

**H-Net:  
Preserving and Improving Access to Specialized Electronic  
Mailing List Archives**

**Interim Narrative Progress Report, January 1, 2009–June 30, 2009**

**Project Activities Undertaken**

Of the project activities scheduled, MATRIX undertook the following during the reporting period:

***H-Net Preservation Work Plan***

- Continue to implement work plan for H-Net preservation
- Implement improvements to backup system and an archival storage plan
- Document preservation policies for H-Net
- Evaluate with Archival Advisory Board on work plan for H-Net preservation and make any recommended revisions
- Report to and discuss with H-Net governing council results of the H-Net preservation and access project

***Presentations***

- Deliver presentation reporting on project results at American Library Association (ALA) Midwinter Meeting, digital preservation interest group meeting
- Deliver presentation on project to “Practical Engagement Workshop,” School of Information, University of Michigan
- Present poster on project at the Digital Curation Curriculum (DigCCurr) symposium
- Deliver presentation reporting on project results at Midwest Archives Conference (MAC) annual meeting

***Other Activities***

- Publication of article on project as SAA Campus Case Study
- Submission of article to “Infinity,” the newsletter for the SAA Preservation Section
- Continue negotiations for succession plan
- Semantic Augmented Consensus Clustering (SACC) research on H-Net records

**H-Net Preservation Work Plan**

***Continue to implement work plan for H-Net preservation.*** During the reporting period, work continued on the implementation of the recommended technical improvements to the H-Net e-mail list preservation system. Archivist Lisa Schmidt and systems administrator Dennis Boone dropped or modified some of the original plans for technical improvements, however.



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- Better ensuring authenticity by:
  - (1) Establishing and periodically checking fixity of messages and notebook files.  
*Done, through the use of the SHA-256 message digest algorithm.*
  - (2) Developing an editorial interface that would allow editors to add metadata to messages rather than overwriting original message creation metadata.  
*Not done. The H-Net Council would not approve this use of technical resources.*
  - (3) Restricting editors' LISTSERV administration capabilities to prevent possible message and/or notebook deletions.  
*Done.*
- Preserving attachments on the private H-Net lists by:
  - (1) Making the private lists browsable.  
*Systems administration has the means to do this, but it requires policy changes from the H-Net Council. To date, the Council has not moved forward on it.*
  - (2) Providing a migration strategy for attachments.  
*After conducting a rough inventory of attachments on the private lists, it was determined that they occur in only a tiny fraction of the messages. Furthermore, most are in common formats. MATRIX will therefore not provide a migration strategy at this time, but will assist users in opening files if problems arise.*
- Preserving links to content within messages, by redirecting broken URLs to websites archived by the Internet Archive.  
*Systems administration may still do this, but it isn't considered a primary goal of the project.*
- Mapping URLs of messages to shorter persistent URLs, for easier use as citations.  
*Not done, after further consideration by the IT department.*

***Implement improvements to backup system and an archival storage plan.*** Ms.

Schmidt oversaw the implementation of the following improvements to the MATRIX backup system as well as an H-Net archival storage plan:

- Investigation of offsite, climate-controlled facilities in Lansing and Grand Rapids that the Michigan State University Archives could contract with for storage of the long-term retention backup copies of MATRIX data, including the H-Net lists.
- Reciprocal storage arrangement with the Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, in which MATRIX's data is synchronized and copied into dark storage at ICPSR and vice versa. Members of MATRIX's IT and programming staff are currently implementing the storage arrangement.

- Creation of archival copies of the H-Net lists to tape on an annual basis. Mr. Boone created archival copies to tape (two copies) that include all H-Net notebook files through the end of 2008 as well as scripts for the browse and search functions and some documentation.

***Document preservation policies for H-Net.*** Ms. Schmidt documented digital preservation policies and procedures for the H-Net e-mail lists based on a digital preservation policy framework developed by Nancy McGovern, digital preservation officer at ICPSR. These policies and procedures were posted to the H-Net archive project website (<http://www.h-net.org/archive/doc.php>) and internally on the MATRIX wiki in July 2009, after the reporting period.

***Evaluate with Archival Advisory Board the progress on workplan for H-Net preservation and make any recommended revisions.*** The board has been apprised of all developments on the project, and feedback has been encouraged.

***Report to and discuss with H-Net governing council results of the H-Net preservation and access project.*** The director of H-Net has been apprised of all developments and will need H-Net Council approval of some aspects of the project. As noted above, the Council must make some changes to list policies to let private list users know how to browse those lists. Also, the digital preservation policies and procedures noted above are still awaiting the Council's official approval.

## **Presentations**

***Deliver presentation reporting on project results at American Library Association (ALA) Midwinter Meeting, digital preservation interest group meeting.*** On January 25, 2009, Ms. Schmidt presented "Preserving the H-Net E-Mail Lists: A Case Study in Trusted Digital Repository Assessment" at the digital preservation interest group meeting of the ALA Midwinter Meeting in Denver. Approximately 80 people were in attendance. In addition to describing how H-Net works and the planned preservation improvement strategies, a large part of this 30-minute presentation focused on the TRAC and how it was used to assess the H-Net preservation system; the audience was especially interested in use of the TRAC. The presentation has been posted to the H-Net archive project website, <http://www.h-net.org/archive/presentations.php>. The Library of Congress referenced the presentation in a press release on its website ([http://www.digitalpreservation.gov/news/2009/20090204news\\_article\\_ALAMidwin.html](http://www.digitalpreservation.gov/news/2009/20090204news_article_ALAMidwin.html)) and in its February 2009 digital preservation newsletter (<http://www.digitalpreservation.gov/news/newsletter/200902.pdf>).

***Deliver presentation on project to "Practical Engagement Workshop," School of Information, University of Michigan.*** On March 19, 2009, Ms. Schmidt presented "Digital Preservation Concepts in Action: Assessing the H-Net Archive as a Trusted Digital Repository" to Dr. Elizabeth Yakel's "Practical Engagement Workshop in Digital Preservation" class at the School of Information, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. The course included guest lectures from practitioners, and the topic that week was Electronic Records Programs and Projects. A primary focus of the presentation was the

use of the TRAC. The presentation has been posted to the H-Net archive project website, <http://www.h-net.org/archive/presentations.php>.

***Present poster on project at the Digital Curation Curriculum (DigCCurr) symposium.***

On April 2, 2009, Ms. Schmidt presented a poster entitled “Preserving Electronic Mailing Lists: The H-Net Archive” at the Digital Curation Curriculum (DigCCurr) symposium in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. The abstract for the session was included in the proceedings of the symposium, which are available at <http://stores.lulu.com/DigCCurr2009>. The poster and abstract have been posted to the H-Net archive project website, <http://www.h-net.org/archive/presentations.php>.

***Deliver presentation reporting on project results at Midwest Archives Conference (MAC) annual meeting.***

On May 1, 2009, Ms. Schmidt presented “Electronic Mail List Preservation Takes Off: The H-Net Archive” at the annual meeting of the Midwest Archives Conference (MAC) in St. Louis. This presentation was part of a session entitled “No More Waiting on the Runway: Case Studies in Archiving Active Electronic Records.” The session was well attended, with standing room only. The presentation has been posted to the H-Net archive project website, <http://www.h-net.org/archive/presentations.php>.

**Other Activities**

***Publication of article on project as SAA Campus Case Study.*** Ms. Schmidt wrote and submitted a Campus Case Study on the project, published in February 2009 on the SAA website (<http://www.archivists.org/publications/epubs/CampusCaseStudies/casestudies/Case11-Schmidt.pdf>). The article may also be accessed from the H-Net archive project website.

***Submission of article to “Infinity,” the newsletter for the SAA Preservation Section.***

In June, Ms. Schmidt wrote and submitted an article on the project to “Infinity,” the newsletter for the SAA Preservation Section. To date, word has not been received as to whether it was accepted for publication.

***Continue negotiations for succession plan.*** Dr. Peter Knupfer, director of H-Net and associate director at MATRIX, continues to pursue a succession plan for H-Net.

***Semantic Augmented Consensus Clustering (SACC) research on H-Net records.*** In March 2009, Bill Punch, Associated Faculty at MATRIX and Associate Professor of Computer Science and Engineering at MSU, along with Samah Jamal Fodeh and Pang-Ning Teh, presented the paper “Combining Statistics and Semantics via Ensemble Model for Document Clustering” at the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) Symposium on Applied Computing, data mining track, in Honolulu. The abstract for the paper has been posted to the H-Net archive project website, <http://www.h-net.org/archive/presentations.php>.

**Additional Project Developments**

In addition to activities and events noted on the project work plan, the following developments occurred during the reporting period:

- Request from Nancy McGovern to use the digital preservation policies developed for the H-Net e-mail lists as examples in her future Digital Preservation Management Workshops.
- Request from Robin Dale, associate university librarian at the University of California at Santa Cruz and author of the TRAC, to reference this project as an example of how the TRAC was used to assess an electronic records archive as a trusted digital repository. (Note that this request occurred in August 2009, after the reporting period.)



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