



Dear colleagues,

I am very grateful for William for starting this workshop, because this saves me quite a bit of time. You see, we in the Netherlands plead guilty to copying the British idea ... with a twist, of course.

We were impressed by the DPC's *Mind the Gap* report and its conclusion that digital preservation is too big a challenge for individual organisations to tackle.

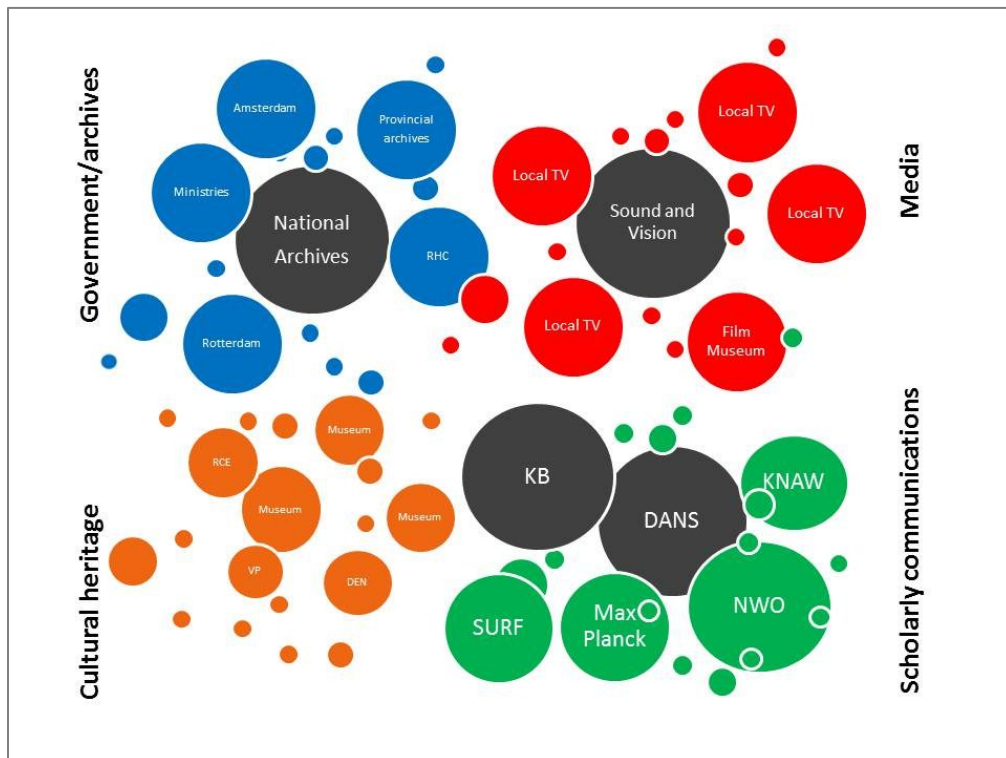
So the KB, National Library of the Netherlands and Data Archiving and Networked Services or DANS, a scholarly data repository, brought together [eight other national organisations](#) and founded the Netherlands Coalition for Digital Preservation, or NCDD. Like the DPC, the NCDD was established as voluntary membership organisation, with only membership funding. The NCDD became a legal entity in 2008

There is one significant difference between the DPC and the NCDD. Where the DPC speaks of raising awareness and contributing to the debate, the NCDD has boldly formulated this mission. To build an infrastructure for long-term access to digital resources – an infrastructure that includes not only storage facilities, but also funding and organisational alignment. Within a five-year timespan no less.

How did we go about realising this mission? In 2009 we did our own Mind the Gap survey which resulted in our report [A future for our digital memory](#). These are the main findings: lack of awareness, of tools, of services, of qualified staff; short-term interests that have a tendency to prevail over long-term interests, and basically institutions that are still organised around the analogue paradigm.

I think most of you will recognise these findings, so I will not go too deeply into analysing them. A more important question is how we will deal with them and realise our mission.

The public sector is as diverse in the Netherlands as it is in any country, thousands of stakeholders play a role, and as a voluntary membership organisation we have no official leverage against anyone. We started out by sorting our stakeholders in domains which roughly show the same type of dynamics when it comes to digital preservation: stakeholders, legal regimes, types of organisations, etc. We identified four basic domains: government/archives, scholarly communications, media, and quote unquote 'other' cultural heritage, chiefly museums.



In order to really make something *happen* in each domain, we decided that we needed some type of leadership. Not the hierarchical kind, but an organisation with enough standing, enough funds, and a large enough network to mobilise the others. We call them *network leaders*. In three out of four domains such network leaders could easily be identified: the National Archives for government/archives, the NL Institute of Sound and Vision for media, and shared leadership for scholarly communications between the KB (for publications) and DANS for research data. Early this year these network leaders took on obligations to develop the infrastructure in their sector.

The fourth domain, cultural heritage, still lacks a clear network leader, but coalition-building discussions are under way there as well.

The NCDD is the platform where they share knowledge and expertise, and develop coordinated plans.



It is early days yet to draw any conclusions about the success of our approach. But there are some encouraging signs. First of all, the four network leaders have made a commitment that they will not make any major investment or collection decisions without consulting each other. They have also agreed to develop sensible plans to share the work wherever their remits overlap. And they have approached the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science together to lobby for the digital preservation agenda.

More concretely, the archives have made a giant leap forwards by agreeing, last June, that they will develop a joint shared services organisation for all public records at the local, regional and national level, with five or ten storage facilities nationwide. They have asked the Government for €20 million euro's to fund the plan, which sounds like a lot, but is really only about 20% of what it would cost if all archives were to build their own repositories. And there are other examples, which I cannot all name here. For instance, the KB has taken on long-term preservation of publications in universities' institutional repositories, so they do not have to develop themselves. And Sound and Vision is developing long-term preservation services for third-party audio-visual collections.

But obviously, there are challenges. And we all know that the major challenges are not shown in this slide,



but in this one.



Some challenges are common to all collaborative efforts that deal with digital preservation, such as that long-term benefits are always hard to sell, especially when money is tight. And the ideal of cooperation is lofty, but doing it in practice is sometimes very difficult.

Specific challenges to the NCDD include the fact that we are an organisation based on consensus and voluntary contributions. The office is small – it is only me – and that limits the amount of work the Office can do. The approach with network leaders sometimes makes smaller institutions uneasy, as you can imagine; balancing local needs and national cost-effectiveness is a tricky thing to do.

And yet, I think we are going to make headway in the next years. Not as quickly as I would want it, of course, and five years was perhaps too optimistic a time frame. But in The Netherlands the cooperative approach to digital preservation is now firmly grounded. The next challenge is to make it work in practice.

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