GLOBAL FORUM 2004
Shaping the Future

Long Term Preservation of Digital Content

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ITEMS INTERNATIONAL

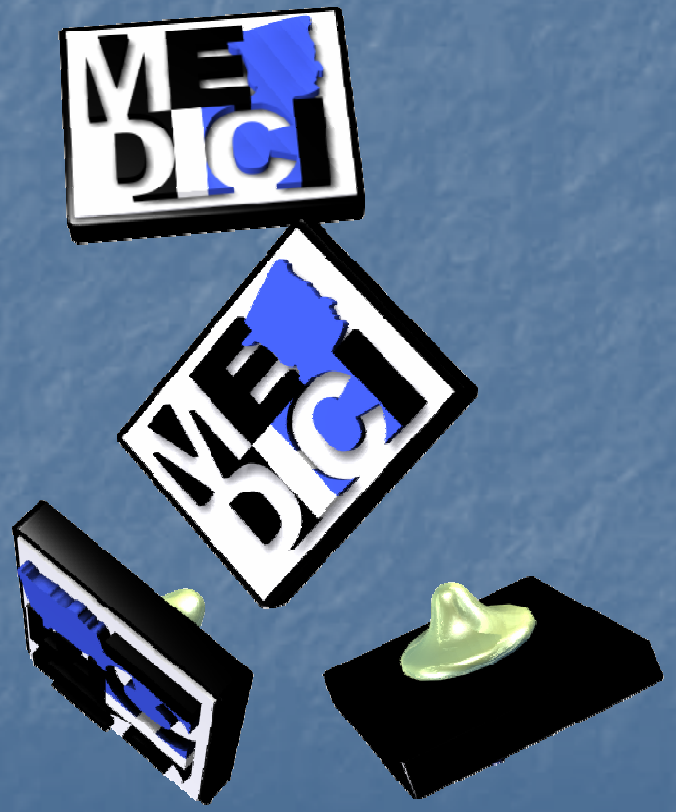
FONDATION SOPHIA-ANTIPOLIS

City of Malmö

MEDICI Framework

- Promotes the use of ICT & New Tech in the field of culture - education, cultural heritage

- Main actions:
  - Information sharing – web based services
  - Events and initiatives, research projects
  - Education – courses, etc



Lost and to loose

We have already lost….

- Leonardo da Vinci's Battaglia di Anghiari
- Alexandria Library
- Plays of Aeschylus
- Egyptians Papyri
- Paxton's Cristall Palace
- Music reconds in Edison's format
- Von Karajan's early records
- …

Endangered species ….

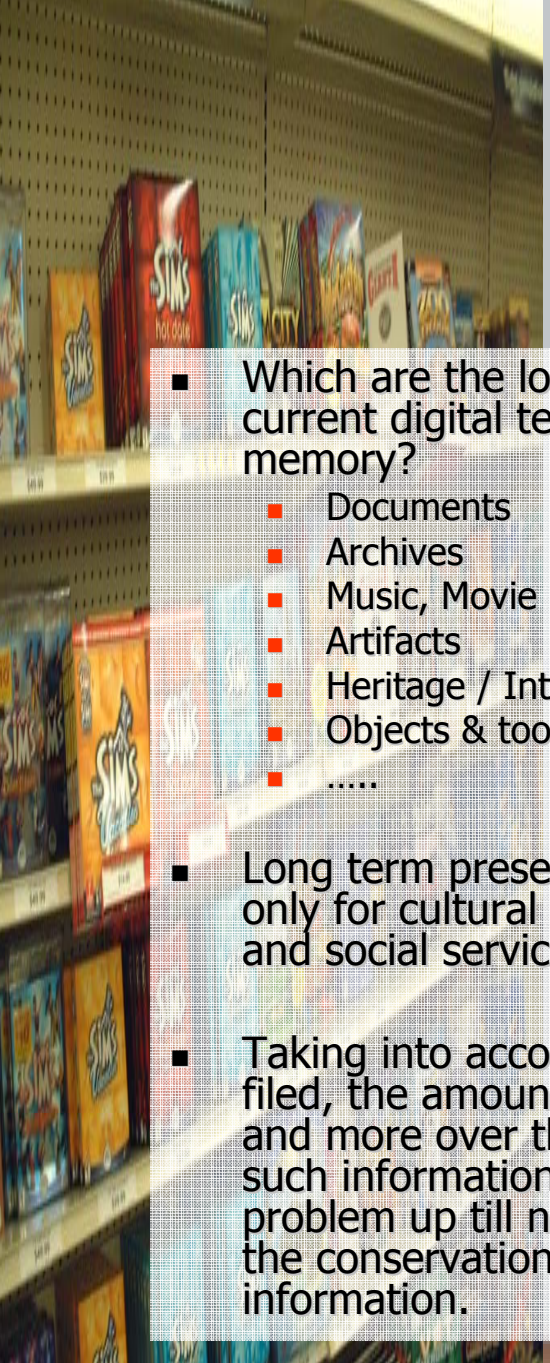
- Digital archives
- Digital music
- Electronic Art & Installations
- Digital movies and special effects
- Electronic Musical Instruments
- Cars, Motorbikes
- Photo Cameras
- Wristwatches
- Hi Fi Stereo ….

This subject takes us to consider two aspects, the first is technological obsolescence and the second the 'temporary instinct' of the so-called 'permanent supports'.

"Digital fragility"

- Rapid changes in technology make preservation of digital content a challenge. The biological clock of ICT beats smaller time slices compared to those considered worldwide in the field of cultural heritage.
- Digital formats becomes suddenly obsolete and disappear. An extraordinarily long-lived solution, such as the PC/DOS in great favour for over twenty years, represents a short-lived apparition if compared to the time spent in state owned archives.
- Systems are aging, media on which information is stored are disintegrating - the magnetic technology diskette survives without problems for thousands of hours but not enough to be considered 'permanent' for those aims

Digital Landscape



- Which are the long-term implications if we rely on current digital technology to preserve our cultural memory?
  - Documents
  - Archives
  - Music, Movie
  - Artifacts
  - Heritage / Intangible Heritage
  - Objects & tools
  - …..
- Long term preservation of digital archives is a issue not only for cultural content but even for e-government and social services.
- Taking into account the huge amount of data to be filed, the amount of time to accomplish with this task and more over the period of time we need to store such information, we have to value objectively a problem up till now widely underestimated and that is the conservation for long periods of time of digital information.

Main approaches & “formats”

- Refreshing
- Printing …. microfilming
- Multiple Instances (copies)
- System Preservation
- Emulation
- Migration
- Standardisation
- Encapsulation
- ….

- Plain text (for a long time the essence of interoperability and long term format;
- Text with specific formats and functions (such as camera ready pages, spreadsheets, database import/export formats)
- Multi/hypermedia content (images, movies, sounds in different formats, links, refs);
- Technical Sketches, 3D models (vector graphics, interactive scenarios);
- Content deeply merged with specific applications (archives, data base, , video games, custom applications);
- Interactive installations, virtual enhanced reality applications, etc
- Future applications involving a higher interaction with users and heterogeneous distributed data structure.

Projects & Initiatives

- Task force on Archiving of Digital Information (94-96) The Commission on Preservation and Access & The research Libraries Group Inc.
- OASIS Open Archival Information System
- LOCKSS Lots of Copies Keep Stuff Safe
- VERS Victorian Electronic Record Strategy
- ERA Electronic Records Archive (NARA)
- Interpares
- …

- Jeff Rothemberg, Avoiding Technological Quicksand
- The Digital Rosetta Stone

"Long term preservation of digital content"

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Follow Ups

- We ask for additional contributions
- A full report will be available on line at www.medicif.org
- WG under the UNESCO umbrella ?

References

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