Collaboration to Clarify the Cost of Curation

4C Sustainability Self-Assessment Questionnaire (ESRM)

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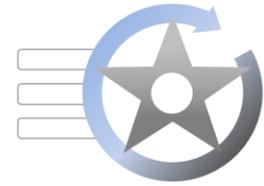
4C Sustainability Self-Assessment Questionnaire (ESRM)

Introduction

The following self-assessment questions interpret the advice and guidance in the Economic Sustainability Reference Model (ESRM) and present it as a sustainability self-assessment exercise.

This tool is designed to engender thinking and discussion about issues relating to digital curation in your organisation as it is understood at a particular point in time. It's probably best to approach it in two stages. Firstly, have a look at the questions and think about how the issues apply to you (you may wish to type your thoughts into a document to enable you to cut and paste later without worrying about time outs). When you have considered your responses go on line and do the self assessment.

We have put this self assessment on line knowing full well that your thinking and responses will change over time as circumstances change. In addition, our thinking will change and as a result the self assessment will evolve. To get the most from the tool we expect that you will want to repeat the exercise a number of times. We have therefore designed it to be persistent. If you choose to register, you will be able to return to previous response sets and review your answers. You can still use the tool without registering and, if you enter your email address, the responses will be emailed to you. It is also possible to do the assessment anonymously (but if you do you won't get the email with the responses). In addition, if you register we can tell you when new versions of the self assessment are available.

Objective

To challenge present assumptions about sustaining designated digital assets and act as an awareness raising tool for issues you may not have considered in conjunction with your digital curation activities.

Who is this aimed at?

The questions are non-technical and are aimed at participants who have strategic-level responsibility for digital curation and the sustainability of digital assets. The issue level throughout the exercise should be rated as follows:

Instructions

Each set of factors are presented as questions designed to stimulate your thinking around digital curation processes and as such there are no right or wrong answers.

We'd like you also to think about how much of an issue any particular factor is for your organisation. The issue levels throughout the exercise should be rated as follows:

1. **Not an issue**—something you don't ever see as being a problem for your organisation either now or in the future
2. **A minor issue**—something that exists as a minor problem now or something that's not really a problem now, but which might become a problem soon
3. **An issue**—something you are aware of that is currently affecting your ability to preserve digital assets (or will affect that ability very soon), but which is probably resolvable in the near future (through, for example, the application of additional resources)
4. **A major issue**—something that is significantly affecting your ability to preserve digital assets, but which is may be resolvable in the medium term future (through, for example, the application of significant additional resources)
5. **Not resolvable**—something that is significantly affecting your ability to preserve digital assets, and which will probably continue to be a problem in the medium and long terms

It is possible to move quickly through the self-assessment by simply selecting the Yes/No answers and the issue levels. However, this exercise is about reflecting upon your situation and how the issues might affect your organisation. To this end there is also a text box for each question where you can put down some thoughts or comments over and above the simple Yes/No answers. Please write anything you think relevant to the issue being considered. If you have entered your email address these answers will be sent to you after the self-assessment is completed. Registered users will be able to access their answers on-line.

There are approximately 40 factors for you to consider. This number will change over time as the questionnaire evolves.

Don't forget you can do the self assessment as many times as you wish and, if you have chosen to register first, you can use the "My results" menu to edit your responses later (there's a reference number at the end of the questions that will allow you to identify particular answer sets) should you wish to.

This Worksheet is primarily for you to use to consider your responses before going on line and entering you responses. It is not intended to be a paper/electronic form to be submitted at a later date.

Not all questions will be encountered on-line. Some branching occours.

Name and affiliation

Name	
Email address	
Affiliation	
Department / Group / Section	
Role	
Which digital assets* are the specific focus of this sustainability assessment exercise?	
Your reference	

* Digital assets is the term used throughout this exercise to refer to all digital information/materials/ objects/data that will require digital curation over time to ensure their sustainability

CHALLENGES

ASSETS
Digital assets have a variety of properties and characteristics that have implications for digital curation and sustainability.

Questions	Yes/No	Issue level	Comment
Are the digital assets in manageable formats?			
Can digital curators access them and work on them?			
Are the digital assets homogeneous in type and capable of being batch processed?			
Are the digital assets heterogeneous, chaotic and difficult to process?			
Is it known whether others have copies of the assets?			
Are they sustaining the copies of the assets effectively?			
Are the rights to the assets understood?			
Do they allow digital curation to be undertaken?			

STAKEHOLDERS

The network (or ecosystem) of stakeholders that have interests in digital assets is often complex and may affect digital curation and sustainability strategies, particularly where curation roles are distributed.

Questions	Yes/No	Issue level	Comment
Has the stakeholder ecosystem been surveyed or mapped?			
Are the curation roles in the ecosystem clear to everyone?			
Has at least one stakeholder declared responsibility for the assets?			
Is it understood what interests various stakeholders have in the assets?			
Is it clear whose job it is to supply access to the assets?			
Is it clear who is demanding access to the assets?			
Do people who aren't paying for the curation (free riders) access the assets?			
Are free riders a problem?			

PROCESSES

Long-term accessibility to digital assets is achieved through the curation process, which is the set of activities involved in maintaining digital assets in a usable form for an extended period of time.

Questions	Yes/No	Issue level	Comment
Are the curation processes that are currently used to sustain the assets adding sufficient value?			
Is it understood that the activities that are undertaken at an early stage of the digital asset lifecycle determine the later value of those assets?			
Is there enough flexibility in the curation processes to withstand a change in external economic conditions? (i.e. can processes be changed or scaled up or down)			
Can the curation processes change in response to emerging technology?			

STRATEGY & TACTICS

The following questions are more reflective in nature and address strategic or tactical issues that may need to be overcome in the future for sustainable curation of digital assets to occur or continue. In addition to the question, current issue level and comment parts there are two additional parts for each question.

The 'When might this change?' question is to record at what point the current situation is likely to change (for better or worse). For example, there may be an agreement in place for the next 3 years to transfer funds to support digital curation activities but there may be little likelihood of the funding arrangements being renewed. So a response to the question about functioning agreements might be as follows:

Are functioning agreements in place to transfer funds and/or other resources from those who are willing to pay to those who are able and willing to curate?

> *Yes*

Current issue level:

> *Not an issue*

Comment:

> *We have an agreement with the Foundation for Digital Sustainability that their final phase of funding to support our digital curation programme will end in three years time. We have no alternative funding currently lined up.*

When might this change?

> *2016*

New issue level:

> *A major issue*

If the situation or the response to the question is unlikely to change, then the date and the new issue level should be left blank/unselected.

VALUE

The term 'digital asset' implies that the object in question has value. This value has to be understood and realised over time to avoid the digital object becoming a liability.

Questions	Yes/No	Current Issue Level	Comment	When might this change?	New Issue Level
Is there a written business case that clearly sets out the purpose of sustaining the assets?					
Have the assets been assigned quantitative financial value?					
Has the value of the assets (financial and/or non financial) been agreed upon by the stakeholders for whom they are being sustained?					

RESOURCES

Are sufficient resources in place to achieve long-term goals?

Questions	Yes/No	Current Issue Level	Comment	When might this change?	New Issue Level
Are functioning agreements in place to transfer funds and/or other resources from those who are willing to pay to those who are able and willing to curate?					
Is the mechanism for payment or transfer of other resources arranged such that it is effective, robust and reliable? (e.g. pricing, fees, philanthropic donations, effort)					
Are curation activities organised and managed to make the best and most efficient use of the funds or resources received?					
Can sufficient human resource with adequate capability be employed to ensure effective curation takes place?					
Are the appropriate tools and infrastructure available to allow effective curation to take place?					

SELECTION

Are strategic choices being made about the assets being sustained?

Questions	Yes/No	Current Issue Level	Comment	When might this change?	New Issue Level
Is it understood that the best use of resources involves making choices based on value judgements and selecting material for curation?					
Is the selection of materials based on an agreed framework where the selected items are those which are most likely to realise the greatest value over time?					
Is the demand for materials sufficiently understood to inform selection decisions? (e.g. types of demand: measured, certain, non-excessive)					
Is it possible to de-select and transfer or dispose of assets that are deemed no longer worth sustaining?					

ORGANISATION

f an organisation chooses to sustain its digital assets, it must know why it is making that investment and why it is motivated to do so. Alternative organisations might have more plausible reasons to take on the responsibility for sustaining the assets

Questions	Yes/No	Current Issue Level	Comment	When might this change?	New Issue Level
Is the organisation under an obligation to sustain the assets? (e.g. funder requirements, project conditions, customer expectations)					
Are the governance arrangements clear for taking responsibility and approving sustainability strategies?					
Is there a written policy that mandates a way of sustaining the assets?					
Is there a written strategy that sets out how the assets will be sustained?					
Are roles and responsibilities for sustaining the assets clearly allocated?					
Are roles and responsibilities for sustaining the assets appropriately allocated?					
Have benchmarks and metrics been assigned to evaluate the outcome of curation activity and its impact on sustainability?					

INCENTIVES

Sustaining digital assets requires stakeholders to invest in curation processes and investments require incentives

Questions	Yes/No	Current Issue Level	Comment	When might this change?	New Issue Level
Do the incentives for sustaining the assets align with the interests of the rights holders?					
Are there sufficient incentives to continue to invest in sustaining the assets?					
Have the costs of sustaining the assets been calculated?					
Have the benefits of sustaining the assets been clearly articulated?					
Are the benefits that the assets realise more significant than the cost of sustaining them?					