling Emulation and Software Preservation Infrastructure (EaaSI), and Code of Best Practices in Fair Use for Software Preservation.

To date, the range of services and benefits that we offer have been built through grant funding and the volunteer efforts of faculty and staff from dozen of institutions. Now, in order to secure our efforts going forward, we are proposing a two-year start-up period to scale up SPN's services and operations. As we work to become a self-sustaining member-driven organization, we hope you will consider joining our growing community of practice.

If you have any questions or feedback (or even if you just want to chat about your favorite software title), please reach out to Jessica Meyerson (jessica@educopia.org). We will be accepting participation agreements for members and sponsors through December 14, 2018.

SOFTWARE STORIES

In September, we shared a series of software preservation stories on Twitter that highlight the growth and evolution of our Network and its members. Ranging from the personal to the institutional, from the obstacles that we have overcome as an organization, to the ones that lie ahead, these stories speak to the collective action that defines our organization and our efforts - to save software, together.

To see the full series, find us on Twitter ([@SoftPresNetwork](#))!

WHY IS SOFTWARE PRESERVATION IMPORTANT?

Software Preservation Network

"The more I've learned about software preservation, the more I've been struck by the fact that even when I can provide an ironclad legal argument in defense of sharing a digital collection, my library clients will be out of luck if they haven't got access to the right software to render their collections. Code is law, indeed."

Brandon Butler
Director of Information Policy
University of Virginia Library

Even the most ironclad legal arguments for sharing digital collections hinge on access to, and preservation of, software.

"WITHOUT A PLAN FOR SOFTWARE PRESERVATION, WE CANNOT EXPECT CURRENT SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERIES TO BENEFIT FUTURE RESEARCHERS."

"If you can't open the data files or re-run software algorithms, at best we lose the benefits of scientific transparency, and at worst we lose the ability to take action on the discoveries entirely."
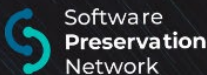
Megan Potterbusch
Data Services Librarian
George Washington University

From STEM to the humanities, from the tech industry to cultural heritage, the preservation of software is a critical concern. And while the implications of these issues reach far and wide, the challenges are such that no single institution can hope to address them alone.

WHY IS COLLECTIVE ACTION THE BEST APPROACH?

"Archival collections increasingly contain born-digital materials, and these files are growing in size and complexity."

"Regardless of the size of your institution, we are all facing the same issues in regards to the growing inaccessibility of our digital collections. Sharing information, tools, and working collaboratively is the only way to efficiently and successfully address software preservation."

Susan Malsbury
Digital Archivist
New York Public Library

The ability to render born-digital material is increasingly important for current scholars and will be critical for future scholars, which is why SPN is launching a two-year start-up period to scale up our services and operations.

THE CASE FOR

"The issue of software preservation is so large that it cannot be solved by competing and fractured approaches. Only by working together can we create infrastructures, processes, and social agreements that will safeguard software for the future."

Neil Chue Hong
Director
Software Sustainability Institute

COLLECTIVE ACTION

Through collective action, SPN is developing tools, guidelines, and workflows that build capacity for a broad range of cultural stewardship organizations to participate in software preservation.

SIGNIFICANT SOFTWARE

Software **Preservation** Network

AstroPy

is a piece of software that has proven particularly significant in my professional life

"Learning more about how the AstroPy community builds the code and works together and the challenges they face in getting credit for their work has been more instructive than anything I could have read."

Daina Bouquin
Head Librarian
Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics

Can you name a piece of software that has shaped your personal or professional life? For Daina, it's AstroPy - an openly developed Python module built by and for the community that her library serves.

Jess used to spend her days helping smaller community radio stations migrate to digital tools. She saw firsthand the impact that a free open-source audio editor like Audacity could have in the lives of local journalists. Now, as part of SPN, Jess brings that experience and expertise to a boundary-spanning community of practice dedicated to saving software.

SPN INTIATIVES

To date, SPN has united software preservation efforts by aligning project-based and programmatic initiatives across our five core Working Groups: Research, Legal & Policy, Metadata Standards, Training & Education, and our newest Working Group, Technological Infrastructure.

Explore some of our most recent WG accomplishment below, and get in touch if you want to get involved!

Research

SPN's Research Working Group leads collaborative efforts to collect, analyze, and share information about software preservation.

The Working Group facilitates research projects that bring individuals and organizations with diverse perspectives and interests together to

document and analyze the landscape of software preservation and access. The Working Group aims to explore frameworks for sustainable, transparent, community-based research and to advocate for innovative models of research that accelerates practice.

Legal & Policy

The Legal & Policy Working Group explores fair use, licensing, and information policy specifics pertaining to the lawful preservation, sharing, and reuse of software in cultural heritage and research contexts.

Together with Harvard's Cyberlaw Clinic, our

Legal & Policy Working Group has interviewed cultural heritage practitioners to outline concrete use cases for the preservation and reuse of software. Legal & Policy WG members have also advocated for changes to U.S. Copyright protections by filing additional comments on Section 1201 of U.S. Copyright Law.

Most recently, the Working Group collaborated with the Association of Research Libraries on the newly published *Code of Best Practices in Fair Use for Software Preservation*.

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Metadata Standards

The Metadata Standards and Policies working group is responsible for developing, promoting, and advocating for common metadata frameworks and related metadata standards, vocabularies, and ontologies that support software preservation and access.

This working group will collect and analyze

existing metadata standards, develop approaches for establishing a common metadata framework, suggest crosswalking strategies, and promote community awareness of complementary standards.

Training & Education

The Training & Education Working Group develops resources and hosts outreach activities that raise awareness and broaden participation in software preservation. Training & Education plays an important role in making findings from other SPN Working Groups accessible to a broader audience. Training & Education is also responsible for

outreach to professionals interested in software preservation, to professionals in fields adjacent to software preservation (e.g. data management), and to faculty in Schools of Information to engage students in the broader goals and activities of the Software Preservation Network.

To this end, Training & Education recently hosted a **6-episode webinar series** in partnership with the Digital Preservation Coalition. All 6 recordings (including transcripts and recommended readings) are now freely available on our website.

FIND OUT MORE

The Software Preservation Network (SPN) is a leading organization established to facilitate and support software preservation efforts. SPN preserves software through community engagement, infrastructure support, and knowledge generation. You can learn more about SPN's accomplishments, our plans for the future, and how to join and support this community through our newly released Software Preservation Network Prospectus.

Software Preservation Network

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