PCP on digital preservation @ EGI CF 2014, Helsinki



Summary]

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.

Aim of this workshop is to present to the whole digital preservation community ? open source community, developers, standardization bodies and memory institutions - the new opportunities offered by the project and by the forthcoming call for tender.

Description

The main objective of the pre-commercial-procurement launched by PREFORMA is the development and deployment 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.

Media types covered by the tender are: documents, images, audio-visual records.

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

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

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

Six suppliers are planned to be selected at the end of the tender procedure 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 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.

Target communities and stakeholders

PREFORMA aims to ensure the establishment of a process of Open Dialogue, which involves:

- 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.
- Best practice networks endorsing the use of open standards in creating and managing digital content.
- Other projects in the digital culture, e-Infrastructures and policy arenas.