

Digital Preservation Strategy Warner Music Group

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Background

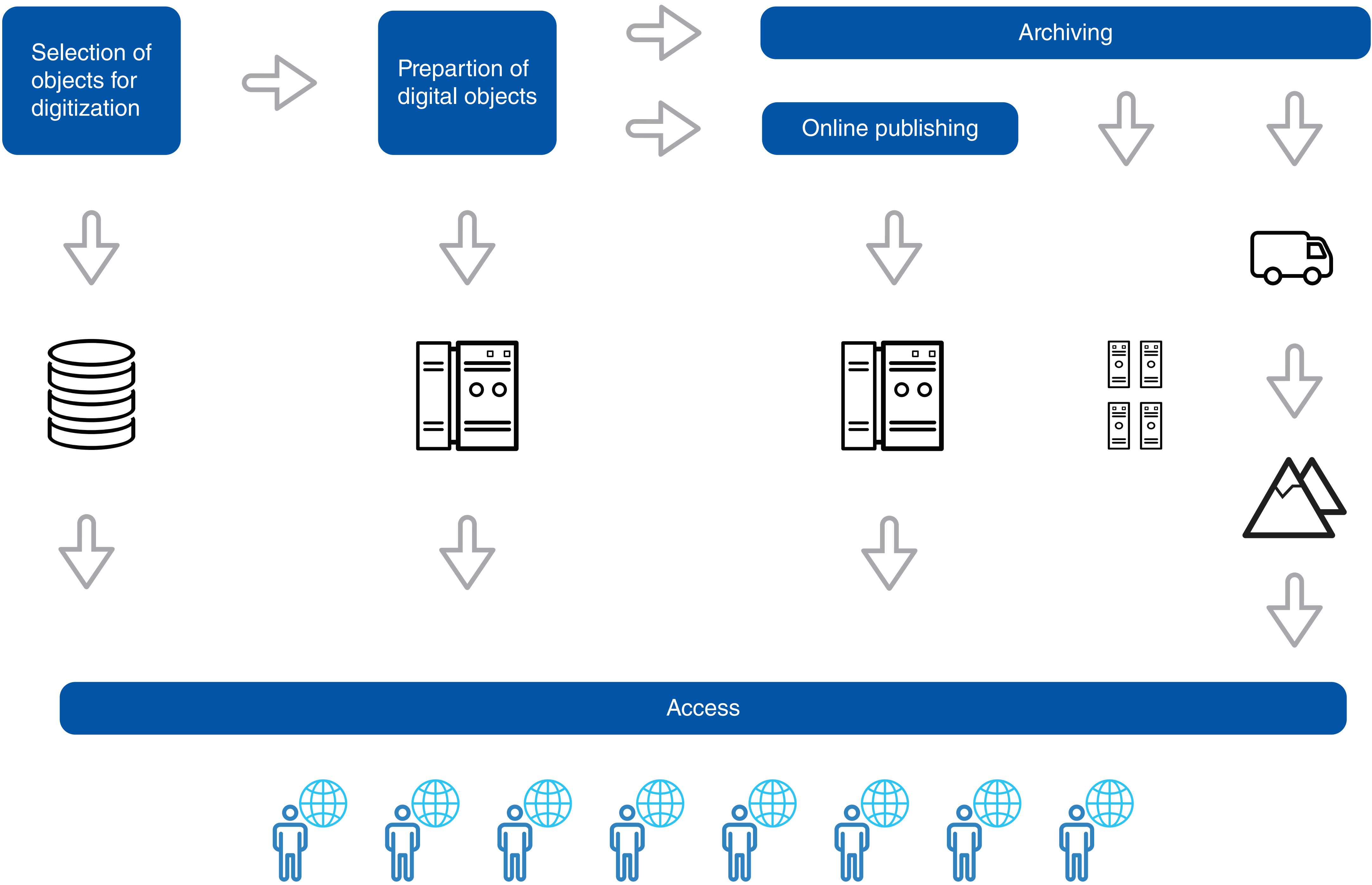
Digital objects, already incredibly complex, are situated within a fast-changing technological infrastructure. Traditional notions of analog archival preservation are not sufficient for ensuring long-term access. Whereas analog preservation efforts involve maintaining a self-contained physical item in its original state, digital preservation requires a more active and critical consideration of content, hardware, software, and rendering in order to keep an item usable.

Warner Music Group became increasingly aware of the perils of long-term preservation when dealing with the loss of audio recording assets. Several fires and a few cases of neglect meant the destruction many irreplaceable items. These casualties prompted a closer consideration of how to digitally capture their existing audio content and how to maintain several redundant copies for protection against loss.

Objectives

The Warner Engineering and Archives (WEA) section recognized that many of the original audio master files were stored on media which faced significant format obsolescence. This need to develop a system for saving and converting these materials into digital assets that could be monetized became the catalyst for the preservation strategy in place and its review of the audio recording significant properties:

- Audio bit-stream
- Recording metadata
- Original supporting paper ephemera



Best Practices

- File format specification is freely available with no patents or licenses.
- Other established digital repositories use or endorse the format.
- Not dependent on a specific operating system or type of equipment.
- Variety of writing and rendering tools available.
- Self-documenting.
- Back-up redundancy stored at different locations.

Conclusions

In all areas of audio preservation, Warner Engineering and Archives services has carefully considered the most critical aspects of digital preservation. Best practices are followed in all steps of their workflow process. Although there is not one strict set of behaviors that guarantees accessibility of audio assets forever, Warner Music Group is exemplifying the conscientiousness necessary to continue to have viable digital assets into the future.

Recommendations

- Sustainability - Use repositories that use green energy. Minimize overall carbon footprint.
- Big Data - repurposing for unanticipated uses may bring the greatest value.
- Integrated solutions that allow end users to explore their data using graphical metaphors in order to unify data mining algorithms and visual human interfaces.

