Chapter 26
Final Thoughts

After reading Part I of this book the reader should have a better idea of the variety of types of digital objects which may need to be preserved, and some of the challenges which will need to be addressed. In particular the reader should be armed with most of the key questions which need to be asked about the digital object to be preserved and the key concepts needed to answer them.

The OAIS Reference Model is quite fundamental to any serious attempts at digital preservation and the reader should now appreciate the important concepts and models of OAIS, and should also appreciate why these are what they are – the hows and whys of OAIS.

While Part II of this book does not provide details of all possible preservation strategies, it should, we hope, provide enough to give the reader the ability to make his or her own judgement about the type of information which must be captured. Perhaps most importantly the reader should be able to use the term "metadata" with a real understanding of the plethora of things which this covers, and even more importantly will be able to avoid being misled when others misuse that term.

In Part III the reader should have gained an insight into how the international audit and certification process will work and the kinds of evidence one needs to present, and the infrastructure required to share the effort needed to preserve digitally encoded information.

Taken as a whole this book should provide the reader with the intellectual tools to ask, and answer, sensible, fundamental questions relevant to the preservation of his/her digital objects.

It may be disconcerting to realise that there are no absolutes: preservation is defined in terms of the Designated Community – which is up to the preserver; authenticity is evaluated according to the evidence and there is not a simple yes/no answer. Nevertheless there is the comfort that everything can be evidence based and that preservation techniques can be tested. Moreover it is possible to identify and counter the things which can change over the course of time.

This book was entitled "Advance Digital Preservation" to distinguish it from the simpler, more limited, approaches. We hope the reader will agree that this title is justified and has fulfilled its aims.