

SCORE MODEL FOR THE PRESERVATION OF DIGITAL COLLECTIONS

A case for another digital preservation self-evaluation tool

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Abstract – The Score Model for the Preservation of Digital Collections is an online (www.scoremodel.org) self-evaluation tool for cultural heritage institutions which aims to help them with getting a grip on digital preservation. The idea and rationale behind the Score Model is that it can be easily used by smaller and less technically advanced organizations. It is therefore as jargon-free as possible and gives organizations hands-on advice on which issues should be tackled first. The Score Model has the form of an online tool in which the user has to register for an account. They then have to answer 56 questions - separated in seven ISO 16363 inspired clusters - which result in a final report. This report gives a comprehensive overview of how the user has scored for the different clusters and which issues the organization should tackle first. Additionally, the report gives an impression of how far the organization has advanced in becoming a Trusted Digital Repository in the form of qualifying for a Core Trust Seal.

Keywords – self-evaluation, risk assessment, certification.

Conference Topics – What steps are needed to build capacity and skills for organizations of all sizes?

I. INTRODUCTION

The Score Model for the Preservation of Digital Collections [1] is an easy to use, as much as possible jargon-free, self-evaluation tool that aims to help cultural heritage institutions with getting a grip on digital preservation. It is meant for organizations who take long-term digital access seriously but which are still developing policies and practices in this area. Practically the Score Model comes in the form of an online tool where the user answers 56 questions (or criteria), which result in a final report that gives an indication of how far the organization is advanced in digital preservation and offers suggestions for improvement in the form of an action plan.

II. MOTIVATION AND AIM

The wish to facilitate an easy-to-use, online self-evaluation digital preservation tool for less technically oriented institutions, was the motivation behind the creation of (yet) another self-evaluation instrument. The existing evaluation or certification tools (see below) are mostly documents with a high level of complexity, full of technical and (OAIS) jargon and therefore not very accessible (in terms of use) to less experienced users. Clearly these tools are often meant as the basis for (external) audits, mostly executed by experts in the field.

However justified this complexity may be in regard of the arduous domain of digital preservation, these tools carry the risk of resulting in the opposite effect, in which inexperienced users drop the case for digital preservation altogether.

The choice for an easy-to-use self-evaluation tool was made on the assumption that by using it, institutions would be more inclined to critically view their own digital preservation policy, expertise, systems and workflows. The format of an online score model was chosen because of its easily accessible and interactive nature, because it can be easily maintained and because user results can be easily published and (if wished for) shared.

III. HOW THE SCORE MODEL WORKS

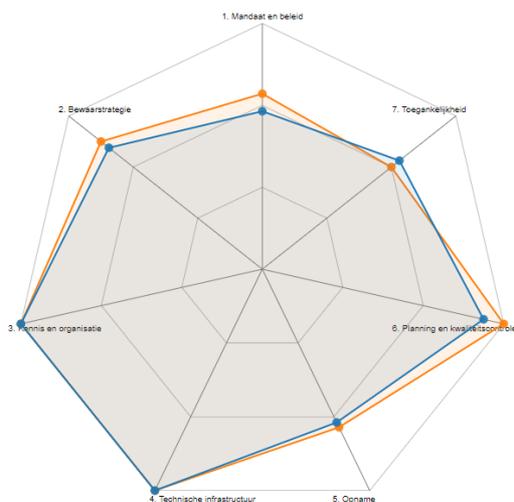
The user of the Score Model has to create an account. This makes it possible to fill in the questions in more sessions (which will often be the case) and revisit earlier made reports. Score Model end reports are explicitly not shared

with the outside world and are not used for benchmarking purposes. This was considered essential as the data produced is in many cases of a confidential nature.

After logging in, the user has to create a new report or they can go back to earlier made one. The user then starts filling in the 56 criteria - divided over seven clusters - of which Score Model consist. Each question is to be answered by a deliberately simple yes or no. As in some cases the answer will not always be so clear-cut, the user is urged to answer the questions in a consequent way. Each criterion comes with some contextual information, i.e. an explanation of the risk when no action is undertaken and an example.

As stated already, the criteria are divided into seven sections: organization and policy, preservation strategy, expertise and organization, storage management, ingest, planning and control, and access. These follow more or less the logical order used in ISO 16363 and other evaluation tools. Criteria can have three risk levels: high, normal or low. The idea behind this is that the high-risk criteria ideally have to be solved first, followed by the medium- and low-risk criteria. Also the risk levels have an effect on the score.

When the user has filled in all criteria they will receive a final report which contains a spider graph that shows how they have scored for each cluster. Also they receive an action plan which contains the five most urgent criteria the organisation should ideally solve first. The complete final report contains all criteria and what the user has answered.



Example of the spider graph that is part of the Score Model final report. It shows the scores for the seven clusters of which the Score Model consists.

The dark area is the score of the organisation. The light area gives an indication of how the organisation scores in relation to the Core Trust Seal.

IV. RELATION WITH OTHER EVALUATION TOOLS

The model is based on several well-known audit tools and evaluation checklists for digital preservation: the Trusted Digital Repository (TDR) Checklist (ISO 16363), DRAMBORA and foremostly the Core Trust Seal. The Score Model was inspired by a concept of the Digital Preservation Capability Maturity Model by Charles Dollar. Like most of

these tools, the Score model focuses on both technical and policy/organization-related considerations.

One of the big challenges of building the Score model was translating the often complex and interlinked terminology of these tools and checklists into understandable, but not simplistic criteria. Also for the sake of conciseness the amount of criteria had to stay within reasonable bounds.

The real difference with the aforementioned evaluation tools is thus that the Score Model aims to assist organizations in prioritizing what should ideally be done first to come to a level of 'trustworthiness'. Also the Score Model is unique in that it gives the user an indication of how far they are advanced in gaining TDR status in the form of a Core Trust Seal certificate. This can easily be seen in the spider graph from the final report.

V. BROADER IMPLICATIONS

As jargon-free and technically understandable as the Score Model tries to be, some parts of the model may still be hard to be fill out. As the model covers the whole spectrum from institutional policy, financial and organizational practices, preservation planning, ICT strategies and dissemination, it might be a challenge for one person to give answers to all criteria.

This is of course a bigger problem than the Score Model itself. The broad implications of implementing digital preservation policies in an organization are exactly why digital preservation is still very problematic for a lot of cultural heritage institutions. The feeling of urgency and the (costly) investments needed in people, knowledge, soft- and hardware may, in the daily battle for other priorities, be snowed under or even (willfully) ignored. Of course the Score Model as an instrument cannot solve this lack of commitment, means and/or feeling of urgency. However, it can help by giving insight into where the major obstacles lay and where the first steps towards digital preservation "trustworthiness" might be taken.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

The Score Model has its own place among other digital preservation self-evaluation and certification tools. Its added value lies in its jargon free, easy to use and practical, hands-on approach to digital preservation challenges.

REFERENCES

- [1] Homepage Scoremodel: <https://scoremodel.org>. The Score Model was created and is maintained by Flemish and Dutch cultural heritage supporting organizations PACKED (Centre of Expertise in Digital Heritage <https://www.packed.be/en/>), DEN Digital Heritage Netherlands, <https://www.den.nl/> and the International Institute of Social History (<https://socialhistory.org>) on behalf of the Dutch Heritage Network (<https://www.netwerkdigitaalervoed.nl/en/>).
- [2] ISO 16363: Audit and certification of trustworthy digital repositories <https://www.iso.org/standard/56510.html>, Core Trust Seal, <https://www.coretrustseal.org/>, DRAMBORA <https://www.repositoryaudit.eu/>.