Welcome Speech at
the 2007 International Conference on Preservation of Digital Objects（iPRES2007）

Dear colleagues and friends, ladies and gentlemen, good morning,

It is my great pleasure, and on behalf of the National Science and Technology Library of China, to welcome all of you, from abroad and within China, to participate in the iPRES2007, the 2007 International Conference on Preservation of Digital Objects.

Long term preservation of digital information is now of critical importance to the sustainable development of science, education, culture and the society. As all of us witness, digital information has become the primary information resources used in research (especially scientific and technological research) and in many circles of education. Most of scientific journals make their electronic versions the choice of the access and the first channel of publications, electronic theses and dissertations become the norm for deposit and retrieval for more and more universities, online versions of conference proceedings dominate their dissemination, and e-books has begun to take strong hold on learning. What is more, digital scientific, social sciences, and humanity data becomes the very basis for research, so much so that a new model of research - data science - is emerging and a new form of scholarship – cyberscholarship - is developing. At the same time, cultural institutes including libraries, museums, and archives, are busy transforming their collections into digital resources that can be accessed across time and space, helped or stimulated by projects like Goolge Book and Open Content Alliance. We all know that our kids, the network generation, are thriving on digital

photos, music, and video, and engaging themselves enthusiastically in social networking in sites such as Facebook and YouTube. To them, life is digital. All this not only happens in western countries. As a country with the 2nd largest internet user population and probably largest research and education community, China is embracing digital revolution in an unforeseen pace. National programs, such as National Scientific Infrastructure Platform（国家科技基础条件平台） and National Digital Culture Network（国家文化信息资源共享工程） are laying down the foundations for nation-wide digital resources. Most key universities and research organizations in China already live on their e-journal collections. The Web now becomes the first source for news and entertainment for more and more Chinese young people. Digital libraries, e-science, and e-learning, all become an integral part of research and education endeavor. In fact, more and more our scholarly communication activities and intellectual output manifest, embody, made available in and some only in digital form.

While all these being digital do enhance our research and education and enrich our lives, long-term availability becomes the key to its enduring value to generations to come and to peoples yet hindered by digital divide. A crisis is already here. A lot of digital information disappears daily, and much else is saved and managed in an ad hoc or proprietary manner that offers no guarantees for long term availability. For countries like China, this crisis often comes in more ominous ways. For example, most important information for Chinese scientific research is foreign journal publications. More and more Chinese institutions subscribe to these journals by acquiring online access rights with fewer and fewer print subscriptions. Without perpetual digital copies promptly

saved in trusted Chinese archives, this lifeblood of research is in great danger at any time.

There are many threats to long-term availability, including technological, legal, financial, and organizational ones, most of which are very familiar to the audience here. Yet, long-term availability of digital information is not just a library issue, or a technical issue, or a financial or organizational issue, or just an issue for research, education, and cultural institutions. It is a professional issue for all of us involved in the creation, dissemination, and management of knowledge to make sure the information we deal with can be available for future generations. It is also a development issue for the society to guarantee that the accumulated knowledge will be utilizable in the future to promote further progress. It is even a political issue for our governments to safeguard knowledge assets, most produced by public support, so that those yet hampered by digital divide will someday be able to share it, and those future generations will benefit from it. So eventually, it is a public policy issue and a public investment issue. As digital information becomes so fundamental and so pervasive, as the burden of long-term preservation far outstretches the capabilities of any single or group of organizations, and as the value of doing preservation often fail to align with short term organization goals and market interests, it is the responsibility of the society to rise to the crisis and commit itself as a public duty and public service to preserve the society's knowledge assets and cultural heritage, digital or other wise. We need a social insurance plan just like health insurance, to coordinate efforts from professions, as a country, and by international communities, to secure necessary political commitment, sustainable public investment, organizational responsibilities, and trusted

legal and financial management, for the preservation of our heritage.

It is with this understanding, NSTL has supported iPRES 2004 and again this year's conference. As a national level establishment, NSTL has as its aim to provide open, convenient, and trusted access to scientific information for Chinese scientific communities. Its member libraries, the National Science Library, the National Medical Science Library, the National Agricultural Science Library, and the National Engineering Library, work together to offer comprehensive coverage and public services. Though NSTL started with its cooperative print collections, it began to secure national licenses to selected electronic resources and to support members and other research and education institutes subscribing to other electronic resources. NSTL begin to realize that, as the national scientific information platform at the digital age, it needs to play a proactive role in building a national network of trusted digital archives for foreign scientific publications, and at the same time to collaborate with other national organizations in preserving Chinese scientific knowledge outputs and to coordinate efforts in ensuring interoperability and serviceability of networks of digital archives for sciences, social sciences, humanities, and other cultural heritage. So during its recent strategic planning process, NSTL takes as a key strategy for its future development to provide leadership, organizational framework, and technological incubation for this national preservation network.

We are glad that we will have opportunities in this conference and after it to learn from our colleagues to tackle the challenges on the way. Problems in digital preservation are not confined within the boarders of a country, and international progresses bring new progresses internationally. As we discuss issues as infrastructures for digital curation, archival

systems in practice, institutional repositories, rreservation strategies and policies, trusted repository & certification, file formats & registries, preservation of research data and other resources, education/training for digital preservation, and preservation administration, we are moving closer to archiving our goals of preserving our knowledge and heritage.

It is the pleasure of NSTL to sponsor this conference, and I am very confident the conference will bring the best of the participants and to forester future collaborations between partners.

Beijing's autumn is the best time of the year, and I wish you all pleasant stay in Beijing.

May you have a very successful conference