JOHNS HOPKINS COLLABORATES ON
DIGITAL PRESERVATION PROJECT

Work to Lay the Foundation for Preserving the Nation's Electronic Archives

In a project to test the best methods and strategies for long-term preservation of important digital collections, the Sheridan Libraries of The Johns Hopkins University are participating in a $1 million Library of Congress project called the Archive Ingest and Handling Test.

Along with Harvard, Stanford and Old Dominion universities, researchers at the Digital Knowledge Center at Johns Hopkins will work with a massive collection of images, e-mail messages, Web pages, chat logs and the like focused on the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States. The collection of some 57,000 digital records was collected by historians at George Mason University and donated to the Library of Congress for this preservation test project.

"We're thrilled that this is going to be preserved for the long haul," said Tom Scheinfeldt, managing director of the September 11 Digital Archive. "I think the exciting thing about this is having a real-world case study."

Using different methods, each university will analyze the Sept. 11 collection and test ways for "bulk ingesting" the archive into digital repository systems, keeping in mind that data formats - such as html, .jpg and the like - may go out of use over time and that for true long-term preservation, any digital repository must be flexible and capable of migrating data and adapting to new formats.

"Digital preservation of our nation's social, cultural and historic record is vitally important and we're delighted that the Sheridan Libraries are participating in this effort," said Winston Tabb, dean of university libraries and director of the Sheridan Libraries.

The Johns Hopkins team will test multiple systems, not only to determine how the systems handle the data but also to see how the systems may work with one another, said Sayeed Choudhury, associate director for digital programs in the Sheridan Libraries.

"For this particular test, one system may be sufficient," said Choudhury, who will oversee the Hopkins test project. "But when one considers the diversity and scale of digital content, it's possible that one system will not be sufficient. This test will help us understand the features of the multiple systems as they relate to different types of content and metadata."

At the end of the 12-month test, the participants will publish a final report detailing both current practices for digital preservation and future areas of research. Further information about the project will be posted periodically at: http://www.digitalpreservation.gov/

The Archive Ingest Handling Test is part of an initiative led by the Library of Congress to build a network of preservation partners through the National Digital Information Infrastructure and Preservation Program.


###

Johns Hopkins University news releases can be found on the World Wide Web at: Headlines@Hopkins