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CoreTrustSeal Newsletter 08-2026

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One Size Fits None

At the FIAT/IFTA World Conference 2025 in Rome, Brecht Declerq, on behalf of Swiss public broadcaster RSI, presented his organization's self-audit on the topic of digital sustainability. An important part of his presentation focused on the suitability of current certification frameworks for repositories hosted at organizations whose core business isn't curation or preservation of digital objects.

Brecht was requested by the Dutch Certification Network to write a blog post in Dutch based on his presentation. This blog post has now been translated into English using Microsoft Copilot, after which it was reviewed by a Dutch-speaking member of the Certification Network and by Brecht himself. The result is now shared through this newsletter.

The CoreTrustSeal Board is happy to share the post, and would like to take the opportunity to stress that CoreTrustSeal certification is intended for and can be awarded to all types of repositories, regardless of whether digital curation is their

organization's digital preservation activities. You can even use certification as an incentive to raise awareness of the importance of digital preservation within your organization, and to get the required policies and processes in place.

[One size fits none? Digitale archieven certificeren in organisaties waar archiveren niet de kerntaak is. - KIA community](#) (Dutch article by Brecht Declercq on certification of repositories in organisations whose main task isn't archiving – translation by Microsoft Copilot)

Digital preservation has grown over the past fifteen years into a full-fledged discipline, with an increasing emphasis on certification. OAIS, CoreTrustSeal (CTS) and other standards have been designed to assess repositories on their ability to preserve digital collections reliably, verifiably and securely. At least in the wealthiest parts of the world this already works well for institutions that were set up precisely for that purpose: organizations with an explicit (often government-mandated) remit to preserve heritage, manage infrastructure and set policy themselves.

But there is a category of archives that fits this picture much less well: archives that do not exist as independent institutions, but as an internal service within another kind of organization. A prime example of this are (public) broadcasters. Their mission is not primarily digital preservation, but supporting production, broadcasting, documentation and public service. In many countries, at least in Europe, their archives nevertheless form the core collection of the national audiovisual patrimony. They manage collections that are at once heritage, evidence and creative material, and must do so within complex realities: limited control over IT, relatively low visibility within the organization, limited understanding at executive level of their potential to strengthen legitimacy in society, and a constant stream of new media from newsrooms and production houses.

That context was central to my presentation "[One size ... fits none? - RSI Archivi and Trusted Digital Repository certification for broadcast archives](#)" at the FIAT/IFTA World Conference 2025 in Rome. There I described, on behalf of RSI (the public broadcaster of Italian-speaking Switzerland), how we as an archive carried out a self-audit based on the Flemish-Dutch Score Model for Digital Sustainability, which closely aligns with the CTS requirements. The ambitions are clear: in the long run RSI wants to be able to demonstrate that an internal broadcast archive can also meet international standards on integrity, authenticity and sustainable accessibility.

As far as is known, this kind of certification is an ambition that no audiovisual archive managed by a broadcaster itself has yet set for, let alone achieved, anywhere in the world. A provocative but fundamental question is therefore: why

management of the digital archive infrastructure simply no longer lies with the archive department itself. As their collections became more digital, archive departments became clients of an internal service. But they often have little or no say in how that service is delivered, as long as the typical broadcasting objectives are met.

Is it just cold feet? Often probably yes, at least in part. It takes courage to critically examine your own specialty and domain. Whoever allows themselves to be audited shows vulnerability: perhaps it turns out that your processes are less tight than you thought. But there is more at play. The world of certification feels, for many broadcast archives, far removed from day-to-day production practice. Yet certification is a sign of professionalization — and for internal broadcast archives even a form of emancipation. Only: without support from senior management nothing happens. In times of tight budgets it is difficult to put (digitally) sustainable archiving high on the priority list.

This leads us neatly to another core question: why is certification of your archives important for a broadcaster whose primary job is making programmes? In short: because digital preservation is no longer a neutral background activity. As analogue carriers disappear, the digital file becomes the only lasting evidence. In times when images and sounds can easily be edited, generated or manipulated, the archive becomes an anchor of trustworthiness. A broadcaster must not only produce to a high standard, but also demonstrably preserve.

That is precisely why RSI wants to work towards certification. But the first internal audit already revealed a number of structural problems. Many CTS and OAIS requirements assume that the archive itself decides on workflows, governance, infrastructure and disclosure. For internal broadcast archives that is usually only partly the case. Some findings were strikingly simple: many requirements focus on organizational policy, documentation and process agreements, not on technology. Yet those are often precisely the things that are hard to formalize in institutions where archive, production and IT each have their own mandate.

A few obstacles recurred: first, internal archives rarely have full control over hardware, software and storage. IT services have their own norms, their own standards, their own considerations and multiple internal customers who each have their own, sometimes contradictory, demands. Second, responsibilities are often split across multiple departments, so governance is not centralized. Ultimately it is the higher levels that decide, and rightly so. Only they also take other interests into account besides those of the archive. That is why broadcast archivists are so fond of national legislation that firmly anchors their position: compliance is an argument

the [Federal Radio and Television Ordinance](#), short though it is, has already been of (perhaps too much) use to me on several occasions.

A third obstacle is the production context: it makes it impossible to guarantee that all files are immediately publicly accessible: no broadcaster treats copyright, privacy and journalistic source confidentiality lightly. Fourth, there are technical obstacles: for example, systematically logging every preservation action on every file is not simple. Some files are larger than a terabyte. The entire audiovisual broadcast archive easily exceeds 10 petabytes, which is hundreds of times larger than even the largest textual document archives. Finally, we must also be self-critical. Broadcast archivists are too often outsiders in the broader archival field. But however specific their tasks, goals and working conditions, there is still something to learn from colleagues, including those who work with docs, PDFs and PNGs.

Despite all of the above, RSI's interim conclusion is not that certification is impossible. Broadcasters are mistaken if they think the obstacles above are reason enough not to even start. Only the current standards assume a form of autonomy that broadcast archives within a broadcaster generally do not possess. The standards often seem designed for institutions that are precisely allowed to do what they are being assessed on.

At that point the story opens up to the wider heritage world. The situation of broadcast archives is not unique. For decision-makers at a museum the bridge to what I would call "thinking like an archive" may still be easy to make. For regional governments, universities and technical institutions it becomes more difficult, although they face the same asymmetry: they bear responsibility for sustainable preservation, but operate within systems managed elsewhere and within frameworks that pursue a different purpose. Many of these organizations recognize the tension between the ideal and the practicable. In the Netherlands it seems to me that there is an interesting role for NDE and the network around certification, which fortunately also has a short line to the CTS board.

The goal need not be a separate standard, but a form of interpretation or guidance that better fits organizations that must achieve digital sustainability without full autonomy. Possible avenues to explore include developing interpretation guidelines for archives within larger organizations, adapted documentation models for shared governance, realistic implementation of accessibility and public-mandate requirements, and best practices around preservation metadata and hardware and software when IT lies outside the archive.

Ultimately digital sustainability does not stop at institutions that were set up for that purpose. It is at least as relevant in environments where heritage is created,

digital preservation. Henk Vonhoff already knew that when, in the mid-1990s, he wrote his blueprints for Sound and Vision's predecessor, the National Audiovisual Archive (NAA), on behalf of State Secretary Nuis. In other countries the situation is often different. Broadcast archives are managed by the public broadcaster itself, and carry a societal weight that reaches beyond the broadcaster: they document culture, history, journalism and public service. Certification there is not an ornament, but a foundation of legitimacy and trust.

In that light RSI's certification initiative is not an exception, but a signal. If standards can acknowledge the reality of internal archives, certification will not be an exclusive path but an achievable route for institutions that manage heritage within a larger organization. "One size fits all" may never become reality, and perhaps — as the Dutch so aptly say — we should not want that. But "one size fits none" could at least slowly start to disappear.

Reminder Community input needed:

Shared Infrastructure, Shared Responsibility. CoreTrustSeal Board Discussion Paper

Federated and consortium-based repository models are increasingly common across the digital preservation landscape. Communities pool resources to operate shared curation platforms, preservation pipelines, storage infrastructures, and access systems. These arrangements offer clear benefits: reduced duplication, lower costs, shared expertise, and greater sustainability.

At the same time, they raise important questions for trust certification. When members of a federated environment apply individually for CoreTrustSeal certification while relying on shared or outsourced functions, how should responsibility, accountability, and evidence of trustworthiness be transparently displayed and assessed?

The CoreTrustSeal Board has created a discussion paper that articulates a CoreTrustSeal perspective on these questions, grounded in the principles of community stewardship, active preservation, and long-term responsibility. It builds directly on the [CoreTrustSeal Extended Guidance](#) on third-party services and outsourced functions, clarifying how that guidance applies to federated preservation communities. The central argument is straightforward: shared systems are

transferred, diluted, or obscured. Certified repositories must demonstrate active, organizational responsibility for curation and preservation, even when those activities are operationally distributed.

Comments are welcome on this shared [Google document](#).

Deadline for input is September 15, 2026.

Please note this work will be discussed in a panel session during iPRES 2026:

<https://ipres2026.dk/>

Review essential evidence for TTRAM

The [Transparent Trustworthy Repository Attributes Matrix \(TTRAM\)](#) is a key reference point for [FIDELIS](#), a Horizon Europe project, developing a network of trustworthy digital repositories. The matrix uses [30 activities and functions](#) based on an analysis of multiple repository-relevant criteria, including CoreTrustSeal. The CoreTrustSeal Board has endorsed the [current mapping](#) between the CoreTrustSeal Requirements 2026-2028 and the TTRAM. The TTRAM includes variables that influence how each activity and function are delivered, which then influence the information (metadata, documentation, etc) should be made available. These variables include adoption of the [CoreTrustSeal Levels of Retention, Curation and Preservation](#) and ongoing work to describe the different depositors, users and object types served by repositories. FIDELIS does not perform evaluations, but there is a clear alignment between this evidence and potential evidence for assessment processes.

We have provided a [suggestion mode Google document](#) of the current activities and functions and would value input from the CoreTrustSeal Community on what you see as essential evidence for each A/F, including those not covered by CoreTrustSeal. We realise everyone is incredibly busy and there is no expectation that you complete responses to all thirty items, we're just looking for as much information as you have the time and inclination to provide. After the end of September 2026, we will confirm the TTRAM-CoreTrustSeal alignment and begin to update our public records of suggested evidence.

Feedback and comments welcome!

Please don't hesitate to contact info@coretrustseal.org if you have feedback or suggestions for us on the tool, process, website or anything else!



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