APTrust Associate Member Toolkit

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1. Introduction

1.1 Audience

The audience for this toolkit is APTrust Sustaining Members. The purpose is to help Sustaining Members conceptualize and onboard new Associate Members.

1.2 Overview of Associate Membership

APTrust introduced Associate Members in 2018 as sub-accounts, sometimes called affiliate members. Any APTrust Sustaining Member can sponsor an Associate Member. An Associate Member is a child account to the Sustaining Member and does not require approval of the APTrust Governing Board. The sponsoring Sustaining Member's annual invoice will include a storage report that clearly shows the storage fees for their Associates. Sustaining Members act as first-level support to their Associates.

Associate Memberships are a bottom-up approach through which APTrust can place APTrust services within reach of organizations that cannot commit to a Sustaining Membership, either financially or through staffing resources. The Sustaining Member manages the terms of the relationship, including determining what, if any, fees the Associate Member pays to the Sustaining Member.

1.3 Why Sponsor Associate Members?

Sponsoring Associate Members allows a Sustaining Member to extend their membership's reach and increase their return on investment. Associates may be other organizational units, strategic partners, or community partners. Because Sustaining Members establish terms with their Associates, a flexible financial model can include sharing membership fees, distributing preservation storage fees, subsidizing, or waiving fees.

There is growing evidence in the scholarly record that research libraries are well-positioned to help community archives in various ways, including digital preservation. With our easy-to-use desktop packaging and transfer tool, DART, the APTrust Associate Membership model greatly facilitates the technical aspects of collaborating with community archives. These collaborations are most successful when they start with relationship-building and trust establishment before progressing to technical collaborations.

1.4. Use Cases

Sustaining Members can establish Associates for various use cases. The use cases described here are some examples and should not be considered prescriptive or exclusive.

Institutional Collaborations

Many APTrust Sustaining Members are university libraries. As the stewards of digital libraries and archives, university libraries have strong motivations to preserve digital content. However, other organizational units at universities or colleges often also have digital preservation needs. These include publishing units like university presses, research support units, central IT whose customers may be asking for long-term preservation, and supercomputing centers.

This scenario strategically positions the Sustaining Member as the organizational lead for digital preservation. From an institutional perspective, this may involve taking on digital preservation services for other departments, schools, or administrative units within a given umbrella organization.

Benefits:

- Economies of scale—centralizing disparate services allows for greater efficiency at a lower cost.
- Reduces redundancy of services and staffing across the organization.
- Provides a strong case for other departments to advocate for the Library's role in supporting their digital preservation needs.
- Enhances the Library's role in fostering community and civic responsibility within the institution

Strategic Partnerships

Sustaining Members may have preexisting relationships with other organizations; for example, there may be a reciprocal agreement between university libraries where one hosts a shared ILS and the other hosts a shared publishing service. Another example may be a shared offsite storage center. Sustaining Members can incorporate Associate Memberships into these partnerships.

Additionally, this scenario enables the Sustaining Member to be responsive and supportive of an external set of organizations. These needs may include digitization, metadata description, and preservation services, extending support to those most in need.

Benefits:

- Expands access to preservation services for smaller institutions that may lack resources.
- Positions the Sustaining Member as a critical partner in providing enterprise-level services that are unaffordable to a single unit.
- Enables the Library to learn from different communities, identifying unique digital preservation needs that may drive the development of new services.

Community Archives

As mentioned, research libraries can help community archives meet their mission to preserve their collections. Beyond post-custodial models, flagship university libraries sometimes extend digital library services to smaller regional or state organizations. While the university library takes on hosting access copies in a digital library, there often needs to be more preservation copies. Incorporating these smaller organizations as Associate Members of APTrust is a way to fill this gap.

Benefits**:**

- Provides community archives with access to preservation infrastructure they might not otherwise afford.
- Strengthens partnerships between university libraries and local or regional institutions.
- Enhances cultural heritage preservation by ensuring long-term access to unique and historically significant materials.
- Expands the impact of the university library's mission beyond its immediate academic community, reinforcing its role as a public-serving institution.

Faculty Research and Data Sustainability

This scenario positions the Sustaining Member as a central hub for supporting and sustaining research data and digital scholarship. As faculty and researchers increasingly need long-term preservation solutions for their work, the Library can offer Associate Memberships tailored to research data management.

Benefits**:**

- It helps faculty and researchers meet the Data Management Plan requirements for grant funding, enhancing their ability to secure financing.
- Establishes a centralized methodology for managing research data and digital scholarship within the organization.
- Strengthens the relationship between the Library and its research community.
- Strategically positions subject librarians to work closely with researchers, deepening their understanding of digital preservation costs and requirements.

1.5 Overcoming Obstacles

When APTrust ran its 2022 member census, we asked what prevented interested Sustaining Members from sponsoring Associates. This section discusses the typical responses.

Uncertain Budget Impacts

Many organizations have faced budgetary challenges and constrictions since the COVID-19 global pandemic. Understandably, this uncertainty causes organizations to pay close attention to new initiatives and projects. Some kinds of Associate Memberships, such as partnerships with community archives, bring more uncertainty. However, this isn't universally true.

Associate Memberships can establish new revenue streams. Sustaining Members can work with other parts of their organization interested in medium—or long-term data preservation. These may include central IT units that provide enterprise storage, domain-specific repositories, communications and photography services, university presses, and agricultural extension services.

Local Practices and Workflows Are Under Development

Investing time and labor into establishing local practices, workflows, and shared understanding among stakeholders is always worthwhile. Yet, library professionals are well known for allowing perfection to impede progress. Perfection is an illusion, and practices will continuously iterate over time. People will change, tools will change, and priorities will change.

Not having long-established practices and workflows might even better position a Sustaining Member to sponsor Associates. Associates likely operate in different contexts and may have different skillsets, tools, and priorities. What works for a Sustaining Member may not work for their Associates. Having long-standing, formal practices and workflows may create an implicit bias toward these processes, making it more challenging to envision pragmatic strategies and solutions for Associate Members.

Capacity and Support Uncertainty

There's always more work to do than people to perform it. Given the potential scope of the work, sponsoring an Associate may seem like yet another daunting task. Organizations will always need to *prioritize*. However, if there is a will, it's possible to prioritize Associate Memberships to carve out the necessary capacity.

It's also easy to overestimate the effort needed to sponsor Associate Memberships when they are an unknown quantity. Hopefully, this toolkit's content will lighten the load and make it easier for Sustaining Members to sponsor and support Associate Members.

2. Creating Associates

2.1 Relationship Management

The Sustaining Member manages and defines the relationship with its Associates. In some cases, the relationship may already exist. Establishing trust through building relationships over time provides a firm foundation for sponsoring Associate Members. APTrust believes that Sustaining Members are particularly well-suited to nurture these relationships, so we've decided to expand Associate Memberships before exploring grants to underresourced organizations or establishing new membership models.

Because each relationship is different, there is no simple checklist or process to follow. Below are several considerations for Sustaining Members, though there may be others. Sustaining Members generally support and train Associates, elevating issues to APTrust as needed. Associate Members are not eligible to participate in governance groups, but they and their staff are welcome to join interest, user, and working groups.

2.2 Establishing Terms

Sustaining Members establish terms with their Associates. The same Sustaining Member may even have different terms for different Associates. APTrust does not need to be involved if our Sustaining and Associate members follow our guidelines and policies. The following are non-exhaustive topics that Sustaining Members may wish to discuss with their Associates.

- **Content Scope**: Are Associates free to deposit any content to APTrust? Are there any restrictions on the content they can deposit to APTrust?
- **Storage Class**: Are Associates limited to using a [particular storage class/location](#), or can they use any class/location?
- **Disk Space**: Are Associates permitted to deposit as much content as they wish? Are there any restrictions on the total amount of storage consumed, how large a single object can be, or the number of files they can include in an object? Associate Members should also follow our [deposit guidelines](#).
- **Duration**: For how long can Associates deposit content? Is there a time-bound agreement that needs renewal? If so, at what frequency?
- **Disposition**: What happens to an Associate Member's content if the relationship ends? What happens to an Associate's content if the Sustaining Member withdraws from APTrust? What type of advance notice must either party provide in either situation? (Sustaining Members must give advance notice to APTrust by March 1 if they intend to withdraw the following membership year, which starts on July 1. See [Expectations of Participation for Sustaining Members](#).)

- **Roles and Responsibilities**: Associates will have their own Registry accounts and AWS keys, distinct from the Sustaining Members. Depending on the nature of the relationship, Associates may deposit directly, or the Sustaining Member may deposit on their behalf. In the latter case, the Sustaining Member will need separate Registry accounts and AWS keys. Be intentional about deciding who does what and document roles and responsibilities for both.

2.3 Financial Models

Sustaining Members decide what, if anything, to charge the Associates they sponsor. All financial transactions are between the Associate and Sustaining Members; APTrust does not invoice Associates. The models below are not exclusive.

Gratis

The most straightforward and generous model is to charge nothing. This model might make sense if you have a long-standing and collaborative relationship with the Associate. Sustaining Members may want to use this model to collaborate with other institution units and help meet outreach goals.

Reciprocity

Another option that does not involve financial transactions is a reciprocal agreement or bartering with another organization. Perhaps in exchange for providing preservation storage to the Associate, they provide your organization with training. Two institutions may collaborate on a shared access platform hosted by the other, with preservation storage supplied by the Sustaining Member. It is up to the Sustaining Member to decide on an agreeable exchange of goods or services.

Cost Recovery

Sustaining Members may decide that their Associates need to cover their costs. In this case, the Sustaining Members could pass on storage fees to Associates, who the Sustaining Members would then invoice. In addition to storage fees, Associates may need to pay something to the Sustaining Member to help cover the membership fee.

Flat Fee

While cost recovery usually attempts to recover all storage (and possibly some membership) fees, a flat fee is a form of partial cost recovery. It's also simpler to manage from a financial perspective, with less accounting. Flat fees are helpful when the Associate is limited to a specified amount of content they can deposit.

Revenue Generation

The most entrepreneurial model is to try to make money. While marketing this type of Associate Membership to small organizations might be challenging, this may interest large institutions. For example, if a joint public-private center generates data, it may need a preservation solution. Or perhaps a Sustaining Member partners with a for-profit corporation facing data management challenges.

2.4 Operational Process

The process below is generic for establishing new Associate Members. It may look different if the Supporting Member provides a concierge-type service where they deposit on behalf of their Associates.

1. The Sustaining Member and Associate Member come to mutually agreed-upon terms for the relationship.
2. An Advisory Representative for the Sustaining Member contacts help@aptrust.org and provides the following information.
   a. Name of the Associate Member
   b. Domain Name of the Associate Member (If they do not have a domain, APTrust can create a spoof domain for object identification.)
   c. Names and email addresses of Associate administrators and users.
3. APTrust staff creates the Associate's institution and users in the Demo instance of Registry, provisions AWS keys, and securely shares them with the Associate users.
4. The Sustaining Member orients the Associate to APTrust, provides basic training, and shares APTrust documentation.
5. When the Associate is ready, the Sustaining Member contacts help@aptrust.org to request production Registry accounts and AWS keys.
6. APTrust staff creates the Associate's institution and users in the production instance of Registry, provisions AWS keys, and securely shares them with the Associate users.
7. Associate Member starts depositing.

3. Managing Associates

3.1 Training

The Sustaining Member is responsible for any training needs of their Associates. Training includes digital preservation generally, and APTrust specifically. Associate Members can request access via their Sustaining Member sponsor to the [Digital Preservation Coalition website](#), which contains many [training resources](#), and they can register for the [Novice to Know-How online digital preservation training](#).

If APTrust conducts any training programs, Associates may attend. However, generally speaking, Sustaining Members are responsible for training their Associates to make deposits, update objects, monitor their content, and delete and restore files and objects. All APTrust documentation is open to Associate Members. They can request access to the restricted [Technical Documentation](#) on the APTrust website via their sponsoring Sustaining Member.

3.2 Support

Sustaining Members are responsible for providing initial support to their Associates. This support might include answering basic questions, providing links to documentation or training videos, or walking them through using DART. By default, the Sustaining Member has no access to their Associates' content, buckets, or Registry account unless an admin user on the Associate account creates a separate user account for them.

As needed, Sustaining Members escalate Associate support requests to APTrust staff via help@aptrust.org. If they are not sending the message, copy the Sustaining Member's Advisory representatives on the request.

3.3 Finances

APTrust does not bill Associate Members. Each April, APTrust prepares invoices and storage reports for each Sustaining Member. The storage report includes a monthly breakdown of deposits by storage class/location for the Sustaining Member and any of their Associates for the previous year and provides the Sustaining Member with all the direct costs incurred by their Associates.

3.4 Associates on Website

Although not required, APTrust likes to include Associate Members on our website. Examples are on our [Members page](#); Associates are the sub-bullets underneath a Sustaining Member. If your Associate Member wants to be listed, send a representative photograph, descriptive paragraph, and link to their website to the Executive Director.

3.5 Associates in APTrust Groups and Mailing Lists

Associate Member staff are welcome to participate in APTrust [interest](#), [working](#), & [user](#) groups, and [mailing lists](#). Contact the relevant group co-chairs or Executive Director to sign up.

3.6 Terminating Associate Members

As mentioned, Sustaining Members should discuss the process for either side to terminate their relationship when it forms to prepare for an orderly transition. If needed, Associates can use

Registry to restore and delete objects. APTrust staff can also initiate bulk restoration and deletion requests upon request. Deletions would follow standard procedure requiring an Associate's admin user secondary approval. Once the Associate Member has deleted all content from APTrust, APTrust can deactivate the institutional record from Registry.

If an Associate Member becomes dormant, stale, or abandoned, contact the Executive Director.

4. Resources

4.1 Checklist for Associate Memberships

☐ **1. Define the Relationship**
    ☐ Identify the sponsoring member institution.
    ☐ Clarify the purpose and goals of the associate membership.
    ☐ Confirm mutual benefits for both the sponsoring member and the associate.
    ☐ Address any potential obstacles or challenges.

☐ **2. Establish Terms of Membership**
    ☐ Determine the duration and conditions of the associate membership.
    ☐ Define the scope of services available to the associate member.
    ☐ Establish usage limits and responsibilities.

☐ **3. Set Up Financial Arrangements**
    ☐ Choose a financial model (e.g., cost-sharing, sponsorship).
    ☐ Document any fees, subsidies, or budget considerations.
    ☐ Secure approvals from relevant financial and administrative bodies.

☐ **4. Implement Operational Processes**
    ☐ Provide access to APTrust systems and repositories.
    ☐ Set up necessary accounts and credentials.
    ☐ Ensure compliance with local and APTrust policies.
    ☐ Share documented procedures for deposits, retrievals, and management.

☐ **5. Provide Training and Support**
    ☐ Onboard new associate members with training sessions.
    ☐ Assign a primary contact for support and questions.
    ☐ Offer ongoing technical assistance as needed.

☐ **6. Maintain and Review Membership**
    ☐ Regularly check in with the associate member to assess needs.
    ☐ Monitor usage and compliance with membership terms.
    ☐ Update records and financial arrangements as necessary.

☐ **7. Publicize and Integrate**

☐ List associate members on APTrust's website if appropriate.
☐ Include them in APTrust groups and mailing lists.
☐ Provide access to relevant community discussions and meetings.
☐ **8. Manage Termination or Transition**
☐ Define the exit process if the membership ends.
☐ Ensure a smooth transition or migration of preserved content.
☐ Conduct a final review and collect feedback for future improvements.

4.2 Example Storage Report

See an [example invoice and storage report](#) showing the breakdown between Sustaining Member and Associate Member storage.

4.3 MOU Template

APTrust has prepared a [generic template MOU](#) that Sustaining Members can customize to meet each use case. [*Edit any text in brackets, italics, and underlined*]. Legal counsel has not reviewed this template.