

New Horizons: How APTrust Developed a Community-Centered Technical Roadmap Process for Digital Preservation

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Academic Preservation Trust

APTrust is a digital preservation consortium at the University of Virginia, with consortial member institutions across the U.S.

We provide digital preservation storage for our member institutions as well as regular meetings, working groups, and resources aligned around digital preservation strategies.

This includes not only the storage itself, but also the digital tools needed to accompany digital preservation workflows.

APTrust Technical Stack

Registry - Web application

Microservices - Digital preservation operations:
ingest, restoration, deletion, fixity

DART - Desktop tool / GUI

Here's the story...

We needed a new process for determining our technical direction.

Joining the team 2025 and planning for 2026.

What is a roadmap? A focused, collaborative plan that defines our technical direction.

Brainstorming

We decided to come up with a new process that would take both qualitative and quantitative feedback into account.

Collecting and analyzing member feedback was paramount to this approach.

Survey Design, 1 of 2

Adding a variety of questions

Number of questions - try not to make it too long or complicated. Ours was just 6 questions.

Multiple selection voting

“Listed here are some possible features and enhancements for APTrust development - which three (3) of the following possibilities would you MOST like to see in 2026?”

Survey Design, 2 of 2

Free text questions

“In question 1, we mentioned the idea of improving the Registry search interface. If you'd like, please describe how you would like to see the search interface improve (searching for objects or files) (1000 characters max):”

Focus Groups

Focus groups are an excellent way to foster conversations about roadmap priorities.

We aimed to design focus groups in particular to accommodate our consortium of member institutions and ensure everyone had a forum of discussion for this work.

Are Focus Groups Like Interrogations...?



Musical Interrogation - Muppets Most Wanted Clip | Disney Video

Focus Groups: Design

Ideally, smaller focus groups can facilitate discussion **between** stakeholders rather than a one-sided conversation between developer and user.

There is room for those conversations in other formats. (User interviews, etc.)

Active discussions help you to understand the areas you need to focus on.

Ideally, boost participation by providing several focus groups. Take into account timezones if it is a factor for scheduling.

Guide discussion with leading questions using tools like Slido.

Survey Analysis

Google Forms provides automatic analytics and is very well suited for post-survey analysis. It is worth looking into other tools for more in-depth analysis.

10 out of 16 respondents voted for improved reporting tools. (62.5%)

9 out of 16 respondents voted for easier ways to move content between storage options. (56.3%)

9 out of 16 respondents voted for improved search interface. (56.3%)

Focus Groups Analysis, 1 of 2

There were two focus group sessions of five (distinct) participants.

Overall, the focus groups provided us with several key conclusions for the roadmap:

Reporting and search improvements proved to be a hot topic of discussion, bolstering the results from the survey.

Focus Groups Analysis, 2 of 2

Surprising: While adding a new storage provider received just 4 votes out of 16 (25%) on the survey, focus group participants indicated the importance.

Integrating with other systems proved to be more of a nice-to-have.

The Final Product!

[A link to our 2026 Technical Roadmap, the final product of this investigation.](#)

We publicly shared our 2026 Technical Roadmap on the APTrust blog.

Software, Infrastructure, Security, Risk, and Disaster Planning

APTrust 2026 Technical Roadmap

Software: Improved reporting was highlighted in our survey and focus groups as a point of high priority for our members. Additionally, easier ways to move content between storage options and improved search were ranked as high priority enhancements.

Infrastructure: Our members indicated high interest in new storage options for their content, which we are currently evaluating to ensure they meet our needs and our members' needs.

Security, Risk, and Disaster Planning: We aim to evaluate ISO-27001 compliance as well as improve our security posture and disaster management plans.

All the Learnings

Consider qualitative (free text) feedback.

Aim to make sessions open to all stakeholders.

Use quantitative data analysis to your advantage.

In Conclusion...

We plan on continuing to improve our process for developing future technical roadmaps.

Overall, we're glad that our membership feels heard and participates in these activities.

We believe this is a positive signal that we're moving in the right direction!

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Thank you!

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