Training needs in digital preservation – A DigCurV Survey

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ABSTRACT

In this poster, we introduce the results of a survey of the training needs in digital preservation conducted by the DigCurV project.

Categories and Subject Descriptors

K.3.2 [**Computers and Education**]: Computer and Information Science Education – *Accreditation, Computer science education, Curriculum, Information systems education*

General Terms

Management, Human Factors.

Keywords

Digital preservation, digital curation, training, qualification, survey, questionnaire, needs assessment, vocational, cultural heritage institution.

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2011, the EU project Digital Curator Vocational Education Europe (DigCurV, http://www.digcur-education.org) conducted an online survey on training needs in digital preservation and curation. The study was part of the research DigCurV carried out to survey and analyze both the existing training opportunities and training needs in the cultural heritage sector. The results will be used to inform the development of a curriculum framework for vocational education and training in the field.

2. CONCEPTION

The online survey was carried out in July and August 2011. The target audience consists of staff members from libraries, archives, museums and other cultural heritage institutions as well as from organizations in the scientific and education sector, such as universities.

The questions addressed the digital preservation activities in which the respondents' organizations were engaged, the staff situation regarding this area, training plans for staff involved in the associated tasks as well as preferences in terms of methods and time frames for training, and whether training should be certified. Additionally, the respondents were asked to evaluate the importance of a range of general as well as digital preservation-specific tasks and skills in terms of the work of staff involved in digital preservation and curation, and to assess the need for training with respect to several associated skills and competences.

3. SURVEY ANALYSIS

3.1 General information about the survey population

In total, 454 participants from 44 countries responded to the survey, the majority of them from Europe. The respondents were employed at a variety of institutions, mainly in the cultural heritage, the scientific and the education sectors, and were involved in digital preservation activities in manifold ways.

3.2 Involvement in digital preservation activities

A majority (approx. three quarters) of the respondents reported that their organizations are already storing digital materials for long-term preservation, and another 18% plan to do so in the future. However, the survey results show that many organizations lack staff to take care of the associated tasks. While some plan to hire new staff, the majority (57%) do not.

It can be assumed that in many cases the tasks associated with digital preservation will be assigned to existing staff, who will then need to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, and competences. Hence, it seems very likely that there will be a considerable demand for corresponding training opportunities in the near future.

3.3 Training plans and preferences

Accordingly, many of the respondents' organisations are planning training for digital preservation staff. 35% of the respondents reported that there are plans to train staff with no previous experience in digital preservation, and 31% stated that there will be training for staff who already have some experience. Regarding the certification of training, the respondents' opinions were divided. Half responded that certification of training is important; the other half replied that such certification is not necessary.

In terms of the methods and time frames for training, the respondents indicated clear preferences. Small group workshops stood out as the method that was regarded as most suitable for their organisation by 75% of the respondents, followed by blended learning (a combination of face-to-face instruction and online components), which was chosen by 38%. The most popular time frame, one-time training events of 1-2 workdays, was chosen by 55% of the respondents. One-time events lasting 3-5 workdays

were the second most popular time frame, as indicated by about 30% of the participants.
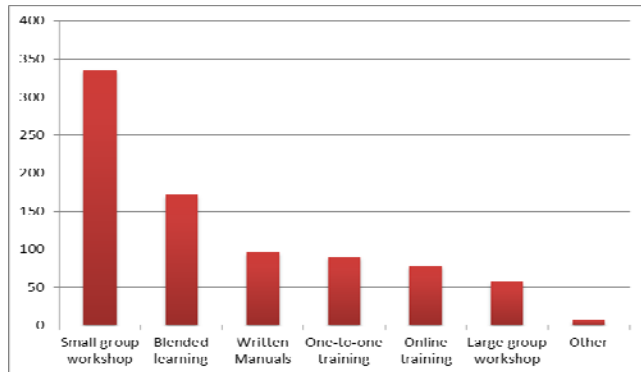

Figure 1. Most suitable training method[1]

3.4 Skills and competences needed in digital preservation

With regard to the importance of several tasks and skills in terms of the work of staff involved in digital preservation and curation, the respondents indicated a high degree of relevance of both general skills and digital preservation-specific and technical skills. In terms of the latter, all of the listed items (Preservation Planning, Ensuring access, Managing data, Evaluating and selecting data for long-term preservation, Storing data, Ingesting data, Research, development and implementation of digital preservation environments, Administering the archive) were assessed to be either essential or important by more than 90% of the participants. As for general skills, three of them were regarded as being either essential or important by more than 95% of the survey population: collaborating with others, communicating with others, and an affinity for technology.

3.5 Training needs with regard to digital preservation and curation

The results of the assessment of the need for training with regard to the different skills and competences suggest a substantial need for both digital preservation-specific and technical skills and general skills. The percentage of respondents who reported either a great need or a moderate need were consistently very high for each of the given digital preservation-specific and technical skills: between 86% and 96%. The greatest need in this respect was expressed for general or basic knowledge of digital preservation issues, preservation and data management planning, and preservation tools. Regarding general skills, the numbers were lower but nevertheless still significant: between 60% and 85% of the respondents indicated a moderate or a great need for the several items given, with the greatest need stated for liaising between customer and information technology experts. When asked to prioritize the most pressing needs, they are clearly ascribed to the digital preservation-specific and technical skills (see Figure 2). The three items where the need was expressed to be most urgent were already mentioned above: general or basic

knowledge of digital preservation issues (chosen by 49% of the respondents), preservation and data management planning (48%) and preservation tools (38%).

4. OUTLOOK

The results of the survey show that digital preservation and curation is a field of activity that is becoming more and more relevant for cultural heritage as well as other institutions. However, many of these institutions are suffering from a lack of appropriately skilled staff to take care of the associated tasks. Arising from these circumstances is an urgent need for training that calls for immediate action. As a response to this situation, the DigCurV project is developing a curriculum framework for vocational education and training in the field. The design of the curriculum will be informed by the results of the training needs survey and of other research conducted by this project. The curriculum will be evaluated by trainers and also tested in practice. One opportunity to do so will be the nestor/DigCurV School event to be held in Germany in autumn 2012. In addition, DigCurV is actively seeking trainers and other projects to collaborate on the evaluation and the further development of the curriculum framework.
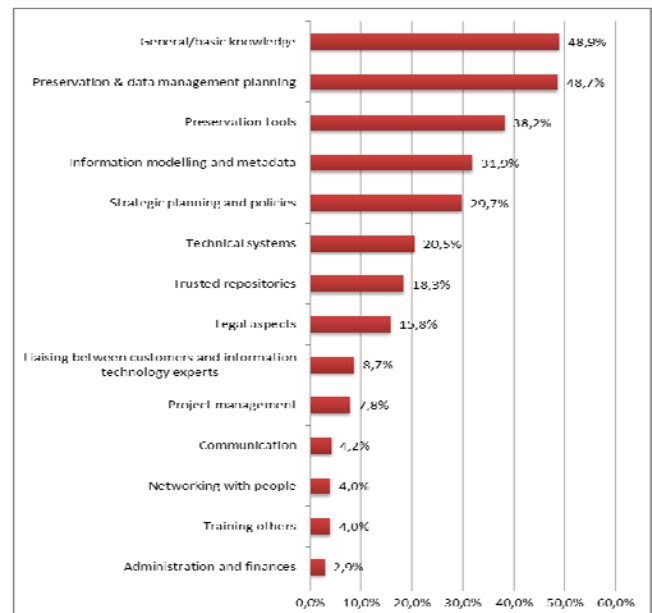

Figure 2. Most pressing needs for training[2]

5. REFERENCES

[1] Karvelyte, V., Klingaite, N., Kupriene, J., Molloy, L., Snow, K., Gow, A. 2012. D2.1 Report on baseline survey and evaluation framework. Section 1: Training opportunities survey. http://www.digcur-education.org/eng/content/download/3033/41768/file/D2.1.1%20DigCur-survey-into-training-opportunities.pdf

[2] Engelhardt, C., Strathmann, S., McCadden, K. 2012. Report and analysis of the survey of Training Needs.

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[1] Figure 1 shows the results for the following question: "Which training methods do you consider the most suitable for your organisation?" 446 respondents answered this question; up to two answers were allowed.

[2] Figure 2 shows the results for the following question: "In which of the following digital preservation-related field/s is the need for training most pressing?" 448 respondents answered this question; up to three answers were allowed.

http://www.digcur-education.org/eng/content/download/3322/45927/file/Report%20and%20analysis%20of%20the%20survey%20of%20Training%20Needs.pdf