



Book review

Yannis Tzitzikas and Yannis Marketakis. *Cinderella's Stick – A Fairy Tale for Digital Preservation*. Basingstoke, UK: Springer Nature, 2018, XXI, 249p. 97 b/w illus., 13 illus. in colour

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Digital preservation is a very important topic in the contemporary digital environment, as well as for scholarly communication. Quite often the field and its products are considered inaccessible by large parts of our community and destined to be researched by staff with certain degrees of technical knowledge. The literature of digital preservation, even in the specific fields of libraries and archives, is quite wealthy and digital librarians have already explored the field with their manuscripts. However, most of these books are attached to the very technical nature of the field and they require a savvy reader on the other side.

This book carries a couple of twists. First it is authored by two computer scientists, Yannis Tzitzikas and Yannis Marketakis from ICS/FORTH and University of Crete, Greece, but instead of making it very technical with rigid language and technical complexities, it follows a different approach that exhibits why digital preservation is something that matters to everyone, either with or without a strong technical background. Both authors are experts in the field of digital preservation and they know well the challenges that research libraries face, not only because they have good links with the library sector in Greece, but also because in the past they have joined forces with LIBER in the APARSEN Network of Excellence.

The book is based on a revision of the classic fairy tale in the modern world. The second twist is that the “stick” is not in the hands of the Fairy Godmother. The authors play with the concept of a stick, which in their story is the object of desire, a USB stick, and they implicitly claim that the transformative powers are in the hands of the actors. In a nutshell, good digital preservation skills are magic.

Leaving aside the prologue and epilogue chapters, the book is structured in 19 small units, from 5 to 10 pages each. All of the chapters can stand alone, despite being connected by the linearity of the story. Each of these chapters is separated into two parts: the episode of the story and the technical background that gives the details of the problem at hand. The technical background is what enables the reader to read the book in a modular format. To materialize this modularity the authors have assigned certain patterns to each chapter, which is the set of underlying semantics for the technical challenges. The fifteen patterns, fourteen regular and one meta-pattern, have a label, their relations to other patterns and the desired task that someone has to carry out. For instance, Pattern 6 focuses on the dependencies and safety of executable archives. It is connected to Pattern 1 for background knowledge on reading bites and affects several other patterns, such as on obsolete software, web applications, etc.

With the help of the story, which is the search for a gifted coder, Daphne (or modern Cinderella), by the CEO of an IT company (or the prince), the authors describe everyday challenges that we all face. Even the very technical details, such as the implementation of OAIS or the provenance information modeling through CIDOC CRM, are reader-friendly, because they are described in a very applied context that all of us can connect to. Throughout the chapters, the authors give hints and references to several other fields that relate to the curation and preservation of digital information, such as Linked Data or the FAIR principles. This underlines the interlinking of the policies and practices that should govern the digital information in order to combat its fragility. The meta-pattern that closes the technical part of the book, a pattern overarching all previous ones, is focused on the very need for concise approaches that reverse fragmentation.

The book is well written in all its aspects. Naturally, the episodes, the parts that narrate the modern Cinderella story, have not comparable virtues of a fiction book, but they serve well the aim, providing also much historical

information. As a reader I found that the typesetting of Springer does not enhance the book, as it is very uninspiring in contrast to the content of the book. Maybe Springer needs to revise its typographic policy and establish a new series with a more distinct and appropriate character.

The book has also a companion website that provides various information and updates, including teaching material, exercise material (the content of the USB stick of the modern Cinderella), etc. In the first couple of months since its release, the website was regularly updated and you may find it at <https://www.cinderella-stick.com>.

To conclude, “Cinderella’s Stick” is an excellent book for all readers in research libraries. It provides the right concepts in a very smart and innovative way, and it underlines that the amount of digital information that we alone produce is immense and the challenges of fragility are here to stay. Memory or knowledge organizations are bound to the new digital layers of information and, as the LIBER strategy mentions, today -with our actions and our omissions- we build the cultural heritage of tomorrow.