Digital Records: for Ever or for Never?

Maureen Pennock, Digital Curation Centre
UKOLN, University of Bath

RMS North of England Group Meeting, Wigan, 3rd April 2008

UKOLN

MLA MUSEUMS LIBRARIES ARCHIVES JISC UNIVERSITY OF BATH DCC

The Great Digital Preservation Challenge

UKOLN

RMS North of England Group meeting, Wigan, 3rd April 2008

UNIVERSITY OF BATH

DCC

Not so much digital infinity: more of a digital black hole

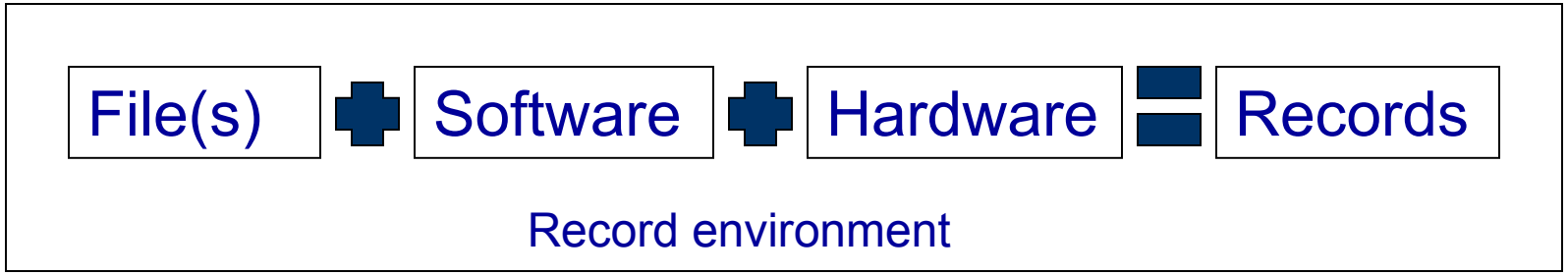
RMS North of England Group meeting, Wigan, 3rd April 2008

commodore
PET
2001 Series
professional computer

OBSOLETE

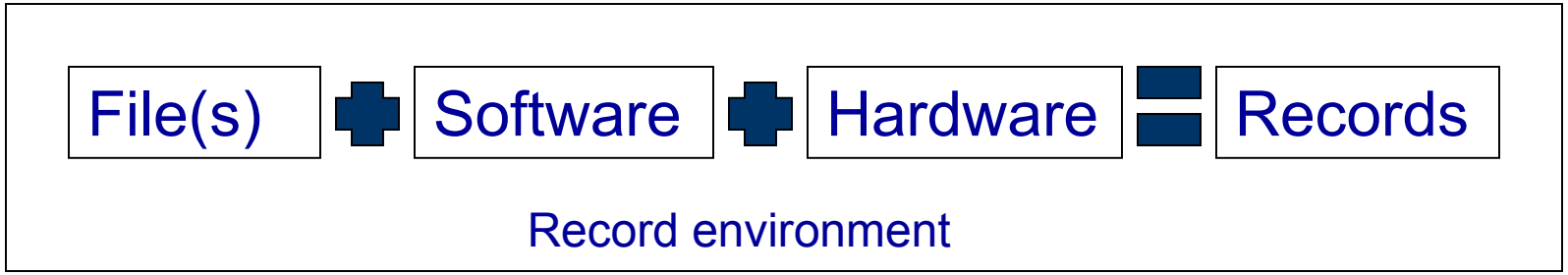
The Problem

- Digital records are highly environmentally dependent



The Problem

- Digital records are highly environmentally dependent



- Environments change many times during lifetime of records
- Records will become inaccessible if action is not undertaken
- Records may be altered if action is undertaken

But we can't just bin it all…

… can we?

Of course not!

And nor would we want to.

What is Digital Preservation?

"the series of actions and interventions required to ensure

continued and *reliable access*
to
authentic digital objects

for as long as they are deemed to be of value."

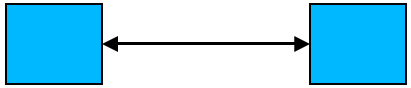
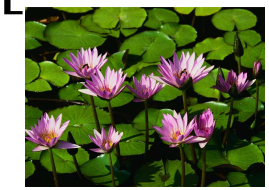
authentic digital objects

Definitions of Authenticity:

- 2 a: worthy of acceptance or belief as conforming to or based on fact
  <paints an *authentic* picture of our society>
- b: conforming to an original so as to reproduce essential features
  <an *authentic* reproduction of a colonial farmhouse>
- c: made or done the same way as an original
  <*authentic* Mexican fare>
- 3: not false or imitation : real, actual
  <based on *authentic* documents>

- b: conforming to an original so as to **reproduce essential features**
  <an *authentic* reproduction of a colonial farmhouse>

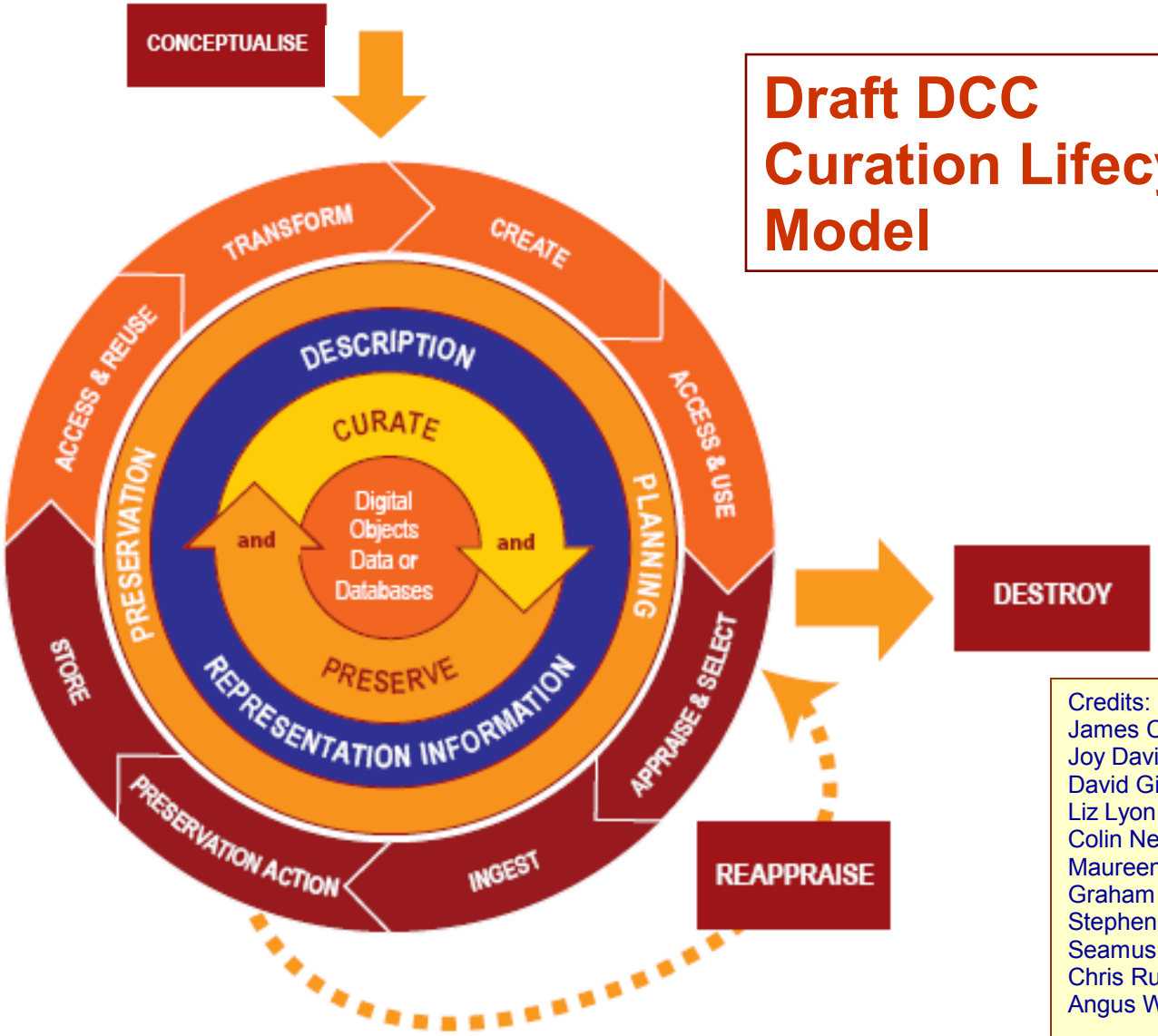
Essential features: examples

Colour	Font	functionality
•Lists •numbers •bullets	structure	19/03/2008 14:35:37 [content!]
 Diagrams		 images

Think in terms of…

- The five characteristics:
  - Context
  - Content
  - Structure
  - Appearance
  - Behaviour

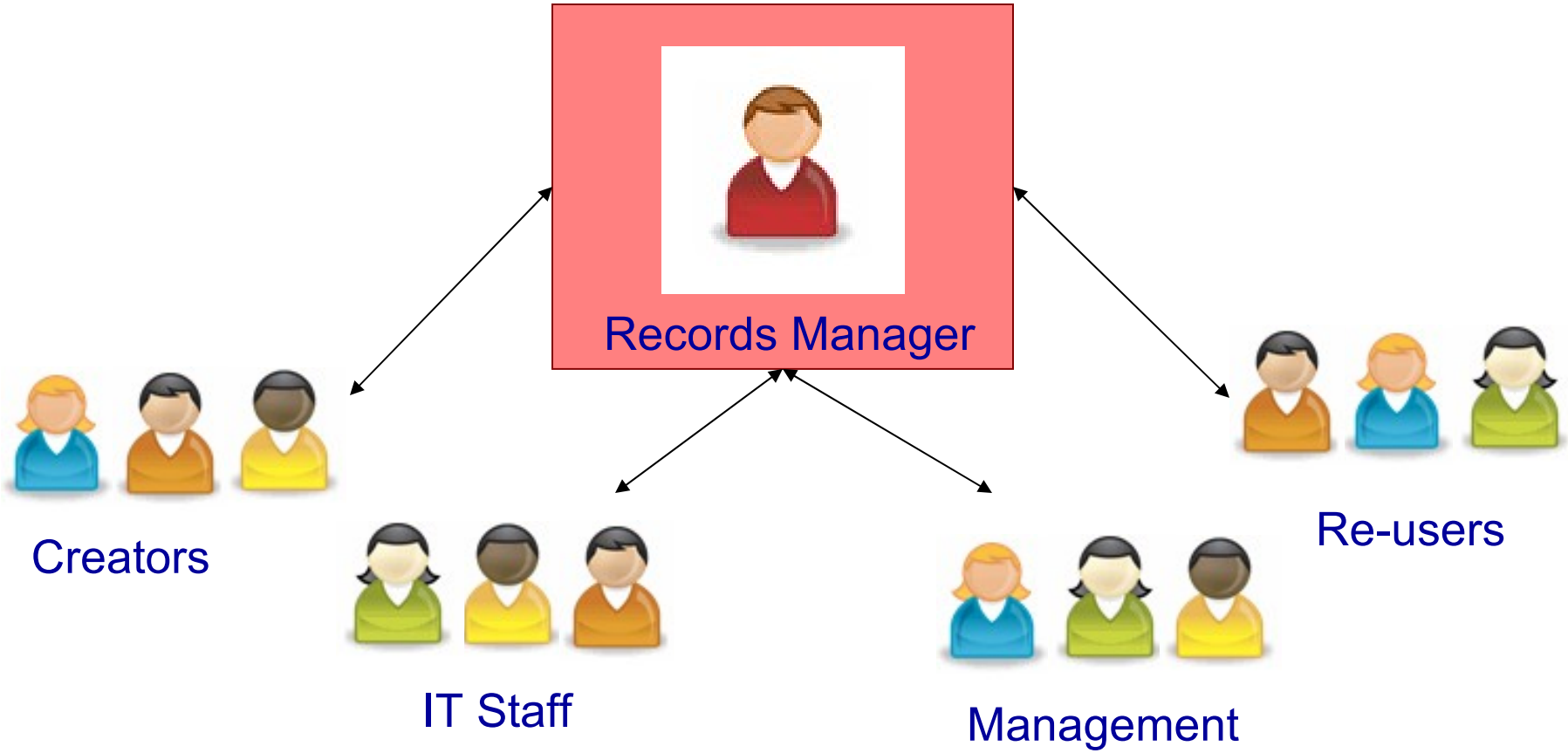
Draft DCC Curation Lifecycle Model



Credits: Sarah Higgins
James Cheney
Joy Davidson
David Giaretta
Liz Lyon
Colin Neilson
Maureen Pennock
Graham Pryor
Stephen Rankin
Seamus Ross
Chris Rusbridge
Angus Whyte

Graphics: Chris Blackhall

Stakeholders



So what **do** you do?

Stage 1 - Creation

Activities	Responsible
Policy on records creation, eg records to be properly constructed, use templates	Senior management; Records managers
Policy on acceptable use of records-creating systems (including mobile devices and technologies)	Senior management; Records managers; IT staff
Templates to be designed or provided	Records managers; IT staff?
Good practice creation guidelines & advice	Records managers; IT staff

Stage 2 – Access & Use

Activities	Responsible
Policy on responsibilities for personal records/data management, including legal issues	Senior management; Records managers
Guidelines on good practice storage, versioning and filing	Records managers; IT staff
Good practice storage and filing	Records creators

Stage 3 – Appraisal & Selection

Activities	Responsible
Policy and guidelines/advice for users on desktop/systems appraisal, selection, retention	Records managers, (+ IT staff)
Departmental training on responsibilities for retaining records at end of active life	Records managers; records creators
Exploration of significant properties/essential features	Records managers
Automatic selection of records, based on metadata and business process classifications?	Records managers; IT staff

Stage 4 – Ingest (or Disposal)

Activities	Responsible
'Pull' transfer activities: awareness raising; pro-active communications; communicating metadata requirements and transfer requirements	Records managers
'Push' transfer activities: making records available and accessible for transfer; adding metadata	Records creator; Records managers
Providing technical transfer infrastructure (including metadata facilities)	IT staff
Policy on disposal	Senior management; Records managers

Stages 5 & 6 – Preservation & Storage

Activities	Responsible
Policy, strategy & infrastructure for storage and preservation	Senior management; Records managers; IT staff
Finances for preservation activities	Senior management (Records managers)
Checking transferred records; adding metadata; developing preservation requirements	Records managers
Adhering to preservation requirements!	IT staff
Ongoing awareness of preservation tools and infrastructure; technology watch	IT staff; (Records managers?)

Stage 7 – Access & Re-use

Activities	Responsible
Policy on data and records accessibility	Senior management, Records managers
Ensuring Data Protection compliance in accessible records	Records managers; IT staff; DP officer
Developing requirements for metadata-enabled accessibility	Records managers
Providing reliable access whilst protecting stored records from malicious or accidental harm	IT staff
Providing other access/re-use tools as required	Records managers; IT staff, re-users

Summary

- Talk talk talk!
- Plan ahead
- Define your preservation requirements
  - Think about what's *really* important
- Develop strategy & policy
- Develop templates
- Organise training
- Re-evaluate regularly

Useful resources

- PLATTER – repository planning tool
- DRAMBORA – risk assessment tool
- Managing Risk project report
- PARADIGM & CAIRO project web sites
- SIGPROP workshop (April 7th, London)
- DCC website, events & helpdesk

"YOUR RECORDS NEED
YOU"