

Case study on procuring a Digital Preservation system

In May 2014, the University of Sheffield published an invitation for expressions of interest supported by fully costed quotations from companies able to supply either a complete digital preservation system or individual components to be integrated into a system. The invitation was accompanied by a set of functional requirements covering the following areas:

- structure (compliance with OAIS Reference Model, interoperability, roadmap)
- ingest
- data management and metadata
- preservation planning
- storage functionality
- administration
- support

These requirements were drawn up in collaboration with colleagues at the University of York, and although ultimately the two institutions selected different solutions, it was exceptionally helpful to share ideas and experiences while putting together the document.

A commercial solution was of particular interest to Sheffield, due to the limited developer resource available to implement an open-source solution.

During the submission period, Sheffield received 19 expressions of interest, resulting in five full tender responses. As well as the paperwork responding to the specification, demonstration visits were arranged with all five vendors. To these were invited a range of colleagues both from the University Library (Systems, Special Collections, National Fairground Archive, Research Data Management, Metadata and Procurement) and from the wider University (Records Management, Computing Services, Student Support, Planning & Governance). The Library's immediate requirement was for a system to preserve the outputs of digitisation programmes in the Special Collections Department and National Fairground Archive, and to provide for long-term preservation of the born-digital archival material beginning to be deposited. The management and preservation of research data was a further requirement, and, although the Library was taking the lead on procuring the Digital Preservation system, it was always intended to be for the benefit of the whole institution, preserving the University's corporate memory and providing for future access to the University's administrative, academic and statutory outputs.

Having a variety of colleagues present at the demonstrations was very helpful, although the whole concept of digital preservation was new to some, and unsurprisingly there was considerable confusion over the difference between storage/backup and preservation... Nevertheless, the range of experiences and interests made for very valuable questions and discussions, and gave the procurement team much food for thought.

The result of the demonstrations and paper submissions was to narrow the field down to two suppliers, and further meetings and input from their existing customers were needed because both systems were clearly capable of providing what was required. In the end, the decision was made to select Rosetta from Ex Libris, with whom the Library already had experience as early adopters of the Alma library management system. Both suppliers were exceptionally helpful during the course of the decision-making process, and good relationships have been maintained with the unsuccessful vendor. At the time of writing, the implementation phase of Rosetta is coming to an end: inevitably there have been some challenges but the hard work, dedication and ingenuity of the teams at Sheffield and Ex Libris have enabled solutions to be found.