

„A Patchwork Quilt to a Grand Design” – A Planned Approach to Preservation for Libraries and Archives in the United Kingdom and Ireland

by VANESSA C. MARSHALL

I shall divide this paper into five sections:

1. an introduction to the National Preservation Office (NPO): 1984 to 1995; 1996 – 1999, when a new funding basis and management structure was put in place
2. set out the NPO's strategic aim, which is the adoption of a planned approach to preservation by libraries and archives in the UK and Ireland and lay before you the achievements of the Office since 1999
3. bring you up to date on digital preservation in the UK since 1996
4. touch briefly on factors affecting the preservation profession in the UK today, and
5. give some personal thoughts on where preservation management initiatives might advance the profession and where that could take us over the next three years (2002 – 2005).

1. AN INTRODUCTION TO THE NATIONAL PRESERVATION OFFICE (NPO): 1984 TO 1995; 1996 – 1999.

The National Preservation Office was established in 1984 by the British Library Board on receipt of the recommendations made by Dr Fred Ratcliffe into the state of preservation policies and conservation in libraries in the UK.¹ The Office was given the task of acting as a focal point of information and to raise preservation awareness generally. There were a number of other recommendations but principal amongst these was, when the time was right, to set

out upon the task of developing a national approach to preservation in the UK.

The Office was guided and supported by the National Preservation Advisory Committee (NPAC). Members were drawn from a wide cross section of preservation administrators, educators, and conservation professionals. In 1995, NPAC took a long hard look at the way things were and questioned whether or not the British Library could, any longer, be expected to bear the cost of the Office single-handed. It was agreed that others with a national remit, or believing themselves to have a major role to play in preservation for their members, would allocate funds on a rolling three-year basis.² Thus the NPO is able to undertake work of interest to its funders which is of interest to the community as a whole. The basis of the contribution to core funding is altruistic, that of *public good*. I believe this is an important principle, not only in its own right, but is an essential element for publicly funded institutions, especially those with a national remit, charged with a duty of care in respect to the nation's cultural heritage.

I should like to take this opportunity to thank the British Library Board for their vision in 1984 and the principal funders for joining with the British Library in 1996 to support the work of the NPO. I am pleased to be able to announce here that the British Library has committed itself to continuing its support for the next triennium 2002 – 2005, and that the external funders are agreeable in principle. Since 1996 a number of other organisations have agreed to contribute to the work of the National Preservation Office.³

The Management Committee agreed new terms of reference in 1996:

- to develop and co-ordinate a national preservation strategy
- to provide an information and enquiry service
- to promote best practice through education and training, and
- to initiate and co-ordinate research.

The overall aim of the Office is *to provide an independent focus for ensuring the preservation and continued accessibility of library and archive materials in the United Kingdom and Ireland*. That is, a planned approach to preservation by libraries and archives throughout the UK and Ireland based on the needs and priorities of the collections in their care.

2. SETTING THE NPO'S STRATEGIC AIM: THE ADOPTION OF A PLANNED APPROACH TO PRESERVATION BY LIBRARIES AND ARCHIVES IN THE UK AND IRELAND.

The first five years of the Office's revised plan would need to focus on the following:

1. giving the NPO a clear identity⁴
2. developing the team work approach adopted by the staff⁵
3. refocusing the Information and Enquiry Service,⁶ and
4. lay the foundations for the development of a national preservation strategy for the written and documentary heritage in libraries and archives throughout the United Kingdom and Ireland.

The following three-year period, now 2002-2005 would test the growing rhetoric of co-operation and collaboration. The Office would need to focus on:

1. acquiring information to populate a central database containing preservation information
2. identifying collaborative preservation programmes based on the information held in the central database
3. identify additional funding to support prioritised action.

This was, and remains, an extremely ambitious programme for a team comprising six people.

I should now like to review the work of the Office against these objectives and the timescale outlined above, taking a familiar management approach: Where are we going? Why are we going there? How are we getting there? When will we be there? How will we know if we have arrived?

Where are we going?

I have already said, the NPO's strategy is for libraries and archives to adopt a planned approach to preservation for collections in their care whether they are of local, regional, national or international significance. Such a strategy has to be based on core values that state clearly why this approach is a valid one for organisations to adopt wholeheartedly.

Why are we going there?

I think we can all accord that libraries and archives

- are guardians of the written and documentary heritage for the use of present and future generations
- will manage collections in a secure environment and care for those collections in an appropriate manner sufficient for the needs of the collections and their users according to agreed priorities and levels of responsibility
- are responsible for the governance of their institutions holding the nation's memory and the bodies responsible for them should ensure the collections are managed and resourced to ensure their sustainability
- recognise their role in longer term social purposes through preservation and through sustainable access to those collections, for all who use them, in appropriate ways, and
- must act together and with other cultural heritage organisations to maximise the use of scarce resources to the benefit of users and the collections in their care.⁷

A strategy needs a practical basis as well. These were clearly articulated by Ian McGowan in his paper to the 1995 NPO Conference.⁸ A national preservation strategy is necessary because:

- libraries and archives contain the irreplaceable accumulation of human knowledge
- we need to understand the nature and extent of the preservation problem nation-wide
- the NPO needs to be able to co-ordinate a response to address that preservation need
- resources must be obtained to meet prioritised actions, and
- individual institutions must be able to locate their activity at the local and regional level within the wider context of an appropriate national or international framework.

The NPO has been developing a series of tools to enable libraries and archives to manage their collections. With the emphasis now on access through digitisation programmes, preservation administrators have to meet increased demand in such a way as not to compromise longer-term access to historic collections, which are inevitably, a fragile and non-renewable asset. The maximal

use and effective management of scarce resources are twin drivers of institutional change and closer collaboration.

How are we getting there?

Three key elements, or building blocks, for the development and co-ordination of a national preservation strategy were identified.⁹

- The need to identify and locate the national written and documentary heritage.
- The need to create a database to hold information on collection strengths and their retention and preservation status.
- The need for a standard survey methodology to assess preservation condition, enabling priorities to be established, and to develop programmes in the national interest.

i. Identifying the National Written and Documentary Heritage

The National Preservation Office recognises the need for this information, across all types and sizes of library institutions in order to develop and co-ordinate the allocation of resources for shared preservation responsibilities. However, it is beyond our remit to decide upon the designation of what is, and what is not, the national print collection, or the national research collection, or the totality of the written and documentary heritage held in libraries throughout the UK and Ireland. That is the province of Chief Librarians and collection development professionals. Rudimentary definitions have been used by the Office for the purpose of self-assessment by libraries taking in populating the database created as part of the following pilot project.¹⁰

ii. Register of Collection Strengths, Retention Intentions and Preservation Intentions

David Haynes Associates and Information Management Associates were commissioned by the National Preservation Office, acting on behalf of CURL, to undertake the development of a pilot national Register of Collection Strengths in late 1998. The aim of the project was to develop specifications for the structure and information content of the Register. The pilot project was completed and delivered to the commissioners in June 2000.¹¹ We wanted to create a flexible database holding information concerning material forming part of the national research collections contained in libraries and archives in the UK and Ireland. We proposed to fill the database with information provided by the CURL members' institutions initially. The Register is intended to inform

librarians and users of collection strengths and the retention status of the collection. For example, if the collection is held in perpetuity by the organisation as part of the legal deposit arrangement then the preservation intention must be for that institution to preserve in perpetuity. The NPO would need to know this information in order, for example, to develop shared preservation programmes designed specifically for this class of materials.

In addition, the NPO undertook to facilitate the completion of the CURL/BL model retention policy. The work of the steering group was completed in 1999 and responsibility for final agreement of the draft policy is with its sponsors.

There remains a substantial amount of work to be done in this area. The collaborative effort necessary referred to by Sir Brian Follett in his keynote speech to this conference underscored this. It will not be easy and it will not be done quickly. It is essential for the allocation of resources within a co-ordinated approach to shared preservation responsibilities.

iii. A Standard Survey Methodology to Assess Preservation Condition

What is within the remit of the National Preservation Office to deliver is the third of the building blocks – a statistical survey tool that enables libraries and archives to assess the preservation status of their collections and holdings. The Preservation Assessment Survey (PAS) is crucial to the success of a planned approach to preservation whether within an individual institution, as the basis for shared preservation programmes amongst different sector-groupings, or to inform strategic bodies acting in the national interest.

The research phase was funded by the BL Research and Innovation Centre and carried out between May 1997 and August 1998.¹²

The aims of the research were twofold:

- To develop a model for assessing the preservation needs of paper-based and photographic materials (including microforms) for use in libraries and archives in the UK and Ireland, and
- To develop the model in such a way as to facilitate an assessment of national preservation needs and priorities.

Very early on in the life of the research the steering group were persuaded by the researchers that it was not feasible to develop a single model for libraries and archives at the same time. It was felt at that time that the differences between the two disciplines were too great and that time would be lost in try-

ing to reconcile these. The steering group agreed to revise the project remit, limiting it to libraries only. Subsequently, the Public Record Office funded and undertook work that has made the model equally applicable to both domains.

The research team handed over the original project report, recommending that the National Preservation Office should, „make every effort to ensure that the momentum of this project is sustained”.¹³ The NPO has given the development stage of this project the highest priority. The combined library and archive models, with associated software and guidance, were launched at the NPO annual seminar in November 2000.¹⁴

The NPO Preservation Assessment Survey is a method of obtaining a picture at a moment in time of the state of preservation of a library collection or archive holding. It works by selecting and surveying a 400-item sample. This provides a statistically reliable report. The survey assesses, condition, use, value, (i.e. non-monetary) and environmental conditions. The survey form is simple to complete and uses only two sides of A4. The database structure developed by a member of NPO staff, using an Access database, manages the data to provide a number of pre-set reports. In addition, the database can be interrogated by the institution according to its own requirements. The database structure should not be altered, as this would destroy the reliability of the information provided. A significant feature of the PAS is the ability to ask „what if” questions. This enables the institution to assess the preservation impact of a particular course of action. For example, if a Full Disclosure¹⁵ catalogue retro-conversion programme were envisaged, what would that mean in terms of increased handling when the collection is more visible on the web? The „what if” facility enables you to assess the risk of increased damage and to plan a preventive conservation programme for the items to minimise that risk. Similarly the impact of proposed improvements in preservation provision, such as better environmental conditions, can be quantified enabling a better business case for the necessary resources to be made.

The survey allows us to take a snapshot of the current state of preservation conditions in a library or archive. When carried out on a regular basis, the PAS is capable of monitoring progress towards identified aims. It is therefore a powerful means of assessing and reporting the impact of preservation programmes at the institutional level. It could be extended as an evaluation tool to assess the impact of shared preservation programmes.

The Preservation Assessment Survey methodology has been tested in a wide range of libraries and archives. It has been tested to near destruction using the British Library as a test-bed. The whole of the BL’s collection was surveyed on the basis of a 400-item sample. The results are being compared to surveys of

sub-sets of the collection carried out on the same statistical basis. Early indications are that the results obtained from the surveys of the sub-sets support the validity of the results obtained from the survey of the whole collection.

I must stress however; the NPO Preservation Assessment Survey methodology is not an item by item condition survey tool. A compatible item by item condition survey method remains to be developed. It is however, a pre-requisite for well prepared funding applications. We are already aware of internal institutional funding applications making use of the reports generated by the Survey. The software and the guidance manual are now available.¹⁶

I have concentrated on describing the Preservation Assessment Tool as the critical element in the NPO's strategy of a planned approach to preservation for libraries and archives. It is only one aspect of the work carried out by NPO staff for the benefit of the community we serve:

- We are continually involved in education and training programmes.¹⁷
- We are continually enhancing the information and enquiry service.¹⁸
- Disaster preparedness has always been central to the role of the Office.¹⁹
- Promotion of standards in preservation microfilming and digital surrogacy is of vital significance in planned preservation programmes.²⁰
- Since 2000 we have administered the National Manuscripts Conservation Trust on behalf of the British Library.²¹
- The NPO facilitates and fosters partnerships to raise preservation awareness and promote best practice in preservation management.
- The NPO, through its national and international role, is able to bring a wide range of expertise to bear on the needs of the library and archive community throughout the UK and Ireland.

When will we be there? (First 5 year plan 1999 - 2007)

NPO Task 1	Manage the research project to develop the structure and test the pilot Register of Collection Strengths Retention Intentions and Preservation Intentions	completed 2000
NPO Task 2	Implement the development phase for the library Preservation Assessment Survey module, develop and test archive module with PRO, including software and guidance for users	launched 2000

NPO Task 3	Implement the recommendations of the review of the Information and Enquiry Service	completed 2000
NPO Task 4	Lay foundations for a planned approach to Preservation in libraries and archives in the UK and Ireland: key target Preservation Assessment Survey	completed 2001

This is no small achievement. The current NPO staff team has more than made up for the time between 1996 and 1998 when the NPO was so seriously understaffed.

How will we know when we have arrived?

At this stage of the overall plan the full impact of the National Preservation Office's approach to preservation in libraries and archives in the United Kingdom and Ireland cannot fully be assessed. The PAS central database needs to be populated. Shared preservation programmes need to be identified using information garnered from the database. There are signs that this might be achievable. 21 institutions have either carried an assessment, or are currently undertaking one. (16 libraries and 5 archive repositories; 8 more surveys are planned to be carried out by the end of September 2001). I shall return to the uses that, with further controlled development, the Preservation Assessment Survey might be put.

3. DEVELOPMENTS IN DIGITAL PRESERVATION IN THE UK SINCE 1996

In 1996 the Commission for Preservation and Access and Research Libraries Group published a seminal report on the issues facing libraries in responding to digital preservation.²² The Joint Information Systems Committee, Committee on Electronic Information, through the Electronic Libraries Programme commissioned a report to investigate what this meant for UK higher education.²³ Rereading the report of the meeting to discuss the findings of this report makes interesting reading now. I do not think anyone, with perhaps the exception of the representative from the Data Archive, really understood what acceptance of digital preservation would mean to libraries and archives in practice. 1996 was indeed the „digital preservation dark ages“. The need for a national body to take forward raising awareness of digital preservation issues was highlighted and the meeting recommended the National Preservation Office should take on this role. Accordingly in 1997 the NPO Digital Archiving Working Group was established with membership drawn from a representa-

tive group of stakeholders, including publishers. The meeting in December 1996 called for the appointment of a National Digital Preservation Officer.²⁴

With the help of Seamus Ross²⁵ and Dan Greenstein²⁶ the NPO put together a job specification and digital remit to take to potential funders for this additional post. The response was indicative of the prevailing attitudes and lack of awareness at that time. Refusal coalesced around two points: firstly that digital preservation was not an issue – the technology would look after itself; and if it is a problem for libraries and archives they should take care of it themselves. In the UK the CEDARS project²⁷ has demonstrated the complexity and enormity of the institutional, national, and global task we face. Through DAWG and joining with others, the NPO continued to press for funding and at the same time take advantage of the opportunities presented to raise awareness of digital preservation issues.²⁸ A good overview of progress in the UK, and the NPO's role in this, can be found in Lynne Brindley's keynote speech to the international conference CEDARS 2000 held in York during December 2000.²⁹

During 1997 and 1998, the NPO managed the intellectual content of the JISC funded, eLib digital preservation studies. The Digital Archiving Working Group formed the steering group for these often technically complex studies.³⁰ In March 1999 the NPO launched a synthesis of the 7 research studies under the title, Digital Culture, maximising the nation's investment.³¹ The audience for this publication was described as „the person on the Clapham omnibus and busy Chief Executives and Directors”. It has had a tremendous impact worldwide and even waved aloft at a meeting held in Brussels by the European Union.

However, in 1998 members of the DAWG recommended to the NPO Management Committee that a new body should be formed in the light of experience, one which met the increasingly pressing need for a national digital preservation agenda. In March 1999, the NPO together with JISC and the BL organised a meeting at the University of Warwick. The meeting called for the setting up of a UK Digital Preservation Coalition. When the full report of the meeting was received by the NPO, the Management Committee agreed to approach the CURL Board, and together submit an application for funding to JISC Committee on Electronic Information. This was done in June 1999. Neil Beagrie was appointed the JISC Digital Preservation Focus in June 2000 within the JISC funded Distributed National Electronic Resource programme.³²

NPO Task 5	Obtain funds for a National Digital Preservation Officer	completed 2000
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What follows is a report from Neil Beagrie on his first year in the post of JISC Digital Preservation Focus and Deputy Director of the Distributed National Electronic Resource (DNER):

About The Digital Preservation Coalition

The Digital Preservation Coalition is being established as a consortium during 2001 by a range of leading organisations to foster joint action to address the challenges of improving long-term management of and preserving access to, digital information in the UK. We believe digital preservation will be fundamental to the National Learning Networks, the preservation of contemporary cultural heritage, and the recording of research and development. It is therefore an essential component in securing the knowledge base of the UK and its global partners.

The Coalition is seen as operating on four levels:

- a core set of Coalition activities of common interest and benefit to all its members supported by resources from its membership;
- activities undertaken individually by member institutions and sectors but accomplished and co-ordinated in line with their commitment to the principles and goals of the Coalition;
- collaborative projects which would be taken forward with project funding drawn from a variety of sources;
- Promoting a national infrastructure for sustaining access to and preservation of, digital resources.

As a newly established organisation the programme and longer-term business plan for the Coalition will be developed in consultation with its membership and other potential external funders over its first year. Suggested examples of levels and activities for the Coalition's first year made during extensive preliminary consultation with potential members include:

Suggested Core Activities

1. establishment of the Coalition and development of the Coalition' programme and plans to address its long-term goals.
2. practical steps to accelerate dissemination of information, and build expertise in digital preservation by:

- (a) developing and maintaining web pages built around an electronic version of Preservation Management of Digital Materials handbook and potential international collaboration;
 - (b) utilising and expanding the digital preservation list (currently c 700 members) on JISCmail to disseminate information on the work of the Coalition and digital preservation activities in its members;
 - (c) holding two Coalition forums over the course of the first-year to share and develop practical expertise;
 - (d) utilising the prospective membership and allies of the Coalition which includes cultural heritage institutions, service providers, and industry to build cross sectoral partnerships.
3. Initiating concerted efforts to get digital preservation on the agenda of key stakeholders and developing the groundwork for a national strategy:
- I. Examples of activities undertaken individually by member institutions and sectors but accomplished and co-ordinated in line with their commitment to the principles and goals of the Coalition.
 - II. Institutional activities and outcomes publicised and disseminated through information and contributions to the Coalition webpages, digital preservation list, and members meetings.
 - III. Making institutional and sectoral commitments to digital preservation and mapping roles and responsibilities onto a national strategy for digital preservation.

Examples of a Potential Collaborative Projects which Could be Taken Forward with Project Funding Drawn from a Variety of Sources

These could be developed along the lines of other successful collaborative projects e.g. Cedars, Nedlib, etc. Potential examples for the Coalition include:

1. Archiving web based resources – collaborative projects between members and/or a Coalition interest group to foster/support individual projects undertaken on an institutional or sectoral basis.
2. Digital Archive certification/specifications/competencies – developing and supporting potential projects for uk implementations (eg archiving criteria for UK funding agencies).

An initial meeting to discuss the formation of a Coalition in January is being followed by individual discussions and further meetings in July and Sep-

tember. These will finalise the shape of the Coalition, its initial programme, and its launch later this year.

(End of Neil Beagrie's report.)

Both Neil and I look forward to continuing the close working relationship we have established with each other over the past four years and for the Digital Preservation Coalition and National Preservation Office to work together in the most appropriate way for the benefit of the communities we serve.

4. SURVEYING THE UK PRESERVATION MANAGEMENT LANDSCAPE

In preparation for this paper I mentioned it to the Chair of the NPO Management Committee who urged me to give my own professional view of factors affecting preservation in the UK at the present time and to give my response to them. I shall begin by reviewing a number of factors and then express my response in two ways. Firstly, how the should NPO build on the foundations laid during the past five years to complete the plan outlined in 1996. This will, I believe, enable the NPO to realise the farsighted expectations of the British Library Board in 1984, and bring to fruition the programme articulated by speakers at NPO conferences in 1995³³ and 1997.³⁴ Secondly I shall address a vision for the future in line with the *zeitgeist* which would meet the needs expressed by senior preservation administrators from libraries, archives, and museums at a consultation day held recently by the National Preservation Office.

The Digital Preservation Coalition points one way forward. Yet digital preservation is only one aspect of change affecting libraries and archives, library and archive preservation administrators, and indeed the preservation profession as a whole, at the beginning of the 21st century. What else is happening, particularly in the UK environment, although much of what follows may be of wider continental European, and international, significance?

Perhaps the greatest changes stem from the immediate, and longer-term effects of the merger between the Library and Information Commission with the Museums and Gallery Commission to form Resource, the Council for Museums Archives and Libraries³⁵ is having on the cultural heritage sector in the UK. The general underlying theme can best be summarised as, „together we can do better what we do individually”, and of course, in so doing enrich and enhance the services we provide to our users.

Resource has been working on a range of strategy papers during its first 18 months of existence. Of most significance to preservation professionals in libraries and archives is the *Stewardship Strategy preserving the past for the future*. This is currently in draft form and will be published for wide consultation. This is not a stewardship strategy for the cultural heritage sector in England. It is not a preservation strategy for cultural heritage objects. It is an internal strategy document setting out Resource’s agenda over the next 5 years in order to meet their own aims and objectives – chiefly to obtain information in order to advise the UK government on the state of provision for and the needs of the cultural heritage sector. Stewardship, preservation management, conservation, preventive conservation, depending on the terminology used across the sectors, is only one part of their remit.

Another government led agenda is having an equally significant effect on the profession in the UK. This is devolution. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are now responsible for cultural heritage within their own parliament and assemblies. English regionalism is represented by a plethora of merged and new „strategic” cultural organisations. All claim some measure of responsibility for preservation. At the present time the map is extremely confusing. Perhaps of even greater concern is the increasing number of bodies with strategic remits. Divorcing strategic and operational aspects of preservation management is likely to result in a significant loss in achieving a planned and co-ordinated approach to preservation. Furthermore, I believe it is likely to result in greater duplication of effort and even further fragmentation at a time when there are significant gains to be made from a cross-domain, holistic, approach to preservation management provision, albeit with in a de-centralised national framework.

The UK government agenda for cultural heritage institutions to lead the drive for social inclusion through digital access is an exciting challenge, and one that through the New Opportunities Fund is being embraced with enthusiasm. The pressure on institutions that have received funding for digitisation projects: to obtain appropriately qualified staff, premises, kit, to find suitably experienced vendors, and to carry out conservation audits of the materials concerned as well as the necessary interventive treatments will be immense. Our experience with non-archival quality microfilm serves as a dread reminder of the pitfalls. Few organisations outside the national and major research libraries have internal access to preservation and conservation skills.

That is the digitisation challenge. In addition, cultural heritage institutions face skill deficits across the digital board, as the agenda for the Digital Preservation Coalition demonstrates. For preservation managers there are equally

pressing skills deficits in traditional conservation areas. I mention photographic and book conservation specifically.

There is one further aspect of the changing landscape in which preservation must exist that I want to raise, although I do not pretend to have exhausted the list. This is the value to the economy of the cultural heritage. This is the economic value of our cultural heritage, not the commercial or market value of cultural heritage items. It is an important distinction that must be made and borne in mind at all times. Resource's chairman, Matthew Evans, has drawn attention to the need for a debate, at the highest levels of government, that needs to take place, „If we, the cultural heritage sector, are to play a much fuller, more dynamic and effective role in the economic, educational and social life of the nation...”.³⁶ Again, this will not be an easy task but the preservation of our heritage is integral to achieving the UK government's agenda for economic prosperity and regeneration in the regions with respect to cultural tourism.

5. WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES FOR PRESERVATION MANAGEMENT IN A CROSS-DOMAIN ENVIRONMENT, AND IS THERE A ROLE FOR A SINGLE-FOCUS PRESERVATION BODY?

I have already said that the development of the Preservation Assessment Survey is the key element in the adoption of the National Preservation Office's planned approach to preservation in libraries and archives in the UK and Ireland. There are a number of uses to which it might be put which need to be investigated. It is already in use in a number of institutions and I understand has already been used as the basis of a report to internal funders for increased resources. The NPO needs to build a critical mass of information to assess the extent and scale of the national preservation problem. The PAS could, and I believe should, be carried out as the basis for understanding the nature and extent of preservation needs in copyright libraries, or in CURL members' libraries. Other consortial or regional bodies could make use of the Preservation Assessment Survey in this way.

A self-contained version of the Assessment is currently being tested within a BL Co-operation and Partnership Programme funded project to assess the extent of the acid paper problem by a group of libraries and archives in London and the South East Region. The information will be used as the basis for the business model for a national programme for mass deacidification. More work of this type needs to be carried out to prove the reliability and scalability of the methodology for national collaborative preservation programmes.

The Preservation Assessment Survey, carried out over time is capable of assessing the impact of the preservation spend in measurable improvements to collection care. There needs to be a concerted effort to target a representative range of library and archive institutions to carry out the assessment at regular annual intervals over a three-year period in order to develop these indicators. This would give a key performance indicator for preservation and could provide a crucial impact measure for preservation administrators to support funding arguments.

Many libraries and archives do not have in-house teams who could carry out the survey. It is difficult for them to obtain the resources to employ professional practitioners to carry out an assessment yet it is a key factor in writing funding applications. There appear to be indications in the recent Heritage Lottery Fund consultation document that might lead to increased funding of feasibility studies. This needs to be further investigated. At the same time, pressure needs to be brought to bear on funding agencies to adopt preservation standards for assessing applications. Some success has been achieved by the NPO in this respect but it needs to be enabled to raise this higher up its agenda. A concerted effort now needs to be made to obtain the buy-in by both funders and applicants now the tools are in place. This will take time as it involves a change of culture, particularly on the part of funders. The adoption of digital preservation criteria by the New Opportunities Fund as a condition of grant leads the way. The door should be pushed open wider for the adoption of NPO preservation management and conservation criteria by funders in the public, private and higher education sectors, as basic criteria for the allocation of funds.

There is a further task associated with the Preservation Assessment Survey that I believe should be investigated as soon as possible. Since the launch of the PAS in November 2000 a number of expressions of interest have been made by museum preservation managers. Could the methodology be adapted to assess museum collections? The opportunities presented by a single methodology for assessing preservation priorities, on a comparable basis, would propel the preservation community through the door government has opened to the cultural heritage sector in a cross domain environment.

The former MGC Conservation Unit developed „Levels of collection care” in museums.³⁷ A research project „Benchmarks for collection care in libraries”, funded originally by the former Libraries and Information Commission³⁸ will be published in an integrated document, covering libraries, archives, and museums, by Resource in Autumn 2001. Benchmarking by institutions according to „basic”, „good” and „best” preservation practice should be promoted and adopted as a key performance indicator in the sector. It follows that

definitions of national, regional, local, or international cultural significance need to be linked to this in order for an institution to assess the level of collection care most appropriate to its collection or mission. National institutions holding the nations' cultural heritage would, needless to say, be expected to aim for best practice.

I should like to return to the economic value of the cultural heritage. Assigning economic value to the cultural heritage is a familiar technique in the built heritage. Following exploratory discussions with Carole Milner, formerly head of the MGC Conservation Unit, and Mike Corfield, Head of Ancient Monuments Laboratory at English Heritage, it proved impossible to obtain funding for a joint research project with NPO as first envisaged. The NPO was able to persuade the former Library and Information Commission to fund, through an open call for proposals, (Resource completed the project on its formation in April 2000), a small -scale project to be carried out by EFTEC.³⁹ The concepts used by environmental economists, of contingent valuation and total economic value, have not been applied to the written and documentary heritage before. I am particularly proud of the role the NPO has played in this new environment. If proof were needed, it came in the form of my chairing a session for the British Council at an international meeting of librarians recently to introduce economic concepts relating to cultural heritage, particularly relevant to economically deprived regions. More studies need to be carried out in this area, not only to understand the methodology but its relevance to cultural heritage institutions as it is the preferred cost-benefit analysis methodology in the UK Treasury's „green book”.

Reflect a moment on the significance of the Preservation Assessment Survey as a tool for measuring the impact of the preservation spend; benchmarking as a key performance indicator; and measuring the economic value of our shared heritage to the economic prosperity of the country. We can see the emergence of powerful tools at the disposal of the preservation profession. Cultural heritage organisations, charged with a duty of care for collections in their charge, have a profound opportunity to change the way preservation provision is managed before them. Not to seize this opportunity will, I would suggest, deprive library and archive preservation managers from playing not only a full part in the emerging national and regional agenda, but access to funding opportunities. The argument for preservation funding as an integral part of sustained access, benefiting both our society and economy, in terms understood by management accountants and government, must be developed as a matter of urgency.

The NPO held a consultation day recently attended by senior professionals to discuss possible future goals. One potential outcome was the call for - *a Na-*

tional Preservation Office representing the needs of preservation administrators and the cultural heritage across museums, libraries, and archives. This must be seen as a realistic and valid future scenario, but it will not be an easy task, nor will it be well done quickly. The merger of the Museums and Galleries Commission with the Library and Information Commission to form Resource sets a precedent.

I can list here only a fraction of the steps that will need investigation. Chief amongst these is the willingness of the cultural heritage sector to work together for the benefit of the profession and preservation of our shared past. There will be questions of ethics and preservation philosophy to be addressed. There will be the practical governance issues of merging a number of related bodies – the nuts and bolts of any business merger. Who would pay for an independent National Preservation Office? How many staff and what are the appropriate qualifications and competencies required? Should it eventually reunite digital and physical preservation? After all, libraries, archives, museums and galleries, care for collections regardless of physical format currently. If it does not prove possible to create such a National Preservation Office, how will the NPO in its current form be taken forward? This too will need to be investigated. Business models for both need to be developed.

Who will carry out this work? There is at present only one organisation representing the preservation profession in a cross-domain and international context. It is, of course, the NPO. It is a terrific challenge but one that I believe would be worthwhile for the future of preservation and the care of the moveable heritage in the UK.

However, in order to begin to undertake such a task, in addition to its current role, the NPO would need to be enabled to do so. This would require a vision and commitment to sharing responsibility for the preservation of the moveable cultural heritage, wherever located, similar to that made by the members of the British Library Board in 1984. The difference being that now, that vision and commitment must come from across the cultural heritage domain. It should include research collections and digital collections. Most importantly, to succeed, we must engage support for such an investment at the highest political level.⁴⁰

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- 2 National Library of Scotland (NLS), National Library of Wales (NLW), Cambridge University Library (CUL), Bodleian Library, Oxford, and Trinity College Library Dublin (TCD). These are copyright libraries in the UK and Ireland. Public Record Office (PRO), the national archive of England, Wales and the United Kingdom; and Consortium of University Research Libraries (CURL).
- 3 National Library of Ireland (NLI); the Consortium of National and University Research Libraries in Ireland (CONUL); and the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI).
- 4 This meant designing a brand image that people would recognise instantly that stands for quality and service.
- 5 Through the generosity of the BL's Training and Development Department we were able to secure the services of the „Training and Organisational Development Consultancy” to speed this process.
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- 10 Collections of international and national status: Collections which are viewed widely to be important and relevant in the UK, and beyond, to, many international as well as national users because of the range and depth of their existing

holdings and --- in the case of collections being added to --- their current collecting strength. They will include special collections and will often include material that may be more or less the only) or among the comparatively few) sources nationally and internationally.

Collections of national status: Collections which are seen by many users in the UK to have existing and --- in the case of collections being added to --- recurrent collection strengths which are shared by few other libraries in the UK and Ireland.

Collections of regional importance: Collections which are well based in their institutions' strengths and emphases of collecting and are successful in maintaining a significant span of current collecting. They will be recognised as able to meet many needs of users whose own home institutions' collections may be considered more limited. Where there is co-operation among libraries in UK regions or localities and one library takes a lead role in collecting in a particular subject/form of publication, etc., that lead role would usually signify „regional importance”. „Regional importance” refers to position within the British Isles.

Collections of local importance: Collections which meet many of the needs of researchers within their institutions but without significant use by, or interest from, researchers beyond the institution.

Local studies / local history collections may often be included here but could be designated to other categories depending on the uniqueness and rarity of the material held, or, of its arrangement, or of the combination of published and unpublished material, or knowledge of use of it by wider constituencies of users.

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- 17 NPO post prints of annual seminars and guidance leaflets are available through the publication list on our web site <<http://www.bl.uk/npo/>>.
- 18 NPO Journal Subscriptions: Turpin Distribution Services Ltd, Blackhorse Road, Letchworth, Hertfordshire SG6 1HN, Tel: 01462 672555, Fax: 01462 480947; Rates: UK £25; Overseas £30 (surface), £35 (airmail); all rates given are inclusive of postage. <<http://www.bl.uk/services/preservation/faq.html>>.
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- 32 Information about the Digital Preservation Focus can be found at: <<http://www.jisc.ac.uk/dner/preservation>> and contact by e-mail at: <preservation@jisc.ac.uk>.
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- 40 This paper is dedicated to all NPO staff since 1984, but in particular, to the present members of staff: Alison Walker (Deputy Director), Julia Foster (Database Applications Development Office), Belinda Sanderson (Information Officer), Jane Fowler (Archives Liaison and NMCT Awards Officer), and Josie Johnson (Administrative Officer).