DAWN OF DIGITAL REPOSITORY CERTIFICATION UNDER ISO 16363
EXPLORING THE HORIZON AND BEYOND
Perspectives From Three Institutions

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Abstract – The dawn of Trustworthy Digital Repository Certification under the ISO 16363:2012 standard is on the horizon. Across the digital preservation community, institutions are eager to learn more about the processes of preparing for and undergoing an ISO 16363 audit from an accredited third-party organization. As the first ISO 16363 audits in the world have been performed, repositories want to learn value and benefit that certification provides. This panel features representatives from three different repositories representing three countries with distinct collections, designated communities, organizational infrastructures, and unique challenges. Institutions represented on the panel have either recently achieved certified or are currently undergoing an ISO 16363 audit. This panel will explore each repository’s experience during, leading up to, and following certification. The panel will include a representative from the accredited external auditing body who has performed these audits to respond to audience questions about the audit process. The panelists from repositories will present varying perspectives on the future of digital repository certification, the role of digital preservation standards, and approaches to implementation. All panelists will present arguments, concerns, and criticisms regarding the ISO 16363 standard and existing methods of repository assessment.

Keywords – repository, trustworthy, standards, audit, certification

Conference Topics – Exploring New Horizons

I. INTRODUCTION

As of March 2019, two digital repositories have received certification under the ISO 16363:2012 Audit and Certification of Trustworthy Digital Repositories standard. Only one auditing body, the Primary Trustworthy Digital Repository Authorisation Body, Ltd. (PTAB) has publically announced their accreditation to perform such audits[1]. Though the digital preservation community has recognized the importance of standards and best practices for over two decades, now that an ISO 16363 certification process is in place, a relatively small number of repositories have initiated an external audit. Those repositories which have pursued certification represent diverse collections and designated communities, and this diversity presents unique challenges for the audit and audit preparation activities. Based on their experience with the audit and certification process, these early adopters are eager to share their perspective about the horizon of digital
repository certification and standards including a
discussion of the feasibility and value of an ISO 16363
for various types of digital repositories and
organizations.

II. INSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVES

This panel features representatives from the United
States Government Publishing Office (GPO), the Indira
Gandhi National Centre for the Arts National Cultural
AudioVisual Archives (NCAA), and the European
Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN). Each of
these repositories have either received certification or
are in the process of being certified under the ISO
16363:2012 standard. Also represented on the panel is
the British Library, an institution which has performed a
self-assessment against repository standards but
currently does not intend to pursue ISO 16363
certification. Each of these organizations have specific
institutional missions and stakeholders. These varying
institutional contexts prompted different, yet similar,
reasons for pursuing or not ISO 16363:2012
certification. Representatives from each organization
will discuss which assessment methodology was the
most appropriate for their institution and goals. Panel
questions will be presented from two alternating
members of the panel in order to allow for full
participation in responding to prepared questions, as
well as facilitated questions from the audience.

For each of these institutions, the implementation
and operation of a standards-based digital repository is
one of their key responsibilities. Preparing for the ISO
16363:2012 audits and self-assessments entailed
significant preparation and training. Each panelist will
share information about their preparatory activities
including the benefits of attending an ISO 16363
training course. Panelists will also reflect on challenges
to performing the audit, the criticality of institution-wide
support, and audit planning.

Panelists will discuss how their repository benefitted
from their certification experience. Representatives will
also explore the ways in which their organization has
improved or changed workflows and processes as an
outcome of the audit, how certification has impacted
stakeholders or designated community members
regarding the repository and its role, and how each
repository measures the success of their audit. In
addition, for those repositories that have achieved
certification, the panel will also discuss their next steps
to maintain certification and how they view the future
for their repository post-certification.

III. EXPLORING THE DIRECTION OF ISO 16363:2012

In addition to the three institutional repositories
represented on this panel, PTAB, an auditing body and
contributing author to the ISO 16363:2012 standard,
will provide perspectives on the historical development
of the standard and the ISO certification process. PTAB
will reflect on feedback received in regards to the
standards and the certification process and how, as
auditors, they believe that formal repository certification
will impact digital preservation and broader institutional
missions, communities, and nations.

Each repository will have the opportunity to share
assumptions they had prior to the certification process
and how their experience working with the auditing
body might inform their preparation for future
surveillance and re-certification audits in order to
maintain certification. Repository representatives will
share their perspectives on ways in which ISO
certification and the implementation of these standards
may be impacted by major policy directives, such as
national efforts for open access, accessibility,
transparency laws or other legal mandates.

Through a series of facilitated questions and
responses, the repositories will respond to frequent
arguments against ISO 16363 certification. Participants
on the panel will be prompted to consider the
appropriateness of ISO 16363 certification as compared
to tiered approaches to assessment, such as the
WDS/RDA repository audit method, or peer-to-peer
assessment models. Panelists will respond to whether
or not the certification will be able to maintain relevance
if more repositories are not participating in ISO 16363
audits and if the certification is ultimately successful in
establishing reputation across the digital preservation
professional community. Is the ISO standard too
complex or comprehensive to be practicable for most
institutions? Are ISO 16363 audits truly effective and
rigorous enough to evaluate long-term trust in
institutions with organizational infrastructure and
funding models which are complex, interdependent,
and changing? Panelists will consider the costs of
certification versus the costs of risk associated with
unreliable preservation systems. How would the ISO
audit be impacted by reliance on third-party software
services, enterprise technology dependences, or even
geographically distributed systems? The audience will
have the opportunity to question panelists, including
representation from PTAB, about the audit experience,
or more broadly, the suitability of assessment for their
individual situations. Representation from the British
Library allows the audience to gain perspective on ways
in which repository managers can evaluate and improve
their institutional practices successfully without
pursuing ISO certification. Additionally, panelists will
review the certification process and share feedback on
how digital preservation standards could be more
applicable and approachable to other repositories
interested in pursuing assessment and certification
under ISO 16363.

REFERENCES

[1] Audit & Certification, Primary Trustworthy Digital Repository
Authorisation Body Ltd. http://www.iso16363.org/iso-
certification/