



# COI

## Cost of Inaction

Chris Lacinak

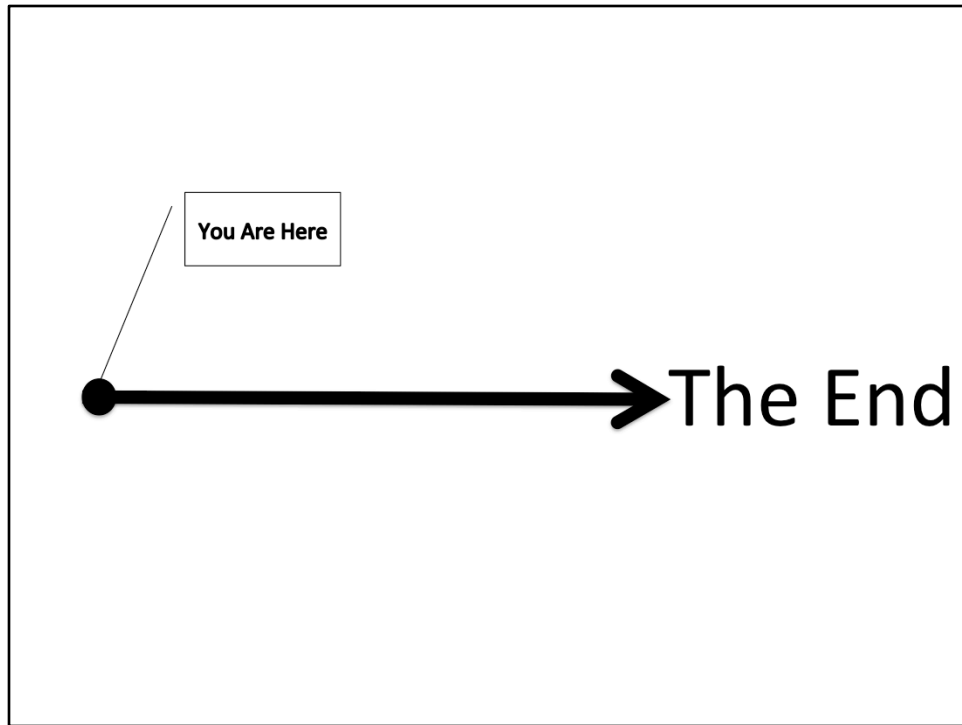
AUDIOVISUAL PRESERVATION SOLUTIONS

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AMIA | November 8, 2013

# The End

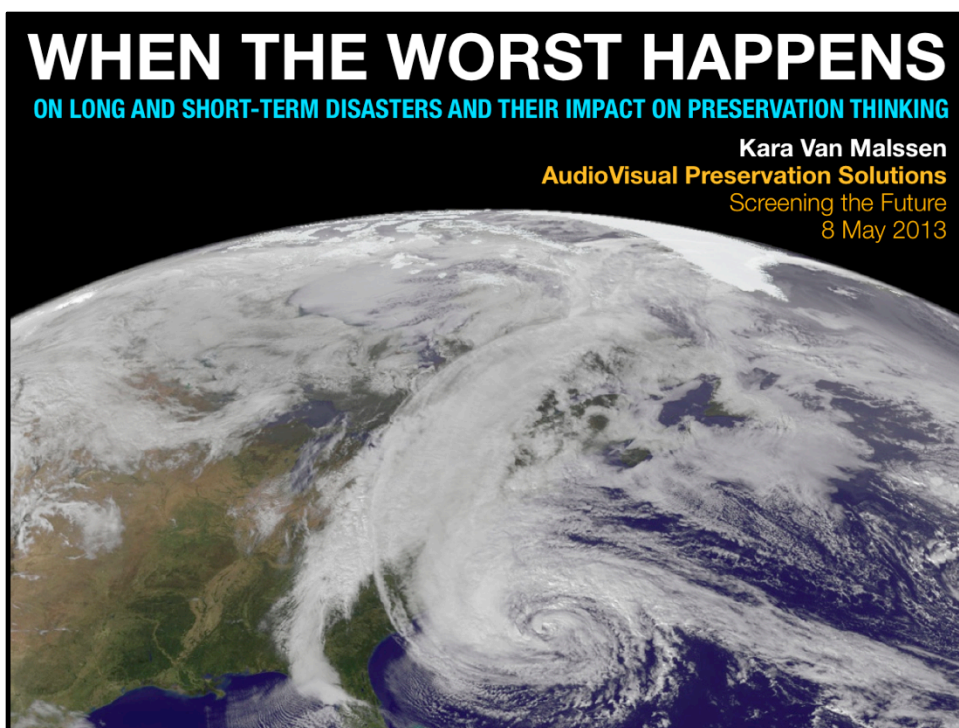
The end of physical audiovisual media is something that most organizations with holdings of legacy AV collections recognize in some way, but it is a general notion. Something for the next person to worry about perhaps?



When you add a reference point and put *the end* on the horizon it tends to get more attention. But still people wax philosophical and get into theoretical conversations about the relative virtues of film over tape, or grooved media over optical disc. And people put stock into technical innovation/heroism swooping in at the last minute to save us from a certain end.



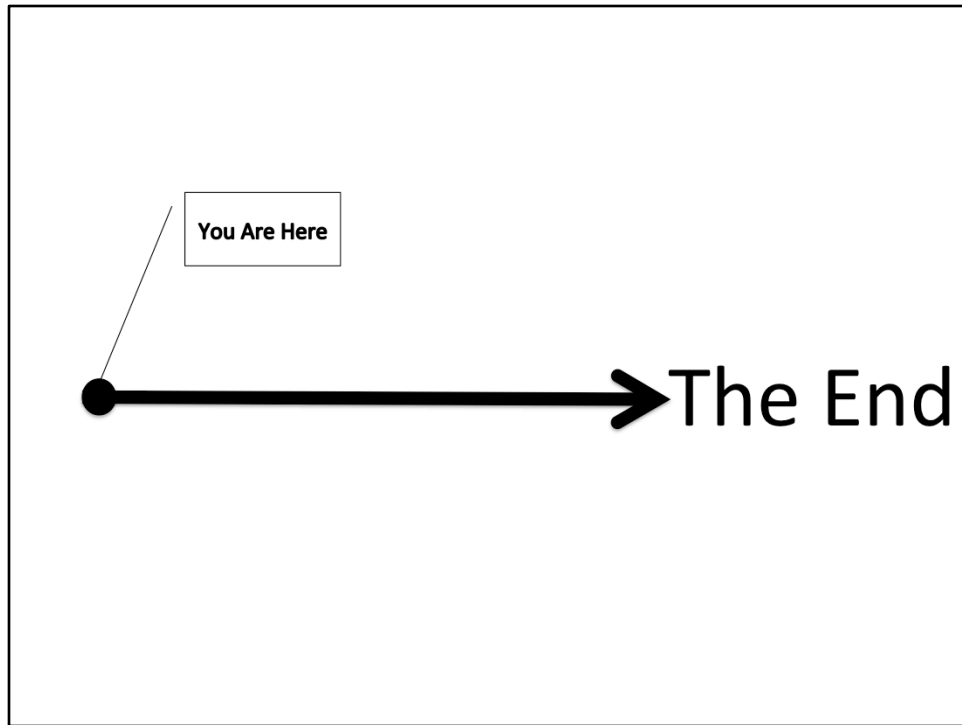
And in unfortunate circumstances such as disasters like Hurricane Sandy the threat of *the end* is thrust upon us.



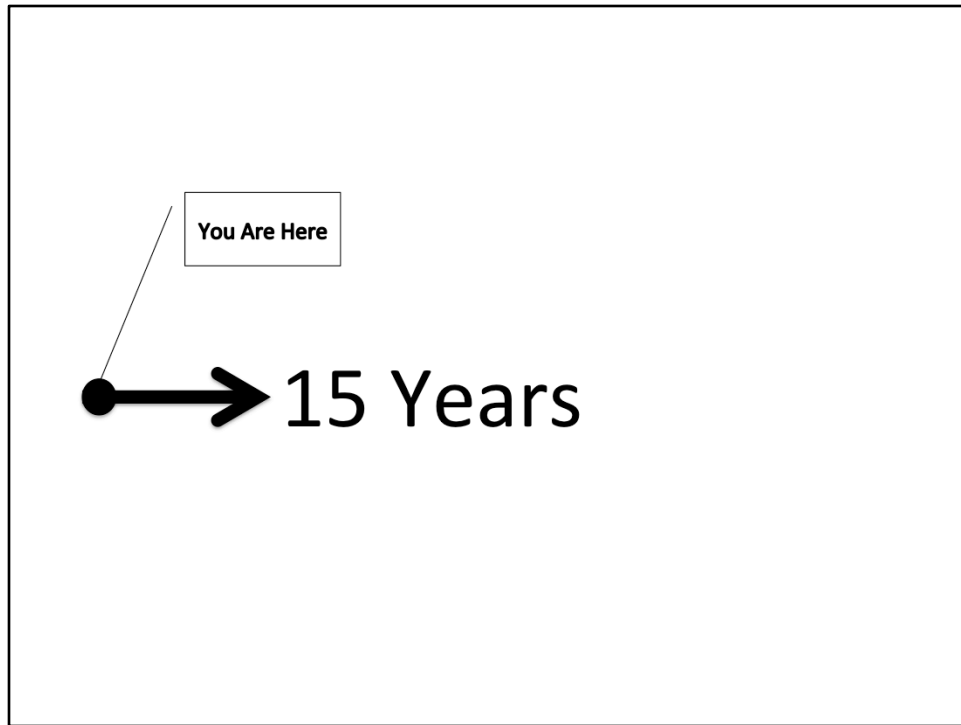
Last year several of us gave the opening plenary at AMIA on the tremendous post-Sandy volunteer effort led by Kara Van Malssen to save the collection of the arts organization, EyeBeam in NYC. And this is a slide from a more recent presentation she gave at Screening the Future.

It is remarkable, the amazing stories coming out of this disaster and others of people springing into action and sparing no amount of effort to save what are recognized as priceless cultural materials.

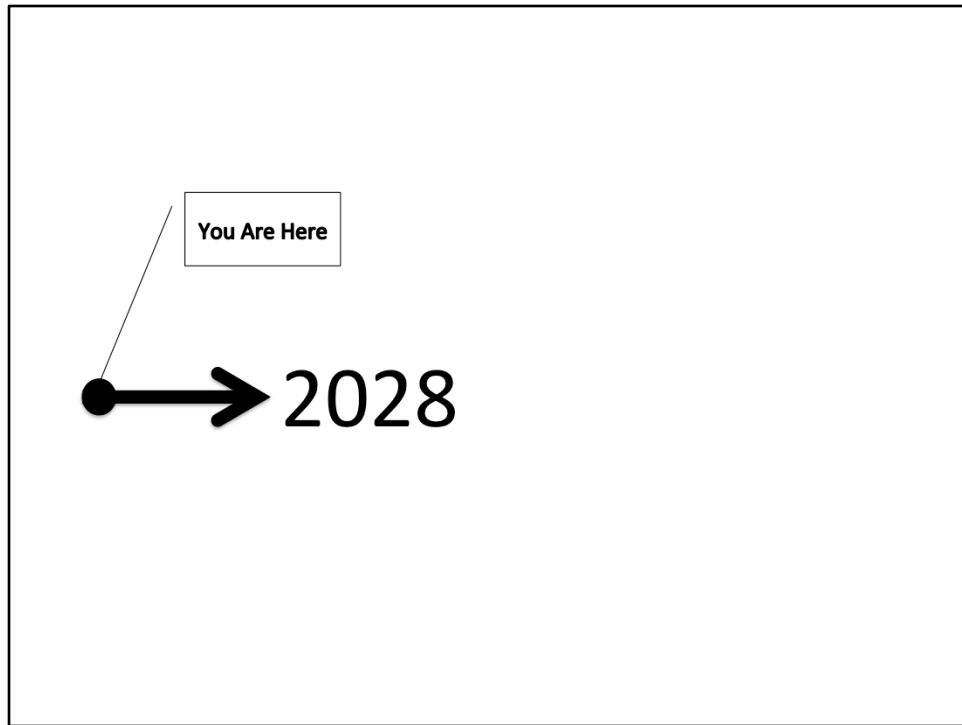
One thing that is interesting about this is the perspective that is realized at a moment like this is the contrast that it presents when compared against the longer term disaster that is playing out in front of us.



General consensus is that we're working with a range of



10 – 15 years, and I'll be generous and call it 15 for the purpose of this presentation, but either way the trend is undeniable. But saying 15 years is tricky because people have a way of continuing to say 15 years even after 5 years has passed. So let's put a number to it.

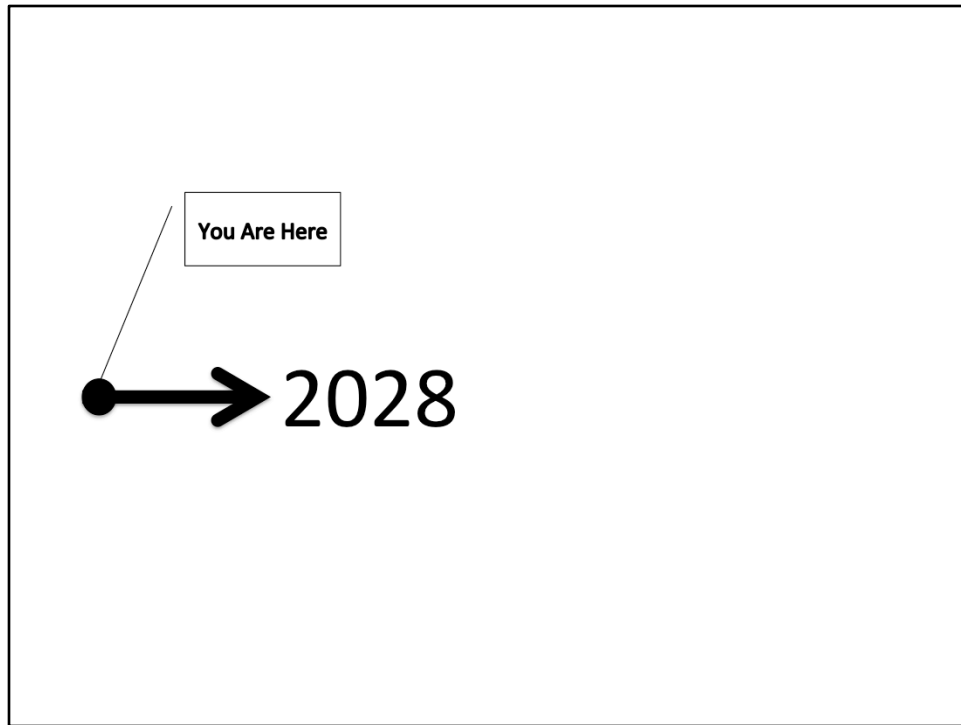


Let's call it 2028



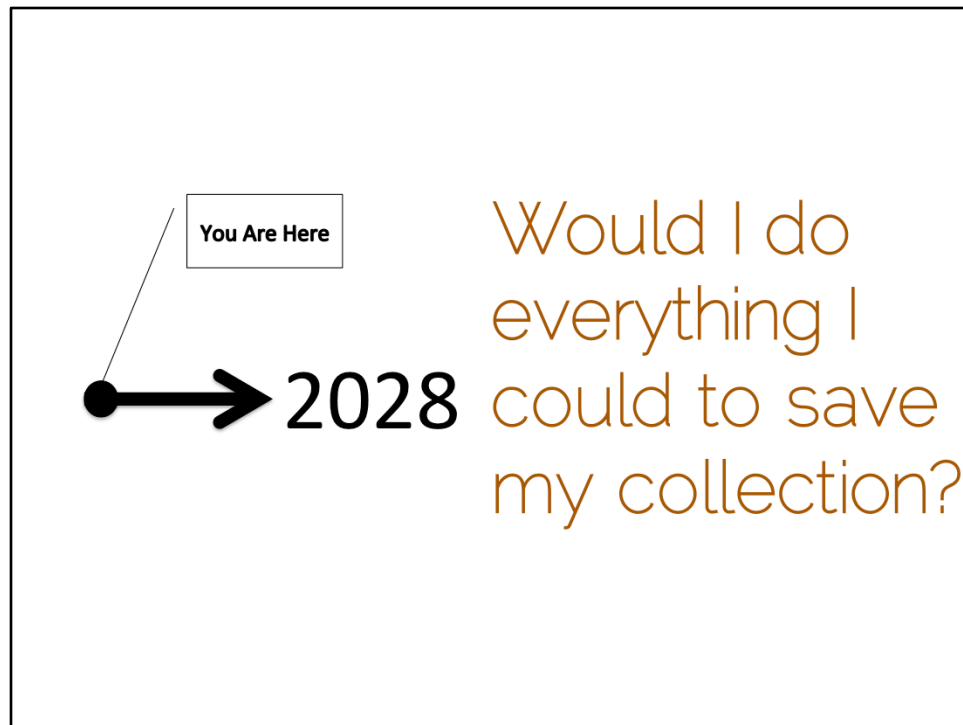


It is imperative that we take the perspective and effort found at this moment

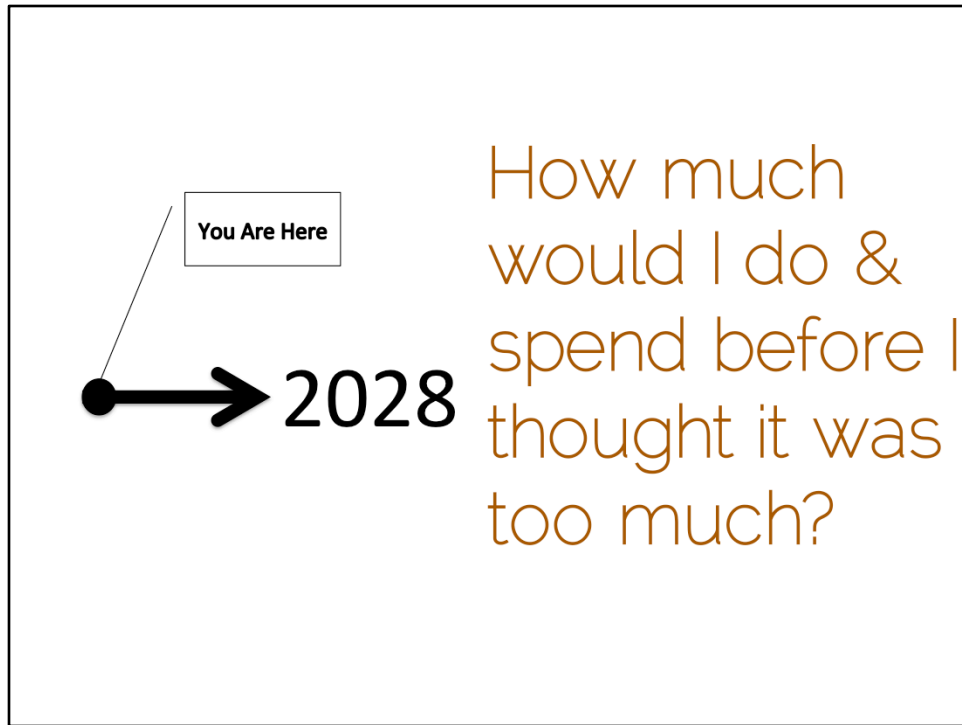


And apply it here. Because there are many organizations that would spring into action in the face of a disaster but currently stand by without acting while the longer term disaster occurs.

Imagine if all of these materials were in a disaster today? I would like stakeholders and caretakers within an organization to ask themselves -



Would I do everything I could to save the collection?



Would I raise funds to rescue the collection? How much would I do and spend before I thought it was too much?"



These questions are as relevant to this timeline as they are to being hit with a sudden disaster situation. I would be willing to bet that I know what the response would be and I would like to take that response and apply it because this is not a marathon at this point. It is a sprint.

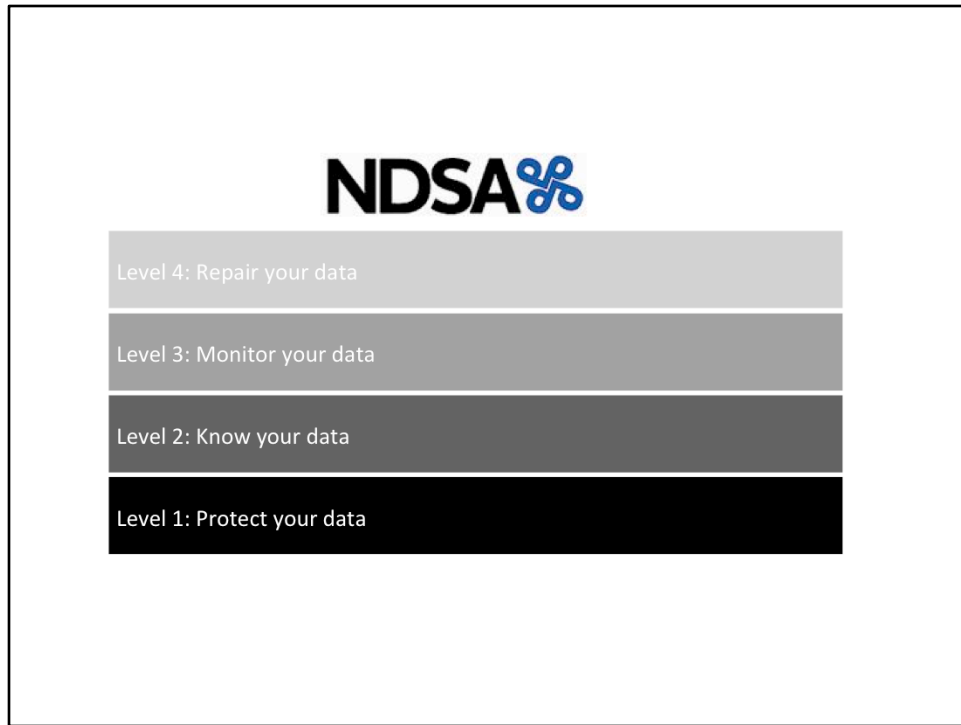


But it's also true that the task at hand can be overwhelming and that this is not an all or nothing approach. A really important work that came out which helps us navigate this is this report.

“Another **misleading perception** about digital preservation investments is that ... choices are binary: **either we implement intensive preservation ... immediately and forever; or we do nothing....** A relatively small investment may be enough to preserve the option of making larger commitments in the future ”

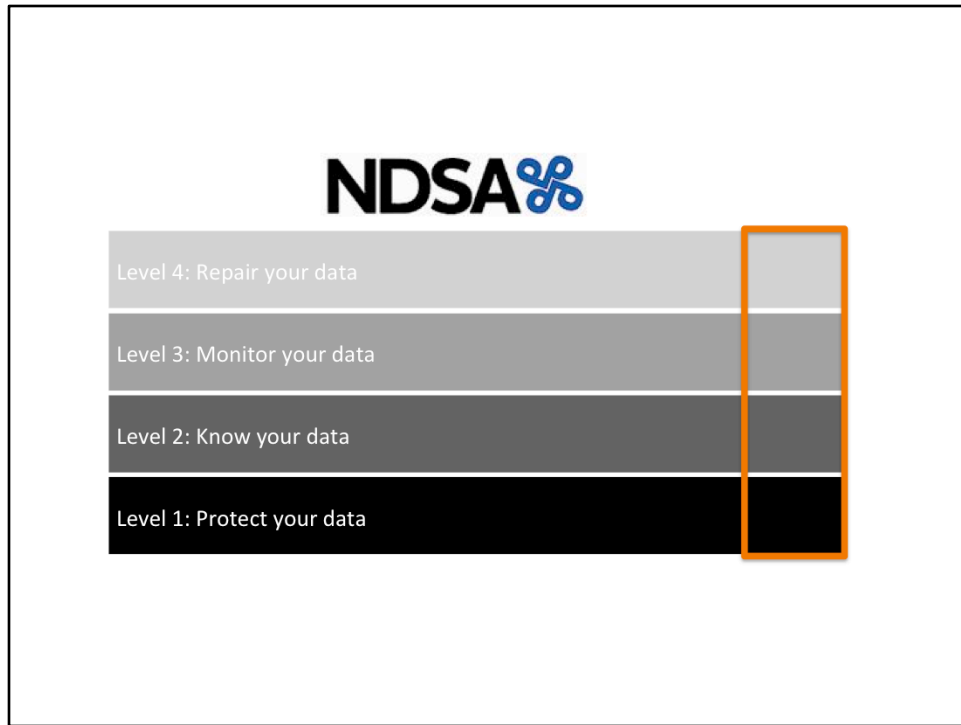
--Blue Ribbon Task Force: Sustainable Economics for a Digital Planet (2010)  
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Which tells us that a common misleading perception is that either we do all or nothing, forever or never.



I like to think about this in the context of the recent work coming out of the NDSA on the Levels of Digital Preservation, which defines the levels shown here and provides guidance on what each looks like and means. Thinking about this we realize that



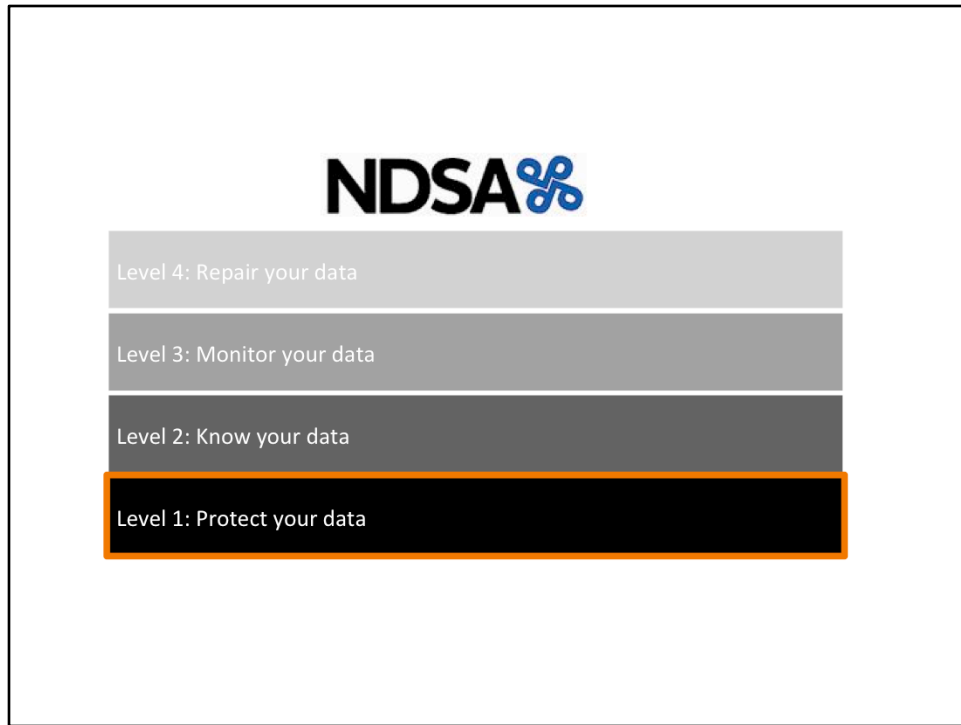


If we have intellectual control we can take a small vertical slice across all of these layers and apply it to our highest priority content. Or one important thing that the BRTF report talks a lot about is...

“When future conditions are particularly uncertain ... it is often economically justified to make a small current investment that in effect **purchases the option to make a choice sometime in the future.**”

--Blue Ribbon Task Force: Sustainable Economics for a Digital Planet (2010)  
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This concept of maintaining the option. That we do not have to make a choice to preserve something forever or not. Forever is not a concept that anyone has an easy time with and particularly not budget holders and decision makers.



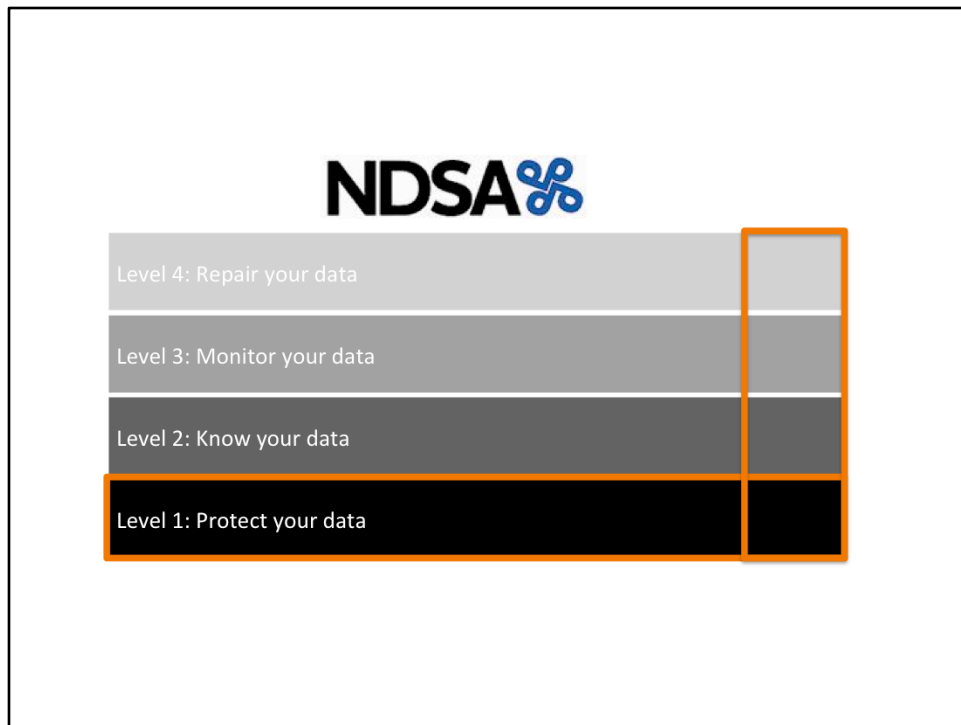
Instead we can think about providing the minimal amount necessary to maintain the option – pointing here to level 1 of the NDSA Levels of Digital Preservation -, and think in periods of 5 or 10 years, with each period being an opportunity to assess and decide whether or not we want to do nothing, do the minimal amount necessary to maintain the option to decide, or to do much more than that for materials across the collection.

“Commitments made today are not commitments for all time. But **actions must be taken today to ensure flexibility in the future**”

--Blue Ribbon Task Force: Sustainable Economics for a Digital Planet (2010)  
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It's important to avoid the paralysis that strikes when people think about very large things in black and white terms. It's not forever or never. It's not all or nothing.

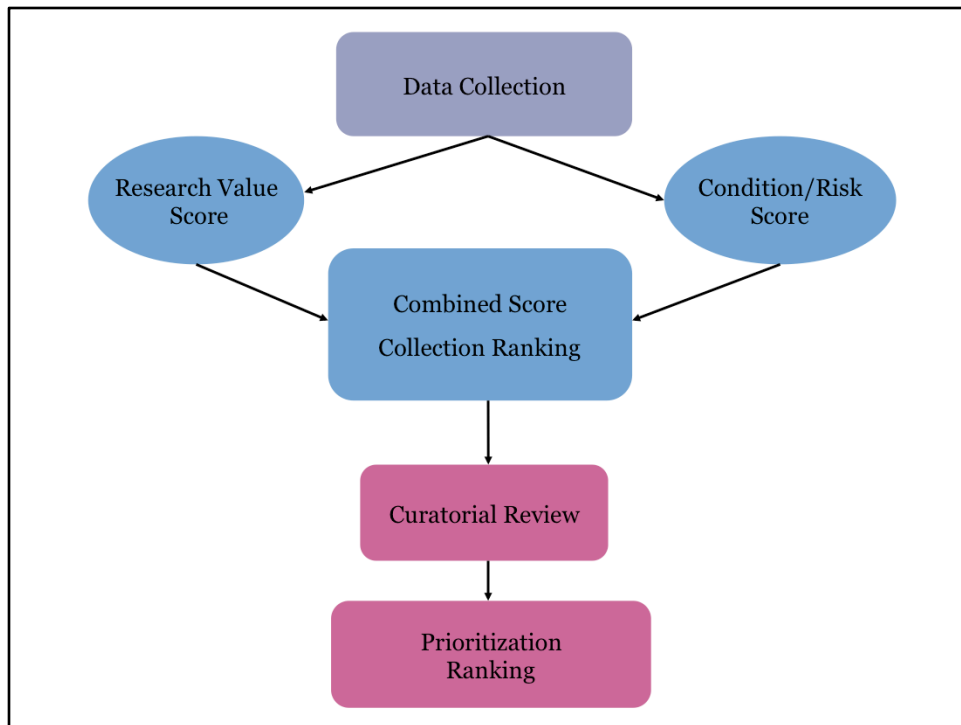
What we do require is immediacy because we are up against a wall with the time window we have. We have to start acting now.



And of course, a hybrid approach is usually the most effective path under most circumstances.



Underlying this is the issue of prioritization, which Indiana University talks about in an articulate and significant way. Additionally these reports provide an amazing amount of information and critical analysis.



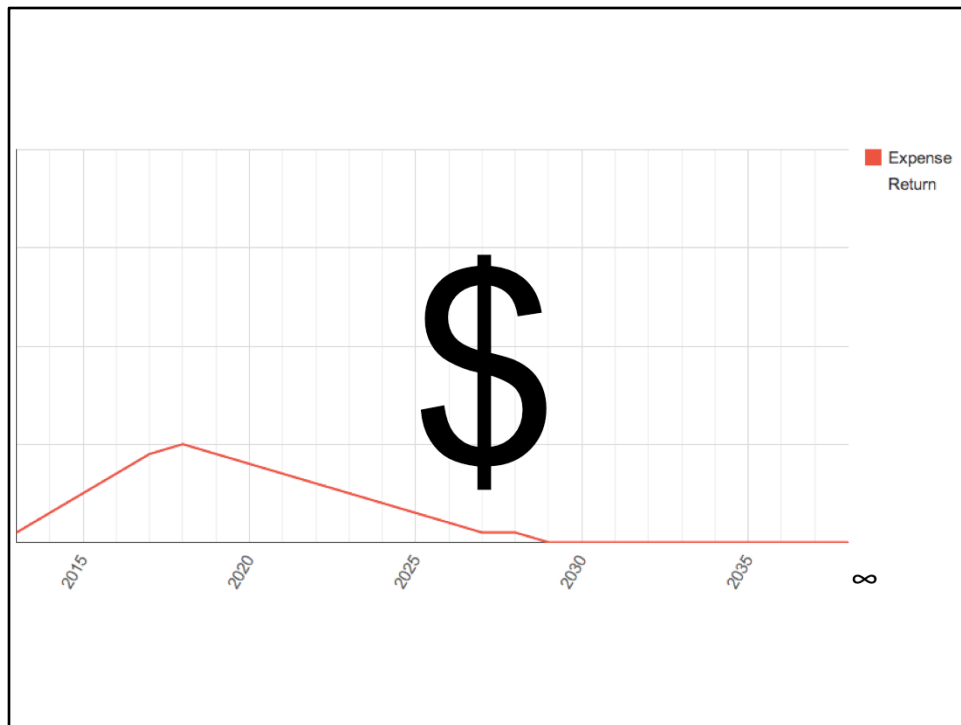
Prioritization and the need to make informed selections is a core tenet of IU's work. We need to be smart and work with information that provides us with the ability to prioritize on an ongoing basis. This is a slide from Mike Casey, Director of Media Preservation Services at Indiana University giving a high level overview of their methodology for prioritization. We are working with them to develop applications that focus on the scoring both the technical risks and research value to inform prioritization. These are called MediaSCORE and MediaRIVERS and will be published by IU in the near future.



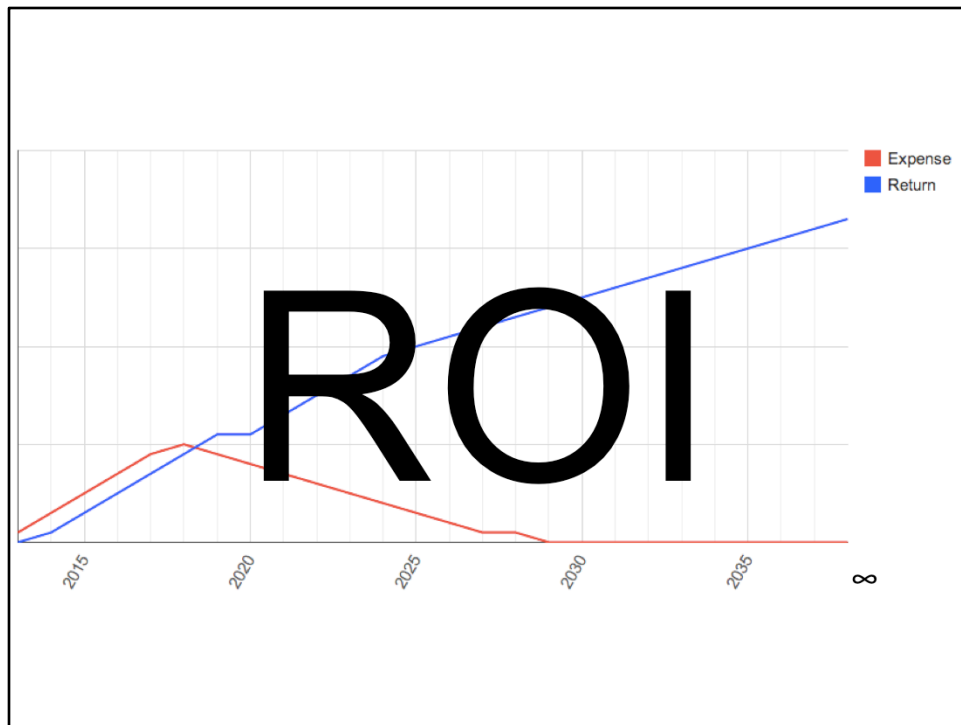
But under any circumstance an effort like this takes resources and the mobilization of those resources is only made possible by a network of people acting in coordination across departments within an organization that have a common understanding of the need and value of this work.

A point where efforts to preserve content in archives often falls short is within the higher levels of organizations where the topic that always creeps in is Return on Investment and opportunities for direct monetization.





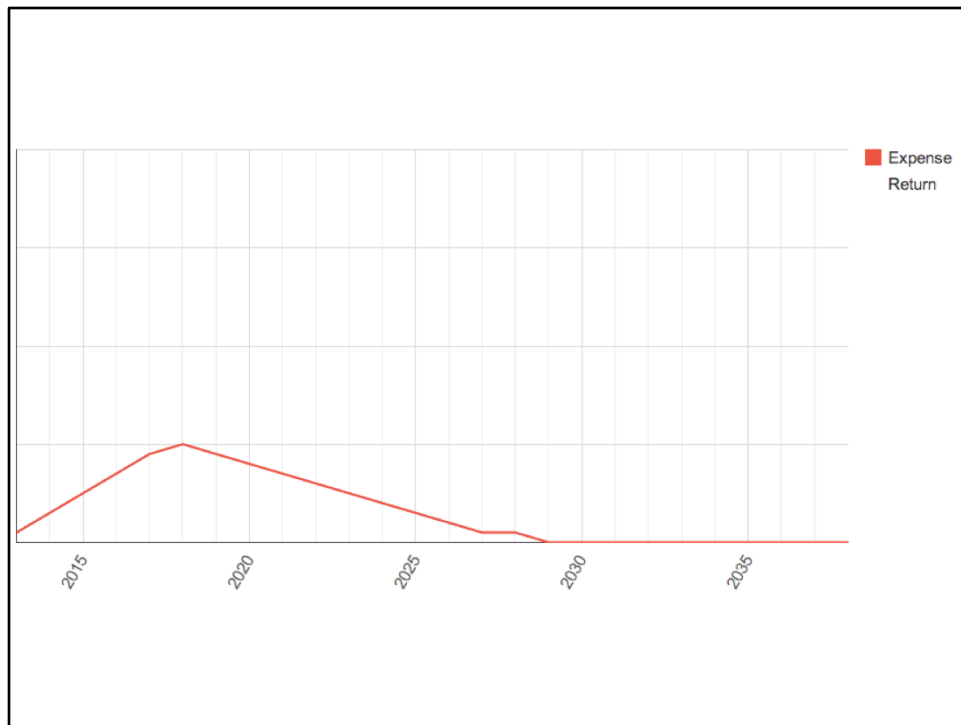
They want to know “If we put funding behind digitizing these things...



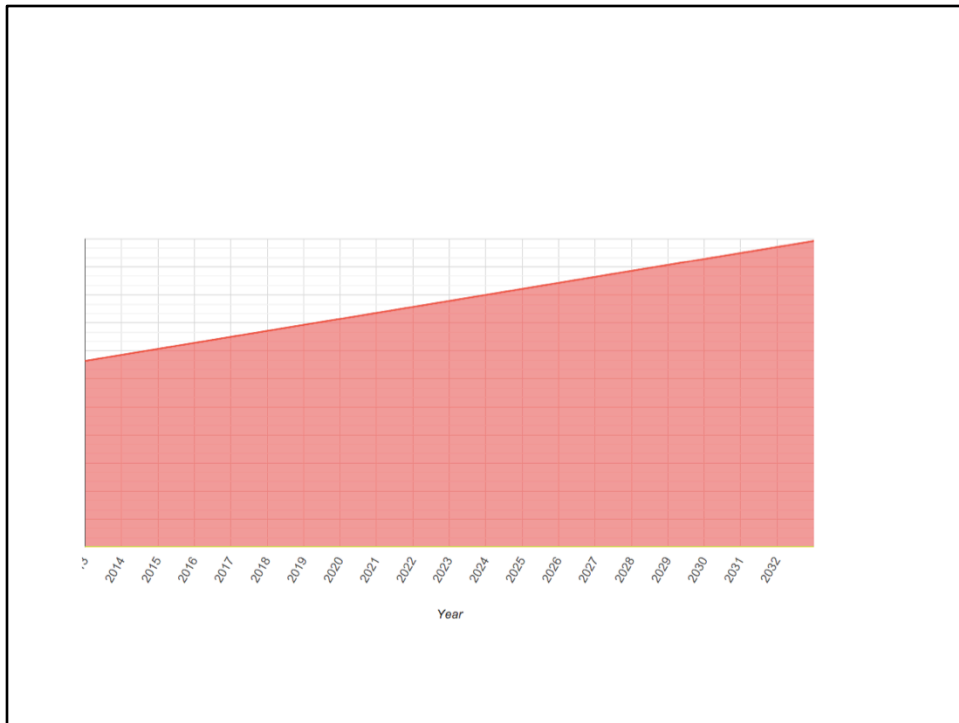
can we recoup our costs, or maybe even make money through monetization”

In fact in most cases, and for a number of reasons, using ROI as a metric, and direct monetization as a justification, is inappropriate and misguided. It fails to speak to the benefits and value derived from the effort, including support of mission and purpose and the effectiveness and quality of serving “clients”.

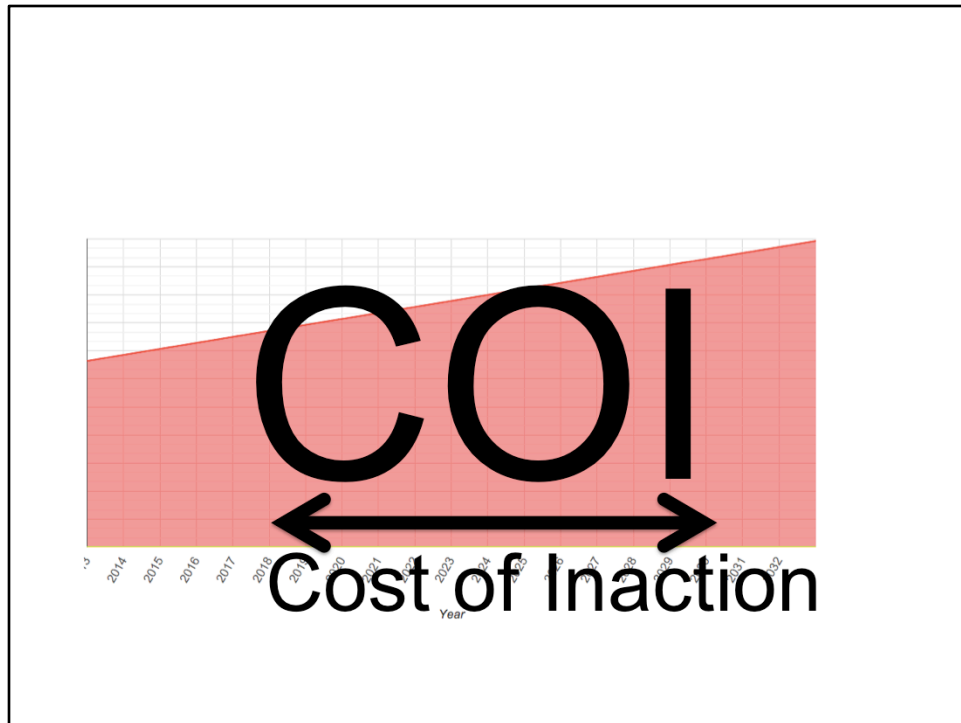
Not only this but



The real expense graph doesn't look like this where the expenses begin at \$0 in 2013 with digitization. It looks like....



This. Notice that the line for 2013 doesn't start at 0 and it doesn't ascend and then descend. The reality is that investment started years ago. Investments in collections don't start today with digitization and they don't go away once digitization is done. Collections have had investments in staff, facilities, management, administration, moves, rehousing, consulting, assessments, acquisition in some cases, and more. They will continue to manage physical collections for some time after digitization is done. So it is critical to recognize the investment made to date, and the ongoing investment made for physical collections in addition to the cost of digitization, storage, and more.

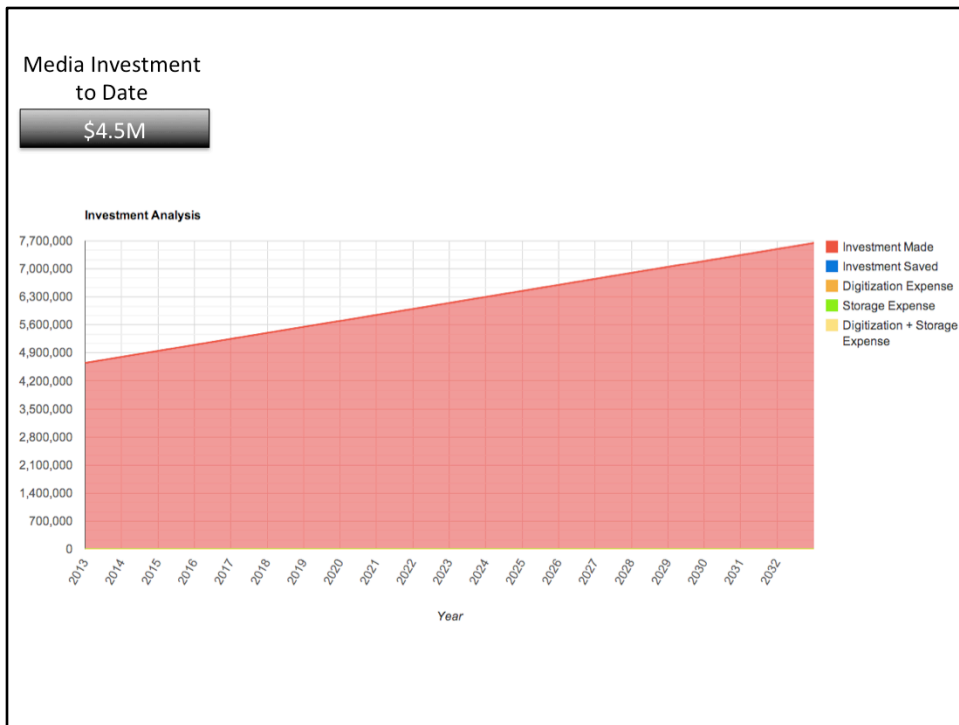


And once we come to this understanding the question of return on investment becomes less relevant and the question about the Cost of Inaction becomes much more relevant.

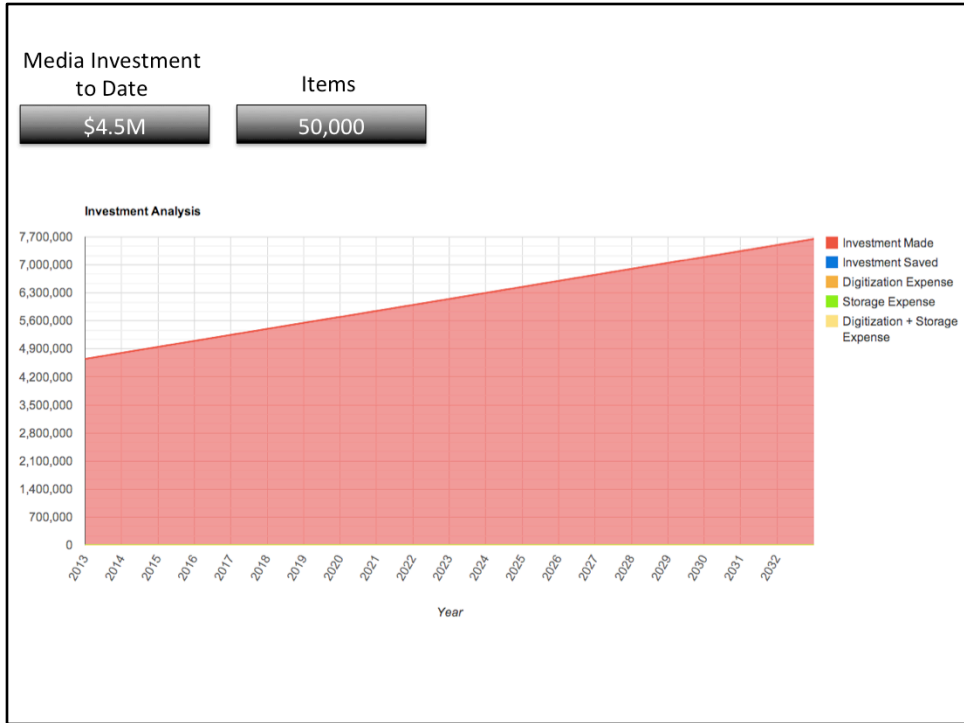
So let's talk numbers and put an organization behind this, taking a look at AVPreserve's Cost of Inaction Calculator which analyzes financial and intellectual implications of varying degrees of action. (shown here is the Google Doc prototype, although a free web application is in development currently and available before January, 2014).



Acme Org will serve as our hypothetical organization

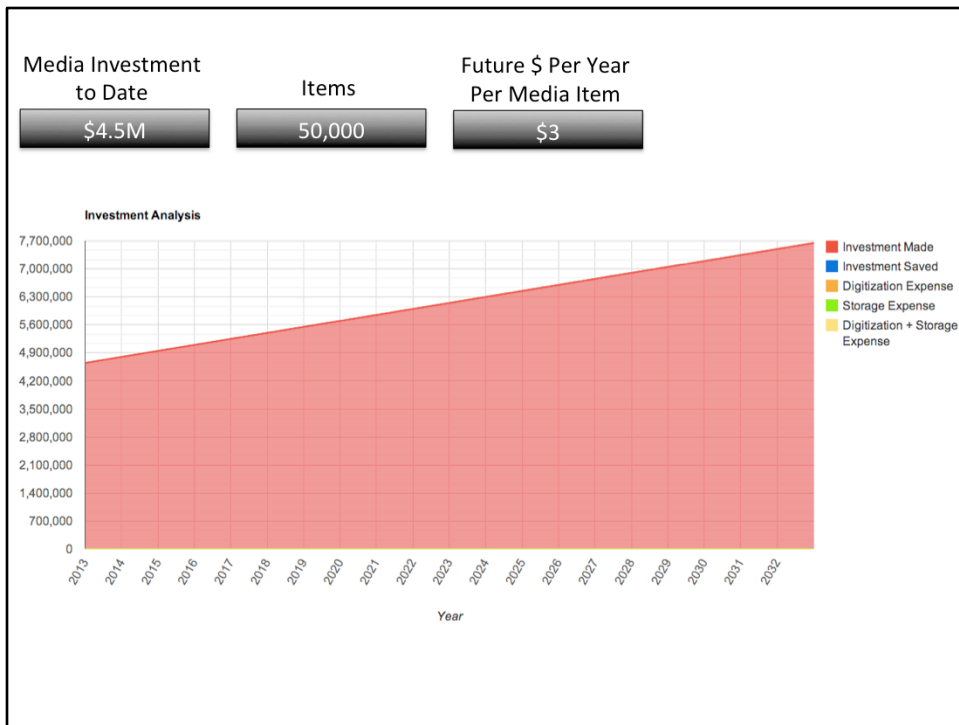


Acme Org has spent \$4.5M to date on it's collections over the past 30 years currently made up of about...

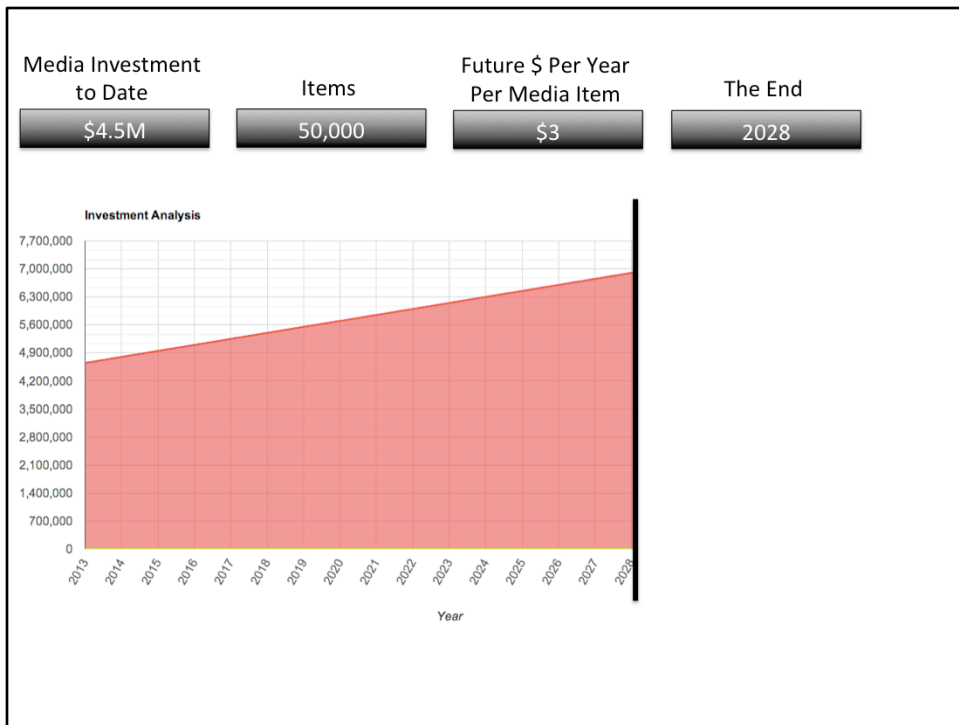


50,000 items

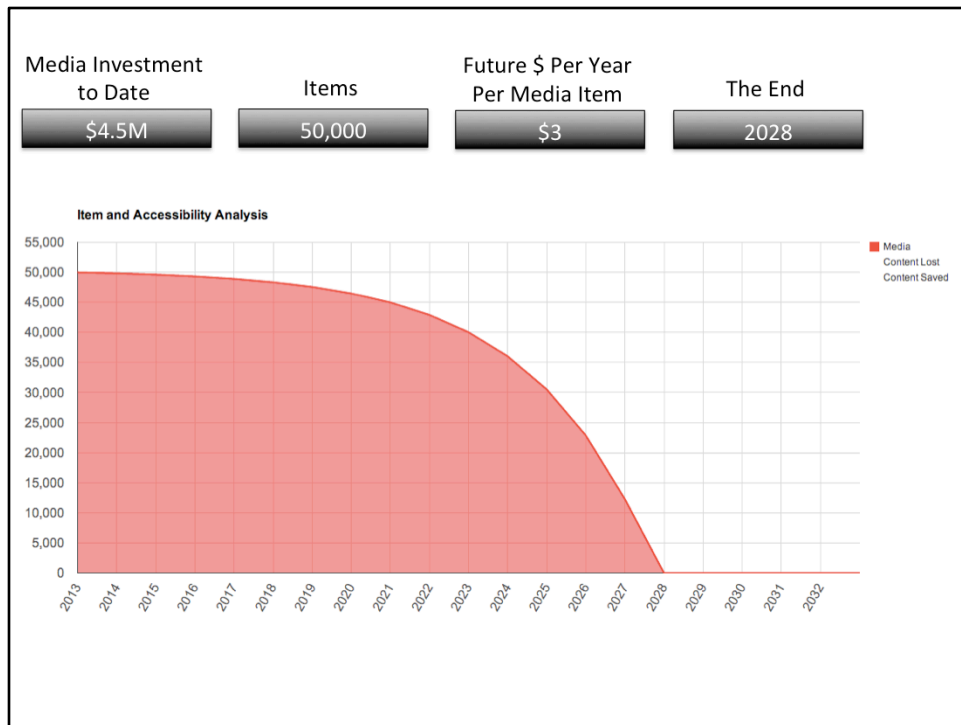




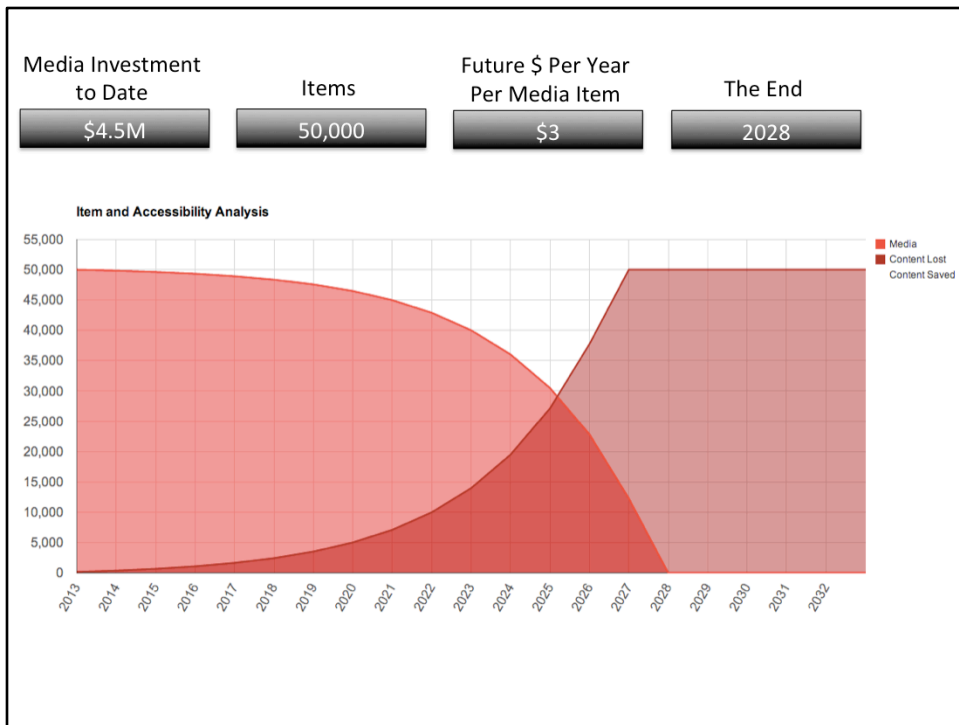
They estimate that they'll spend about \$3 per year, per item



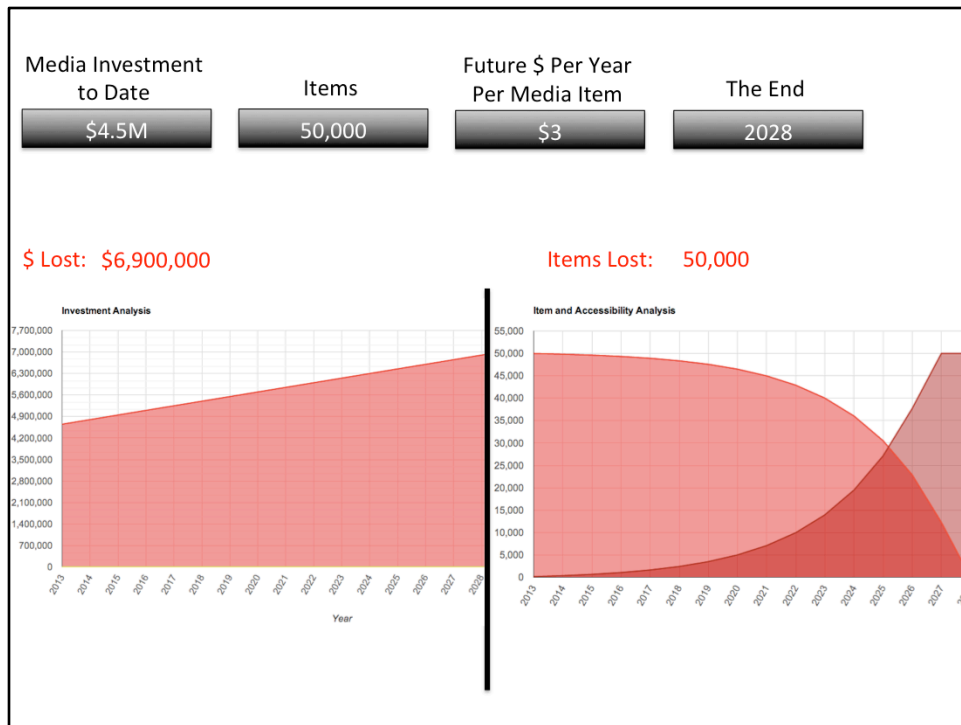
And although Acme Org has made this investment, they just came to the realization that they have 10 – 15 (we'll call it 2028 here to be generous) before they completely lose the option to access or digitize their content.



And this happens behind this backdrop, with the curve representing the loss of media due to obsolescence and degradation. What we know about this curve is that it doesn't just expire in 2028, but it's also not a linear decline. Between now and 2028 we will lose media every month to obsolescence and degradation. No matter what we do, this will be the case...



And along with that media, if it's not digitized, the content stored on that media – a huge loss to the organization and...



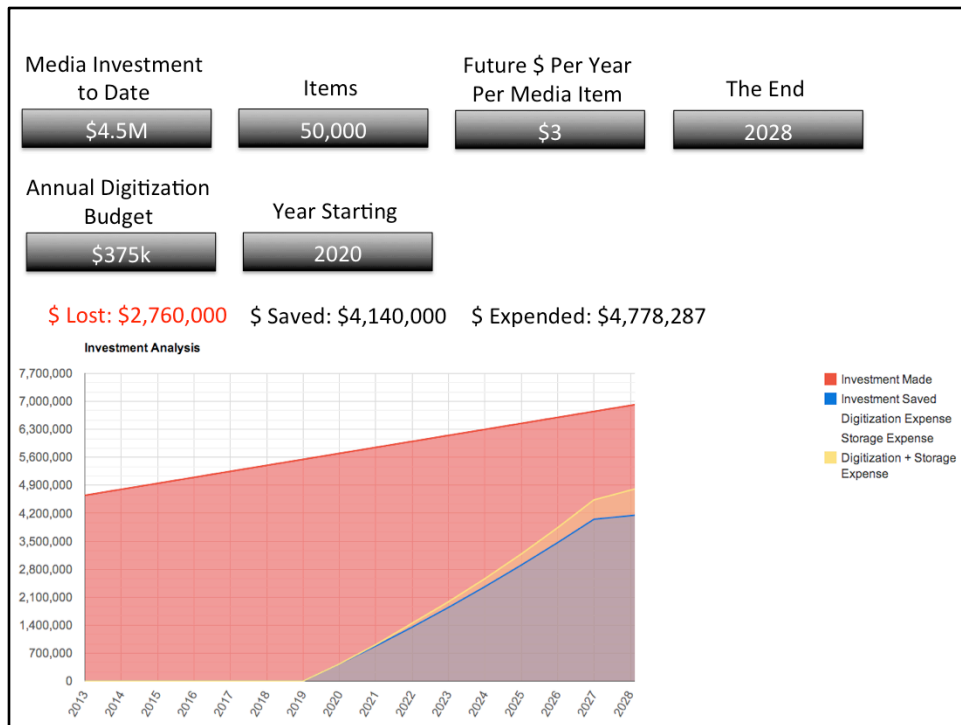
The money they have invested in it will also be thrown out the window – in this case \$6.9M, assuming you cut your losses in 2028.

With this in mind Acme Org decides to respond. Let's look at the implications of possible decisions.

# SCENARIO

\$375k per year  
starting in 2020

A



In Scenario A Acme Org spends \$375k per year starting in 2020. The assumptions are 1-hour long originals, using uncompressed audio and video target formats along with mezzanine and access copies stored in an environment...



Level 4: Repair your data

Level 3: Monitor your data

Level 2: Know your data

Level 1: Protect your data

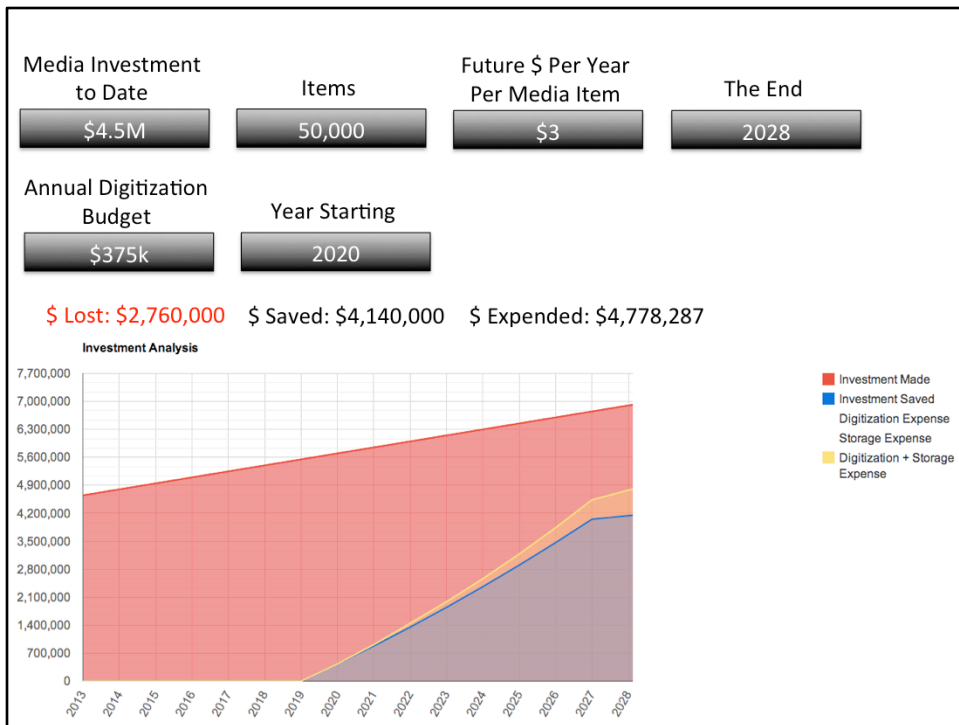
meeting NDSA Level 1 in order to..



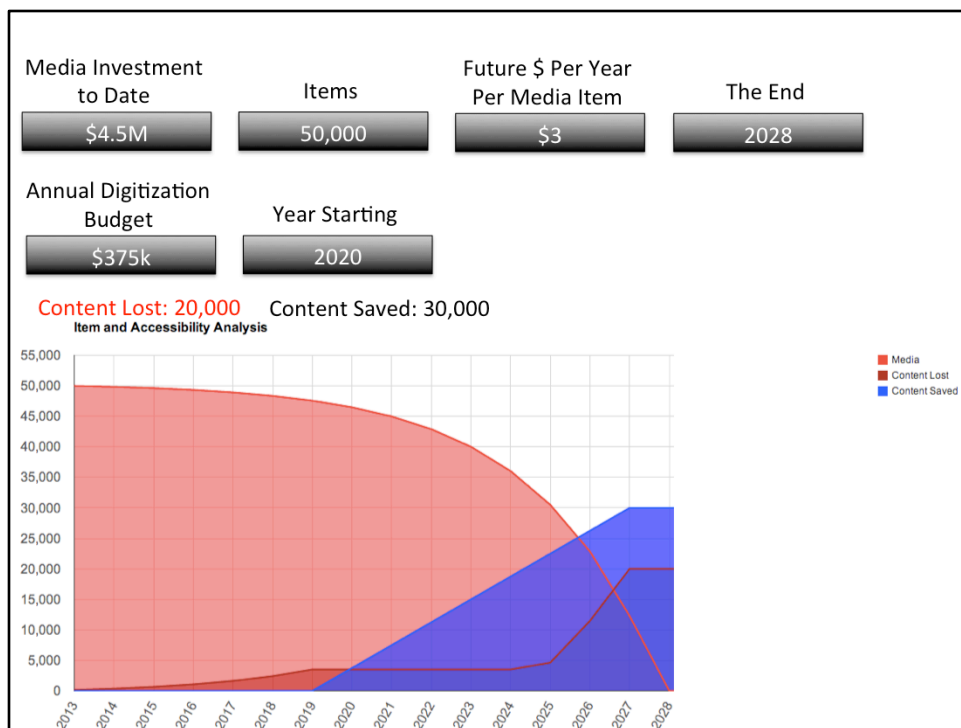
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maintain the option to make a decision in the future



In this scenario Acme Org is throwing just under \$2.76M out the window. They saved \$4.14M by spending \$4.78M.



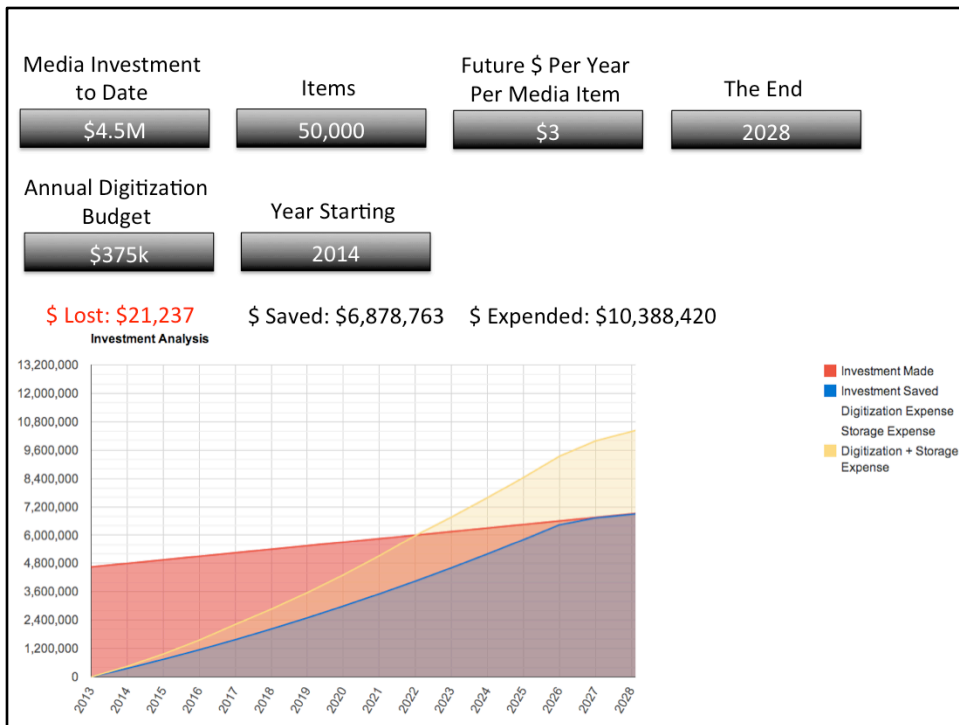
And losing content from 20,000 items.

# SCENARIO

\$375k per year  
starting in 2014

# B

In Scenario B Acme Org spends \$375k per year starting in 2014.



In this scenario Acme Org loses the items lost before they started in 2014 and the amount of money associated with those items. Otherwise they saved all of their content and investment along with it.

Media Investment  
to Date

\$4.5M

Items

50,000

Future \$ Per Year  
Per Media Item

\$3

The End

2028

Annual Digitization  
Budget

\$375k

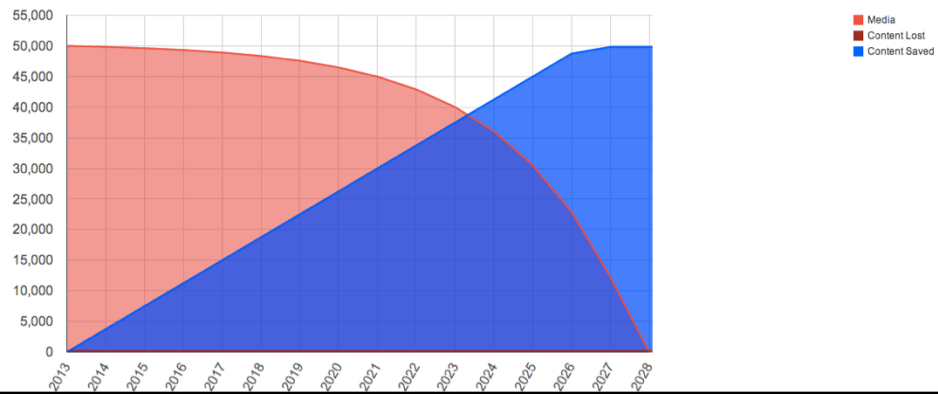
Year Starting

2014

Content Lost: 154

Content Saved: 49,846

Item and Accessibility Analysis

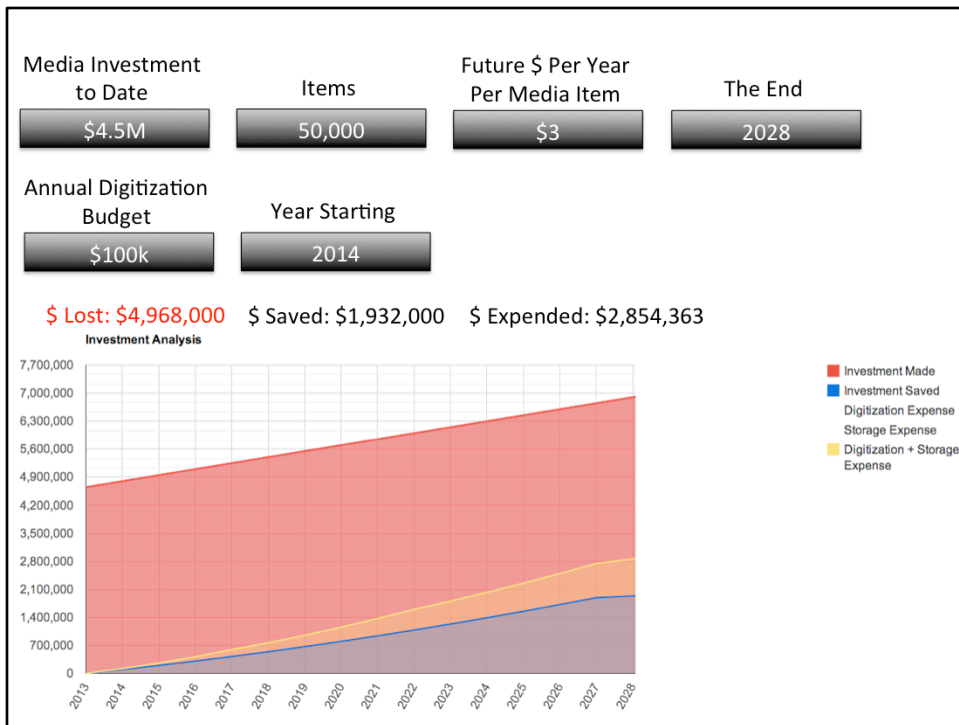


# SCENARIO

\$100k per year  
starting in 2014

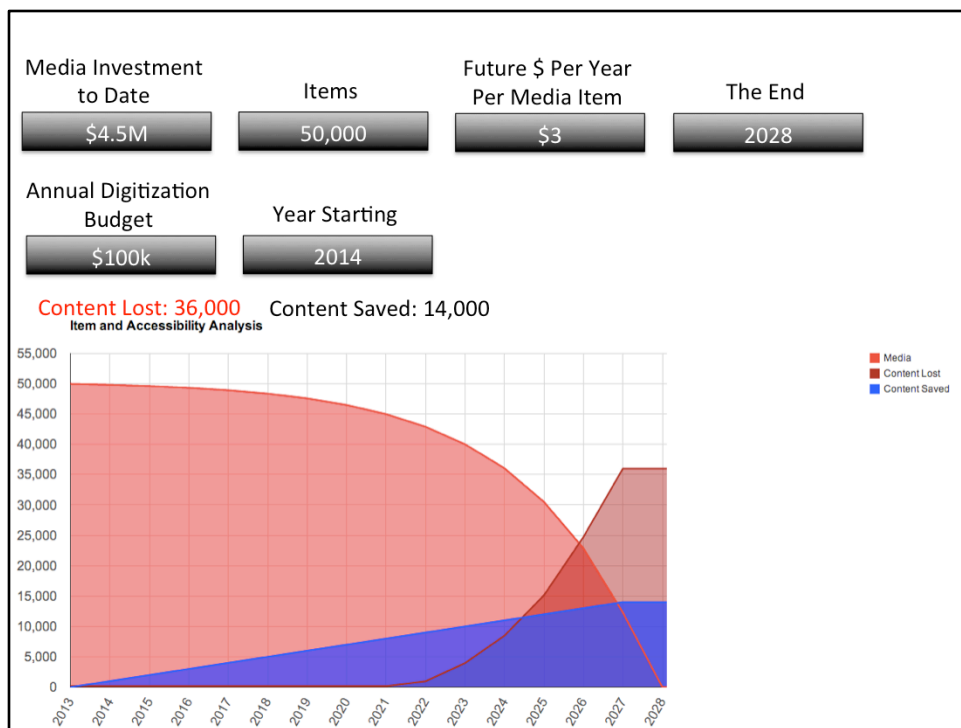
C

In Scenario B Acme Org spends \$100k per year starting in 2014.



In this scenario Acme Org is not able to keep up with the lost of items over time and loses just under \$5M of their investment. Saving ~\$2M by spending \$2.8M.






And they lost 72% of their collection



I would argue that there is no meaningful access to over 90% of content in audiovisual collections today. I say this to say that many people think that all of the important work has been done. I also say this to say that these...

# List of rediscovered films

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia




This article **needs additional citations** for **may be challenged and removed**. (February 2013)

This is a **list of rediscovered films** that, once thought lost, have since been discovered.

**Contents** [hide]

- Silent era
  - 1.1 1890s
  - 1.2 1900s
  - 1.3 1910s
  - 1.4 1920s
- Sound era
  - 2.1 1930s
  - 2.2 1940s
  - 2.3 1950s
  - 2.4 1960s
  - 2.5 1970s
  - 2.6 1980s
  - 2.7 1990s
- See also
- References
- External links



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## A 1973 Bowie performance thought lost is aired

January 18, 2013 18:53 Paul McCartney news RSS Feed

### Rare Paul McCartney recording found on lost tape

*Discovery captures Beatle performing 1964 Peter And Gordon hit 'A World Without Love'*

**theguardian**

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**Culture** > Film > Metropolis

## Missing scenes from Fritz Lang's Metropolis turn up after 80 years

Are not success stories. These are evidence of the work that we have to do.

<b>OTHER CONSIDERATIONS</b>	Historic and present lack of access to AV collections  Impact to Reputation
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The impact to reputation of choosing to let collections and content be lost is potentially extremely damaging to an organization. Particularly those where there is precedent and they are charged preservation and access of materials.

<b>OTHER CONSIDERATIONS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Historic and present lack of access to AV collections</li><li>Impact to Reputation</li><li>Direct vs. Indirect monetization</li></ul>
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While direct monetization is not a viable model for most organizations, indirect monetization is a very realistic consideration. Within universities, special collections have become the jewel in the crown and is a major contributor to recruit faculty and students, get the attention of internal and external funders, and generally obtain resources.



The next steps for COI are to develop a web application that people can use to run their own analyses and output data and reports. There has been great work in other domains on cost modeling, and it would be extraordinarily helpful to establish some cost models for past-investment to plug into the calculator for organizations. All feedback is welcomed and appreciated.

# The End

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