

The Digital Future of the Past and Present

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- Preserving the past
- Traditional vs. digital preservation
- The dilemma of modern media
- Challenges
- The way forward

Preserving the Past

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Perspectives From the Film and Media column in the April 1998 Perspectives		
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Current Issue Preserving the Past: Into the Future with Terry Sanders		
Past Issues Submissions By Pillarisetti Sudhir Advertising When ancient lithographers chiseled with lapidary skill their masters' voices into stone, they knew that their work would endure. When cloistered monks incised their illuminated uncials and italics into parchment, they too knew that the marks of civilization they were inscribing were designed to last. Even the coming of the printed book and the paperback did not presage the death of the durable text. Today, however, as digital magic converts words and pictures into electronic texts that can be disseminated at the speed of light, the question that has begun to loom large is: How long will these new cybertexts last? Each step in the technology of textual reproduction has made access to knowledge more democratic and universal. Now access is virtually universal, or soon will be; but will these easily retrievable texts be available in the future? This is the critical question posed by <i>Into the Future: On the Preservation of Knowledge in the Electronic Age</i> , the significant new documentary film by Terry Sanders that was recently shown on PES.1 The 56-minute film was commissioned—like Sanders's 1987 film, <i>Slow Fres: On the Preservation of the Human Record</i> —by the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR), in association with the American Council of Learned Societies. It was produced by the American Film Foundation and was funded by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Xerox Corporation.		
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- The Internet has reversed information seeking from:
- Time rich / information poor
- Information rich / time poor



"What is not online, does not exist !"

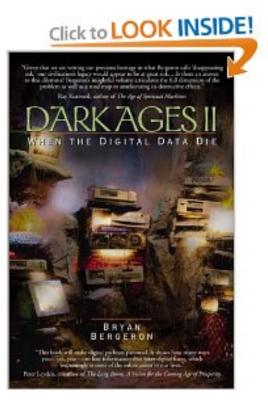
Preserving Digital Heritage



- As a society we are "becoming increasingly dependent on digital artifacts to represent our cultural and artistic heritage".
- Yet, as Jeff Rothenberg puts it, "Digital documents last forever – or five years, whichever comes first".

Digital Dark Ages





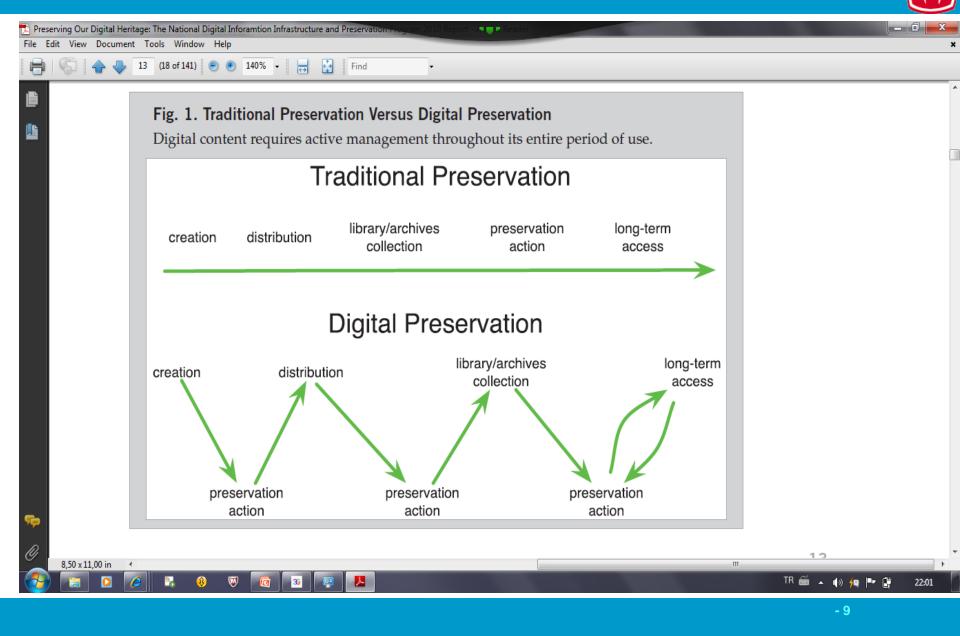
"Though we have developed traditions of which organizations . . . should take responsibility for preserving . . . analog material . . . , no such traditions exist yet for digital material. As a result of this, much current material originating in digital form falls through the cracks, and is unlikely to be accessible to future generations." (Besser, 2001)

"Preservation through Neglect"

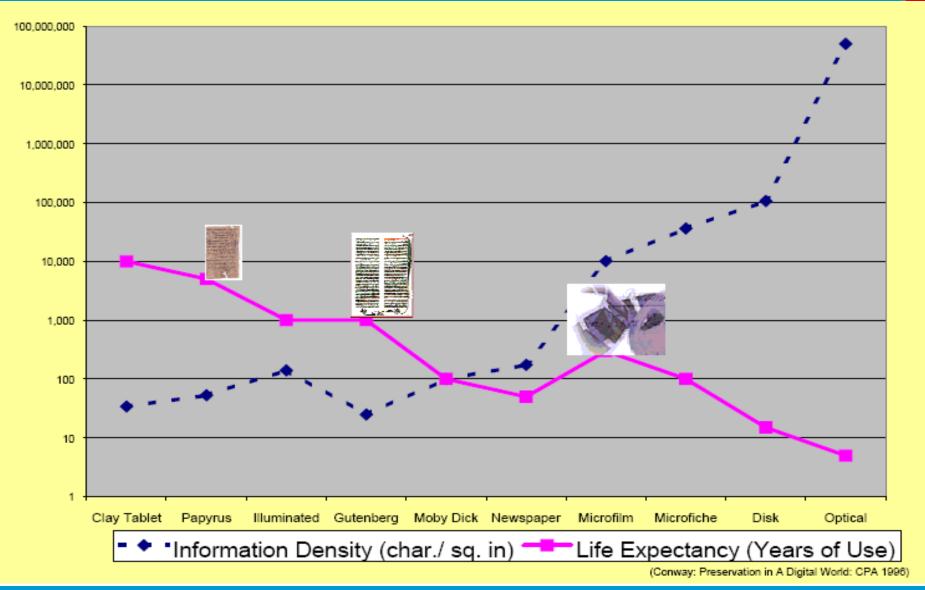


 "archivists have often operated on the principle of "preservation through neglect," which has meant that materials that lasted fifty or one hundred years found their way into an archive, library, or museum. The difference with digital data is that it appears that if we wait twenty-five years, it may be too late--we could have nothing rather than, say, 10 percent of the data."

Traditional vs. Digital Preservation



The Dilemma of Modern Media



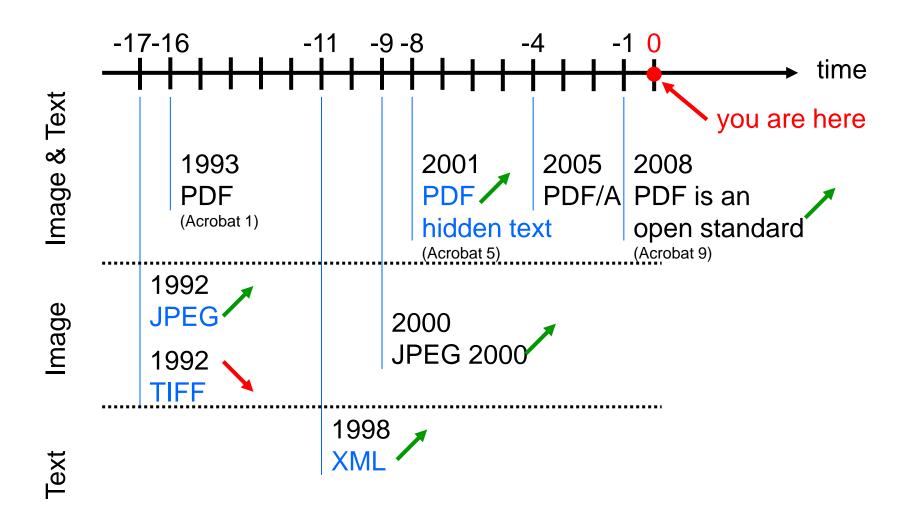


 "Our capacity to record information has increased exponentially over time while the longevity of the media used to store the information has decreased equivalently.'² Archivists and librarians always had to contend with various frailties of the material in their care. Papyrus and paper, parchment and film, are all vulnerable to the ravages of time, and precious information can be lost to decay and destruction."

Challenges of Obsolescence

- Hardware
- Software

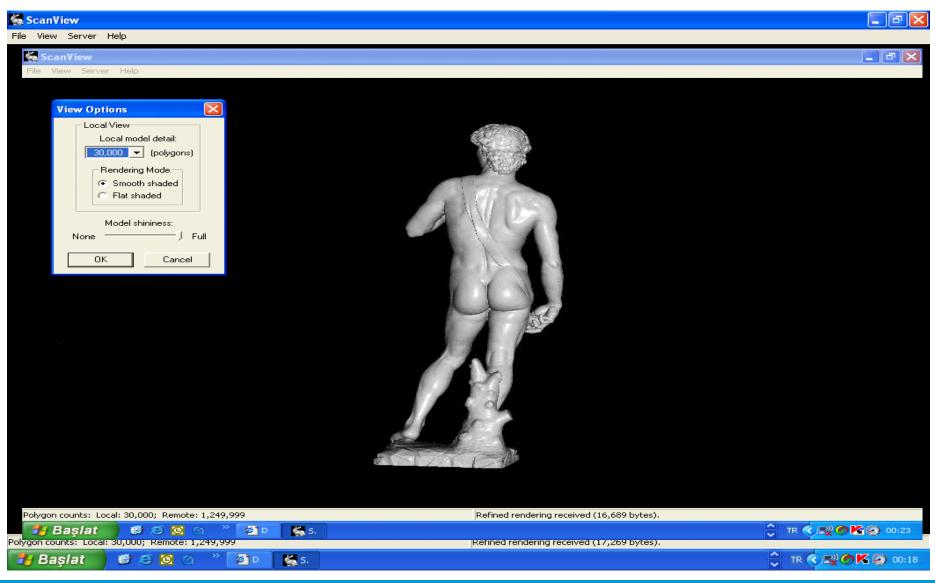
Challenges of File Formats



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The 3D Digital Michelangelo Project





Preserving Personalized Digital Objects

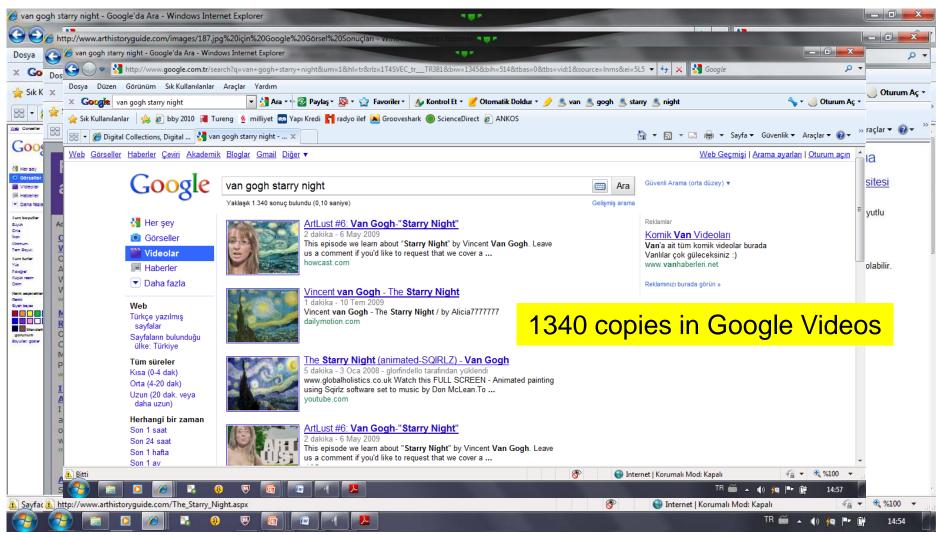




Vincent Van Gogh's Starry Night

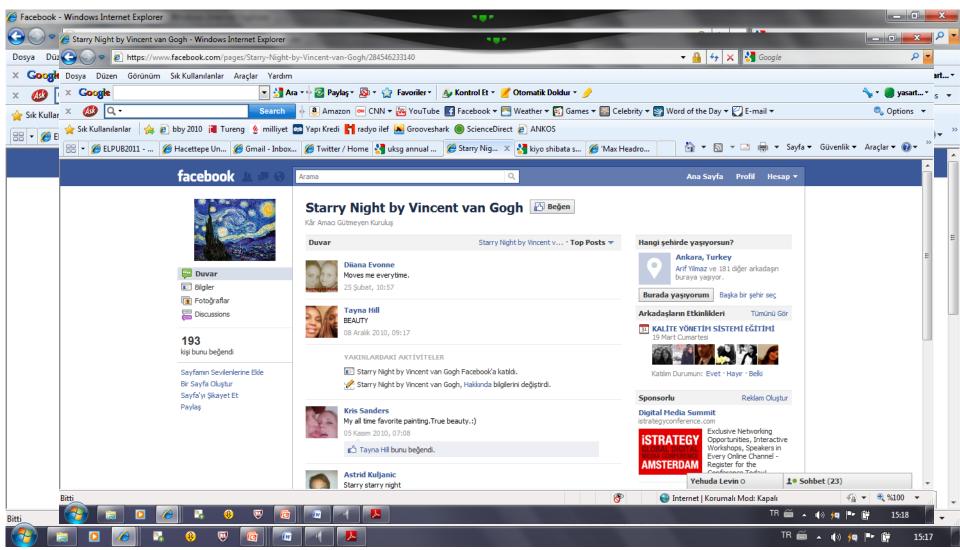
Starry Night on Google





Starry Night on Facebook



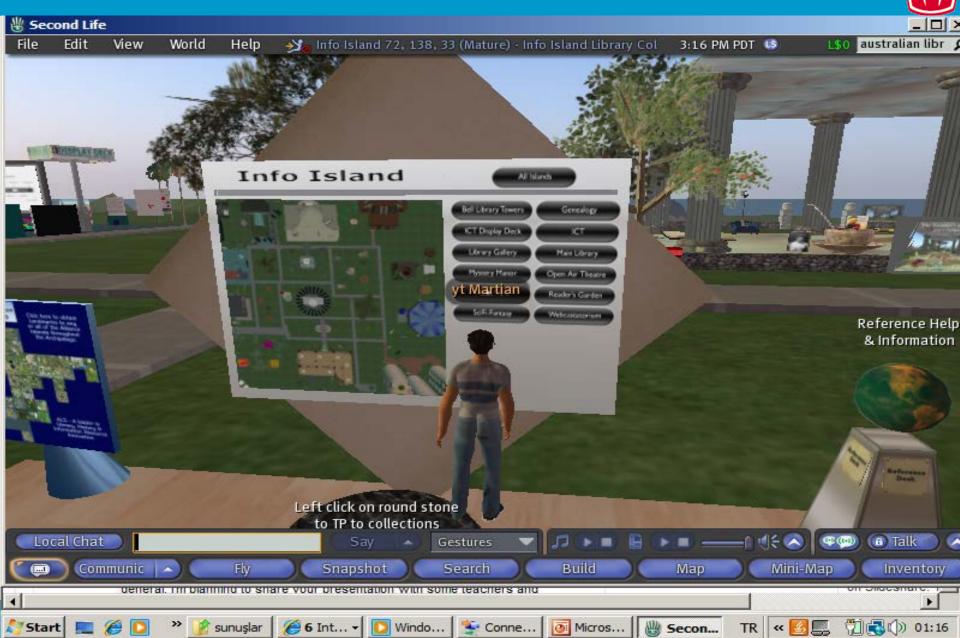


Starry Starry Night on YouTube

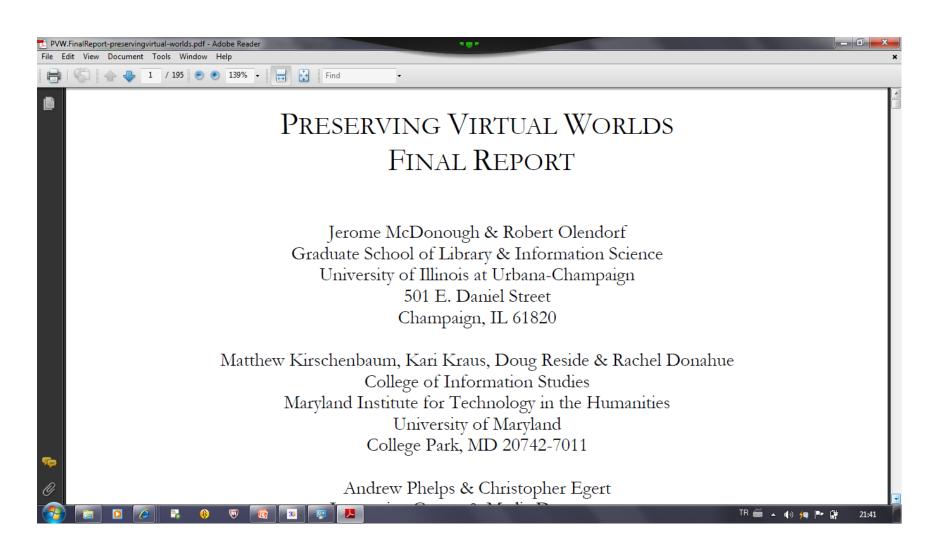


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The paintings of Vincent Van Gogh set to Don McLean's "Starry Starry Night".	
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Highest Rated Comments Don Mclean - "Vincent" (Starry Starry Night)	
I cannot hear this song without thinking about my buddy who was schizophrenic. He was a wonderfully gifted musician and an amazing person but then developed	
schizophrenia and it drove him to his death. Rest in peace my friend. I miss you.	=
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Fantastic song with fantastic matching images; the guality of the images is making	_
justice to Vincent's work. Well done!	
I wonder how many Vincents, Shakespeares, Einsteins, Ghandies, etc. there are out there is this world no having a voice, an opportunity or any means to express	
their talent. How many of them die without we even knowing about them at all?	
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Second Life "Info Island"



Preserving Virtual Worlds





- "While these technical difficulties are immense, the social, economic, legal, and organizational problems are worse. Digital documents—precisely because they are in a new medium—have disrupted longevolved systems of trust and authenticity, ownership, and preservation. Reestablishing those systems or inventing new ones is more difficult than coming up
 - with a long-lived storage mechanism."

The Future of the Past in the Digital Age

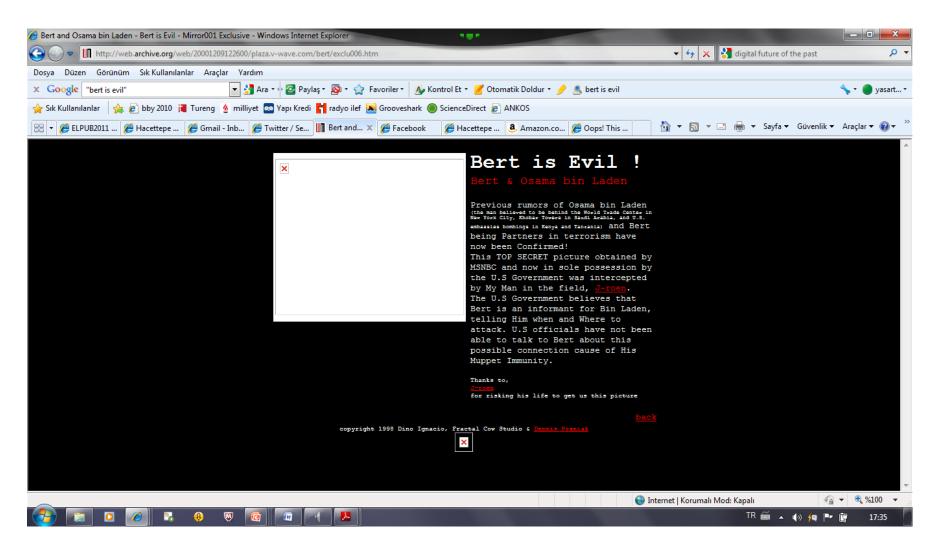




Copyrighted Material

"Bert is Evil!" is gone!



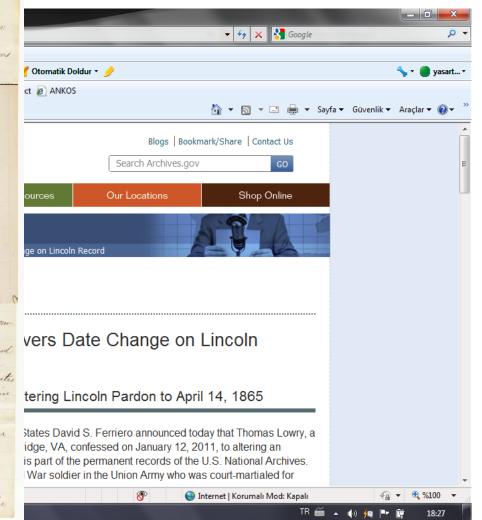




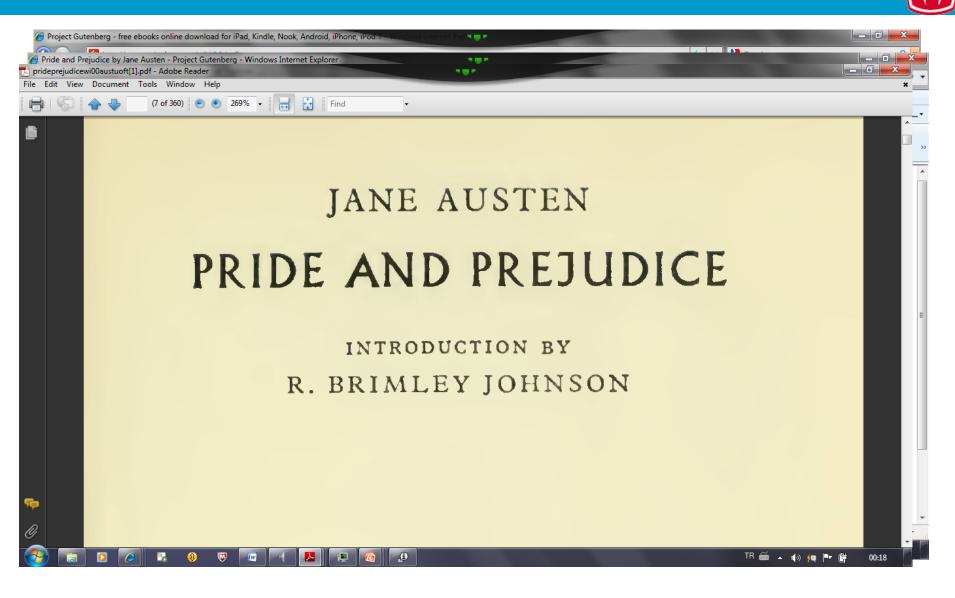
 "Not only are ephemera like Bert and government records made vulnerable by digitization but so are traditional works – books, journals and film- that are increasingly being born digitally. As yet, no one has figured out how to ensure that the digital present will be available to the future's historians." (Rosenzweig, 2011, p. 5).

Tampering with the Originals

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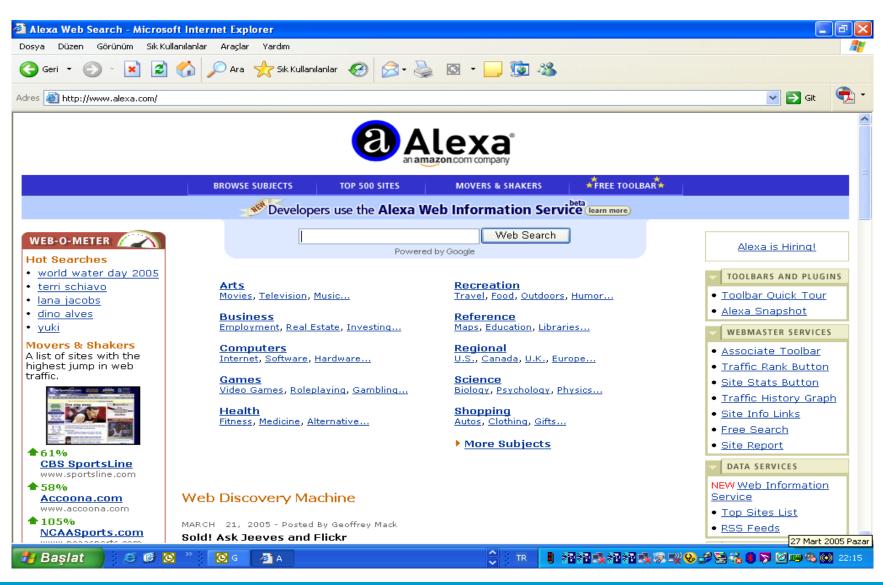


Current Digitization Initiatives



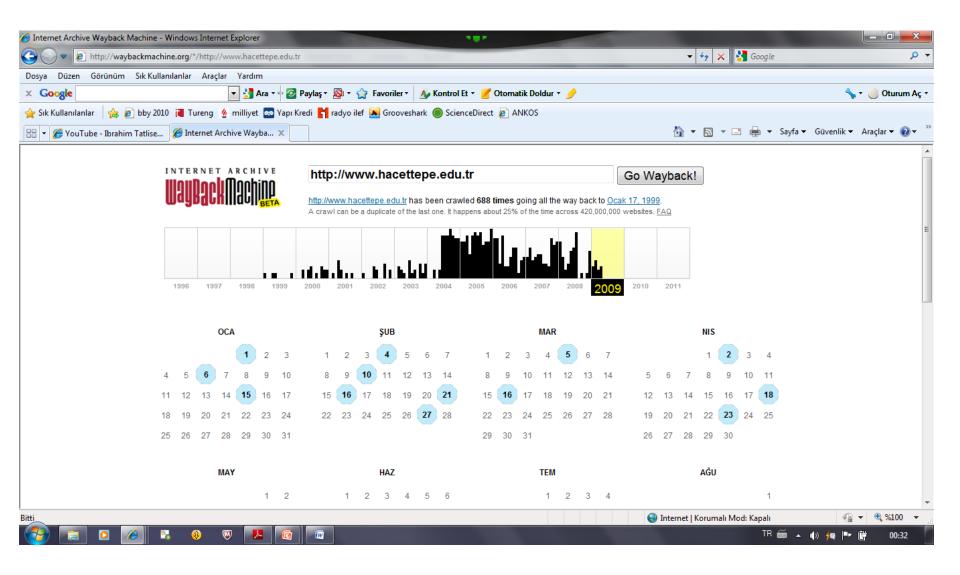
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The Wayback Machine



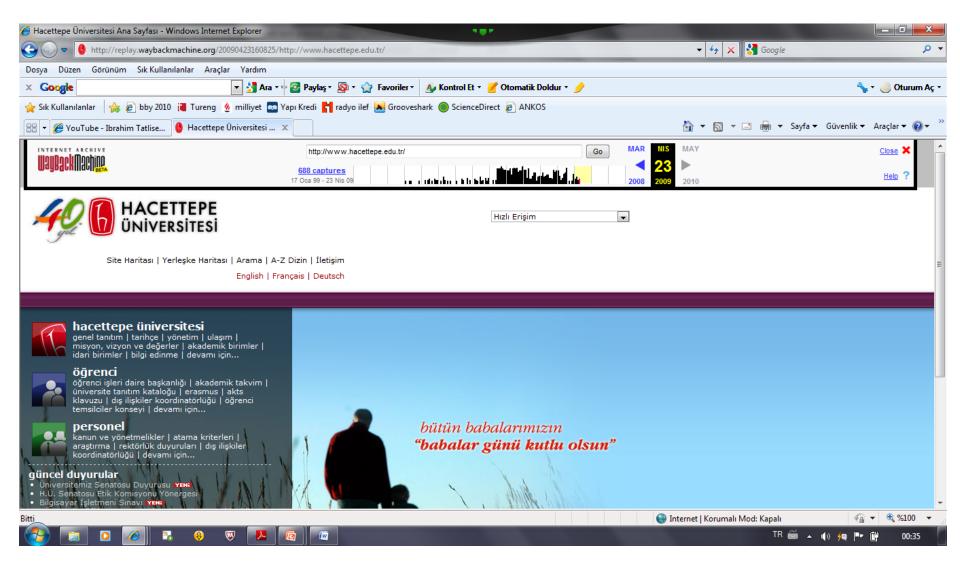


Hacettepe web site in 1999

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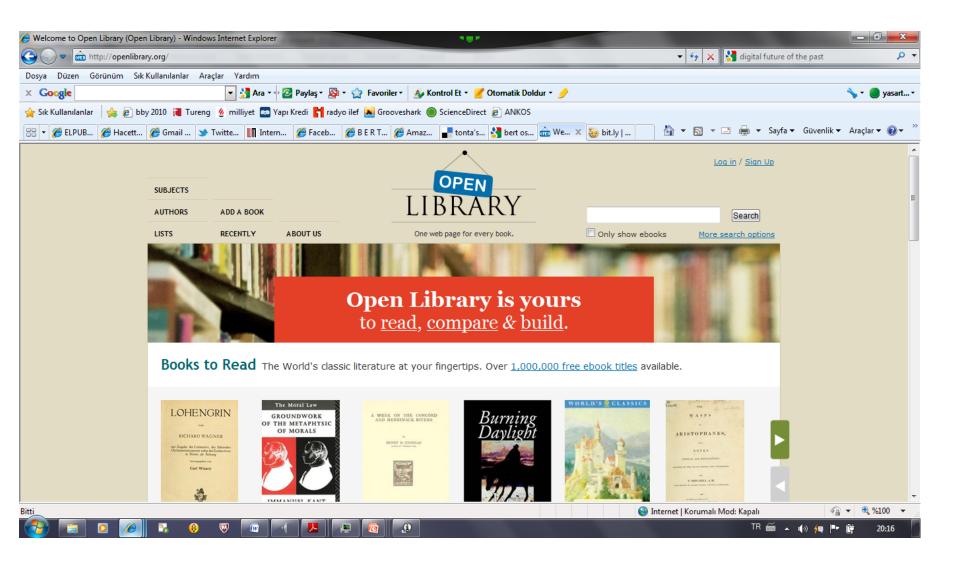
Hacettepe web site in 1999





Open Library





Google eBooks



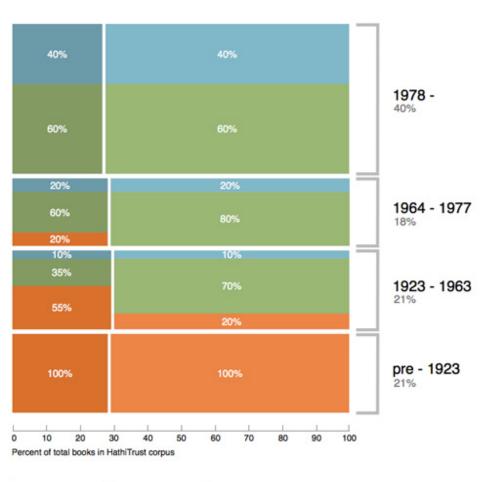
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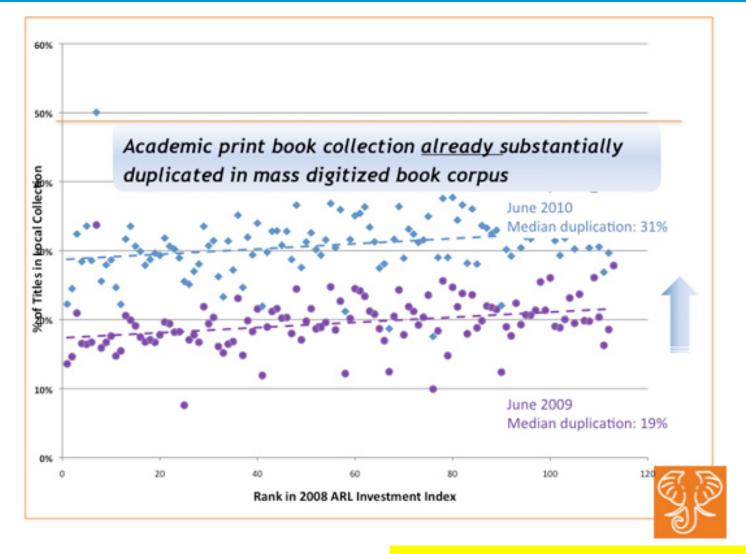
HathiTrust book corpus: Breakdown by US/non-US and rights status for all periods





http://www.clir.org/pubs/ruminations/01wilkin/wilkin.html

Overlap between HathiTrust and ARL libraries



http://www.clir.org/pubs/ruminations/01wilkin/wilkin.html

"Preserving Our Digital Heritage"

B

1. Stewardship network: Develop a growing national preservation network.

- 2. National digital collection: Develop a content collection plan that will seed a national collection and preserve important at-risk content.
- 3. **Technical infrastructure:** Build a shared technical platform for networked preservation.
- 4. **Public policy:** Develop recommendations to address copyright issues and to create a legal and regulatory environment that both encourages incentives and eliminates disincentives to preservation.



Preserving Our Digital Heritage: The National Digital Inforamtion Infrastructure and Preservation

View Document Tools Window Help

EC Recommendation: "Digitize once, distribute widely.



- 1) Digitization of content
 - by setting up large scale digitization facilities;
- 2) Online accessibility
 - by promoting the development of the European
 Digital Library as the multilingual access point
 to Europe's cultural heritage; and
- 3) Digital preservation
 - by establishing national strategies and plans for the long-term preservation of and access to digital material.

-http://europa.eu.int/information_society/activities/digital_libraries/doc/recommendation/recommendation/en.pdf.

Europeana: think culture



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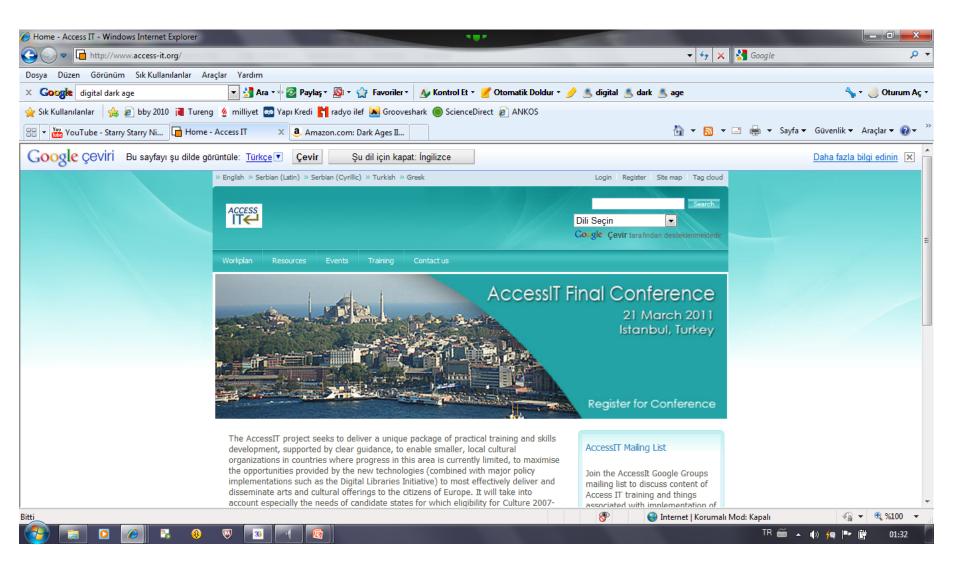
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AccessIT





The Way Forward

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- National digitization/preservation networks are not in place in many countries
- Not all cultures are represented in the European Digital Library
- The digital future of nations' past and present should be secured by investing in digitization efforts, by public as well as private and non-profit institutions
- All stakeholders should be involved



- The future constantly becomes the present and the present constantly becomes the past. Hence, "the future is the past". (Jackson Jackson)
- "Who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the present controls the past." (George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 1949)
- Securing the digital future of the past means securing the future.



The Digital Future of the Past and Present

Yaşar Tonta

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