



Strategic Directions 2018-2021: Growth and Development

Acknowledgements

This strategy was produced during 2017 by the BitCurator Executive Council with input from BitCurator Consortium members. The strategic planning effort was overseen by Sam Meister (BitCurator Consortium Community Manager) and Katherine Skinner (Educopia Institute Executive Director), and facilitated by Christina Drummond (Educopia Director of Strategic Initiatives). Our thanks go to all who have contributed.

Background

Today's libraries, archives, and museums actively acquire digital content in many forms and formats that demand attention and stabilization, from floppies to optical disks to hard drives. To address these complex activities, the BitCurator open source software environment was developed. Originating in 2011 under the leadership of the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, School of Information and Library Science and the University of Maryland, Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities, the BitCurator environment is now further developed and sustained within the BitCurator Consortium.

Formed in 2014, the BitCurator Consortium exists to support the curation of born-digital materials through the application of open-source digital forensics tools by any institution with the responsibility to care for such materials. Membership is open to all. Since its founding, the Consortium has doubled in size and, the BitCurator environment has similarly expanded. Digital forensics technologies and their applications with archives are ever-evolving, and our work strives to mitigate the effect of those changes by expanding the feature set of the BitCurator environment to incorporate new tools and meet new archival needs.

Context

The BitCurator Consortium is currently one of a relatively small number of digital preservation membership organizations, and is the only preservation membership organization with an exclusive focus on digital forensics. The digital forensic processes and tools developed and maintained within the BitCurator Consortium ensure that digital records and objects, particularly those acquired upon handheld media, can be extracted and relied upon as authoritative, authentic, complete and reliable representations of original digital content. Authority and reliability is of the essence if the records are to be considered trusted, trustworthy, and of value to future users.

Memberships

The Consortium is populated by a growing, committed and skilled membership. Retention and participation rates within the membership are high and the Consortium has experienced steady growth since its inception in 2014. We're currently twenty-seven institutions strong, and we look forward to continued growth in coming years.

Any institution can apply to become a member of the BitCurator Consortium. The Higher Education sector is particularly well-represented amongst the current membership, alongside a smaller number of archival institutions and national libraries.

Community Values

From the outset, the Consortium has been defined by sharing, knowledge exchange, and community support. Our membership spans boundaries of sector and space - with members from libraries, archives, and museums sharing resources and exchanging knowledge in both virtual and in-person settings. These foundational characteristics have ensured our success and they remain at the center of all that we do, guiding the Consortium toward a more open, collaborative, and sustainable digital preservation future.

Strategic Purpose

To the Bitcurator and wider digital forensics community, the Consortium offer this, a three-year strategic plan, to ensure the sustainability, functionality, and ongoing relevance of the BitCurator environment.

Strategic Priorities

Our priorities for 2018 - 2021 address three key aspects of the BitCurator Consortium landscape:

1. Technology
2. Community
3. Sustainability

The underlying and unifying theme to all three aspects is sustainable growth.

Strategic Priority Area One: Technology

The BitCurator technical environment has many strengths, first and foremost being its design in packaging digital forensics tools for use by archivists, librarians, and other cultural heritage professionals. As open source software, the BitCurator environment allows for flexibility in its adoption and implementation within different institutional digital curation workflows. Our aim in this strategic period is to build upon that flexibility and pursue connections and interoperability with other, related preservation software. At the same time, we want to make the software more accessible to staff with limited knowledge of BitCurator's underlying technology.

Based on feedback from our users, our primary goals in this area are thus to strengthen the usability and extensibility of the BitCurator technical environment, underpinned by a comprehensive documentation suite.

Goal #1: Expand and improve the suite of technical documentation for the BitCurator environment so that it is comprehensive and meets the needs of various different user groups:

Objective 1.1: Develop training and guidance documentation on digital forensics tools, methods, and approaches used in conjunction with the BitCurator environment (e.g. KryoFlux).

Objective 1.2: Assess and analyze current gaps in technical documentation.

Objective 1.3: Develop and provide more novice-oriented documentation and resources on BitCurator dependencies (e.g. Linux/Ubuntu, VirtualBox).

Objective 1.4: Develop technical overviews of digital forensics and BitCurator for multiple audiences (e.g. IT Staff, Administrators, Researchers).

Goal #2: Advance the BitCurator technical environment with improved usability, interoperability, and options for future development:

Objective 2.1: Implement a sustainable software release process and schedule.

Objective 2.2: Improve user experience of BitCurator environment.

Objective 2.3: Ensure data and tool outputs are able to interoperate with other systems and tools.

Objective 2.4: Research options for increased functionality and support for working with individual files as well as disc images.

Objective 2.5: Support BitCurator software development contributions by individual developers from member institutions.

Strategic Priority Area Two: Community

The BitCurator Community is one of the most valued and valuable elements of the Consortium. It comprises both member organizations *and* staff within those membership organizations. The Community includes potential, as well as active users of the BitCurator environment.

Our primary goal in this area is to increase the number, type, and range of active voices heard within the community in order to increase its strength, diversity and relevance to the ongoing development of the BitCurator environment and to the field of digital forensics in general.

Goal #3: Expand focus of community to support broader application and use of digital forensics in cultural heritage:

Objective 3.1: Develop formal partnerships and collaborations with other digital forensics tool developers and service providers.

Objective 3.2: Create space for discussion, exploration, and collaboration between information professionals and cultural heritage patrons.

Objective 3.3: Develop training offerings for member institution staff outside of archival technical services (e.g., public services librarians, curatorial staff, data curation staff, preservation staff).

Objective 3.4: Include expanded members institution staff in BCC activities.

Strategic Priority Area Three: Organizational Sustainability

Organization sustainability is a pre-requisite for delivering our technological and community-based goals. This strategic priority therefore addresses the resources required to grow, sustain, and lead the Consortium over the next three years as we consolidate our position from a start-up to an international organization. In this area we seek to diversify and increase the overall number of members in the Consortium, expand the resources available within the Consortium to deliver member services, and ensure a strong and skilled leadership to direct and guide implementation of this strategy.

Goal #4: Strengthen and expand membership numbers in order to increase the financial sustainability and security of the Consortium:

Objective 4.1: Ensure that the service offering remains attractive to existing members.

Objective 4.2: Grow and expand geographical reach of membership by at least five new organisations each year.

Objective 4.3: Diversify membership beyond existing academic and memory institutions.

Goal #5: Strengthen governance function and support structure of the BitCurator Consortium:

Objective 5.1: Ensure sufficient staff capacity to enact strategic plan.

Objective 5.2: Strengthen the Administrative and governance function that underpins effective leadership of the Consortium.

Join Us

The Consortium is a community of people invested in the success and longevity of digital forensics practices worldwide. We hope you'll bring your expertise to the BitCurator Consortium and help us shape the digital forensics conversation of the future. For more information on the benefits and services we offer, and an application form, visit <https://www.bitcuratorconsortium.org/>