



InterPARES 2 Project

International Research on Permanent Authentic Records in Electronic Systems

Characterization of Case Study Validated

Case Study 05: Archives of Ontario Web Exhibits

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Relevance of the Case Study to InterPARES 2

According to the case study proposal, “the records generated in the development of Web site exhibits, from conception to posting, at the Archives of Ontario are of interest to the InterPARES 2 project because they can be described as experiential and interactive. The process of creating these exhibits may provide indicators of the qualities of authenticity, accuracy and reliability in experiential and interactive records...the case study would look at the process of creation for these records and at their present and potential uses within the government sector.”¹¹ The relevance of the case study is therefore to enable InterPARES to meet its goals in relation to the study of government activities that are conducted using experiential, interactive and dynamic computer technology.

Information about the Creator

The creator in this case is a large public governmental organization, which has been in operation since 1903. The creator currently has one location, in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. The creator is subject to the laws of Ontario and Canada, in addition to many regulations related to provincial governmental organizations. Funding for the activities of the organization is made available through the provincial government. Under its enabling legislation, the mandate of the creator is to, “take custody of government records and undertake the following activities: the classification, safekeeping, indexing and cataloguing of all matters transferred to the Archives under section 3; the discovery, collection and preservation of material having any bearing upon the history of Ontario; the copying and printing of important public documents relating to the legislative or general history of Ontario”; ...the collecting of various types of records or records from various sources, and “the conducting of research with a view to preserving the memory of pioneer settlers in Ontario and of their early exploits and the part taken by them in opening up and developing the Province”. The underlying philosophy is, “To preserve Ontario’s rich documentary heritage and make it available for the benefit of all.”

¹ Case Study 05 Proposal, p. 2.

Therefore, the mission of the creator is to “to work with government bodies and other donors to ensure the discovery and transfer of materials to the Archives; to acquire, arrange, describe, and preserve materials transferred to the Archives and made incorporated into the repository; to promote the use of archival material; to enable users to effectively use archival material, and to conduct research into Ontario’s past.

Functions of the creator include all those related to the operations of a large public archival repository, such as research, administration, preservation, acquisition, processing, and public services. In terms of governance, the creator operates within the Management Board Secretariat within the organizational structure of the provincial government. The creator’s head is the Archivist of Ontario. The activities of the creator are influenced by norms related to archival work, such as the *Rules of Archival Description*.

Information about the Administration / Management Function

The activities of the creator are those that would be applicable to a large public archival repository. The activities are also consistent with those of a body within the organizational hierarchy of a provincial government. The government of the province of Ontario has an active archival and records management program. The creator’s records are governed by policy requirements. It is assumed that the creator’s records are cared for by an archivist. The creator does not adhere to the directive in relation to electronic records. Technological requirements and constraints are not applicable as related to the administrative function, although software such as Word, Outlook, and PowerPoint is used.

Information about the Digital Entity Being Studied

The digital entity for the purpose of the study is three Web exhibits: The Government of Ontario Art Collection, Toys of Our Childhood, and The War of 1812. The exhibits meet the mandate of the Archives to preserve the memory of the province, and the mission of the Archives to promote the use of archival materials. The exhibits include scanned images, recorded sound, recorded video, and text, in addition to the Web “container”. Strict legislative and normative requirements apply to the exhibits, particularly to the formatting of the Web site to be consistent with all other governmental Web sites. Many ethical concerns have also been raised regarding the development of the exhibits. In addition, the creator is constrained by the need to make the Web exhibits viewable under common technology that a user might be utilizing.

In terms of preservation, the all Web material on the creator’s development server is captured on removable media (CD-R, DVD-R) once a month. The completed Web exhibits are kept on a drive on the production server, and are not regularly captured or included in the records management plan. The exhibits are developed on the development server, and moved to the production server when completed. Software used to create the exhibits includes DreamWeaver and Page Maker. Analog software is used to track statistics. Word, Outlook, and Powerpoint are also used in the development of the exhibits. There are three technological layers to the exhibits: the digital components, including the text and video; the html pages which contain the components; and the exhibits. Digital components include: html, including the css template; text, which can include html, doc, pdf, and ASCII; images, of “full, small, and thumbnail” size. Exhibit images are in jpg, with some gif decorations; sound, in wav (PC) and aif (MAC); video, in wmv (PC) and mov (MAC). The Web exhibits are hosted by the Archives of Ontario as a centralized IT function, not localized as is provision of content.