

# JISC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

## Project Document Cover Sheet

### FINAL REPORT

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JISC

making it happen  
**espida**  
by getting real

**An Effective Strategic model for the Preservation and disposal of  
Institutional Digital Assets**

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## **Table of Contents**

<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Background .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Aims and Objectives .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Methodology .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Implementation .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Outputs and Results.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Outcomes .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Conclusions.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Implications .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Recommendations .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>References .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Appendixes.....</b>	<b>18</b>
Brief Glossary .....	18
List of Publications .....	19
List of Papers .....	19
List of Poster Presentations.....	19

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- Ms Helen Shenton, *Head of Collection Care at the British Library*
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## Executive Summary

The *espida* Project had as its initial aim the creation of a model that could help the digital preservation community achieve sustained funding. To do this, the plan was to develop a model of the relationships, roles and responsibilities, costs, benefits and risks inherent in institutional digital preservation and implement this model by selling it to all the stakeholder groups, including senior management, administrative and clerical staff and academic teachers and researchers. In particular, the project sought to identify the cost and benefits to the institution of developing a coherent, managed and sustainable approach to the preservation of its digital assets in a way that is transparent to all stakeholders.

The principal objectives were to set up dialogue with a network of stakeholders, review research, gather a wide-ranging set of information about drivers, costs, benefits, etc., develop a model of digital preservation that is sustainable and can be 'sold' to the stakeholders and hold events and publish reports to share our experiences with stakeholders and the wider HE/FE community.

During the course of the project work however, the scope developed from focussing solely on digital preservation issues to a wider information environment. The model that *espida* has developed can help make business cases for proposals that may not necessarily offer immediate financial benefit to an organisation, but rather bring benefit in more intangible spheres. It is being used initially within the area of digital resource management. But it also has potential for far wider application (decision making, performance measurement, change management).

This widening of approach arose from gaining an understanding of the decision-making process in HE/FE organisations. The rapid pace of change in Higher and Further Education means that decision-makers are frequently required to evaluate project proposals that have serious implications for their institutions. There are never enough resources available to fund more than a small fraction of the proposals and decision makers are keenly aware that the size of the resource pool is fixed, with every pound spent on infrastructure and administration is a pound not spent on 'primary production', learning, teaching and research.

Project proposals are prospectuses for investment in the future of the organisation and good decision making requires that they clearly set out the costs, benefits and uncertainties surrounding the investment. With these in place, proposers, decision makers and other stakeholders can fully understand what is involved and share expectations of outcomes and impacts.

Costs of projects are relatively straight-forward to define, but benefits that are not simply conveyed in financial terms can be very difficult to express, communicate and measure. These intangible benefits are frequently a major feature of business cases and are often communicated in vague, prosaic language. While the costs of two different projects can easily be offered for comparison, how does one compare the outcomes of projects where the benefits are not financial, but revolve around knowledge, information and processes? At the moment, communicating outcomes of proposed projects is often done through rhetorical prose designed to maximise the impact of the positives. This does not make for effective communication and cannot be said to offer decision-makers adequate information on which to base investment decisions. A common currency is needed so that these stakeholders can communicate effectively.

The *espida* project has developed an approach to help the proposer and decision maker (or funder) enter into an effective dialogue about the character of outcomes (be they positive or negative) that an investment can bring to the organisation. It frames proposals within an investment context that is directly aligned with the strategic goals of the organisation and offers a realistic approach to understanding and communicating intangible value and risk.

The work undertaken in the workpackages well exceeds the initial scope of the project – which was to “develop a model of digital preservation that ... can be 'sold' to the stakeholders”. The process developed now encompasses proposals for investments that will principally offer intangible benefits in

return for investment, which means it is applicable to digital preservation, information systems, institutional repositories, records management and a whole host of other areas.

The project has gained good community exposure and buy-in, particularly from librarians, records managers and funding councils. Indeed, a recent review of our methodology in the *Records Management Journal* states: “there is no doubt the model has huge potential value in building business cases, making impact assessments and evaluating proposals, and should become a new tool in every records manager’s toolkit” (RMJ, vol.16, no.3). Feedback during workshops and conferences has convinced us that the work has tapped into a real need within the information sector.

Opportunities exist where the work can be developed further. While we have been encouraged by the enthusiasm for our work, by its nature, take-up of it will be relatively slow (although the principles behind it can be taken on board rather more quickly). However, the website and all the materials will be available for the foreseeable future and the Project Team will be disseminating the methodology as they undertake other work.

## Background

Within specific types of organisations, funding is being made available to undertake actions that will help preserve digital materials (Schweizerisches Bundesarchiv, TNA, NARA). Typically these are large-scale memory institutions with a remit to preserve particular types of information and the management teams in these organisations have been convinced that investing in such actions is of benefit to the organisations. Clearly, these organisations have an intimate understanding of the value of the particular types of information that they are charged with managing. However, how do staff within organisations whose primary business is not preservation, begin to demonstrate value in digital objects? Even within organisations that may be classed as the ‘pioneers in the field’, preservation activities must still vie with other services for funds: will solid funding for the activities last beyond the novelty period of ‘Digital Preservation’?

A good business case is a communication between a proposer and funder and is composed of clearly defined costs and benefits. As there is already a large body of literature and research on the costs of digital preservation, the *espida* project has put the majority of its work into benefit articulation.<sup>1</sup> Costs for ‘digital preservation’ actions includes the financial cost of the actions needed to a) put in place a system that can provide longevity for digital assets<sup>2</sup>; and, b) upgrade technology, run the service(s), train staff in new practices, and assess the processes over the long-term.<sup>3</sup> There are also various models available to aid in the creation of these costs.<sup>4</sup> However, the methods employed do not take into account the actual assets that need to be preserved (managed). The work has concentrated on cost models not business cases with the assumption, seemingly, that the assets **must** be preserved. Business models must answer not only the question ‘how much does it cost?’, but also, ‘why do we need this?’ and ‘why should we spend money on this, rather than on the primary business of the organisation?’ And while accurate costs are vital to a good business case, these “why” questions demand very different answers.

Strategic thinking is not driven by cost and financial issues alone. It is driven by vision and insight with organisations taking risks when investing in new ideas in order to develop. The *espida* project is seeking to ensure that where required, organisations recognise the value of their information assets and have the foresight to see that their persistence should be a matter of decision rather than technological determination. This requires an explicit recognition of the value of information assets and their relationship with the strategic plan. The challenge is in expressing value in terms that senior managers understand. If digital assets can be shown to bring value (which is multifaceted) in strategic terms then there is a greater chance of attracting resources for their retention, so as to capitalise on that value.

It is not an exaggeration to suggest that most work exploring the issue of digital longevity has been undertaken with either external grants or internal project funding. Common to both is the short-term nature of the funding: one to three years at a time. This is at variance with the nature of the problem. While funding bodies see the need for work to be carried out, they can provide funding only for ‘pump-priming’, not for the long-term. Now that for the most part the technological solutions have been, or can be, solved, the focus has to be on creating an environment where digital longevity is an organisational goal.

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<sup>1</sup> Most work has looked at the elements of cost that must be accounted for (ERPANET 2003, Russell & Weinberger 2000; Hendley 1998). Work is being done in great detail at the Cornell Institute (see most recently Kenney 2005). Lavoie (2004) explores preservation as an economic activity and begins to look at making practices sustainable.

<sup>2</sup> The word ‘system’ does not necessarily mean one unified technological system for holding and managing the assets. Rather, it is taken to be the processes, actions **and** technological infrastructure(s) needed to be put in place.

<sup>3</sup> Oltmans has compared the cost implications of choosing one method of preservation over another (emulation and migration) and finds that the cost pattern differs. However, there is still a cost in the future, which must be taken into account. Erik Oltmans & Nanda Kol, ‘A Comparison Between Migration and Emulation in Terms of Costs’, *RLG DigiNews*, 9:2 April 15 2005 [http://www.rlg.org/en/page.php?Page\\_ID=20571](http://www.rlg.org/en/page.php?Page_ID=20571).

<sup>4</sup> Two such models are those of the LIFE Project ([www.ucl.ac.uk/lifeproject/](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/lifeproject/)) and the Digital Duurzaamheid Project at the Nationaal Archief van Nederland (<http://www.digitaleduurzaamheid.nl/home.cfm>).

## Aims and Objectives

The original aims and objectives of the project were:

- To offer tangible results to questions that must be addressed in order to take digital preservation on to the next phase: sustainable institutional implementation.
- Set up dialogue with a network of stakeholders from the following communities: senior management, library/archives management, academics involved in research, administrators, academics involved in teaching and external expert advisors.
- Review research on sustainability and business models in digital preservation. Specifically, gather a wide-ranging set of information about drivers, costs, benefits, etc. from work with the stakeholders, particularly in relation to materials related to research inputs and outputs, institutional record keeping, and to a lesser extent, materials related to teaching related inputs and outputs.
- Develop a model of digital preservation that is sustainable and can be ‘sold’ to the stakeholders, using input from the stakeholders and desk-based research. Discuss and refine this model using workshop events with people from the wider HE/FE community, as well as the immediate stakeholder identified above.
- Work to implement the modelling at the University of Glasgow and disseminate the lessons learned from the experience with the wider community. To aid this: develop a comprehensive web site to allow all those who are interested to see and engage with what we are doing and to contribute ideas, comments, etc.; hold events and publish reports to share our experiences with stakeholders and the wider HE/FE community; and contribute to the research literature on sustainability and business models in digital preservation.

Within the area of costs, as has already been suggested in the ‘Background’ chapter, work had either already been undertaken, or was in progress. That said, there are still important issues that the *espida* Cost Template addresses. In the Template, costs are split into either Capital or Revenue. Capital are the costs required to set up a project (which of course may be spread over more than one year), and Revenue are recurrent costs (such as manpower). Revenues are the least well-understood aspects of project costs and need the greatest reflection and detail.

While costs are relatively easy to communicate (there is an agreed structure and language) there are still uncertainties attached to them. These include bad estimations, rising costs and making calculations based on the wrong assumptions. For the most part, the Template addresses these by asking the proposer to detail the ‘Basis of Costing’ – where do the costs come from, what are they made up of, upon what are they based? This field allows the decision maker to understand the assumptions and decisions made while compiling the costs and come to their own conclusions about their accuracy.

Working on practical implementation of the model is clearly important, since otherwise it is simply a theoretical idea. As often seems to be the case with projects that have strategic implications, changes in senior management can have a major effect on outcomes. In this case, virtually every member of the senior management team changed between the submission of the project proposal to the JISC and the midway point of the project, and a new University Strategic Plan was developed alongside these personnel changes. The result of this is that whilst the original sponsors of the project have not been there to provide support, we have been able to develop new relationships.

Two new relationships have been crucial. Firstly with the VP for Strategy and Advancement, who has provided the input in the form of early drafts of the emerging strategy and has been very helpful in providing feedback on how practical the proposed approach was from the point of view of a senior decision maker. Secondly with the Director of IT Services who, coming from outwith Higher Education, already had a very ‘business-focussed’ view of support services such as IT and was able to provide very helpful insights into senior management decision making. The project was also fortunate to be able to engage with external organisations such as the Records Management Society, the Scottish Arts Council

and a number of commercial and consultancy organisations, whose members/employees struggle with similar issues to those that this project addresses. Whilst none of these would claim to have implemented the methodology in its entirety, a number have indicated that they have used parts of it to good effect, or plan to do so because they believe that it will be effective. Within the University of Glasgow, parts of the methodology have been employed within IT Services and have helped secure resources for a range of projects where the benefits are intangible, demonstrating its applicability beyond digital preservation challenges.

After undertaking research throughout the University, it was clear that there was not actually a large swathe of assets that justified long-term preservation (in terms of value that the decision makers were prepared to fund). What we have been able to do however is to provide a framework that helps information professionals within the University to make business cases, and hence develop a robust methodology that could be used across the sector, rather than be able to provide a detailed case study for ‘How Glasgow made digital preservation a strategic goal of the Institution’. All other aims remained the same and the change in focus of the implementation element is probably more valuable to the JISC community (broadly specified), although the wide applicability of the deliverables makes it easier for projects from a wide range of activity areas to produce better business cases, so digital preservation projects will have to compete with other projects that have a better understanding of intangible benefit, rather than being ‘one step ahead of them’.

## Methodology

In creating the *espida* approach, the first hurdle was to find a suitable underlying economic approach that would offer a framework to help communicate intangible value. Recent research in the heritage sector has used contingent valuation as a method of discovering and communicating intangible outcomes. Used by the British Library to help justify its use of public funding, contingent valuation (CV) uses questionnaires to place a monetary value on services and outputs. CV is a complex undertaking and reduces intangible values to a single financial figure. Because of this, it was decided that it is too reductionist, complex, prone to error, costly and unwieldy for use in the *espida* approach.

Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA), another economic method examined, is an aid to decision making. It analyses all factors of undertaking a programme of work to comment on its efficiency, with the primary objective of funding the most efficient method of achieving the goal. It incorporates negative benefits with traditional capital outlay under ‘costs’. The *espida* Approach prefers to keep these two types distinct and employs the terms ‘dis-benefit’ for the former and ‘costs’ for the latter. The Approach details the relationship of these benefits (both positive and negative) within the remit of the work. That is, some benefits will be a major outcome of the work, and others will be of less consequence.

CBA’s initial purpose to minimise management ‘discretion’ can benefit from the *espida* Approach. Where intangibles are unclear CBA uses various methods to create a monetary sum for them (willingness to pay and cost of life being two such examples). Integrating the Outcome Scorecard into a CBA could offer a consistency to the treatment of intangibles and transparency of how they are dealt with.

Other economic methodologies, including ‘return on investment’ generally ignore intangible benefits, or place arbitrary financial figures on them. It was decided that a derivation of Kaplan and Norton’s Balanced Scorecard would best fit the needs of the project.<sup>5</sup> The balanced scorecard (BSC) is a performance measurement tool that uses different perspectives to look at the performance of an organisation beyond a strictly financial outlook. The scorecard is a great tool for the communication of strategic objectives, and it is this ability coupled with the multi-directional views from which to view

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<sup>5</sup> See Kaplan, R.S., and D.P. Norton, (1992), ‘The balanced scorecard - measures that drive performance’, *Harvard Business Review* 70:58-63; & Kaplan and Norton (2001). *The Strategy-Focused Organization. How balanced scorecard companies thrive in the new business environment*, Boston: Harvard Business School.

assets that makes it an attractive framework to develop. In addition, it is an internationally recognised tool, used in a great variety of organisations.

We have repurposed Kaplan and Norton's concept in a fairly cavalier way, using it as a tool for making evaluating and proposals in addition to its performance measurement capabilities, and those that have used BSCs before will discover many differences in the approach. However, the concept of perspectives introduced by the BSC is one that still underpins the *espida* approach.

## **Implementation**

The work undertaken by the project was bound by a robust methodology and the implementation has many strong lessons for future projects. The work began with initial desk-based research to map the state of knowledge on business cases for intangible benefits not only within the Digital Preservation community, but also the Economic and Business Management disciplines. The understanding and communication of intangible benefits is a common issue and a rich corpus of material therefore exists which was mined for information and approaches. As has been discussed above, the underlying economic framework came from a business management perspective. Our attention was brought to the Balanced Scorecard through one of the several development meetings we had with Sir Laurie Hunter, Professor Emeritus at the University of Glasgow. Intangible assets are high on his research agenda and, despite being retired, we successfully managed to engage Professor Hunter with the project's work. Throughout the life of *espida* he has commented on papers and presentations, met with us to discuss our developments and enriched our understanding of economic issues that lie at the heart of the problem.

## **Engagement**

At the project inception, an engagement strategy was developed to frame the development process of the model. The strategy outlined the stakeholders to engage, what was needed from them, the method of engagement and the timeframe within which to do it. As the strategy states, the 'engagement of stakeholder groups is a principal success factor of the project'. It was vital that the strategy worked.

Stakeholders were grouped into three primary categories: those from whom information on needs and drivers within the University of Glasgow would be gained; staff from within the University that would help develop and test the approach at various stages; and external stakeholders able to bring expertise to bear on the approach and discuss its wider applicability.

Face-to-face meetings were set up with a wide-range of staff in the University, ranging from the Vet School to the Safety and Environment Protection Service. A questionnaire was developed to cull general information about the digital objects these departments held, who used them and for what purpose, and the requirements for their retention or destruction. While the interview instrument was useful as a starting point, it was not created to be a standalone tool nor could it ever be. The meetings therefore discussed in much greater detail the issues surrounding information within the departments, drivers for creating and retaining particularly digital information and issues they had faced when making their own business cases within the University. After these meetings the values that they attached to their information were put into the BSC framework to give an initial description of the value the assets had to the University. This was then commented on by the interviewee.

These meetings gave two primary outcomes. First was an understanding of the values placed on many different types of information object in the University, and secondly, the blocks and issues staff faced when trying to make business cases within the organisation.

The second stakeholder group was used to help develop and test various iterations and stages of the approach. This group was composed of information professionals and staff with a particular interest in the management and use of digital information. Detailed planning closely defined the outputs required from group meetings and the method of best achieving them. For every meeting, the stakeholders were asked to prepare certain pieces of information – be it value/time graphs for particular objects, or

completed templates for certain business cases. The meetings were used to explore the value of digital objects within the University, the concept of value over time, the categorisation of objects. They also helped develop case studies.

The value of these meetings cannot be over-emphasised. While many projects have ‘focus groups’ and ‘stakeholder meetings’ to discuss various issues, the *espida* project carefully planned each meeting so that it produced the results needed at that particular stage of the work. In particular, ensuring that the participants had spent time preparing and thinking over issues focussed the meetings and ensured high-quality outputs.

Running in parallel to this engagement work, and drawing on certain outcomes from it, the team developed the strategic elements within the BSC perspectives that were the definitions of value for the University. The composition and wording of these elements were crucial to the success of the Outcome Scorecard creation. If the elements were badly worded, or neglected certain parts of the University’s Strategic Plan, the value of the approach would be very little. A great deal of time was therefore spent defining and refining the elements. The engagement of the principal architect of the Strategic Plan ensured that the translation of the Plan into the elements of the scorecard was consistent with the vision outlined in the Plan.

Once a version of the approach was complete, the external expert group were brought together to ‘test the model to the point of destruction’. During the Expert’s Workshop they used the scorecard to examine various hypothetical and real-world scenarios to assess the suitability and success of the approach. Again, the time taken constructing the format of the workshop reaped great rewards, as the experts engaged with the work and offered a deep vein of advice and feedback that helped change certain characteristics of the approach.

With these changes, the model was released to the community in beta-form. Staff from a good spread of organisation types downloaded the model (a total of 362 people have downloaded the beta version). To take advantage of any experiences or thoughts of those that did download the work, a final evaluation workshop was held to which those who had expressed an interest in the work or offered thoughts on the work were invited. This offered some of the most fruitful interactions of the entire project. As an introduction to the approach a training exercise was developed which proved to be an excellent way of explaining the model’s terminology and certain aspects of the process. This has now been published on the website.

Mention must be made of two specific examples of engagement. A meeting was held with the Scottish Arts Council, an organisation that had just gone through a strategic review of its funding policy. The meeting gave encouragement in relation to the applicability of the approach to public sector bodies and the Team were asked to offer a review of the methodology that the Council had recently put in place. The JISC also asked for a presentation to be given at a Programme Development meeting, which focussed on the use of the methodology for communicating strategic objectives to potential proposers and in making investment decisions. There is a strong need for an approach like the one developed by the project, as Government is becoming increasingly concerned with transparency and public value.

The approach has now been published in the *espida* Handbook and made available through the website.<sup>6</sup>

## **Dissemination**

As a complement to the engagement strategy, one was also developed for dissemination. From the very beginning of the work the projected outcomes and plans were disseminated to create an awareness of the project, and also to draw in potential collaborators. Dissemination continued as the approach developed with various angles being presented at conferences throughout the UK, Europe and North America. These presentations were designed to provoke a reaction and a great deal of useful interaction did take place during conferences. Leaflets and promotional materials were printed and posters of various aspects

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<sup>6</sup> The *espida* Handbook is available from [www.gla.ac.uk/espida/documentation.shtml](http://www.gla.ac.uk/espida/documentation.shtml).

of the work were presented at conferences. The dissemination strategy has proved to be very successful with the project outputs and outcomes being met with warm responses in many communities. All papers and presentations are available from the *espida* DSpace collection held in the University Library.

## Outputs and Results

The principal output of the project is the *espida* Handbook. All of the research, engagement work and evaluation fed into the final iteration of the Methodology, and is encapsulated in the Handbook. The document details the methodology and how it can be used in organisations.

What the Handbook describes is a way articulating the possible value of projects where the primary outcomes are intangible and thus play a role in the creation of business cases and demonstrating the return on those investments. Simply, this means that project proposals do not have to resort to rhetorical flourishes when describing intangible benefits of their work, nor try to gauge the monetary value of the benefits. Rather, it can allow proposers to describe the value to the organisation through explaining the relationship of their work to the organisational strategy, the returns that the organisation may expect and ways of measuring these outcomes. The process for developing the approach has been described above.

A major part of the Handbook is the Outcome Scorecard and Cost Template. These tools can be used by the stakeholders to facilitate the dialogue and help ensure that proposals are fully understood by all.

The Outcome Scorecard is the conduit through which the investment context is expressed and proposals are communicated. It is therefore a top down and bottom-up communication tool. The Outcome Scorecard has four principal roles:

- 1) to convey the strategic priorities of the organisation in a form that can be understood through perspectives and elements (top-down communication);
- 2) to help potential proposers internally explore the benefits and disbenefits of their planned work to help understand risks and refine the proposal to ensure it delivers the biggest range of benefits (internal project development);
- 3) to communicate the outcomes of a particular proposal to funders, from which decision-makers can enter into a dialogue about the proposal and make an investment decision;
- 4) to measure the performance of an investment.

In the Cost Template, costs are split into either Capital or Revenue and thus start-up costs and ongoing costs are dealt with separately. Capital are the costs required to set up a project. These will typically include any equipment needed, the creation or modification of physical space and any other assets or resources required. These costs may of course be spread over more than one year and depending on the accounting preferences of the organisation, may be written off or depreciated. Revenue costs are recurrent costs throughout the term of the project (and in some cases beyond). Crucially, the Cost Template also deals with the uncertainty of costs. While costs are relatively easy to communicate (there is an agreed structure and language) there are still uncertainties attached to them. These include bad estimations, rising costs and calculations based on wrong assumptions. For the most part, the Template takes care of these by asking the proposer to detail the ‘Basis of Costing’ – where do the costs come from, what are they made up of, upon what are they based? This field allows the decision-maker to understand the assumptions and decisions made while compiling the costs and come to their own conclusions about their accuracy.<sup>7</sup>

Accompanying the Handbook are three Case Studies and a Training Exercise. The studies were developed in conjunction with a number of experts (both internal and external) and reflect proposals from which a number of communities can draw relevance. The studies on Institutional Repositories and a

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<sup>7</sup> This aspect of the Template came from discussions with a Head of Accountancy in the public sector.

Digital Theses service resulted from direct collaboration with stakeholders within the University. A third, on creating a catalogue of a Museum’s manuscript collection was borne from the Evaluation Workshop. The studies demonstrate the different ways that the scorecards can be used – for example in a straight fund or don’t fund scenario, or in an option appraisal decision – and offer realistic outcomes that the relevant communities may be able to utilise in their own situation.

The Training Document (as described above) was created as an easy way into the process and terminology of the approach, using a simple example of going on holiday to describe how the approach should be used.<sup>8</sup>

## Outcomes

The principal outcomes were:

- An understanding of how organisations should create and communicate the investment context and how proposals should be made against this.
- A belief that value is situated in the funding organisation, rather than being inherent in an object.
- A conviction that ‘Digital Preservation’ actions must use conventional business cases to seek investment, therefore communicate outcomes and costs in the same way as other cases made to the organisation.

The principal outcomes of the work are discussed in the Handbook, and therefore will not be repeated in this report. What we have developed is a methodology that can help proposers to communicate the potential benefits and risks of work they propose to undertake to preserve digital assets and for senior management to be able to understand the proposal. The methodology details a process from the creation of strategic objectives through aligning proposals to them, undertaking the work, and evaluating the results with eventual feedback into the organisation’s goals. The Outcome Scorecard, which forms part of this methodology, can allow funders to see the benefits and risks of proposals bound in the same framework (or as the University’s Vice-Principal for Strategy and Advancement has stated, it makes proposers “show their working”.)

One of the most important outcomes is recognition that the value of ‘something’ is defined by who is trying to understand it: a classical music lover will generally not find any value in free tickets to an extreme metal concert, for example. Essentially this means that an organisation decides what it thinks is valuable, but it is our opinion that much of the literature in the Digital Preservation sphere does not recognise this fact. Our interpretation is that many of the arguments centre on some sort of implicit value of objects that demands their preservation (the preservation is generally cited as beneficial for stakeholders a long way in the future). Since value is in fact situated, we have found that organisations will generally only invest in work that they will have a chance of seeing a return from, and far-off, poorly-communicated benefits (focussing mostly on fear of loss, with little rational reasoning) are met with little positive response. This is unsurprising. Focus must therefore be on demonstrating the value of objects to the funder rather than a reliance on ‘it must be preserved for posterity’.

## Conclusions

The *espida* project team has created a viable methodology for contextualising and communicating value within an organisation. Understanding the nature of value and its relationship with funders means that those seeking sustained resources for actions which will preserve digital materials must make business cases that vie with other proposals in an organisations. Two fundamental outcomes of this are:

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<sup>8</sup> All of these documents are available from the *espida* website: [www.gla.ac.uk/espida/documentation.shtml](http://www.gla.ac.uk/espida/documentation.shtml).

- ‘Special case’ funding is not a viable path to follow. The *espida* approach offers information stewards an effective tool that can describe which management ‘buttons’ to press and communicate within a framework that management understand the intangible benefits that their work will (hopefully) bring.
- Only through alignment with organisational strategy and with a clear communication of realistic benefits, can digital stewardship (or digital preservation or digital Curation) come to be part of an organisation’s every-day work patterns.

The *espida* Approach has many applications in a number of different organisation types. At the heart of the work is an understanding that the relationship between funder and proposer should be shaped by the strategic objectives of the funder. The Approach helps:

- Communicate the positive and negative outcomes of a project proposal, allowing decision-makers to fully understand the proposal they are being asked to invest in.
- Rationalise expenditure on representations of intangible assets.
- Detail intangible outcomes in a comparable way in order to be part of an option appraisal exercise.

The *espida* Approach benefits a range of organisation types, helping them better understand benefits that are more complex than financial returns. In particular it can be utilised in:

- HE/FE Institutions, which deal in intangibles every day.
- Funding bodies, to help define programme calls and make funding decisions.
- Public bodies, where transparency in decision-making is necessary.
- Cultural heritage organisations, where demonstrating effective use of the public purse is becoming increasingly important.

## Implications

The project could have major implications for JISC itself. The methodology was presented at a meeting of the JISC development group, as we believe it could be used as a tool to communicate the objectives of programmes and calls to potential proposers, to make funding decisions and to monitor progress of the projects against outcomes (as opposed to outputs).

The *espida* Approach would appear to fit well with the JISC infoNet materials. The process diagram we have created neatly contextualises existing infokits into the business structure of an organisation and the methodology itself fills a gap in the suite. Developing training materials based on the methodology would give tertiary education organisations the chance to move towards structured methods for making funding decisions and help their staff ensure that their applications for funding are relevant to the organisation and offer beneficial outcomes.

A possible implication for the Digital Preservation community is that we do not believe ‘Digital Preservation’ as it is being proposed at the moment is something that can or should be funded in many organisations. Since value and benefit are situated, if a business case cannot demonstrate benefits to an organisation, it will not be funded: our experience has taught us that within HE, there is certainly no such thing as consistent long-term funding, investment must be sought continually. Irrespective of whether or not consistent action must be taken, this is how the institutions work. We do not see this changing in the near future. Our own research within the University has uncovered a limited number of digital objects for which a good business case for preservation could be made.

## **Recommendations**

The work of the *espida* project and the conclusions and outcomes that have arisen from it lead to the following recommendations.

- Business cases must clearly demonstrate costs and outcomes, not only costs and benefits. Communicating the varied outcomes of proposed work, including all the negative outcomes and the likelihood of benefits and disbenefits coming to pass allows funders to understand the full extent of the proposal and understand that the proposer has thought deeply about the proposal.
- Proposals should be closely aligned to the strategic aims of the funder. An organisation will not give resources to actions that bring no benefit. Understanding the strategic direction of the organisation is vital to creating a successful business case.
- The *espida* Approach can be used to help open a dialogue between the proposer and funder. The Approach offers a consistent and effective method of developing, delivering and evaluating investment proposals. The language used and method of communication allows the funder and proposer to discuss and understand proposals.
- ‘Special case’ funding for ‘Digital Preservation’ actions is not the best way to proceed. Proposals must be made in the same context as the normal business of the organisation. This is the only way for sustained and consistent action.

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A full bibliography can be found on the website<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> [www.gla.ac.uk/espida/documentation.shtml](http://www.gla.ac.uk/espida/documentation.shtml).

## **Appendixes**

### **Brief Glossary**

#### **Funder**

The funder is the body or person to whom a proposal is being made. It is generally assumed that the funder will also be the primary recipient of the outcomes of the proposal.

#### **Impact**

Impacts are effects which are of a higher-level than outcomes. The relationship between outcomes and impacts is complex and far from being black and white. Outcomes are effects that a project can have, whereas impacts will generally be a consequence of outcomes from a number of projects. It is unlikely that outcomes will have a major effect on the entire organisation, but impacts do. Impacts are not dealt with explicitly in the *espida Outcome Scorecard* as impacts are the amalgam of outcomes from different projects. They are at a more strategic level than the outcomes of project proposals. That said, if the scorecard is used at the level of, say, managing programmes of work it could communicate the impacts that the different programmes will bring.

#### **Outcome**

An outcome is a happening or result that a project has. Outcomes can be positive or negative. They should not be confused with outputs, which are things produced by the project. Outputs can have outcomes. The output of a project that is creating an Institutional Repository will be the repository itself and the population of it with materials. The outcome will be that the IR is used by people and make use of the materials in the repository.

#### **Project**

A project is the body of work that a proposal is seeking investment to undertake. It does not have to be a short-term undertaking, and could be as large as a five-year records management programme, or employing an additional professor.

#### **Proposal**

A proposal is a case for investment that is submitted to a funder. It details the costs and outcomes of undertaking a particular project.

#### **Proposer**

A proposer is a person, or group of people who wish to gain resources in order to carry out work and create a business case to try and secure those resources.

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