Sustainability Health Check Tool for Digital Content Projects

This is for:

- **Digital project leaders** who want to review the ongoing needs of their projects
- **Library, museum and university administrators** who want to "take the pulse" of the many digital projects for which they are responsible

While the activities required to get digital content projects up and running are generally well documented, those needed to support projects as they mature may be less obvious and are not always discussed once the project has been launched.

This Health Check Tool provides an opportunity for you to think about the kinds of resources — money, staff and otherwise — that are being dedicated to your institution's digital content projects on an ongoing basis. This will enable you to take a fresh look at whether a project is delivering the desired impact in the communities you aim to serve and to consider new ways to enhance the value of your content for your users.

Description of the project

1. **Name of project:** _____

2. **When did this project first become available to users online?** _____

3. **I consider this project to be... (select one of the following)**
    In answering this question, consider the ideal post-grant scenario for your resource. If funding/ capacity were no issue, what model would deliver the greatest impact?

    ☐ A **"pure maintenance" project.** It just requires some basic support to ensure that formats are up to date and usable. These projects can live with minimal updates as long as they are preserved; ongoing work to add content, enhance access, or update technology infrastructures is unnecessary (whether undertaken by the project itself or by the platform or institution on which it is hosted).

    ☐ An **"ongoing preservation" project.** These projects require ongoing activities to ensure that platforms are up-to-date and content is findable; these activities can be done either at an individual project level, or performed at a platform or institution-wide level (eg, repositories that are highly used and findable).

    ☐ A **"growth" project.** This type of project requires specific ongoing maintenance, and shows signs of user uptake that we want to encourage. This is, or has the potential to become, a highly valuable, widely used resource.

4. **Describe the sort of impact you want the project to have.**
    By "impact," we mean the ultimate goal of the resource. The actual impact of a resource may shift over time – a resource that begins as a research resource may morph into a teaching tool. Think about your current aspirations for the resource. Consider the audiences that you seek to influence and how you would like to influence them.

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5.   Who currently manages this collection?
There may or may not be one person with primary responsibility for the success of this resource and the person who is running it now may not be the same person who created it.

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6.   What department manages this collection?
It may be managed by an IT group, a collections team, or an academic department. Bear in mind that other departments might also play a role in supporting this work.

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7.   Does this project have any external partners involved in its management? If so, what is the nature of the partnership (eg, is your content hosted externally; do you host your content but partner with others for access to resources such as equipment)?
Think about any collaborations with bodies outside of the home institution that may assist with content, technical support, marketing, etc.

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8.   If external partners or funders help to support this project, what agreements govern this relationship? When do the terms next come up for review?
Consider both implicit and explicit agreements that might include financial requirements, preservation plans, etc.

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Ongoing Support

Even if the digital project you are reviewing does not have its own budget line, there are certainly activities and costs associated with its maintenance and enhancement aimed at keeping the project current and valuable to users. The questions below will help you to think about what these ongoing activities are and what resources are required to carry them out.

9.   How many total staff, in full-time equivalents (FTEs), are involved with the ongoing maintenance or development of this project?
Take into account all staff associated with the project in FTEs, whether they are paid through the resource's budget funding or not.

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10. Other than staff, what are other costs associated with the ongoing support of this project?
Think about all indirect costs, such as office space, overhead, etc, if possible.

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11. How are the costs for this project currently funded? (List source and amounts for each category.) Do you expect this to change in the next year, and if so, how?

☐ Grants _____

☐ Contributions from partner organisations _____

☐ Base budget from your institution (direct funding) _____

☐ In-kind support (please describe) _____

☐ Other funding sources (please describe) _____

☐ Earned income (eg via sponsorship, advertising, subscriptions, etc) _____

☐ Donations or individual philanthropy _____

12. What activities are involved in the current ongoing maintenance or enhancement of the resource? If more resources could be allocated, what activities would be most valuable in increasing your project's impact? Think about the roles these activities have or would have in the project.

	Current ongoing activities	Ongoing activities next year
Project management		
Marketing and outreach		
Content selection		
Legal services		
Content production (eg scanning, metadata creation)		
Financial and accounting services		
Information technology and support services (eg server space, tech support, upgrades, etc)		
Indirect costs (eg office space, supplies)		
Digital preservation		
Other (please describe)		

13. When was the content of the resource most recently updated?
This includes adding, deleting, or editing content or any material directly related to content (eg metadata).

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14. When was the user interface of the resource most recently updated?
Consider any visual or organisational changes that may affect how users see or interact with your resource.

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Preservation standards checklist

Preservation is often the first concern of managers seeking to ensure the future of their resources. The following checklist outlines specific steps based on preservation "best practices" for resources that require specific preservation activities. This is by no means a comprehensive list of the steps required for a comprehensive preservation strategy; think of it as an introduction to potential preservation activities for your resource.

> For additional guidance on preservation activities and best practices, consult materials published by the non-profit Digital Preservation Coalition: **www.dpconline.org/advice/ preservationhandbook**.

15. Which of the following preservation activities do you conduct or plan to conduct on a regular basis?

☐ Generate and manage descriptive, structural, event, and preservation metadata.

☐ Back up all master and derivative versions of the objects and metadata.

☐ Document which parties are responsible for maintaining the intellectual content and which parties are responsible for maintaining the technical integrity of the collection.

☐ Define supported preservation formats and document which files in your preservation platform are supported and which are not.

☐ Regularly check the files for corruption (eg by use of a checksum).

☐ Other:_____

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Audience, usage, and impact

Who and how many do you hope will use this digital content, and how will you reach them? Understanding who your users are and what they want and need from your project helps you to evaluate the way resources are allocated to support that project. This will help you to make informed decisions and, if needed, changes that can assist you in assessing and achieving the impact you're aiming for. The following questions are intended to encourage you to articulate the audiences for which this resource is maintained and evaluate current tactics for outreach.

16. **Who do you see as the main audience(s) for this project?**
    While resources may aspire to reach all audiences, think about only the most likely or most relevant groups. Potential audiences could include researchers in specific disciplines, students, or subject enthusiasts. Be as specific as possible.

    The SCA-funded Guide to Research Audiences provides a comprehensive overview of the basic principles of audience research: **http://sca.jiscinvolve.org/wp/portfolio-items/the-guide-to-researching-audiences**

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17. **What metrics do you use to measure and evaluate the impact of this project? How have these metrics and measurements changed since last year? Use the most current figures for your project, and separate them by audience, if possible.**
    Consider only those metrics that you use to measure and evaluate your impact. If there are exceptional factors that have affected these metrics, you may want to take those into account as you think about these changes.

    For further assistance, see the Oxford Internet Institute's Toolkit for the Impact of Digitised Scholarly Resources (2009), which presents a framework and set of best practices to measure usage and impact for digital scholarly resources: **http://microsites.oii.ox.ac.uk/tidsr/welcome** and Simon Tanner's Balanced Value Impact Model: **www.kdcs.kcl.ac.uk/innovation/impact.html**

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	Current metrics	Change since last year	Goal for next year
Number of content accesses (eg page views, downloads)			
Total audience reached (eg number of unique visitors)			
Usage in teaching (eg number of students reached)			
User loyalty (eg return visits, frequency of visits over time)			
User engagement (eg time on site, returning users)			
Referrals			
Usage in research (eg citations or references in published work)			
Awards			
Media coverage			
Citations/usage in prominent contexts			
Other (please describe)			

Given your responses to the items above, which statement below best characterises the current level of investment and support for this project?

☐ 5 — adequate for performing all of the activities needed to increase the value of this resource and achieve greater impact

☐ 4 — adequate for performing the majority of the activities needed to achieve greater impact

☐ 3 — adequate for performing some of the activities needed to achieve greater impact

☐ 2 — adequate for performing only the most critical maintenance, preservation and other activities to maintain the project's value

☐ 1 — not adequate for performing any of the maintenance, preservation and other activities needed to maintain the project's value

Your action plan

Based on the current status of your project, and the sustainability and impact needs of your project, evaluate your success in each of the categories below by rating each element from 1-10. In the rows below, please outline goals for the next year in each of these categories, and specific action steps needed to achieve these goals.

	Activities for sustainability: dashboard						
	Currency of content	User interface	Tech infra-structure	Audience	Other impact measure(s)	Preservation	Financial stability
Rating							
Goal for next year							
Action Needed							

Next steps and timeline

Who will you need to work with to take these steps?

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When will you review progress again?

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