

Digital Preservation... Let's get Physical!

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Digital Preservation takes many influences from traditional archival roles but builds on these to influence the much more dynamic nature of digital files. Digital preservation suffers from the Tangibility Problem, where digital files are not easy to own, and even less easy to hold, bound in a pretty leather cover. How many historical collections have you seen, sitting pretty on shelves, but not been able to touch? Here the wow factor is that the materials are tangible and exclusive. This makes items rare, and rarity makes things valuable, just ask any auctioneer. With value comes the money to preserve and thus the ability to do so. So how do we assign value to a digital object? Wouldn't the record companies like to know!?!

The problem with digital objects is that as they become valuable, they become more available, in any number of forms, exactly the problem record companies have. This is not a problem that physical archives have, as valuable objects are rare because they cannot be replicated as easily?

There are many fields of research that try and assign a physical value to digital objects. Journals and citation metrics on scholarly research is one such example. Why does the academic community not accept non-journal/proceedings citations... because this gives physical value.

It is already possible to assign physical value to some digital objects, journals and highly cited articles. However there are many digital repositories that ingest content, more recently including data, where we do not yet have a measure of value. It is in such areas where research is needed to align digital preservation with that of physical preservation.

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