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Workshop Report: Digital Content and Issues for Libraries

Claire Stewart

Northwestern University, cstewart@unl.edu

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News & Features

Workshop Report: Digital Content and Issues for Libraries

Claire Stewart, Northwestern University Library, ACRL/ALCTS Representative

A “Digital Content and Issues for Libraries” workshop sponsored by ALA’s Office of Information Technology Policy (OITP) was held at the O’Hare Hilton in Chicago April 7–9, 2006. Thirty-three attendees represented several ALA divisions, OITP, the Special Library Association, NISO, the Association of Research Libraries, the Association of Moving Image Archivists, the Digital Library Federation, public broadcasters, foundations, and government libraries and funding agencies. The workshop was convened to help OITP form its policy agenda with regard to digitized library content.

The steering committee charged attendees to identify key policy issues relating to digitization and applied the Open Space Technology method to identify discussion leaders and establish discussion sessions. Attendees met in small groups to define the key issues, provide background, identify policy components and stake holders, and articulate possible next steps.

The fourteen key issues were: 1. User-generated content; 2. Privacy; 3. Copyright and the public domain; 4. Framing policies (for mass digitization); 5. Mass digitization (best practice); 6. Collaboration; 7. Funding policy; 8. Principles about open architecture of digital content provision to enable tools; 9. Digitizing standards, best practices, baselines; 10. Is digital different?; 11. Equity of access; 12. Control of digitized assets; 13. Digital rights management; and 14. Preservation responsibility.

On the final morning of the workshop, the group discussed each of the issue summaries, further refined them, and engaged in a values clarification exercise to gauge relative importance and urgency. Issues relating to ownership, long-term responsibilities and funding (issues 3, 7, 12, 13, and 14, above) were identified as the most pressing, perhaps because these are issues that have not yet been addressed across the Association, or because our attempts to influence policymakers in these areas have not yet met with major success.

Steering committee members Liz Bishoff and Karen Coyle will revise and condense the issues document into two working papers: a proposed set of policy priorities for the OITP, and a set of broad principles to be presented to the ALA Executive Council for possible consideration by the entire Association.