

# **Nova Scotia Business Registry, Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations**

## **Description:**

Online service delivery provided by the Nova Scotia Business Registry (NSBR), Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations. Scope: Records creation and maintenance; Nature of the record: Authenticity, accuracy and reliability.

In 2000 the Departments of Housing and Municipal Affairs and Business and Consumer Services were amalgamated to form Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations. The new department is responsible for access to government services and programs; consumer protection, including residential tenancies; licensed drivers and registered motor vehicles; consumer proposals; assessment services; geographic information services; condominiums; vital statistics; real property registries, personal property registry, registrar of joint stock companies, Nova Scotia business registry, registry of motor vehicles and deputy registrar general; municipal and provincial-municipal relations; and the provincial tax commissioner.

Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations (SNSMR) provides a variety of services on line, including business registration and permit applications and renewals. The proposed case study will focus on the on-line business registration system. The on-line business registry was launched in October 2001 as a joint venture among SNSMR, Workers Compensation Board, and Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, the first online partnership of its kind in Canada. Approximately 15% of those registering a business do so online; the remainder continue to submit paper applications which are scanned into the business registration database.

The case study will focus on analysis of the online registration system, including its judicial/administrative, provenancial, procedural and technological context. Subject to interest/input from Working Group 1.3, may also select a specific business registration sub-function, e.g., registering a limited partnership, identify the records it produces, and study their documentary form. Case study will investigate how the concepts of accuracy, reliability and authenticity apply to the NSBR record-keeping system, if and how SNSMR addresses ensuring accuracy, reliability and authenticity, and whether/how it plans to ensure reliability and authenticity over time. Will also examine how the NSBR addresses privacy and security concerns in relation to the collection, maintenance, access and transmission of information.

## **Rationale:**

The Nova Scotia Business Registry provides an excellent subject for case study analysis of the application of the concept of authenticity to online government service delivery. As it is a new system, those who developed it as well as the system metadata are more readily available than with an older or legacy system. It also gives an opportunity to apply some of the InterPARES I Authenticity Task Force recommendations for enhancing the case study methodology to an InterPARES II case study.

## **Research questions:**

What is the judicial/administrative context, i.e., what are SNSMR's governing statutes and regulations. What is the provenancial context, i.e., what are SNSMR's mandate, structure and functions. What is the procedural context, i.e., what is purpose (business function) for which the record-keeping system as been created. What is the technological context, i.e., hardware, software, system models, system administration. What records does the selected sub-function produce, how are these records produced and what are the precise processes or procedures followed to create them. To what other digital or non-digital records are these related, and is this connection documented. Is there a records schedule or classification scheme placing the record-keeping system in its (documentary) context within the functions and internal structure of SNSMR. What are the processes the NSBR follows to identify, retrieve and access the records within the system. Are these procedures and processes documented, and if so, how. What is the documentary form of the records documenting the selected sub-function, e.g., standard data elements, annotations made in the course of executing the record. How are updates to the selected specific records made and recorded. Of the records created during online business registration, which are considered transitory. Which warrant longer-term retention, and for how long. What measures does the NSBR take to ensure the accuracy, reliability and authenticity of records within the system and how are these documented. Does SNSMR think that the authenticity of its records is assured, and if so, why. How does SNSMR plan to preserve the record keeping system through technological change? How does the NSBR ensure privacy and security in relation to the collection, maintenance, transmission of and access to information. Do other users have access to the information within the record-keeping system, and if so what use do they make of it.

### **Research methodology:**

1. Analysis of context and nature of record-keeping system using legislation/regulations, available information on mandate, structure and functions of SNSMR, business functional analysis, and system development metadata, including any existing system or workflow models.
2. Interview records creator to clarify understanding of the above and ask additional research questions as outlined above under **Research questions**.

The research results will likely be represented through a narrative analysis, supplemented as appropriate by system and/or workflow models.

### **Research team:**

Lead investigator: Margaret Campbell

Co-investigators: other members Working Group 2.3

Research assistant: UBC graduate students

Note: Advice on interpreting technical aspects to be provided by archivist(s) in the Government Archives section, Nova Scotia Archives and Records Management

### **Time lines:**

Preliminary research on SNSMR and context of NSBR	Dec. 2002
Preliminary visit(s) of lead investigator to SNSMR to view record-keeping system, analyse business registration function and gather available metadata (with assistance from Govt. Archives archivist(s))	Jan. 2003
Preliminary design of questionnaire by lead investigator	Feb. 2003
Input from other WG members, etc. on questionnaire	Mar. 2003
Administer questionnaire with assistance from Govt. Archives archivist(s).	Apr.- May 2003
Analysis of metadata and questionnaire results, with follow-up visits as needed to SNSMR	June-July 2003
Preparation of case study report and supporting documentation	September-October 2003
Review of report by other WG members	November 2003
Preparation and submission of final report	June 2004