



InterPARES 2 Project

International Research on Permanent Authentic Records in Electronic Systems

Overview

Case Study 03: *HorizonZero/ZeroHorizon* Online Magazine and Media Database

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The Creator Context / Activity

Creator: Banff New Media Institute

Creator type: Artistic focus / Public sphere (cultural centre). In some ways, the creator functions like a small, private corporation in the artistic field (a small team with *ad hoc* procedures).

Juridical Context: The legal status of the creator is not specified in the available documentation. The final report states, “*HorizonZero* is not bound by specific laws or regulations governing its activity.” (FR 4) Its parent organization, the Banff Centre, was founded in 1933 by the University of Alberta Department of Extension with a grant from the U.S.-based Carnegie Foundation.

Activity: Production of the online magazine, *HorizonZero*, from conception to publication. The magazine focuses on digital art in Canada and is published in both official languages (English and French). Issues are interactive and dynamic, in that users to the site can navigate in a non-linear fashion, chat with other users and contribute to the site via message boards. Additionally, there exists “ZeroHorizon,” an Internet-accessible database of media objects drawn from *HorizonZero*, although this is not part of the current study.

Though a publicly-funded cultural centre, the creator is not doing (traditional) e-government activities. The activity is more related to the artistic focus, since it is operating in the artistic field. Although the actor is governmental, the activity is artistic. Even so, it is far from traditional art literature. It is a new artistic expression.

Nature of Partnership

HorizonZero has a partnership with the Department of Canadian Heritage, which funds the magazine. As part of this arrangement, the “entire publication, including computer programming code, graphic design, artist commissions, editorial scripts and underlying database architecture remains the joint property of The Banff Centre and The Department of Canadian Heritage” (FR 1) The final report makes reference to collaborative efforts with the “Canadian Culture Online

Portal” and the “Culture.ca gateway,” which are both probably Canadian Culture Online, part of the Department of Canadian Heritage.

In addition, *HorizonZero* enters into a copyright licensing arrangement with each of its contributors.

Bureaucratic/Organizational Structure

The magazine’s internal structure consists of three “teams”: the Leadership Team (4 individuals), Editorial Team (5 individuals) and Production Team (5 individuals), as well as an administration section (1 individual). The magazine is a unit of the Banff New Media Institute, which is part of the Media and Visual Arts Department of the Banff Centre, a public non-profit organization. The Banff Centre has a large, bureaucratic administration similar to the governmental level to which it is related.

Digital Entities Studied

A Web site¹ with “interactive space” for the *HorizonZero* magazine, which “combines text, images, sound and video in an interactive environment encapsulated in a Flash Web site.” (FR 1) It is a born-digital form that is related to a new artistic expression.

The specific digital entities under study are those created in the process of producing issues of the magazine. The final report identifies three main types of digital documents created, though the primary interest of the study was upon the latter two categories:

1. Administrative: facilitate communication and control of the production process
2. Journalistic/artistic: are drafted, revised and incorporated into the published magazine
3. Programming code: creates the presentation and interactive features of the Flash Web site

Documentary Practices Observed

“*HorizonZero* is not a highly regulated working environment, and records creation, maintenance and preservation are not strictly controlled.” (FR 9)

Records Creation and Maintenance

There are **guidelines** for the creation of documents, although these are intermittent. Some of these procedures are documented and some are not. Contributors to *HorizonZero* must follow a technical specifications sheet, which substantially limits the number of file types that the creator has to manage. There is also a “Production Bible” that is maintained on the server. It includes a compendium of documentation on existing procedures, procedures for technical production and editorial content and some procedures that are being considered for future development. However, “these procedures are in place to govern workflow, but do not specifically address document creation.” (FR 10) Also, the procedures outlined in the Bible are not formalized and are created on an *ad hoc* basis.

The creator has developed procedures for document **identification** and filing (organization) by the editorial staff. “Naming conventions are ad hoc, though some staff members have evolved consistent **naming conventions** for their own work.” (FR 5) However, the graphic design-related documents are “less carefully identified,” because “in a small production environment with a

¹ <http://www.horizonzero.ca/>.

single designer, the need for rigorous naming conventions and access processes and procedures is less pressing.” (FR 6) As a result, “most records can be identified only by their context in the filing system.” (FR 10)

Although individual staff members organize the documents they create at their own discretion, the filing system is **organized** by issue. Each issue has associated subdirectories related to different activities involved in the creation of the issue. While this filing system exists, it is *ad hoc*, with different issues having a somewhat different internal structure. “The person who created the document generally knows where it is.” (FR 7) Nonetheless, there are some common organizing principles, with similar folders labeled as editorial, unedited, ready for layout, etc.

The technical production lead preserves **version** histories for each of the media products developed, and the graphic designer preserves version histories (embedded in each Photoshop document) for the design-related documents. These revision histories are kept as long as the media products are in development, and are presumably not preserved once a final version has been achieved.

Although no descriptive or **metadata** schemas are consistently used for the records of *HorizonZero* pertaining to the production of each issue, “media assets that are identified as such may be copied into the ZeroHorizon database. These documents are well-described with metadata following the CanCore standard...with *HorizonZero* tags added.” (FR 10) Also, objects that are part of the *HorizonZero* Flash site or Text site are described with a set of metadata developed for this purpose. “It is not possible to tag objects embedded in the Flash site, but the .swf file itself has a set of metadata attached.” (FR 10)

Recordkeeping and Preservation

There are no strict recordkeeping practices for *HorizonZero*’s records. **Procedures** are not formalized and are created on an *ad hoc* basis. Although some documents become part of the ZeroHorizon database and are potentially re-purposed for educational or other use, there are no plans for long-term maintenance of the Web site or its component documents.

Most of the documents created by *HorizonZero* are **stored** in the magazine’s recordkeeping system, with the exception of e-mail, which is part of The Banff Centre’s system. Records are generally stored in one of two locations: the hard drives of staff members’ PCs (much of the audio and graphic material) or on the shared server space. “Files destined for **preservation** are posted to the server and then burned to CD-ROM on an issue-by-issue basis.” (FR 4) For the most part, the shared space is navigated using tracking software that organizes postings into threads. Tracker postings are preserved using the data archiving function of the tracker software and are periodically backed up to CD-ROM. The project was set to be closed at end of 2004. At that time, all files associated with the project, including the files pertaining to the various issues, the Web site and the tracker were to be transferred and stored in a Mac G4 computer.

While “the documents have not existed for a long enough period of time to have become technologically **obsolete** and/or to have been migrated to a new platform,” (FR 7) there may be issues of obsolescence or backward compatibility in the future. Many of the documents are saved in a file interchange format such as AIFF or TIFF, though some are saved in proprietary formats

(such as Word, Photoshop or Flash) that require specific software to be accessed. Also, while the ability to access material on the Web site will most likely remain, user interactivity will cease. After the projected closing of the project, the Web site will be contracted for a period of ten years, although chat rooms and message boards will not be functional.

Accuracy, Authenticity and Reliability

Accuracy

Not addressed in the available documentation.

Authenticity

The creator professes to be more concerned with the *integrity* of the documents than with their authenticity. However, “the creator understands integrity to mean “not altered over time,”” (FR 7) which fits the notion of “free from tampering or corruption” in the InterPARES definition of authenticity.

“The creator assumes the authenticity of its documents on the basis of controlled access and a lack of incentive for intentional tampering.” (FR 6)

Reliability

Not addressed in the available documentation.