

# 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. 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/>