



## Set in stone or written to disc: data through the ages

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Each of us generates, processes and consumes more data than ever before. But by some measures [that information is also more ephemeral than ever before](#).

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### The Rosetta Disk

"There is no digital standard that could be counted on in the very long term, in the scenario that we drop the ball," says [Alexander Rose](#), head of The Long Now Foundation, a California-based organisation dedicated to thinking about the long-term future.

Troubled by the unreliability of our most recent data stores, Rose's foundation has developed a format it thinks could last for a millennium or more.

The nickel discs are etched with text that starts at a normal size and rapidly shrinks to microscopic, to make it clear someone who may find it centuries from now that the disc contains more than the eye alone can see. The microscopic text is readable at 1000 times magnification – within the reach of 17th-century lens technology, says Rose – and contains the equivalent of 30,000 pages of text or images. The institute is considering creating a digital version using a form of bar code.

The first disc, made in what its creators call Q2008, holds [descriptions and texts of 1000 languages](#).

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