



Brand Messaging & Positioning

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1. Brand Overview

In this document, **The Access to Memory Foundation is the primary brand.** It is the global, community-lead organization that governs, sustains, and stewards the software AtoM (Access to Memory). **The Access to Memory Foundation** exists to provide necessary structure, funding, and long-term strategy for the ongoing healthy and transparent evolution of AtoM as an open-source software.

In its stewardship of AtoM, **The Access to Memory Foundation** supports the entire archival ecosystem by connecting archivists, institutions, and developers in a way that ensures AtoM remains a stable, trusted platform for preserving access to memory on a global scale.

The Access to Memory Foundation gives AtoM its sustainability and governance. AtoM gives **The Access To Memory Foundation** its purpose and real-world impact. Together they form a unified brand ecosystem where the foundation is the steward and the software is the living expression of the foundation's mission and the practical tool used to support the community.

2. Brand Essence

Stewarding the world's archival memory through open-source collaboration, community-lead governance, and global connection.

The Access to Memory Foundation exists to ensure that the world's knowledge, history, and cultural records remain accessible, protected, and sustainably maintained. It is the stabilizing force that transforms a passionate, but fragmented, open-source community into an organized, global ecosystem.

The Access to Memory Foundation is a community-owned steward of global memory infrastructure.

3. Brand Purpose

To safeguard the continuity, growth, and integrity of AtoM through governance, sustainability, collaboration, and connection to the community it serves.

More than overseeing a piece of technology, The Access to Memory Foundation's purpose is to:

- Ensure AtoM remains truly open-source, community-owned, and globally governed
- Support archivists, institutions, and developers with resources and structure for easy adoption and use of AtoM
- Coordinate efforts in the archival community that could otherwise have been siloed or disconnected and therefor stunted
- Build a sustainable funding and governance model for the future growth of and continued community access to AtoM
- Advocate for global access to the most trustworthy archival technologies

The purpose of The Access to Memory Foundation is simple and profound: to uphold the technology that protects our shared story.

4. Brand Promise

This is the promise that The Access to Memory Foundation makes to its community of supporters and to the world. This promise translates the brand's vision into a clear commitment – not what the brand believes (purpose) or what it hopes to achieve (vision), but what humanity as a whole can reliably expect from The Access to Memory Foundation at all times.

We promise to protect, strengthen, and evolve the open-source infrastructure that preserves the world's memory — with transparency, community partnership, and an unwavering commitment to archival standards.

To archivists, we promise a platform that honors the depth, nuance, and integrity of archival practice.

To institutions, we promise long-term stability, responsible governance, and a clear path to adoption and support.

To developers and contributors, we promise an open, collaborative environment where every improvement serves the entire community.

To the public, we promise to uphold the tools that ensure our shared histories remain accessible, trustworthy, and protected for generations.

We promise to be the stewards of AtoM, so that access to memory on a global scale remains a universal right.

5. Brand Vision

The vision of The Access to Memory Foundation is to create and uphold a thriving, global, archival ecosystem where AtoM is recognized as the leading archival platform worldwide, upheld by

transparent governance, shared ownership, and the collective intelligence of archivists, developers and institutions around the world.

In this future, The Access to Memory Foundation serves as the connective force that dissolves siloes, unifies resources, strengthens international adoption of AtoM, and ensures that every institution, regardless of size or geography, has access to trustworthy, standards-driven archival technology.

Through stability, collaboration, and a commitment to open-source values, The Access to Memory Foundation imagines a world in which access to memory is protected not by a single organization, but by a global community working together to safeguard our past for generations to come.

6. Brand Values

- **Open-Source Stewardship:** AtoM is not owned by a company, it is maintained by the people who use it – archivists, institutions, developers, and community contributors, including the makeup of everyone working inside of The Access to Memory Foundation.
- **Community Ownership:** The strength of AtoM is representative of the strength of its community. The Access to Memory Foundation exists, in part, to support and empower that community through its use of and contribution to AtoM.
- **Global Accessibility:** AtoM is multilingual by design and built for an international archival landscape. The Access to Memory Foundation, in turn, mirrors this global inclusivity in its messaging and its outreach.
- **Transparency:** Open-source governance and shared decision-making are essential to the healthy evolution of AtoM. AtoM does not *belong* to The Access to Memory Foundation, it belongs to the global community, meaning that the foundation has a responsibility to communicate and collaborate openly with that community.
- **The Preservation of Memory:** This value is so central to the mission of both the foundation and the existence of AtoM that they each have memory in their name. At the heart of The Access to Memory Foundation's work is the belief that preserving access to historical memory is vital to humanity as a whole and is a responsibility that belongs to everyone.

7. Key Messaging Pillars

Each of the following messaging pillars represents a core truth about The Access to Memory Foundation and its work. These are the ideas we want people to remember, trust, and associate with the brand. Together, the pillars for the foundation of all messaging, allowing the brand to stay grounded, aligned, persuasive, and recognizable across every touchpoint and platform.

Pillar 1: Community-owned and open source - The Access to Memory Foundation ensures that AtoM remains open, free, and community-driven – not tied to commercial interests or a single vendor.

Pillar 2: Rooted in archival principles and international standards – The Access to Memory Foundation ensures that AtoM is used and governed by trusted professionals in the archival space and is the best platform available to archivists and institutions.

Pillar 3: Sustainable, organized governance - The Access to Memory Foundation provides long-term stability, strategy, and vision for AtoM's future

Pillar 4: Supporting adoption and transition - The Access to Memory Foundation lowers barriers for institutions transitioning from other systems by connecting them to trusted developer ecosystem support. This gets to be a BIG talking point, because institutions might hesitate to transition to a new platform because of the hassle of adopting something new.

Pillar 5: Protecting access to memory - The Access to Memory Foundation is responsible for protecting something that belongs to all of humanity – access to the historical record. This work and the platform matter for the sake of human society as a whole. Archives preserve identity, culture, truth, and accountability and The Access to Memory Foundation plays a vital role in safeguarding AtoM as the leading platform for memory infrastructure.

8. The Brand Narrative – the story of The Access to Memory Foundation

Archival memory is fragile and fragmented. It lives inside of institutions of different sizes, across countries, systems, languages, and traditions. For archives to remain accessible, trustworthy, and sustainable, the world needs archival technology that is built on standards - not profit – and supported by the global community.

AtoM is that archival technology. It is a unifying, open-source, standards-driven platform for global access to historical memory.

Where the tapestry of historical memory had previously been disconnected and difficult to navigate and explore, AtoM provides the community of archivists, institutions, and developers with the ability to weave the threads of human history together into one, unified and universally accessible platform.

But a community this passionate and diverse need infrastructure. They need governance, organization, and support. **That is why The Access to Memory Foundation exists.**

Members of The Access to Memory Foundation are the stewards of AtoM – ensuring that the software remains open source, evolves with practice, stays aligned with archival standards, and becomes stronger through collaboration.

We bring archivists, developers, and institutions together in community. We reduce barriers to adoption of this best-in-class software, we sustain the technology that sustains memory, and we keep the community connected and informed.

Most importantly, we protect the global infrastructure that protects human histories, cultures, identities, and truths.

We are not a corporation, we are a community.

Together, we safeguard access to memory.

9. The Brand Personality

The Access to Memory Foundation is grounded, thoughtful, and deeply committed to the people it serves. At its core, the brand is collaborative, trustworthy, and purpose-driven — guided by the belief that access to memory is essential to a healthy society. **The personality blends the steadiness of a steward with the warmth of a community partner: clear, open, approachable, and anchored in integrity.**

This brand never speaks at people — it speaks with them.

AtoM, the software, reflects the same personality. It is practical, intelligent, flexible, and globally aware — built with care and shaped by collective wisdom. Together, The Access to Memory Foundation and AtoM project a brand personality that feels steady, competent, and empowered.

These are brands that people trust because they feel human and responsible.

10. Brand Voice and Tone

Having a consistent voice is essential to a brand that speaks to multiple, diverse audiences. The Access to Memory Foundation's voice balances authority with community, technical instruction with human warmth, and global inclusivity with clarity and precision. This brand exists at the intersection of memory, technology, and community.

The Access to Memory's voice embodies the organizations purpose and values by being:

- **Knowledgeable** – We speak with an authority that is grounded in archival standards and technological best practices. Our confidence comes from expertise, not ego. We know the landscape, the challenges, and the importance of what is at stake, and we communicate with a clarity that instills trust.
- **Warm and community centered** – Although our work is technical, our voice is human. We speak as members of a global community, working together toward a shared purpose. We are a unified body *and* we are people – individuals who care about the history of humanity and everyone's access to it. Our language is inclusive and grounded in relationships. We welcome, we invite, and we connect.
- **Clear and structured** – Archival and technical content can be dense and difficult for a lay-person to consume. The voice of The Access to Memory Foundation needs to cut through the complexity and organize information into digestible, approachable explanations and bites of information.
- **Persuasive and purpose-driven** – The work of preserving memory is urgent and vital. Our voice communicates that urgency and the importance of the mission in a way that is motivating, not

inflammatory. We show people why their involvement matters and help them to feel like a part of something greater than themselves, because they are.

- **Inclusive** – Both The Access to Memory Foundation and AtoM serve a multilingual, international community. Our tone and our messaging honors cultural diversity, avoids region-specific idioms, and remains accessible to non-native English readers. Yes, the entire site and all messaging will be available in multiple languages, but there will realistically be times when one language is used as the primary way of communicating in any given resource and that language needs to be accessible. All language and messaging must also be adaptable to translation and respectful of global contexts.
- **Trustworthy and stable** – We are a steward – not a startup. Our voice communicates reliability, steadiness, and organizational maturity. We speak in a way that reassures institutions and funders that AtoM has a strong, thoughtful, and enduring home in the care of The Access to Memory Foundation.

The tone of The Access to Memory Foundation's voice shifts slightly based on the audience or context in which it appears, but it always remains rooted in one, core voice.

The tone of that voice is:

Collaborative – like a knowledgeable peer or partner

Grounded – focused on facts, standards, and real-world practice

Calm but urgent – conveying why the work matters

Optimistic – solutions-focused and forward-thinking

Empowering – giving the community ownership and agency

Confident – with the knowledge that this *is* the best platform available to serve this purpose

The tone is NOT:

- Corporate or salesy
- Academic to the point of inaccessibility
- Overly technical without context or explanation
- Exclusive or elitist
- Emotional in a way that feels sentimental rather than meaningful
- Confrontational or condemning – yes there are other, less strong platforms available that serve a similar purpose, but it is better to rise above and prove your value than to speak poorly about a specific competitor

Specific tone-shifts based on audience:

- **Archivists** – Tone is respectful, knowledgeable, collegial. Focus on standards, accuracy, workflow, and community.
Example: “We see you, we understand what you are trying to accomplish, and we support you.”

- **Developers** – Tone is transparent, direct, and technically clear. Focus on governance, documentation, and technical direction.
Example: “Your contributions matter. Here’s how you can engage meaningfully.”
- **Institutional Decision-Makers** – Tone is stable, confident, and credible. Focus on risk reduction, longevity, and ecosystem strength.
Example: “We provide stability and governance for AtoM, the most trusted platform for preserving access to memory on a global scale.”
- **Funders and Partners** – Tone is purpose-driven, globally oriented, and articulate. Focus on mission, infrastructure, and global benefit.
Example: “This work has long-term societal impact. Your support strengthens global access to invaluable human memory.”
- **Students and Emerging Professionals** – Tone is inviting, encouraging, and accessible. Focus on learning, community, and vision for growth.
Example: “You belong here – you are part of the future of archives.”

11. Language Principles

To maintain consistency across all contexts and platforms, the The Access to Memory Foundation should uphold the following language principles:

- **Use precise terminology** – When discussing archival practice, accuracy build credibility.
- **Keep sentences approachable** – Accuracy is important and so is ease of consumption. Avoid overly complex or lengthy sentences and explanations.
- **Lead with purpose before features** – The features are fantastic, but they aren’t persuasive without first knowing their importance and reason for existing.
- **Speak to “we”, not “they”** – The foundation is a part of the community, not above or outside of it.
- **Favor active voice over passive voice** – Active voice conveys clarity, confidence, and accountability, and a sense of urgency.
- **Write intentionally for a global audience** – Use language that is easy to translate, free of idioms or regions-specific expressions.
- **Favor simplicity over complexity** – When explaining technical or standards-based content, break concepts into digestible ideas and segments. Provide necessary context and avoid assuming prior knowledge.
- **Communicate with long-term steadiness** – Reinforce the stability and transparency of your stewardship by avoiding exaggeration or urgency to the extent of sounding alarmist.

12. Taglines and Messaging Bank

These are interchangeable taglines and messaging samples that can be used in marketing, web-presence, and internal contexts. Each can be used as a spark of inspiration for a larger piece of messaging or can be used as a stand-alone piece of content representing the brand.

For The Access to Memory Foundation (primary brand):

Short Taglines:

- Stewarding community-owned archival memory
- Building the future of AtoM, together
- Open-source governance for global memory
- Strengthening the ecosystem of global archival memory
- Protecting access to memory, worldwide
- Sustaining the technology that sustains our histories
- Building a sustainable future for open-source archival infrastructure.

Medium-length Messaging Samples:

- Ensuring that AtoM remains an open, sustainable, and community driven platform for global access to archival memory.
- Bringing archivists, developers, and institutions together to strengthen global access to memory.
- Empowering the archival community through transparent, collaborative growth and governance.
- Combining passion and expertise into organized, community-led stewardship of the leading open-source archival software.
- Supporting institutions with clarity, resources, and the best platform for access to archival memory.

Longer Messaging Samples:

- The Access to Memory Foundation provides the governance and stability that allow archivists, developers, and institutions to build the future of AtoM, together.
- The Access to Memory Foundation exists to unite a global community around one shared purpose: protecting humanity's archival heritage through open-source, standards-driven technology.
- Through transparent governance and community collaboration, The Access to Memory Foundation strengthens humanity's access to archival memory at every level, from individual contributors and members to national institutions.

For AtoM (sub-brand):

Short Taglines:

- Standards-driven. Community-built. Globally trusted.
- Archival software that thinks like an archivist.

- The world's open-source archival management platform.

Medium-length Messaging Samples:

- A platform that evolves through shared expertise, collaboration, and open development.
- Archival technology that puts standards, context, and user needs at the forefront.
- Built to grow with your institution – and with the archival community as a whole.

Longer Messaging Samples:

- AtoM is the open-source archival management platform built by the expertise of the global community it serves.
- AtoM provides institutions of every size with the freedom and functionality to preserve and share their archival collections with the world.
- AtoM reflects the living practice of archives – evolving through collaboration, governed with transparency, and sustained by a global network of experts.

13. Competitor Analysis & Key Brand Differentiators:

Competitor Analysis:

AtoM exists in a landscape with a handful of other archival systems, but each of them serves a slightly different purpose — and understanding that helps clarify what makes AtoM unique.

- **ArchivesSpace** - ArchivesSpace is AtoM's most direct competitor. It is widely used in the United States and has strong adoption there. It's a solid system, but it was built with U.S. institutional workflows in mind.
AtoM was built around international archival standards and is designed for global, multilingual use. Furthermore, **AtoM** is especially well-suited for national networks, multi-repository projects, and institutions that care deeply about standards and public access.
- **Preservica** - Preservica isn't actually a direct competitor — it's a digital preservation system, not an archival description tool.
Many institutions use **AtoM** for description and access, and Preservica or Archivematica for preservation. They're complementary, not competitors.
- **CollectiveAccess & PastPerfect** - These systems are used by museums, small cultural institutions, or mixed collections. They're great for object management but not ideal for archives.
AtoM was built specifically for archival description, hierarchy, and standards — not for managing physical museum objects.

Archivematica – Archivematica is another open-source tool, but it handles preservation workflows, not description or access. It often works with AtoM, not instead of it.

Competitor analysis takeaway:

Where other systems are focused on either U.S.-centric workflows, small museum collections, or digital preservation, **AtoM is one of the only open-source tools built specifically for archivists, based on archival standards, and ready for global, multilingual use.**

The Access to Memory Foundation strengthens that even further by giving AtoM long-term stewardship, sustainability, and organized community governance — something many other tools don't have.

Key Brand Differentiators:

These are the key aspects that truly set The Access to Memory Foundation and AtoM apart from their competitors:

Strong, transparent governance - Many archival systems are run by companies or small teams, which can make institutions nervous about long-term stability. The Access to Memory Foundation changes that. It gives AtoM real structure, oversight, and shared decision-making — so institutions know the software won't disappear or be driven by one vendor's priorities. It is community-led, open, and stable... exactly what archivists and institutions need to feel confident investing in it.

Built on archival standards from the ground up - Some systems can support standards, but AtoM was literally built around them. That means it thinks like an archivist, models hierarchy naturally, and produces outputs that fit into national and international workflows.

Made for a global, multilingual world - AtoM was designed to serve multilingual and international communities, not just a single country or language. That makes it especially well-suited for national networks, large institutions, and any organization serving diverse audiences. Many competitors are stronger in one region; AtoM is built for everywhere.

A real community, not a customer base - AtoM grows through contributions from archivists, developers, and institutions — and the Foundation ensures that every contribution actually benefits the whole community. There's no vendor lock-in, no hidden agenda, and no gatekeeping. Just a shared investment in building the best possible archival system.

Clear support for adoption and transition - One of the biggest barriers to switching systems is simply: "Where do we start?". The Foundation brings together institutions, developers, hosting partners, and documentation so that moving to AtoM feels doable instead of daunting. This "connector role" is a huge differentiator — and it's something many other tools simply don't offer.

Works well alongside existing digital preservation tools - AtoM doesn't try to be everything, it focuses on what it does best (description and access), and it pairs well with dedicated preservation tools like Archivematica or Preservica. This makes AtoM a perfect fit for institutions that want flexible, open, modular systems rather than one big vendor-controlled solution.

The Access to Memory Foundation and AtoM stand out because they combine:

- strong organizational stewardship
- true archival standards
- global accessibility
- open-source collaboration
- real support for adoption
- the ability to integrate with the wider preservation ecosystem

Together, they offer something truly rare: a trustworthy, community-owned archival platform designed for the real world — and built to last.

14. The Value of the Community

The strength of AtoM has always come from the people who shape it. Archivists, developers, institutions, educators, students, and independent contributors have carried this software forward not because they had to, but because they believed in what AtoM makes possible. **That passion is the heartbeat of AtoM and The Access to Memory Foundation — a shared commitment to protecting memory, advancing archival practice, and ensuring that knowledge belongs to everyone.**

AtoM's community is more than a network of users. It is a global collective of stewards who improve the software, share expertise, solve problems together, and build something stronger than any single organization could create alone. Their contributions are not transactional; they're meaningful acts of service to one another and to the world. The work of the community — fixing a bug, improving documentation, refining a workflow, or sharing a use case — becomes part of a much bigger tapestry of global memory infrastructure.

This kind of community-driven evolution is both rare and powerful. In many ways, AtoM mirrors the growth of platforms like popular video game Minecraft (strange reference, I know, but bear with me), whose massive success wasn't defined solely by the company that created it, but by the creativity, care, and collaboration of the people who played, built, and believed in it. Mojang provided the foundation, but the community turned Minecraft into a global ecosystem — shaping its direction, expanding what it could do, and giving it cultural meaning far beyond what was originally imagined. **Mojang calls out that their software could not have been successful to this extent without the input and direction of the community of people who are most passionate about it.**

The same is true for AtoM.

The Access to Memory Foundation provides the governance, support, and structure — but it is the community that brings life, innovation, and momentum to the platform. Their collective knowledge builds features grounded in real archival practice. Their investment ensures the software remains open, relevant, and responsive to the needs of institutions around the world. Their collaboration transforms a tool into a shared resource, a shared responsibility, and a shared achievement.

Every contribution — whether technical, strategic, or practical — strengthens access to memory for everyone. The community doesn't just use AtoM; they advance it. They protect it. They make it meaningful.

This is what makes AtoM extraordinary:

It is open-source technology powered by human commitment. A global platform shaped by thousands of hands. A living expression of what collaboration can make possible when people care deeply about preserving the world's stories.

And the Access to Memory Foundation exists to honor, support, and sustain that commitment — ensuring the community has a stable home, a shared direction, and a future worthy of their efforts and their passion.

15. Brand Summary

The Access to Memory Foundation exists to safeguard one of the most important pieces of digital infrastructure in the cultural heritage world: AtoM, the open-source software trusted globally to preserve and provide access to archival collections. As the governing body, The Access to Memory Foundation brings clarity, structure, and long-term stability to a system built by and for the archival community.

AtoM stands apart because it is standards-driven, multilingual, globally adopted, and deeply informed by real archival practice. The Access to Memory Foundation amplifies that strength — coordinating development, guiding contributions, supporting adoption, and ensuring that the software remains open, sustainable, and community-owned.

Together, The Access to Memory Foundation and AtoM form a unified, purpose-driven ecosystem: one that protects access to memory, empowers institutions, aligns with international standards, and reflects the collective wisdom of archivists, developers, and contributors worldwide.

In a world where history is fragile and access to truth matters more than ever, this brand exists to ensure the world can preserve, understand, and trust its memory — today and far into the future.