

nestor endorsement of TRUST Principles

25. September 2020

nestor ad-hoc WG TRUST¹

The nestor network welcomes the initiative of the authors of the TRUST Principles White Paper² and the RDA Community³ and would like to express its endorsement of the principles.

nestor is the competence network for digital preservation in Germany and is part of a network of European partners. It is a central point of contact for all matters regarding digital preservation and offers consultation services aimed at specific target groups.

The emergence of the concept of "FAIR data" has led to a surge in the recognition of the importance of data management and curation measures to ensure that research data – and the metadata describing them – are findable, accessible, re-usable, and interoperable. What the FAIR Principles lack, however, is systematic attention to digital preservation. The long-term accessibility, usability, and interoperability of the data can only be guaranteed if the systems and organizations holding them fulfill certain (organizational, technical, and object-management-related) requirements. This is something the FAIR Principles do not sufficiently address.

Benefits of the TRUST Principles

The TRUST Principles, seeking to "provide a common framework to facilitate discussion and implementation of best practice in digital preservation by all stakeholders" (Lin et al. 2020, 1), have undertaken to address this gap.

The TRUST Principles offer a mnemonic for data producers and users, funders, and other stakeholders involved in the management and dissemination of research data. They can be a helpful instrument for awareness building: they draw attention to the overall challenge that all data holding organizations face – how to ensure reliable and sustainable access to and usability of research data over time; at the same time they serve as a shorthand pointing stakeholders to the most important aspects that will require their attention when choosing or building suitable infrastructures for the preservation and dissemination of FAIR data.

Consisting of only five principles, TRUST presents a low-threshold entry point for a structured and systematic approach to questions of trustworthy data curation and preservation, and can therefore serve as a pathway to certification via established processes such as those offered by the CoreTrustSeal Foundation⁴, the nestor Seal⁵, or by PTAB⁶.

¹ The working group consisted of:

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² Lin et al. The TRUST Principles for Digital Repositories. In: Scientific Data (2020)7: 144.

<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41597-020-0486-7>

³ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/rda-community-effort-trust-principles-digital-repositories>

⁴ <https://www.coretrustseal.org>

Recommendations for further development

In order to fulfill their full potential, we suggest that the TRUST Principles be developed further, paying attention to the following aspects:

While succeeding at establishing an overall framework for TRUSTedness, the TRUST Principles do not convey a sufficiently comprehensive picture of the requirements that data holding organizations need to fulfill to be considered trustworthy long-term archives. While organizational aspects such as business continuity and disaster recovery are addressed, measures relating to the actual digital objects – e.g. preservation planning and the implementation of suitable long-term preservation strategies – are not. This bears a risk that, despite their importance, these aspects of digital preservation do not receive sufficient attention.

To counter this, the TRUST Principles must be linked with established and accepted criteria suited to measuring trustworthiness. These criteria are already referenced by the TRUST Principles and may serve as inspiration as to which additional, preservation action-related requirements may be relevant indicators of TRUSTedness. This can also help mitigating the risk that claims of “compliance” with the TRUST Principles are used to communicate TDR status without the application of agreed metrics. At the same time, from our perspective, the creation of another standard to measure a repository’s capacity to provide reliable long-term preservation of digital objects, further lowering the minimum (“core”) requirements for trustworthiness, as expressed by the CoreTrustSeal, for example, should be avoided.

Benefits and recommendations at a glance

- provides a common framework to facilitate discussion by all stakeholders
- mnemonic helps to raise awareness
- provides a low-threshold entry point
- principles do not convey a sufficiently comprehensive picture of the requirements
- preservation planning and suitable long-term preservation strategies are missing
- TRUST Principles must be linked with established and accepted criteria suited to measuring trustworthiness

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⁵ https://www.langzeitarchivierung.de/Webs/nestor/EN/Zertifizierung/nestor_Siegel/siegel.html

⁶ <http://www.iso16363.org/>