Information
Governance Initiative

# IG In Action

## A Practical Approach to Governing 170 Years of Critical Corporate Records

“With digital-only records, a number of things can go wrong. We have to deal with playback media that degrades and file formats and software becoming obsolete, among other long-term access challenges. It was vital to protect our unique digital assets from these risks by using digital preservation techniques much more sophisticated than simply storing the ‘bits and bytes’.”

Valerie Komor, Associated Press

As one of the only truly global news reporting organizations, Associated Press (AP) has been bringing us the news for more than 170 years. With journalists in over 100 countries, AP has been at the center of history for nearly two centuries. In the process AP has become the custodian of a vast treasure-trove of irreplaceable and historically significant information in a dizzying array of formats.

The task of ensuring that vital digital information is protected, preserved, and can be accessed for the next 170 years fell to Valerie Komar and her team in AP’s Corporate Archives group. Corporate Archives was created with a mandate govern the massive and growing archive of critical corporate information including reporters’ notes, images, videos, and the millions of wire feeds AP uses as news breaks around the world. With more and more of this information born digital, Valerie’s challenge has been growing not only by volume, but also by complexity – with no end in sight.

Valerie and her team took on this challenge by focusing on ways they could practically govern their information while minimizing the burden on the organization. Here are the steps they took:

1. **Pragmatic & risk/value focused.** Valerie and her team are responsible for a massive amount of information requiring governance. It cannot all be tackled at the same time, nor does all of it require the same level of governance. So, the team conducted a prioritization process and started with corporate records and information essential to ensuring the continuity of the business in the event of a system failure or other disruptive event.
2. **Phase and iterate.** In addition to prioritizing IG activities based on a clear assessment of information risk and value, AP adopted a phased approach. This means they divided their information into chunks based on priority, difficulty, and other metrics. This was the only practical way to approach their project because the volume was too great to address everything all at once. Valerie started information essential for business continuity, then moved on more than 100 years of AP annual reports, charters and bylaws before then digitizing and capturing discrete collections of original and unique wire copy.

To support this strategy, AP selected Preservica’s standards-based digital preservation system, an approach that will also enable them to automate the operational and technical aspects of the project while meeting AP’s needs for IG and long-term accessibility of its one-of-a-kind corporate history.