

# MEMORY: BUILDING CAPACITY IN THE DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

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## ABSTRACT

Local history collections tell the 'story' of their communities. This history helps to define and knit a community together, and is as important as ever in an increasingly digital age.

*Memory* is a State Library Victoria (SLV) and Public Libraries Victoria Network initiative to build the capacity of Victorian public libraries to collect, manage and share local history collections in the digital environment. The aim is to grow the ability of public libraries to meet demand from local history groups, family history communities and the general public for online access to local history collections and content.

As an important first step in meeting this aim, *Memory* focussed on increasing awareness about digital preservation and equipping Victorian libraries with the skills needed to identify, select, store, protect, manage and provide digital content.

In collaboration with the National and State Libraries of Australasia (NSLA) and SLV, the *Memory* Workgroup brought the Library of Congress' Digital Preservation Outreach and Education (DPOE) train-the-trainer course to Australia. The program

was run twice, once in Sydney at State Library of New South Wales (SLNSW) for representatives from each of the 10 NSLA Libraries and once in Victoria at SLV for the *Memory* project with 20 Victorian public library staff participating in the four-day program.

*Memory* chose the DPOE program because it presents a framework for digital preservation that can be used by all staff regardless of their current knowledge or expertise and because of the train-the-trainer delivery model. In this model the staff attending the DPOE program take on the role of trainers and deliver the program to other public library staff.

The DPOE training was of particular interest as it could be rolled out across Australasia by NSLA and enable all Victorian public library staff to be trained in a new standard approach for digital preservation.

Following the four-day train-the-trainer program, *Memory* brought the cohort of twenty staff back together a number of times to develop the final training, which they delivered to public library staff throughout Victoria from October 2015 to April 2016.

This paper details the benefits and pitfalls of this approach, and how it provides a good model for building capacity of public library staff for other States and Territories to consider.

## **Background**

*Memory* is one of a suite of state-wide collaborative projects conducted under the auspices of the Library Board of Victoria to assist in the development of Victoria's public library network.

A planning retreat, *On the Road to 2030*, was held in late July 2013 to identify priorities for the 2014-17 Statewide Public Library Development Projects. Attended by Victoria's public library managers and senior managers from SLV, this highlighted the importance of programs that focussed on supporting, sharing and building Victorian public libraries' heritage collections. Local history tells the story of Victorian communities and is a topic of extremely high interest with the public and of growing importance to public libraries. With an expected more than doubling of the population in Victoria aged over 65 from 2012 to 2061, (ABS, 2013) this sector of the population has time on their hands and the desire to research local and family history. Public libraries in Australia are often the first port of call for local and family history information. There is an increased demand for records online and the digitisation of primary records, highlighting the importance of developing staff skills in managing digital collections (State Library Victoria, 2014, p 4).

The key component of the *Memory* program was to build the capacity of public libraries to collect, manage and share local history collections in the digital environment. *Victorian Public Libraries 2030* highlighted the important role of staff in delivering the Community Library and Creative Library. *Memory* is informed by this and the strategic vision articulated in *Victorian Public Libraries 2030* – the 'Community Library is a learning village' (State Library Victoria, 2014, p 5).

It was seen as essential that the *Memory* program included a training component to help public library staff develop their skills and understanding in working with digital materials, helping them to meet the needs of the public in creating and developing digital content that reflects their local community.

The *Memory* program aimed to provide the following opportunities:

- train staff in current digital content and collection management practices and enable a more consistent approach to digitising and conservation across Victorian public libraries
- increase opportunity to discover significant physical and digital items and work towards protecting and sharing these more widely
- increase capacity for public libraries to collect, manage and share their local history collections and content in the digital environment
- encourage community participation in creating and developing content
- increase engagement with and use of public library and SLV local history collections and content (State Library Victoria, 2014, pp 5-6)

The program built on current and past cycles of Statewide Public Library

Development Projects:

- Digitising WWI Victorian Newspapers project (2011–14) and Digitising Victorian Newspapers project (2008–11).
- Memory Victoria project (2005–08), which focused on assessment, advice and training to Victorian public libraries to evaluate their local historical content with the long-term view of increasing accessibility for the Victorian community.
- Picture Victoria – Local History Digitisation Project (2004–07). The project aimed to make local history materials held by Victoria's public libraries, especially photographic material, available online, and to make online history collections readily accessible through a common platform.

This project was based on the recommendations of a feasibility study conducted by Swinburne University Library.

- Local History Digitisation research project undertaken for SLV and Victoria's public libraries by Swinburne University Library in 2001.

These projects demonstrated a long-term commitment by Victorian public libraries and SLV to making local and family history material more accessible (State Library Victoria, 2014, p 6).

To achieve this, the *Memory Workgroup* of public library and State Library staff took advantage of plans by the NSLA Digital Skills Group to run training for NSLA library staff in digital preservation. The training identified by the NSLA Digital Skills Group was the Library of Congress' Digital Preservation Outreach and Education (DPOE) train-the-trainer course. Digital preservation is 'the accurate rendering of authenticated content over time' (American Library Association 2007), it is about having systems and processes in place to ensure that digital objects in all their formats remain accessible and accurately rendered over time as formats and systems change.

The DPOE training was of particular interest to the *Memory Workgroup* as it could be rolled out across Australasia by NSLA and enable all Victorian public library staff to be trained in a new standard approach for digital preservation.

DPOE was also considered a good fit for *Memory* because of its train-the-trainer delivery model and as it presented a framework for digital preservation that could be used by all staff regardless of their current knowledge or expertise.

## Capacity building

The DPOE program fosters outreach and education about digital preservation on a global scale, and promotes continuing education and training opportunities that increase individual and organisational capacity to provide long-term, durable access to digital content. DPOE supports an international network of trainers who provide training on the fundamentals of digital preservation for current and future professionals. DPOE includes Library of Congress staff, the trainer network, a working group of subject-matter experts, and a community of digital preservation advocates (Library of Congress 2016).

20 Victorian public library participants were selected for the DPOE course following an expression of interest process. Participants had to commit to attending the four-day DPOE course to be held at SLV, doing 12 hours of pre-reading and presenting at least one of the digital preservation modules that they developed at DPOE in the 12 months following their training.

The Victorian public library participants came from 17 metropolitan, outer metropolitan and regional Victorian library services, including:

- Brimbank Libraries
- Casey-Cardinia Library Corporation
- Central Highlands Libraries Corporation
- Darebin Libraries
- Eastern Regional Libraries Corporation
- Geelong Regional Library Corporation
- Glenelg Libraries
- Greater Dandenong Libraries

- High Country Library Corporation
- Latrobe City Library
- Melbourne Library Service
- Mildura Rural City Council Library Service
- Stonnington Library and Information Service
- Wimmera Regional Library Corporation
- Wyndham City Library Service
- Yarra Libraries
- Yarra Plenty Regional Library Service

Once the participants were selected they were asked to complete a short pre-training survey. This survey was designed to help inform the DPOE trainers about the Public Libraries Victoria Network (PLVN) education needs in digital preservation and assist them to tailor the course to best meeting those needs.

The three DPOE trainers Mary Molinaro (University of Kentucky Libraries), Jacob Nadal (The Research Collections and Preservation Consortium) and Amy Rudersdorf (Digital Library of America) arrived in Australia in late May 2015 to run two DPOE train-the-trainer workshops. One workshop was held in Victoria at SLV for the *Memory* program with the 20 Victorian public library staff participants and one in Sydney at State Library of New South Wales (SLNSW) for representatives from each of the 10 NSLA libraries.

DPOE's digital preservation curriculum covers six core modules—identify, select, store, protect, manage and provide. As shown in Figure one, these provide a framework covering each key step in collecting, managing and making digital collection material available to library users.

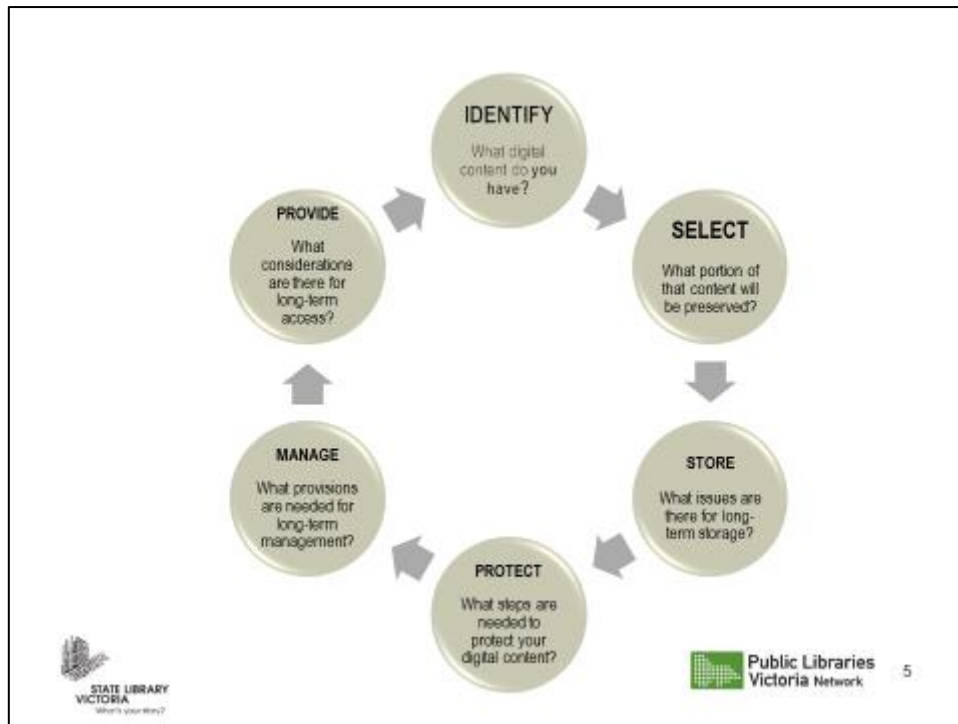


Figure one: DPOE digital preservation framework

The four-day course assumed that all participants had completed the pre-reading. On the first day, the trainers went through the framework and outlined the role and importance of each of the six modules. At the end of the first day participants were divided into six groups. Each group was assigned one module and that evening and for all of day two they worked on developing training materials for this module with assistance from the trainers. This approach was deeply rooted in the concept that the best way to understand a subject is to have to teach it to someone else.

This approach was quite confronting for a number of participants, as rather than being handed pre-prepared material to learn, they were required to develop teaching materials in subjects that they themselves were there to learn about. The trainers provided excellent support, both in the subject matter and in ways to teach the concepts and present the material to others, and all of the participants rose to the



challenge. Groups worked on their modules during the day and also met that night to further discuss and develop the materials.

On day three, each group had to present their module to the larger group, including the trainers. The larger group was encouraged to provide feedback on the content and the delivery of each module.

The final day of the course included a detailed review of the work completed to-date, identification of the next steps for rolling out the training across Victoria to public libraries, and presentations by the trainers on broader digital preservation trends.

The structure and approach of the train-the-trainer course was intensive but rewarding, as highlighted in comments provided by participants in their post-course evaluations.

*It was the most intensive training I have ever experienced.*

*It was a level I could comprehend and enabled me to see how I could implement this practically in my own and other workplaces.*

*I felt the entire course was very focussed and logical. Each component is important to the process of digital preservation. The concept of moving from project to embedded processes is very important.*

### **Training the trainers and developing the materials**

While the participants gained a lot of knowledge and skills from the four-day workshop and training materials had been developed, more work was needed to

refine both before the trainers and the materials were ready to deliver the sessions throughout Victoria.

This took a lot more work than had been originally envisaged by the *Memory* Workgroup. A follow-up session had always been planned to allow the 20 public library participants to plan the roll-out and practice the sessions. However, following the four-day course it was decided that an additional session on advanced presentation skills would also be included. A local trainer was engaged and the participants were brought back together a month later to learn tips and practise their training skills. This additional session was key to building the confidence of the participants and to the overall success of the final sessions they delivered across Victoria.

Another component that required more work than originally envisaged was the development of the final training materials. After some deliberation it was agreed that the best way for the material to be delivered would be as a one-day Digital Preservation Awareness session. The materials created by the participants during the four-day course were revised and standardised by Sarah Slade and Susan McLaine from SLV. A similar look and tone for the materials was created, additional information about digital preservation principles and practice was included and the participants contacted to provide key examples from digital material held in Victorian public libraries to be used in the training materials.

Participants were brought back together again as a group for a day to review the final draft of the training materials, highlight areas where they had concerns or queries, and identify where additional guidance information was needed.

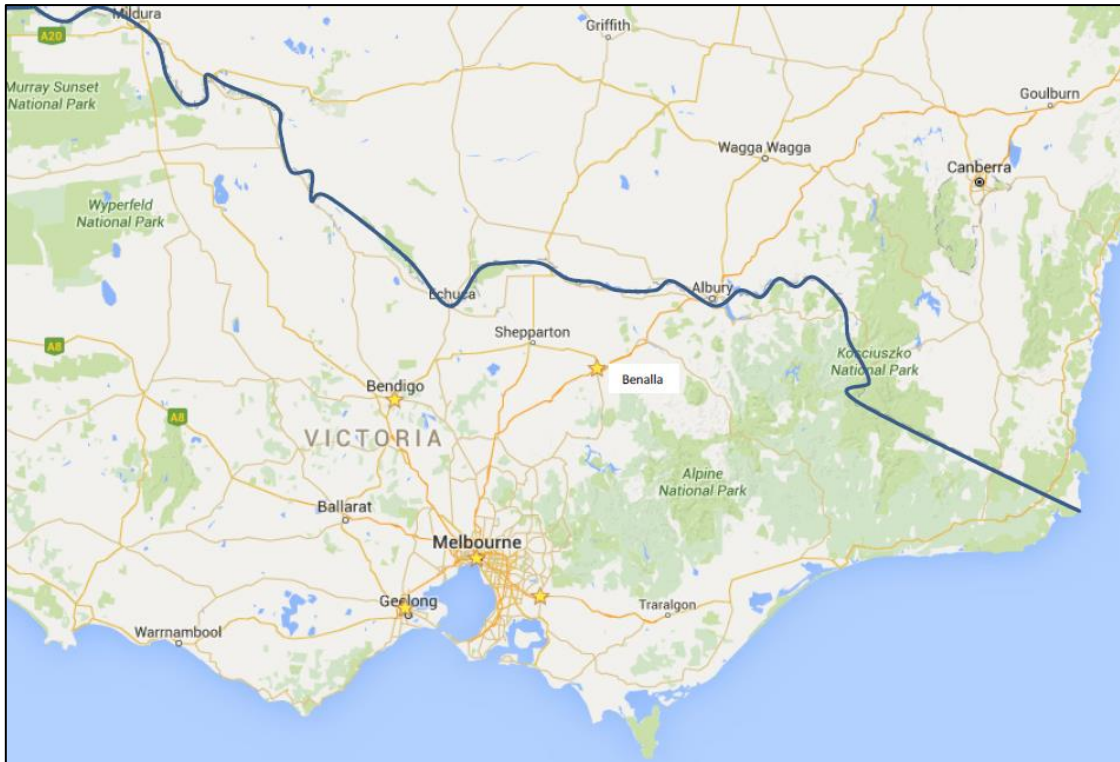
The draft training materials were finalised by Sarah and Susan and the finished Digital Preservation Awareness course pack for the public library trainers included the following materials:

- Digital Preservation Awareness PowerPoint pack (115 slides)
- Digital Preservation Awareness presenters guidance notes for 115 slides
- Seven hand-outs, including:
  - Metadata
  - Checksum
  - Open Archival Information System (OAIS) model diagram
  - Functions of OAIS
  - Storage options to consider
  - Trusted Digital Repository
  - Further readings
- A frequently asked questions (FAQ) sheet for the presenters to refer to

Once the Digital Preservation Awareness course materials were completed, they were distributed to the trainers, who had time to practice them before the sessions were delivered.

### **Running the sessions throughout Victoria**

It was important that the Digital Preservation Awareness sessions were run across metropolitan, outer metropolitan and regional Victorian locations. Those selected were Melbourne, Bendigo, Benalla, Pakenham and Geelong, as indicated by the yellow stars in Figure two.



*Figure two: Location of the five Digital Preservation Awareness sessions (Google Maps 2016)*

Five day-long sessions were run from October 2015 to April 2016 and each of the 20 public library trainers were involved in running at least one session. A total of 79 staff from Victorian public libraries attended one of the day-long sessions which covered the whole digital preservation framework.

Nearly half (47%) of the participants were from metropolitan libraries, 11% were from outer metropolitan and 42% were from regional libraries. A range of work areas were represented with staff attending coming not only from a collections, cataloguing, archiving or local and family history area, but importantly also from the libraries' digital content, systems, information technology and strategic development areas, as shown in Figure three.

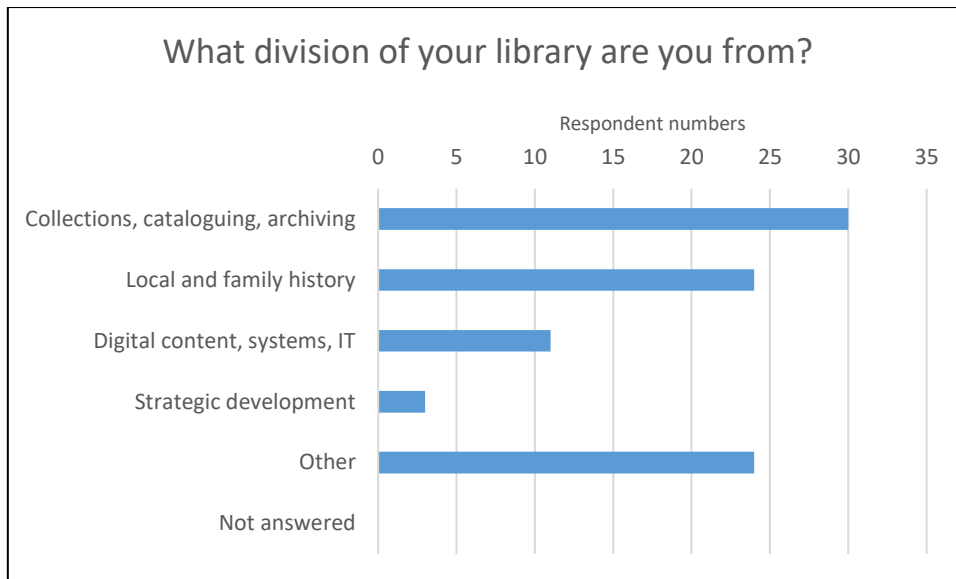


Figure three: Library work areas represented by participants

Participants also covered a range of employment band levels from three to seven, as shown in Figure four, providing good coverage from all key work areas and levels of the library services.

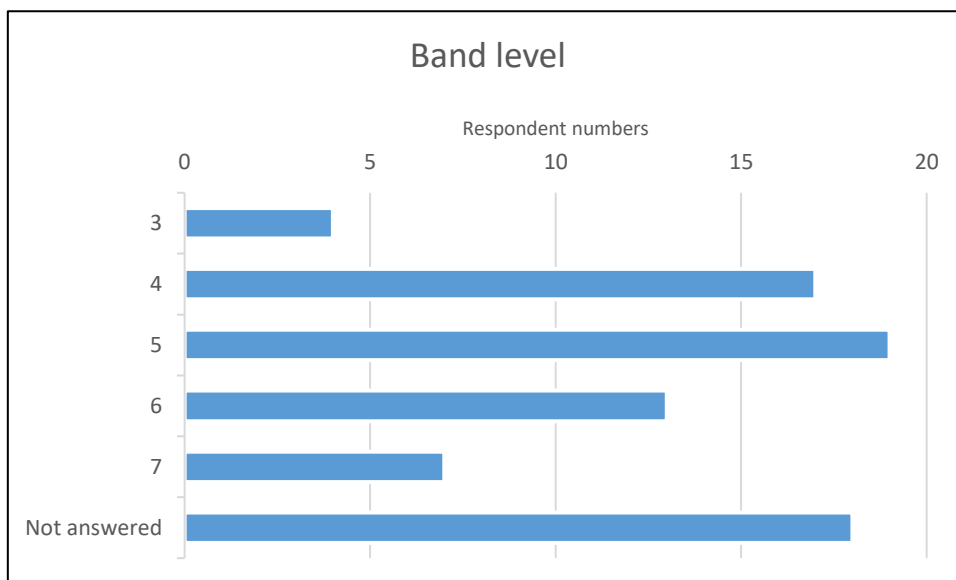


Figure four: Band levels of participants

Attendees were asked to complete an evaluation survey indicating their awareness of digital preservation before and after the Digital Preservation Awareness session. As shown in Figure five below, participants' awareness increased considerably after attending the one-day session. Those indicating a very high or high level of awareness jumped from 24 participants before the sessions to 73 after the sessions, and those indicating a low or very low awareness reduced from 27 before the sessions to only one participant after the sessions.

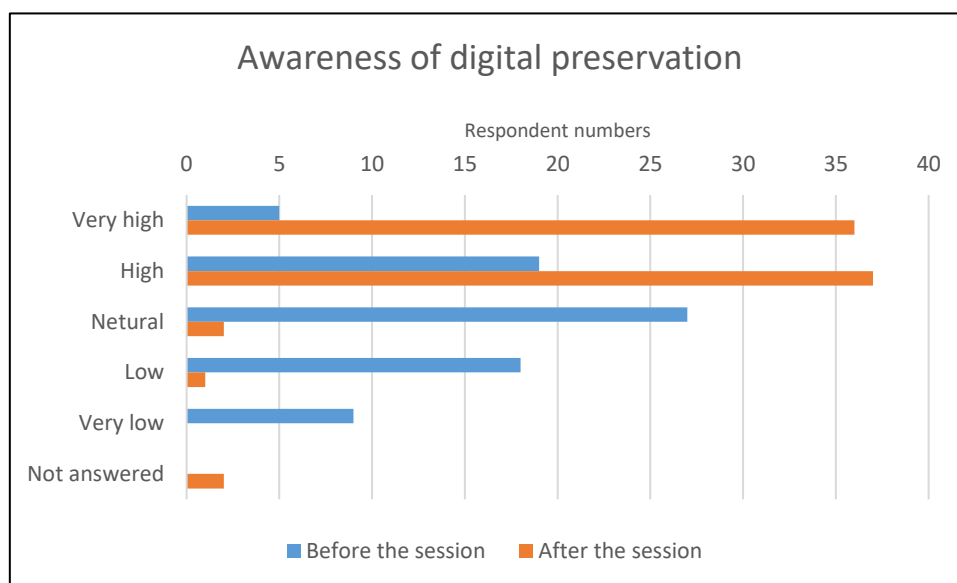
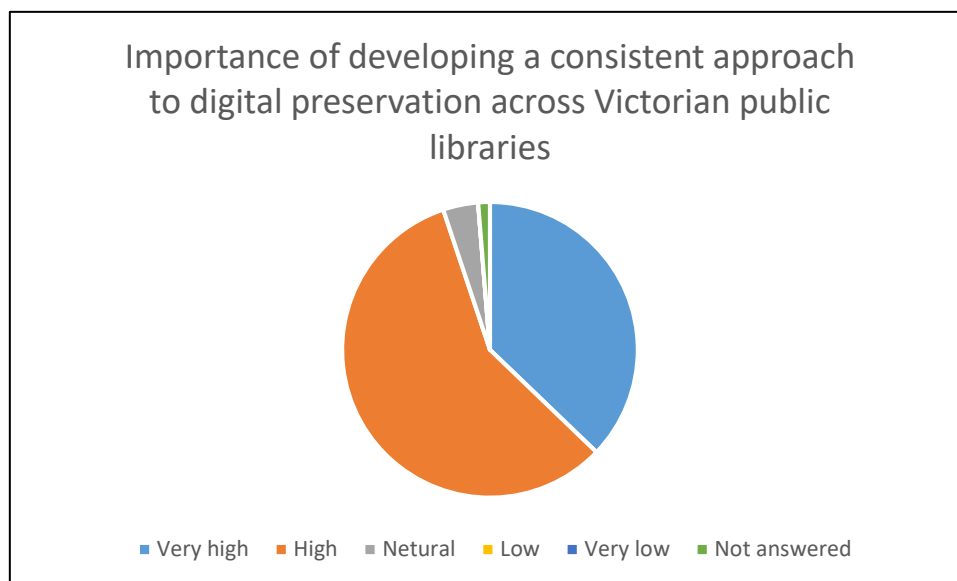


Figure five: Comparison of awareness of digital preservation before and after attending the sessions

While increasing individual's awareness about digital preservation was an important aim of the program, it also had a wider aim of ensuring that Victorian public libraries' can safely store and continue to make their increasingly digital local history collections accessible over the long-term. For this to occur, a consistent approach to the identification, selection, storage, protection, management and provision of digital local history collection material is needed across Victorian public libraries.

This was assessed as part of the evaluation, where participants were asked to indicate the importance of developing a consistent approach to digital preservation across Victorian public libraries. As can be seen in Figure six, after attending the Digital Preservation Awareness sessions participants overwhelmingly indicated that this was of very high to high importance.



*Figure six: Importance of a consistent approach across Victorian public libraries*

## **Benefits and pitfalls**

Overall the intensive train-the-trainer approach taken to build the capacity of Victorian public libraries to collect, manage and share local history collection in the digital environment was very successful. While confronting, creating an environment where the focus is on the participants developing the materials as part of their own training is an excellent way to engage participants and trigger self-directed learning. The benefits from this approach were clear in the knowledge and confidence levels

of the public library trainers by the end of the process, and from the evaluations from people attending the Digital Preservation Awareness sessions.

The only pitfall was the amount of time and specialist expertise needed to take the draft training material created during the four-day course and develop them into a comprehensive, cohesive training pack. For the *Memory* program, the benefits certainly outweighed the pitfall.

### **Where to next?**

While not a pitfall of the program, a key consideration of such an approach is how to continue the work. There was a lot of interest and discussion about creating a community of practice and discussion forum after the program formally finished. Some initial steps have been taken towards this end but an approach that can be sustained by the public libraries needs to be identified.

### **Outcomes**

The *Memory* program was successful in a number of key ways, it:

- achieved its key aim of building the capacity of Victorian public libraries to collect, manage and share local history collections in the digital environment
- increased awareness in digital preservation, equipping Victorian public libraries with the skills needed to identify, select, store, protect, manage and provide digital content
- provided the State Library of Victoria and the Victorian Public Libraries Network with a clear picture of the importance of digital preservation in ensuring that Victorian public libraries' can safely store and continue to make their increasingly digital local history collections accessible over the long-term



This approach provides a good model for building capacity of public library staff in the digital environment for other States and Territories to consider and implement.

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## BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF PRESENTER

Sarah Slade is Head of Storage & Digital Collection Services at State Library Victoria (SLV). Sarah has worked at SLV for the past 10 years, after working for a range of organisations including Artlab Australia, Scottish Museums Council, International Conservation Services, Australian National Maritime Museum and her own consultancy. Her background is in conservation and collection management, more recently she has focussed on aspects of managing digital collections and digital preservation. She is the Project Manager for NSLA's Digital Preservation Group and a member of NSLA's Digital Skills Project.