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## UNESCO Digital Roadmap kicks off under the name PERSIST <sup>[1]</sup>

Digital information is difficult to preserve over longer periods of time. Carriers like floppies or CD-ROMs have a short life span, and even if you have managed to keep the bits and bytes, the risk that current hardware and software cannot process the old data is very real. Archives, museums and libraries are acutely aware of these problems, yet they cannot find solutions on their own.

In December of 2013 an international meeting took place in The Hague in which the ICT industry, governments and heritage institutions discussed collaboration in the field of digital preservation. The meeting was convened by UNESCO, and was possible thanks to a subvention from the Netherlands Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.



Heritage institutions often have the feeling that their concerns for long-term preservation are not sufficiently taken into account by the industry, and they are looking for ways to influence the decisions of the industry at the earliest phase, when new products are developed.

However, in practice they typically work at the very end of the life-cycle of digital documents, where they have to tend to vast collections of disparate materials for which industry support can no longer be guaranteed. The industry representatives in the panel (Microsoft, International Chamber of Commerce) explained the way businesses work, and discussed in an open and realistic manner how the heritage community could find ways to make its concerns shared by the industry; the word ‘business model’ was on everybody’s lip.

### **Bridge the divide**

This discussion between such diverging stakeholders does not come about by itself. Industry and heritage institutions have their own platform to discuss digital preservation, and there seems to be insufficient awareness of what happens at the other side. The Roadmap project should do its bit to bridge this divide.

The important role of national, regional (European Union) and global government (United Nations) in all this is evident. It was stressed that sustained access to government information is vital for development, democracy and the rule of law all over the globe. Moreover, governments can influence developments, not only because they set the rules for businesses and draft the archival laws, but also because they are an important purchaser of ICT-products.

### **PERSIST**

In the coming years, UNESCO will cooperate with ICA, IFLA, LIBER and other partners to continue and intensify the discussion that started in The Hague. Under the new name UNESCO-PERSIST (Platform to Enhance the Sustainability of the Information Society Transglobally) it will address globally pressing questions on selection, responsibility and division of labour.

More information on UNESCO-PERSIST can be found here:

- [Position paper](#) <sup>[2]</sup> for the meeting by Marco de Niet (DEN Foundation/Digital Heritage Netherlands) en Marcel Ras (Koninklijke Bibliotheek/National Library of the Netherlands)
- [Digital Roadmap – Report](#) <sup>[3]</sup>
- [Digital Roadmap – Executive Summary](#) <sup>[4]</sup>



#### **Dossier:**

[Digital Sustainability](#) <sup>[5]</sup>

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