

Collectively building New Zealand's culture and heritage online

4 July 2008

NDF Board *Digitisation Selection Work* Summary of Responses

Dear partner organisations,

The National Digital Forum Board would like to thank you for your comments on the Digitisation Selection Work. The NDF Board produced the paper as a way of articulating ideas about how New Zealand could prioritise material for digitisation and what criteria should be taken into account when doing so. The Digitisation Selection Work was released for consultation on 14 December 2007. In addition, a feedback form was made available on 13 February 2008. The deadline for the feedback form and submissions on the paper was 15 March 2008. Of the 120 plus partner organisations, eleven organisations provided feedback on the Digitisation Selection Work. The comments and suggestions received were reviewed and discussed by the NDF Board.

General Response to Feedback Form Items

The feedback we received via the form and general submissions was in agreement with the statement of principle “the primary purpose of digitisation is to facilitate access. The aim is to enable people regardless of location, to directly access content relating to New Zealand’s documentary and cultural heritage” identified for selection criteria.

Overall, there was support for a nationally coordinated approach to “agreeing priorities for digitisation of significant and important publicly held content,” although one organisation clarified that it would not support a framework that promoted national priorities over its own institutional needs for digitising content, unless additional (external) funding was available to support this activity.

There were various responses to the request to rank the selection criteria in order of importance for individual organisations. A few organisations listed ‘value’ as the most important criterion for selection. One organisation questioned the worth of ranking the selection criteria in order of importance. Noting that depending on the project at hand, criteria would have different weightings.

In principle, organisations would commit any financial resources they had been funded for digitisation to a project identified as a nationwide priority, but in practice, institutional and local priorities would have precedence and digitisation budgets were already committed to ongoing programmes.

Commentary on Draft Digitisation Selection Work

Most submissions agreed that the Digitisation Selection Work was a good start to increasing awareness of the criteria and the need for a coordinated national approach to an overall digitisation strategy for heritage material that informs selection. A few submissions recommended that the international and higher-level context within which the paper sits be further developed in the introduction.

Selection Criteria: Value

One organisation suggested that the Value section should be written about in more depth with indications of measurement, judgement, and weighting. A couple of responses noted that there is a danger that Value is based entirely on demand. One organisation suggested that intrinsic value should be assessed separately from cost-benefit while another organisation wondered whether commercial reasons should be considered. Additionally, one organisation noted that factors listed under the Value section may exclude informal, local material and should not necessarily disregard poor quality materials, as they may be the best representations of a particular event.

Selection Criteria: Demand

Response for the Demand section was supportive with one suggestion for an additional point of "projected demand based on an upcoming event."

Selection Criteria: Collaborative Potential

A number of submissions noted that while collaboration provides benefits, the risks mentioned have to be managed within individual organisations and that decisions regarding prioritisation will always have to be made at individual institution levels. They also noted that effective collaboration requires an ability to progress from local to national to international. One organisation suggested that the paper add the ability to "piggy back" on other systems (including sharing software, web sites and personnel) as well as mention the collaborations possible via research grids like KAREN.

Selection Criteria: Enhancement of Intellectual Access

One submission commented that Enhancement of Intellectual Access be developed further as the aim of the section appeared unclear.

Selection Criteria: Enhancement of Resource Quality

A single submission stated the paper needed to consider the potential of new algorithms to process files and generate new material from a digitised object.

Selection Criteria: Preservation

A couple of submissions included supportive responses to the Preservation section while noting that preservation would be considered a success criterion rather than a selection criterion. One submission recommended the addition of the point: "retain aspects of the original that cannot be saved."

Selection Criteria: Technical Feasibility

One organisation argued that selection should occur independently of technical capability while another organisation, via the feedback form, marked technical capability as the most important selection criterion. Another organisation also recommended the inclusion of "and institutional repository requirements" to "...way to meet user needs" in the first paragraph.

Selection Criteria: Intellectual Control Criteria

One submission recommended that the selection of items for digitisation should not be limited or driven by the resourcing around description of material as alternate ways of describing the material, including the participation of local communities,

could be used. Another submission noted the paper needed some mention of Creative Commons as a new framework for intellectual property and its effect on access and staffing.

Selection Criteria: Māori and Traditional Knowledge

There was general agreement that issues of sensitivity around the way Māori, and various other peoples, value their cultural objects and how they are represented need to be considered. A few submissions recommended that the section needed further development, including discussion about ways Māori communities may go about selecting materials for digitisation. One submission noted that for a number of Māori groups the paper would be their first engagement with the concept of digitisation and its implications.

General comment

A few organisations recommended a tiered or spectrum approach to the selection process with respect to institution size, high value vs. bulk projects, and local vs. national projects or organisations. One submission also recommended that the paper include a fuller discussion of the types of audiences for digitised material. Also recommended was a consideration of informal content alongside formal content.

There were a number of other issues raised in the submissions which were, however, outside of the scope of the draft paper. These issues may need to be included in future discussions on the topic. They include:

- Metadata, Standards and Quality
- Sustainability
- Indexing and finding aids
- Retrospective digitising versus collection and management of born digital
- Institutional benefits / drivers
- Centralised repository for search and access

Implications

The NDF Board looks forward to this document engaging ongoing dialogue about prioritisation values and guidelines for digitisation. Both the Digitisation Selection Work and the Summary of Responses will be available on the NDF website as a resource to partner organisations. The paper is licensed under [Create Commons Share Alike](#); anyone is free to copy, distribute, transmit and adapt the paper under the conditions that they attribute the work to the NDF and if they alter, transform, or build upon the paper, they may distribute the resulting work only under the same, similar or a compatible license.

In addition, the paper and this Summary of Responses are being used for input into the Digitisation Policy Framework, developed by the National Library of New Zealand, which will provide a mechanism for prioritising digitisation of significant and important publicly held content.