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Preservation and Access Framework for Digital Art Objects

In 2013, Cornell University Library received a 2-year research and development grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to design a framework for preserving access to digital art objects. The Preservation and Access Frameworks for Digital Art Objects project (PAFDAO) was undertaken in collaboration with Cornell University's Society for the Humanities and the Rose Goldsen Archive of New Media Art, a collection of media artworks housed in the Library's Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections. This collection of complex interactive born-digital artworks is used by students, faculty, and artists from various disciplines. The ultimate aim of the PAFDAO project was to create generalizable new media preservation and access practices that will be applicable for different media environments and institutional types. The project provides a case study in new media preservation that may be informative to library and museum contexts alike.

The Preserving and Emulating Digital Art Objects White Paper describes the project's findings, discoveries, and challenges. The ultimate goal of the project team has been the creation of a preservation and access practice grounded in thorough and practical understanding of the characteristics of digital objects and their access requirements, seen from the perspectives of collection curators and users alike. Equally important has been the establishment of service frameworks and policies that are sustainable, realistic, and cost-efficient. So all through the project, one of our principles has been moving the experience gained through research into practice. This white paper aims to contribute to better and more practical understanding, management, and curation of digital assets. Although the initiative focused on new media art, we hope that our methodologies and findings will inform other types of complex born-digital collections as well.