InterPARES 2 Project

International Research on Permanent Authentic Records in Electronic Systems

Overview

Case Study 01:
Arbo Cyber, théâtre (?)

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The Creator Context / Activity

<u>Creator</u>: *Arbo Cyber Theatre (?),* which will be referred to in this text simply as "Arbo."

<u>Creator type</u>: Artistic focus / private sphere (small non-profit corporation—two members, one of whom is affiliated with a university laboratory). The creator is likely functioning as an individual

<u>Juridical context</u>: The group was formed in Québec City in 1985 by four partners and was incorporated in 1986, subsequently receiving charitable status, which was revoked in 2004. Since the group has ceased public performances, only copyright and privacy laws remain relevant although the following legislation previously applied:

- La loi des compagnies (C38 Québec)
- Loi de l'impôt sur le revenu (L.R.C. (1985), ch. 1 (5e suppl.)
- Loi sur les normes du travail (Québec) (L.R.Q. N-1.1)
- Code du travail (Québec) (L.R.Q., c. C-27)
- Loi sur le statut professionnel et les conditions d'engagement des artistes de la scène, du disque et du cinéma (L.R.Q., c. S-32.1)
- Loi concernant le statut de l'artiste et régissant les relations professionnelles entre artistes et producteurs au Canada (1992, ch.33)
- Loi sur la Bibliothèque nationale du Québec13 (L.R.Q. B-2.1)
- Règlement sur le dépôt des documents publiés (c. B-2.1, r. 0.1)
- Loi sur la Bibliothèque et les Archives du Canada (2004, ch. 11)
- Règlement sur l'envoi de documents à la bibliothèque nationale 14 (1995 DORS/95-199)

Despite the fact that Arbo is subject to copyright law, "in the digital context, it seems that the use of archival images do not fall under any UDA [*Union des Artistes*] regulations." (FR 13)

<u>Activity</u>: Arbo combines multidisciplinary theatre styles, performing arts, visual arts and media arts into performances that allow the audience to fully interact with the performance.

Approximately twenty productions were created between 1985 and 2001. The group also produced laboratories and workshops.

Although public activities ceased in 2001, two partners (Faguy and Fradet) continue to work on a Web site, known as the *Ludosynthèse*,[1] which is the only remaining activity of the group. The purpose of the site is to maintain the memory of the group, while allowing for audience interaction to continue. It has four modules:

- *Basic*: Introduction to the group and the other sections of the site.
- *Chronological*: Time-line presentation of the group's activities, with video clips and other material from productions.
- *Systemic*: Presents the group's research and how it informed the productions.
- *Ludic*: Allows audience members to interact with the material to produce new performances.

It could be said that the activity under study is a **nascent business practice**. "The concept is contrary to most Web sites, in that it hopes to create an interactive site for a 'dead' entity." (FR 19) Technical issues dictated the form of the *Ludosynthèse*, which was originally intended as a CD-ROM, then a DVD-ROM and eventually became a Web site.

Nature of Partnership

Arbo worked with other companies, such as Obscure, the Medusa Complex and In Vitro (Recto-Verso Pluramuses et Arbo). It was a member of the *Association des compagnies de théâtre*, *Union des artistes* and the *Conseil québécois du théâtre*. "Productions…unite artists from many different fields." (FR 12) The site is hosted by *Université Laval*, where Faguy is the coordinator of the *Laboratoire des Nouvelles Technologies de l'Image, du Son et de la Scène*.

In addition to funding by donations and the sale of tickets to its performances, Arbo received funding from the following:
- Ministère des affaires culturelles, Ministère de la culture et des communications (Conseil des arts et des lettres)
- Conseil des arts du Canada
- Ville de Québec (Entente avec le Ministère de la culture et des communications)
- Programmes d'emplois (fédéraux et provinciaux)

Bureaucratic/Organizational Structure

Arbo was founded in 1985 by four partners (Robert Faguy, Lucie Fradet, Gilles Artaud and François Bibaud), who originally served its administrative council. The structure of the group was flexible, depending on needs. A new production team was brought together for each performance and "each activity…developed through its individual structure, in varying degrees of collective and individual effort." (FR 11)

After receiving charitable status, the administrative council consisted of five members and after public activities ceased, only Faguy and Fradet remained. The two work out of their home and make all decisions regarding the continuing activities of Arbo.

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[1] See http://www.lit.ulaval.ca/arbocyber.

Digital Entities Studied
A dynamic FLASH Web site (the *Ludosynthèse*) with interactive space for performances. Although "Arbo views the *Ludosynthèse* as if it were a single record" (FR 26), ten technological pieces contributed to its development:
1. Databases: made in FileMaker (Apple)—not incorporated
2. Text: DOC (Word) and PDF
3. Digital photos: Adobe Photoshop
4. Sound files
5. Video: Final Cut (Apple)
6. Plans: Adobe Illustrator, Macromedia Fireworks
7. Games: Macromedia Director
8. Program Files: Macromedia Flash and Shockwave
9. HTML pages: Macromedia Dreamweaver
10. Tables: Excel—not incorporated

Documentary Practices Observed

Records Creation and Maintenance
Regarding the creation **process** for the original performances, having a documented process or plan was not a pressing concern for the creators. One informant stated, "You make your plan, then you throw it out, it doesn't really matter." (FR 17) With regards to the processes for the creation of the digital entities contained in the *Ludosynthèse*, "the processes and procedures have not been documented, and the artists themselves do not consider that they necessarily follow any." (FR 30) "The artists, as masters of their art, are the only ones to make decisions regarding content, aesthetics, etc, and so they see no need in establishing specific procedures of creation." (FR 36)

Despite this large degree of artistic freedom in the original performances, there are two ways in which material is **created** for the *Ludosynthèse*. First, older material produced by the group is digitized for the *Ludosynthèse*. The digitized material is new documentation produced in the act of creating the *Ludosynthèse*.[2] "This project is more than a digitization of records with a memory-making purpose: it is a new activity of artistic and documentary creation…that emphasizes the research dimension of Arbo's works." (FR 1) Secondly, audience members (site visitors) can create a new performance in the Ludic section of the site. These members can submit their creations to a database for other audience members to view.

A difference exists in the way that the creator sees the creation of **digital and analogue** records. "The informants do not truly consider themselves the creators of electronic documents, as if records only exist in the analogue environment." (FR 27) What is more, "it seemed that the members of Arbo had an ambivalent relationship with the electronic documents, as if they were not autonomous records, but only copies of records." (FR 38) This may stem from their preference for analogue records.

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[2] The process of creation of the *Ludosynthèse* is detailed on pages 30 to 33 of the final report.

The creator has developed **documentation practices** according to his ability to use the software. There is no use of a persistent, unique identifier, but strict naming conventions are used to **identify** files. The **organization** of the site is achieved as a function of this nomenclature.

Arbo developed a note system using a gray zone in Flash (FLA) files that is inaccessible to users. However, this practice is not a means to capture the document, it is just mnemonic—there is no need to further describe the digital entities, because the creator masters the information embodied in their creation. Its use seems similar to the use of **metadata** and is described in the final report as "similar to a system of content description, and includes colour, sound and image position information." (FR 28) Arbo is not looking to capture information concerning the records themselves with this note-taking system, however. When presented with examples of metadata captured through computer programs, "the informant did not know of the existence of these possibilities…The informant also did not see the use in identifying metadata." (FR 43)

In reference to the **changing** of documents, the final report notes, "The case study…shows how selected archives can be modified by a process of electronic marking and remain more or less linked to some analogical documents." (FR 4) From another point of view, "Arbo hopes that some records within the *Ludosynthèse* will be dynamic and modifiable, such as the SIMUL in the Ludic section. The *Ludosynthèse* program itself, however, cannot be modified in order for all users to participate in the way intended." (FR 27)

Recordkeeping and Preservation
No formal records management or archival **program** exists. Administration, including recordkeeping, was not considered to be a core function of the group, since "the members of Arbo consider themselves to be an artistic entity and so rarely focus on this function." (FR 11) Prior to creating the *Ludosynthèse*, no coherent records management system was in place beyond the classification of video and sound recordings in a database.

Their first step in creating the *Ludosynthèse* was to organize the group's fonds. It can therefore be regarded as an **informal** type of record keeping system, since it is a repository for some of the creator's records (those that the creator has appraised, digitized and uploaded). The purpose of the *Ludosynthèse* is to maintain the memory of the group while allowing for audience interaction to continue. The final report refers to the *Ludosynthèse* as "Arbo's electronic site of memory." However, "Although documentation is important to the group, certain constraints have resulted in a lack of the quality and/or quantity of preserved records. Financial and time-related constraints were identified." (FR 21) This situation is similar to that observed in other InterPARES case studies.

Although the *Ludosynthèse* is a sort of records keeping system, it does not deal with the entirety of Arbo's documentation, notably non-digital entities. Some records are being **stored** in a filing cabinet, while video and sound recordings are stored on shelves. "Because the records are now being kept in a private residence and taking up a lot of room, the informants think they will deposit the fonds in Aparte, a theatre resource organization specifically committed to preserving the history of Quebec's theatre." (FR 22)

"The reorganization of records under taken for the *Ludosynthèse* makes evident that it is the performance that is at the heart of the documentary structure of Arbo…The informants have **classified** records in relation to performances." (FR 22)

Faguy and Fradet make all decisions regarding the **preservation** of materials. The use of "up-to-date" technology may have led them to think that they do not have to worry about preserving the Web site, only their older non-digital records. "During the interviews…it became apparent that the group has not fully thought through the implications of supporting the Web site format: while the members hope to dissolve the group once the *Ludosynthèse* is up and running, they seem to forget that actions will still need to be taken to maintain the site." (FR 21) Also, no processes are used to routinely **capture** the *Ludosynthèse*.

On one hand, Arbo does not use accepted archival preservation **practices**. "[Arbo] does not make use of a preservation schedule and simply retains the whole of its documentation. Equally, the group has no selection or evaluation processes." (FR 27) Also, "The informant wavers between the preservation of only the final copy of the *Ludosynthèse* and the preservation of records evidencing the stages of creation as well." (FR 46) Arbo has attempted to centralize its preservation system, though individual artists often keep certain records. All electronically created textual records are printed for preservation purposes.

On the other hand, some **archival principles** are applied, although apparently unknowingly. Chief among these is the notion that archives must reflect the context of their creation. "According to the creators, the *Ludosynthèse* would never be a site of memory without a proper presentation of the context within which the records created by each show take place. Thus, the creation of the *Ludosynthèse* initiated a memory-making process by which the creators tried to capture the meanings of their past productions and present as clearly as possible Arbo's structure, its modes of functioning and its artistic practices." (FR 5) Archival bonds are also shown by linking various documents on the site to each other. "Arbo completed its site of memory by adding pieces or links between the documents kept in its archives." (FR 6) The secondary or historic value of the records "preserved" in the *Ludosynthèse* is clear in the final report. "The *Ludosynthèse* is witness to the performances by showing the procedures and steps taken and transforming them into interactive electronic elements." (FR 24)

Arbo has already dealt with the question of **obsolescence**. "In the case of many digital records, the group no longer possesses the equipment to read them." (FR 27) They have come up with a strategy to deal with this situation, although (again) unknowingly. "The creators recreated documents that were incomplete or that did not conform with Arbo's standard form of presentation." (FR 4) This practice is comparable to the re-coding or re-implementation of entities in case studies in the scientific focus. However, because the *Ludosynthèse* was created using Flash, users will need to have the Flash Viewer plug-in to access the site and possibly also Acrobat Reader and a sound program. "The heavy dependence on external systems may contribute to a difficulty in the long-term preservation of the site." (FR 27) In addition, "While the *Ludosynthèse* can be seen as a mechanism allowing the group to catch up on technological advances, it is not a solution to the management of records through technological change." (FR 41)

This case study may serve as an **example** for other performance-based artistic case studies. "the study shows how a live, multidisciplinary artistic performance can be described and transposed into an electronic environment; how historical perspectives can be expressed in such transposition; and how specific aspects of...past productions need to be documented and described." (FR 4)

Accuracy, Authenticity and Reliability
"These concepts are very vaguely understood by the informants…to them, the concepts of accuracy, reliability and authenticity are all linked to a relationship to the past. The InterPARES 2 concepts were understood as the capacity for original records to express the reality of the past through the use of electronic technology." (FR 34)

"It is the choice of records that represent the past that guarantees the accuracy, reliability and authenticity of the *Ludosynthèse*." (FR 36)

Accuracy
Closely tied to the notion of "representation," accuracy was a great concern for the creators. "They want to ensure that "true information" is being diffused, since they are creating an historical site." (FR 35)

As opposed to the concepts of authenticity and reliability, Arbo has control measures to ensure accuracy. "Accuracy is guaranteed by having the same people create the *Ludosynthèse* who created the original performances and documents." (FR 35)

Authenticity
"The concept of authenticity was again aligned with the concept of 'representation' rather than the measures taken to guarantee control of records. No voluntary measures to protect the *Ludosynthèse* records from alteration were identified. What is more, the informants did not consider that the records could ever be affected by their projection through time and space." (FR 35) They were not concerned with questions of authenticity, because they could not conceive why anyone would want to alter the site, even if this were possible, which they believe it is not.

"Electronic media are what makes the *Ludosynthèse*'s interactivity possible and allow the group to 'authentically' translate their original 'intentions' of past performances." (FR 20)

The *Ludosynthèse* technology presents certain storage constraints which impact on authenticity. "Although full texts can be supported in .pdf format, the system can only handle clips of performances. Due to this, the group does not define the authenticity of a performance through its level of completeness on the site." (FR 20)

Reliability
Reliability was equated by the creators with "representation," or how the *Ludosynthèse* captures the group's past concepts and performances. Beyond this definition, the creators were not preoccupied with issues of reliability as defined by InterPARES and no means to control reliability were exercised. "With the *Ludosynthèse*, Arbo is not interested in creating an object where the creation process is used to identify reliability; instead, the group wants to faithfully represent the creation processes of original performances." (FR 35)