

THE CHART OF GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICAL GOALS TOWARDS PRESERVING RECORDS, KNOWLEDGE AND MEMORY FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

Preamble¹

As expressed in the 1997 UNESCO Declaration on the Responsibilities of the Present Generations Towards Future Generations, *“the present generations have the responsibility of ensuring that the needs and interests of present and future generations are fully safeguarded”*. That is why we are concerned with sustainable development and with the environmental and other impacts of the legacies we leave behind. Legacies vary broadly, from hazardous waste deposits to cultural heritage. Radioactive waste is an iconic example. By striving to maintain and provide access to records as well as to allow knowledge to persist or be reconstituted if lost, and by propagating the memory of these legacies we will fulfil our responsibility to enable future members of society to make knowledgeable decisions. Our responsibility extends over centuries and millennia, for as long as these legacies will last.

The present chart of guiding principles and practical goals is meant to provide a foundation for future work in the area of preservation of Records, Knowledge and Memory (RK&M) for the wellbeing of future generations.

Principles

- Enabling future members of society to make knowledgeable decisions is part of responsible, ethically sound management of environmental and other impacts of the legacies we leave behind.
- The relevant institutions should plan for continuing oversight. This is also in line with a prudent approach for protecting health and safety.
- Any strategy for the preservation of RK&M should integrate the possibility of a future disruption of the foreseen methods of transmission. The intention should be to regain oversight, in case oversight was lost.

¹ This text can also found in the Proceedings chapter 3.

Practical Goals

- Institutional and non-institutional players should determine and communicate their role in preserving RK&M and take relevant, coordinated actions. Law identifies roles and goals, and regulation guides practice.
- Preparing for future RK&M preservation is best addressed while a project leading to a legacy is being planned, designed, implemented and funded.
 - The long operational phase of some of these projects creates opportunities for the development of inclusive and workable RK&M strategies.
 - During the operational phase, the institutional stakeholders can facilitate the preparation and implementation of archives; administrative restrictions on land use; regular reporting by governments under one or more international mechanisms or agreements, etc.
 - Throughout the operational phase institutional stakeholders must prepare for any stage when their own roles will be reduced and responsibilities will be transferred to others. Responsibilities at the end of operations should be determined ahead of time.
- There is no single means of RK&M preservation over all timescales. All available communication channels should be explored and a number retained for a workable preservation strategy.
 - RK&M preservation approaches should include provisions for knowledge reconstruction and for providing information to future generations with and without requiring the involvement of intermediate generations.
 - Records will be used mostly by future members of society and attention should be given to the needs of these users in terms of facilitating readability and intelligibility, providing, in particular, relevant information on the context in which the legacy and the records were created.
 - The various components of the RK&M system should apply robust, simple and understandable techniques and support materials, and should not rely on technological provisions alone.
 - Common cause loss should be prevented. Robustness will be increased by regular reviews and updates.
 - Overall, a multi-faceted approach should be formulated for the RK&M preservation of each project whereby the various components of the RK&M system complement one another, provide for redundancy and maximize the chances of survival of a recognizable and comprehensible message.
- Collaborations with other bodies in various sectors in society, both nationally and internationally, provide important benefits.
 - Continuous knowledge exchange and synergies should be sought across disciplines and wider than just the specific legacy of concern.
 - Broader strategies and agreements are likely to survive beyond any operational phase and can thus contribute to RK&M preservation.
 - The robustness of national strategies will be increased if they incorporate an international component. A concerted methodology at the international level may be helpful.