

PREFORMA – Future Memory Standards

Objectives

Memory institutions are facing increasing transfers of electronic documents and other media content for long term preservation. Data are normally stored in specific file formats for documents, images, sound, video etc. that are produced by software from different vendors. This software is controlled neither by the institution that produces the files, nor by the institution that holds the archive. As a result, memory institutions have to make conformance tests before accepting transfers of electronic collections, but these tests are again out of control and not totally reliable. This poses problems in long-term preservation. Data objects meant for preservation, passing through an uncontrolled generative process, can jeopardise the whole preservation exercise.

The main objective of PERFORMA (PREservation FORMAts for culture information/e-archives) – a Pre Commercial Procurement project co-funded by the European Commission under its FP7-ICT Programme – is to give memory institutions full control of the process of the conformity tests of files to be ingested into archives, through the development of a set of tools which enable this process to happen within an iteration that is under full control of the institutions.

The procurement, following the rules for tenders in public sector, will match the memory institutions professional knowledge and the supplier's skills in development and promotion of products, creating a win-win situation. Joint procurement enables PREFORMA to build a sustainable network of common interest, where the public procurers can remain in contact and cooperate beyond the EC funding period.

Target Users and Stakeholders

The network of common interest of PREFORMA will be set up with representatives from memory institutions, researchers and developers who are interested to contribute to the definition of the requirements and to take part in the assessment and the exploitation of the results produced by the suppliers. In particular:

- **Memory institutions** and cultural heritage organisations coordinating or representing them, that are involved in (or planning) digital culture initiatives.
- **Developers** contributing code for the PREFORMA tools as well as developers implementing the reference implementations in production software.
- **Research organisations** providing technical and expertise advice to cultural stakeholders.
- **Standardisation bodies** maintaining the technical specifications of the preservation formats covered in PREFORMA.
- **Funding agencies**, such as Ministries of Culture and national/regional administrations, that own and manage digitisation programmes and may endorse the use of the PREFORMA tools in the digitisation process.
- Other **projects** in the digital culture, e-Infrastructures and policy arenas.

Project acronym: PREFORMA

Contract nr. 619568

EC Call ID: FP7-ICT-2013-11

Start date: 01/01/2014

Duration: 48 months

Web site:

www.preforma-project.eu

Contacts:

info@preforma-project.eu

Borje Justrell

Project Coordinator

borje.justrell@riksarkivet.se

Antonella Fresa

Technical Coordinator

fresa@promoter.it

Partners:

Riksarkivet (SE)

Packed Vzw (BE)

Promoter Srl (IT)

Fraunhofer IDMT (DE)

University of Skovde (SE)

University of Padua (IT)

Netherlands Institute for
Sound and Vision (NL)

KIK-IRPA (BE)

Greek Film Centre (GR)

Local Government

Management Agency (IE)

SPK (DE)

Ajuntament de Girona (ES)

Estonian Ministry of
Culture (EE)

Kungliga Biblioteket (SE)

Call for Tender

Objective of the procurement

The main objective of the pre-commercial-procurement launched by PREFORMA is the development and deployment of an open source software licensed reference implementation for file format standards aimed for any memory institution (or other organisation with a preservation task) wishing to check conformance with a specific standard. This reference implementation will consist of a set of modular tools, which will be validated against specific implementations of specifications of standards relevant to the PREFORMA project and used by the European memory institutions for preserving their different kind of data objects. In order to demonstrate effectiveness (and refine) these tools, they will be developed in an iterative process with multiple releases and with a number of experiments with 'real' data sets (files) from memory institutions during each iteration.

The media types covered by the tender are: documents, images, AV records.

Areas which will be covered by the tools developed by PREFORMA are:

1. Preservation-relevant metadata (for documents, books, images and AV records).
2. Particularly challenging types of digital objects (notably AV records).
3. Integration of digital preservation requirements in existing systems in order to increase their resilience against technological changes.

Call Implementation

The total costs of the procurement amounts to 2,805,000 euro.

Six suppliers have been selected (two for each media type) to carry on the first design phase that lasts 4 months and completes with the ranking of the delivered designs.

The suppliers of the best three designs (one for each domain) are requested to proceed to the prototyping phase, which includes two releases and the re-design phase and which lasts 22 months in total. These suppliers are then requested to proceed to the testing phase that lasts 6 months and which corresponds to the final testing with real data sets provided by the memory institutions.

Assessment of the results of each phase is carried out under the supervision of the respective WP Leaders and based on the competitive evaluation criteria published in the tender procedure.

Expected Outcomes

The expected outcomes that are foreseen are the following:

- Development of an **open source conformance checker** that checks if a file complies with standard specifications, checks if a file complies with the acceptance criteria of the memory institution, reports back to human and software agents and perform simple fixes.
- Establishment of an ecosystem around an **open source reference implementation** that generates useful feedback for those who control software, advances improvement of the standard specification and advances development of new business cases for managing preservation files.

Keywords:

Digital preservation
Data transfer
Standard file formats
Conformance tests
Memory institutions and archives
Open Source Software
Pre-Commercial
Procurement

Aim of PREFORMA: to

address the challenge of implementing good quality standardised file formats for preserving data content in the long term and to give memory institutions full control of the process of conformity tests of files to be ingested into archives

Objective of the

procurement: development and deployment of an open source software licensed reference implementation for various file format standards, aimed for any memory institution that wish to check conformance with a specific standard

Main PREFORMA events:

Open Source Workshop:

Stockholm, December 2015

Experience Workshop:

Berlin, December 2016

Final conference:

Stockholm, December 2017

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