

PIDBlogsEtc

[Stephen Downes's blog](#)

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Not only should the government take into account the access needs of individuals, it must take into account the needs of those individuals to create and distribute their own information.CRLF

Note: this article is a response to the discussions held at the Persistent Identifiers Seminar at University College Cork, Ireland, last June. The summary to which I refer is not yet available on the internet. When (and if) it is made available, I will link to it here. Presentations are available on the conference website.

Despite what the name implies, as has been widely observed, a persistent identifier (PI) does not guarantee that an object will be available - my observation is that a significant cause of broken URLs is that the resource has ceased to exist or has been removed from public access. I don't expect this to change in a post-PI world - one might recall that when the U.S. government changed hands four years ago many resources were removed from public access by the incoming government as being no longer current.

From my perspective, the ability of a PI system to associate multiple locations with a resource is a major asset (and, as the author noted, a significant weakness of the widely used Purl system). But the choice of multiple URLs must be resolved either by the address server or by the browser. If the former, there may be concerns regarding the opacity of the process; such a system could be used, for example, by governments or service providers to hinder access to information, to redirect to similar information offered by 'content partners', and more. But if the latter, then browsers themselves must resolve the choice of location to attempt to access. Browsers do not have this capacity - hence the discussion and concern about the need for a plug-in. It would be well worth observing how the Mozilla developers (who have released Firefox) approach this issue.