



# InterPARES 2 Project

International Research on Permanent Authentic Records in Electronic Systems

## Domain 3 Research Questions

### Case Study 05: Archives of Ontario Web Exhibits

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1. **What types of entities does the diplomatic analysis identify in this case study? (i.e., records, publications, data, etc.)**

Web exhibits stored on the production server are considered to be autonomous publications rather than records.

Web exhibits stored on the development server are considered to be records according to the definition developed by InterPARES 1.

- 1a. **If there are no records, should there be records? If not, why not?**

Not applicable.

- 1b. **If there should be records, what kinds of records should be created to satisfy the creator's needs (as defined by an archivist)?**

Not applicable.

- 1c. **What characteristics of records (as defined by an archivist) are missing yet necessary to preserve these entities?**

Not applicable.

2. **Are the entities reliable? If not, why not?**

Reliability is ensured through the control exercised over the processes of creation. External requirements including legal stipulations and provincial government Web standards and guidelines for Web site development dictate to a large degree how information is presented as well as the basic structure of the exhibits. Conventions relating to academic research dictate that the exhibits are sufficiently connected to their

source records, and existing procedures and policies within the creating organizations control creation activities such as scanning.

Reliability is also assured because of the trust placed in the specialized competencies of the staff involved.

Documentation of the creation process is not comprehensive. While those processes that are independent of Web exhibit creation provide sufficient documentation, those processes specific to Web exhibit creation (research and Web page construction) are not regularly documented. Changes made to the entities are not consistently documented.

**3. Are the entities accurate? If not, why not?**

Yes, the entities are considered to be accurate because they follow rigorous procedures relating to scholarly research (such as citation standards) and because the entity components are based upon high resolution images of publication quality taken from analogue images within the archives' holdings.

**4. To what degree can the entities be presumed to be authentic, and why?**

The entities are presumed to be authentic by the creator as a result of Web server security (which is maintained by an external body) and corporate Web page templates. Also, the exhibits must be authentic for accountability purposes. Because the components of every Web page are linked to the government, they must not damage the image of the government; and because the exhibits are accessed by the public, they must not misrepresent the creator or its holdings.

**Benchmark Requirements Supporting the Production of Authentic Copies of Electronic Records** (these apply to the creator):

**1. Capture of identity and integrity metadata**

No specific metadata are attached to the entities beyond the defaults required by the applications used for creation (DreamWeaver and Page Maker software) and meta tags that are attached to “key pages.” However, *The War of 1812* exhibit has a “definition document” that includes the title, reference code, image number, location information, and document/image summary; and the *Government of Ontario Art Collection* cites artworks with title, artist, date, and collection. Digital images in the Archives of Ontario Visual Database are given metadata that include reference code, image file, box number, data of scan, colour, scanned setting, Unsharp mask, resolution, size of original, levels, image size and actions.

**2. Enforcement of access privileges**

Those entities on the production server are accessed by the general public through their Web browsers. However, only the Web site coordinator can access the production server, and only those responsible for developing Web content can access the development server. An external company maintains the equipment

that hosts the Web site and can also access the Web site. Access privileges for creation and maintenance of the entities is limited to Archival staff, based on job competency in relation to the three creation processes of research, administration, and technology.

3. **Protection against loss and corruption**

The Archives of Ontario copies the entities on the development server to removable media (CD-R, DVD-R) roughly once a month. The entities on the development server may differ from those on the production server. Changes made to the entities are not consistently documented, and sometimes may not be documented at all. Logs are kept of all user interactions with the Web exhibits.

4. **Protection against media and technology obsolescence**

The entities are backwards compatible in that they are coded to be compatible with browsers older than the current version of HTML, and the HTML coding is designed to present properly on the widest range of user platforms that is possible. In addition, only basic components were used to create the exhibits in order to reduce future preservation difficulties.

5. **Established documentary forms**

Documentary forms are established as a result of the entities' status as government documents. Web pages must display the provincial and city logos and the institutional name and adhere to a corporate standard Web page template (*GO-ITS 23.1 – Internet Public Access – Product Design*). Ontario Web sites are also provided with standard disclaimers, instructions for accessing and installing plug-ins, copyright statements, privacy statements, graphics for every ministry name, graphics for mandatory toolbars, and the Ontario logo and footer graphics.

6. **Ability to authenticate records**

No formal authentication of records is mentioned in the final report.

7. **Procedures in place to identify the authoritative record**

No authoritative record has been identified by the creator.

8. **Procedures in place to properly document removal and transfer of records from the creator's originating system**

Not applicable, since there is no transfer of records from active to semi-active or inactive status.

**Baseline Requirements Supporting the Production of Authentic Copies of Electronic Records** (these apply to the preserver):

Due to the lack of formal recordkeeping procedures, the Baseline Requirements cannot be assessed.

**5. For what purpose(s) are the entities to be preserved?**

The creator has not identified or considered a preservation purpose.

**6. Has the feasibility of preservation been explored?**

The feasibility has been explored in terms of maintaining usability, but no long-term preservation methods have been considered.

**6a. If yes, what elements and components need to be preserved?**

Not applicable.

**7. Which preservation strategies might most usefully be applied, and what are their strengths and weaknesses, including costs and degree of technical difficulty?**

Current practices involve the reliance of backward compatibility to preserve the entities.

**7a. Which alternative preservation strategies might be applied? What are their strengths and weaknesses, including costs and degree of technical difficulty?**

The following alternative preservation strategies could be applied to the Web exhibits and their supporting documentation. It is difficult to estimate the cost and degree of technical difficulty this project would entail:

B1. Use of standards

B1.2. Encapsulation

B1.3. Normalization

B1.4. Conversion

B2.3. Software re-engineering

B2.4. Viewers and migration at the point of access

B2.5. Emulation

**8. What additional information does the preserver need to know to facilitate appraisal and preservation?**

The preserver needs to obtain an understanding of the lifecycle of Web exhibits so that they can follow regulated retention procedures.

**8a. If required information is missing, where should it come from and how should it be made manifest?**

Creation and maintenance processes need to be fully documented by the creator, and a purpose for preservation developed.

**9. Are there any policies in place that affect preservation?**

No policies are mentioned in the final report that would affect preservation.

**9a. Are there any policies in place that present obstacles to preservation?**

Not applicable.

**9b. Are there any policies that would need to be put in place to facilitate appraisal and preservation?**

A formal recordkeeping system needs to be put in place to ensure the accuracy, reliability, and authenticity of the data within the system, and also to ensure that organized access to the entities is provided and that all entities within the system are accounted for. In addition, audit trails need to be implemented so that all changes to the entities are recorded.