The University of Virginia Library is an enthusiastic participant through the Software Preservation Network in Yale’s Scaling Emulation As A Service Infrastructure (EaaSI) project. We are motivated strongly by the urgent need to preserve software in ways that make our preservation of digital scholarly and cultural materials more accessible and meaningful.

As preservation professionals (whether or not it is a primary assignment for each of us), we are fond of a commonly expressed perspective: preservation without access is pointless. The preservation of relevant software adds many layers of complexity to the notion of digital preservation while promising critical additional value in the result.

If we lose access to the software component-mix that an object requires to be something other than an unintelligible sequence of bits, the object becomes useless.

Such software component-mixes usually contain a large number of individual components, each of which is likely to become obsolete on its own schedule. To meet that challenge, we need to document in some standards-based and automated way the original inventory of components that have been used together to enable use of a digital object. The harder part is to employ that inventory to find and (legally) assemble the components that we need in a virtual place where they can perform their function related to our digital object. That is the promise of EAASI, and we’re pleased to be a partner in proving it through a widespread collaboration aiming to build a community-based infrastructure. The massive scale of our shared mission demands nothing less.

www.softwarereservationnetwork.org/eaasi