

Coalition of Networked
Information Spring Meeting
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
April 8, 2025

MetaArchive Across Its Life Cycle:

Change and resilience in the
digital preservation ecosystem

Featuring panelists representing MetaArchive
community leadership, LOCKSS, and Educopia

Moderated by Jessica Meyerson @ Educopia

Key Audiences

Library Deans

Assistant Deans

Chief Technology Officers

Consortial Project & Program Leads

Resource Allocators

Institutional & Field Level Changemakers

Desired Takeaways

1. We need community-based digital preservation now more than ever.
2. MetaArchive's deliberate sunset is not a reflection on the viability of distributed, community-governed digital preservation networks writ-large. Quite the contrary.
3. We know enough now (20 years into LOCKSS based digital preservation) to design for community resilience.
4. Inherent tension or false binary: balancing affordability of a community-owned digital preservation network with adequate resourcing to ensure that the network as a digital preservation solution is usable for institutions whose staff capacity varies widely

Framing: Many Paths to an Abundant Future

*In recent news: Abundance,
by Ezra Klein & Derek Thompson*

- Scarcity is the result of deliberate policy decisions
- Scaling up production - building more of the stuff we need (e.g., affordable housing)
- Institutional risk-aversion and inefficiency are making it difficult to build
- Techno-optimism combined with policy realism
- Abundance is a big tent - a vision accomplished via massive investment, public goods, and infrastructural expansion

While policy interventions are CRITICAL

how do we advance
visions of abundance
without relying solely
or primarily on
markets, the state, or
key moments of national
mobilization?

Framing: Many Paths to an Abundant Future

June Jordan, in her poem entitled “Poem for South African Women” (1956,1980) writes:

“We are the ones we have been waiting for”

There is a long and deep lineage of visionaries, pre-figuring abundant futures – people that are actively breathing those futures to life by practicing care and resource sharing inside our relationships. This practice is rooted in the understanding that what we practice inside of our everyday lives and the accumulation of choices throughout our day are ultimately reflected in our systemic realities.

Dr. Jessica Gordon Nembhard

Dr. Tyrone C. Howard

Dr. Kathleen Fitzpatrick

Dr. Marissa Duarte

MetaArchive's Lifecycle Through the Lens of Abundance and Scarcity:

01

Formation (2004-2006)

- MetaArchive emerged as a response to the scarcity of sustainable digital preservation infrastructure
- First Private LOCKSS Network (PLN)
- Demonstrated an early commitment to abundance—resource-sharing, collaboration, and decentralization—as opposed to isolated, proprietary solutions
- NDIIIP funding was key to its early instantiation

02

Validation (2007-2010)

- MetaArchive transitioned from Emory to Educopia to ensure longevity beyond shifting funding priorities
- 2011, MetaArchive shifted from its reliance on NDIIIP funding to a membership-funded model
- Reflected an abundance mindset—investing in shared governance and community-driven sustainability rather than relying on a single institution's resources.

MetaArchive's Lifecycle Through the Lens of Abundance and Scarcity:

03

Acceleration (2010-2018)

- Digital preservation became professionalized and programmatic
- MetaArchive member reps shifted from high-level administrators to preservation specialists
- Expansion in digital preservation also created budget constraints, barriers for smaller institutions, and a growing need for affordable solutions.
- The SuperNode Pilot (2016-2018) aimed to lower technical barriers and expand access to preservation services for under-resourced organizations.

04

Transition (2019-Present)

- Growing diversity in institutional needs and funding
- Project Mycelium (2022) & CRTF/LOCKSS Transition (2023-2024).
- These initiatives focused on
 - redistributing technical expertise,
 - refining business models, and
 - ensuring equitable participation.
- The decision to sunset was not due to a failure of these strategies, but a result of the community's stewardship policies, which ensured resources for a thoughtful sunset process and the repurposing of resources to support the growth of existing and new PLNs.

Introducing our Panelists: *Community as key to abundance*

Our panelists and moderator were all members of the **MetaArchive Transformation Research Team (TRT)**. The TRT was responsible for “holding the whole” through the sunsetting process. **Other TRT members included:** Christine Wiseman (Atlanta University Center), Reid Boehm (Purdue University), Hannah Pryor (University of Louisville), Thib Guicherd-Callin (LOCKSS), Aloma Antao (Educopia)



Jackson Huang

Educopia,
Research Lead &
Consultant



Snowden Becker

Stanford University,
LOCKSS Program
Community Manager



Zach Vowell

CalPoly State University,
Digital Archivist / Digital
Strategies Coordinator



Alex Kinnaman

Virginia Tech, Assistant
Director, Digital Libraries
& Preservation

How can digital preservation be reframed as an investment in abundance rather than a cost to minimize?

Alex

What lessons from MetaArchive's model challenge the scarcity mindset often governing institutional budget decisions? How do Private LOCKSS Networks represent an opportunity to build community-owned infrastructure rather than rely on commercialized-scarcity driven alternatives?

Snowden

Instead of thinking about, "how cheaply can we get this done," how can our necessary expenditure on preservation of digital assets become an investment in staff, community, and relationship-building?

What does it take to sustain community-driven infrastructure, and what happens when institutions fail to invest in it?

Jackson

Looking at MA's lifecycle, what were key tensions between institutional resource allocation strategies and the cooperative model?

Zach

What are the risks of short-term convenience choices (e.g., outsourcing) when institutions should be thinking generationally?

How can institutions invest in long-term capacity building for digital preservation?

Alex

What skills and knowledge should institutions be developing initially to ensure they are stewards of their own digital futures?

Zach

What are some of the components that need to be in place for a successful community-governed digital preservation network?

What models can we learn from in order to achieve greater resilience community-driven digital preservation networks?

Snowden

What do these models tell us about the benefits of understanding community-driven digital preservation networks as essential civic and technical infrastructure rather than as technical solutions?

Jackson

What lessons can be learned from mutual-aid networks, and other cooperative models to inform the future of community-driven digital preservation?

All Panelists

“In a time of field-and-nationwide change and transition, investments in shared infrastructure and inter-institutional communities of practice help create both an abundant and resilient information ecosystem – only collectively can we guarantee access to our cultural heritage in the long-term.”

For our last question, each panelist will tell you why, specifically, they believe this statement to be true.

Where to learn more & access resources:

Educopia's website will permanently host information about MetaArchive's history and the sunsetting process:

<https://educopia.org/sponsee-profile/metaarchive-cooperative/>

GitHub repository of code and documentation related to the technical operation of the MetaArchive network: <https://github.com/MetaArchive>

LOCKSS wiki with PLN start-up docs: a collection of templates drawn from MetaArchive for the start-up and operation of other PLNs:

<https://github.com/lockss/community/wiki/PLN-Templates>

Join former MetaArchive members and Educopians at the Digital Library Forum in November for a hands-on workshop exploring the intersection of technological and relational infrastructures needed for resilient digital preservation networks.