InterPARES 2 Project

International Research on Permanent Authentic Records in Electronic Systems

Diplomatic Analysis

Case Study 05:
Archives of Ontario Web Exhibits

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INTRODUCTION

The Archives of Ontario case study specifically examines three of the institution's online exhibits: these are "The War of 1812," "The Government of Ontario Art Collection" and "Toys of Our Childhood." The latter is the focus of our Diplomatic Analysis.

Two sets of files exist for each exhibit; one set is stored on the Archives' internal development server, and the other on the government's production server. Prior to performing a diplomatic analysis, it was first necessary to establish which files can be considered records.

IDENTIFICATION OF RECORD(S)

A record, as defined by the InterPARES glossary, is a document made or received and set aside in the course of a practical activity. A record must also possess all of the following five components, as established by InterPARES 1 research conclusions: fixed content and form, embedded action, archival bond, persons and contexts. The application of the definition of a record to the creator's digital entities is therefore analyzed according to the following parameters:

1. To be identified as a record, the digital entity must possess fixed content and form,[1] and be affixed to a stable medium (or physical carrier).

The Archives of Ontario case study identifies two sets of exhibit files for examination: those residing on the development server, and those on the production server. In both cases, the

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[1] The InterPARES1 Authenticity Task Force has defined fixed form as the following: 1) binary content of the record, including indicators of documentary form, must be stored in a manner that ensures it remains complete and unaltered, and 2) technology must be maintained and procedures defined and enforced to ensure that the content is presented or rendered with the same documentary form it had when set aside. (See ATF Research Methodology Statement, available at: http://www.interpares.org/documents/interpares_ResearchMethodologyStatement.pdf).

medium is constituted by the server, and is stable. The development server files are "live" records, that is, records in the making, and may be considered completed at each given time they are used, but become new files every time information is added; they are fixed in content and form. The files on the production server are equally fixed in content and form. Thus, all files satisfy the first requirement of a record.

2. A record must also participate in an action, defined as the conscious exercise of will by an officer of the creator or by an external person, aimed to create, maintain, modify or extinguish situations. A record results as an unintended by-product or product of the action.

The exhibit files, on both the production and development servers, are generated by the Archives of Ontario in accordance with its mandate to provide public outreach. The files that reside on the production server consist of autonomous finished documents intended for public access. In contrast, the files on the development server are generated as by-products, residue, or means for the outreach activity (aiming to create the files for public access), and are not meant for external dissemination or publication. The development server files, therefore, satisfy the second requirement of a record, while the production server files do not.

3. A record must possess an archival bond, which is the relationship that links each record to the previous and subsequent record of the same action and, incrementally, to all the records which participate in the same activity. The archival bond is originary (i.e., it comes into existence when a record is made or received and set aside), necessary (i.e., it exists for every record), and determined (i.e., it is characterized by the purpose of the record).

While the development server files are linked by an archival bond to other records of the same activity, such as a database of scanned photographs and the Archives' record inventories, the production server files, as autonomous units, do not possess an archival bond and are not linked to any record in the Archives of Ontario fonds: they are meant to fulfill their purpose on their own. Only the development server files, therefore, satisfy the third record requirement as stipulated by InterPARES 1.

4. Record creation must involve at least three persons, whether or not they explicitly appear in the record itself. These persons are the author, addressee and writer; in the electronic environment, one must also take into account two additional necessary persons: the creator and the originator.

- The record's **author** is the physical or juridical person having the authority and capacity to issue the record or in whose name or by whose command the record has been issued.

  The Archives of Ontario is the author of both the production and development server files, and, as it is in its mandate to perform outreach activities, the Archives is the author of both the records and the act.

- The **addressee** the physical or juridical person(s) to whom the record is directed or for whom the record is intended.
  The addressee of the production server files is the public at large, while the addressee of the development server files (which are internal files) is the Archives of Ontario.

- The **writer** is the physical or juridical person having the authority and capacity to articulate the content of the record.

  While the case study Final Report does not specify the writer, it can be assumed that the writers would likely be curators or managers employed by the Archives of Ontario to formulate the content of the Web exhibits in question.

- The **creator** is the person in whose fonds the record exists.

  There exists no creator for the production server files, because, while the files have an owner, the person holding the collection of which they are part—arguably, the Archives of Ontario, considering that it is the only juridical person having access to the files on the production server—they are not linked by an archival bond to any record of any fonds. As it regards the development server files, the creator is the Archives of Ontario.

- The **originator** is the person to whom the Internet account issuing or the server holding the record belongs.

  The originator of the production server files is the Government of Ontario, and the originator of the development server files is the Archives of Ontario.

5. Finally, a record must possess an identifiable context, defined as the framework in which the action in which the record participates takes place. The types of context include juridical-administrative, provenancial, procedural, documentary, and technological.

- The **juridical-administrative context** is the legal and organizational system in which the creating body belongs.

  Both the *Archives Act* of 1923 and the *Management of Recorded Information Directive* of 1992 provide the Archives' juridical framework for the creation and management of recorded information[2]. The Archives of Ontario is also subject to the conditions of its mandate; this includes developing outreach opportunities to enhance the public's access to archival holdings.

- The **provenancial context** refers to the creating body, its mandate, structure and functions.

  In this case study, the Archives of Ontario is the creating body of the development server files.

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[2] Other legislation to which the Archives of Ontario is subject includes: *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (R.S.O. 1990, c.F31); *French Language Services Act* (R.S.O. 1990, c. F32); *Human Rights Code* (R.S.O. 1990, c.H.19); and *Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (S.O. 2001, c.32).

- The **procedural context** comprises the business procedure in the course of which the record is created.

  The online exhibits are part of the Archives of Ontario's outreach activity, as identified in the Archives' mandate, and are intended to enhance the public's access to the institution's "rich and varied holdings via the internet."

  [Editor's note: Analysis of the **procedural phases** was not carried out for this case study.]

- The **documentary context** is defined as the archival fonds to which a record belongs and its internal structure.

  The Web exhibits on the development server form part of the fonds of the creating organization (Archives of Ontario).

- **The technological context** is defined as the characteristics of the technological components of an electronic computing system in which records are created.

  The Web exhibits have been created through HTML coding, and conform to government style sheet regulations. Only the Archives of Ontario has access to the production server which hosts the institutional Website. The development server is accessible only to those developing Web content. The site is hosted by a central IT unit.

CONCLUSIONS

According to the above analysis, only those files stored on the development server fulfill all InterPARES 1 record requirements and are therefore to be considered records; our diplomatic analysis is thus focused solely on these files. In contrast, the files found on the production server do not fulfill certain requirements, and their autonomous nature reveals them to be publications.

The authoritative record to be preserved is comprised of both digital and intellectual components.[3] The digital components include HTML pages, text files, image files, <alt> tags, cascading style sheets, and CGI script. The intellectual components to be preserved consist of style sheet/templates, visual identity graphics, privacy statements, disclaimers, plug-ins, and an HTML 4.01 specification.

The **extrinsic elements** identified in the files include:

- **Overall presentation features**: a combination of text, graphics and sound
- **Specific presentation features**:
    - deliberately employed type fonts: large, bold, italicized fonts in the body;[4]

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[3] Note that access was only available to the production server files; the diplomatic analysis is therefore based on the elements present in these files with the assumption that development server files are of a similar nature.
[4] Large and bold fonts are used for emphasis or to identify titles. Italicized fonts represent a transcribed document.

- deliberately employed colours: colour in title/banner, and to identify hyperlinks in the body;

- hyperlinks: underlined hyperlinks located in the body link to pages in the exhibit, to archival inventories and to related exhibits. Hyperlinks also provide links to instructions for accessing and installing plug-ins. In the eschatocol, hyperlinks provide access to copyright and privacy statements, a standard disclaimer, and a navigation toolbar (which is also found in the protocol);

- special layouts: the exhibits are formatted to the institution' style sheet, which identifies specific layout requirements as dictated by the Government of Ontario.

- **Special signs:**
    - originator identifier: the Government of Ontario logo[5] in the upper left-hand corner and bottom centre. The logo is located throughout the exhibit's pages.

- **Annotations:**
    - annotation of handling: the feedback section found in the eschatocol;

    - annotation of management: the URL and "date last updated" (found in the eschatocol).

The **intrinsic elements** identified in the files include:

- **Protocol:**
    - title: "The Toys of Our Childhood," along the left-hand side of each page;

    - superscription:[6] "The Archives of Ontario."

- **Body:**
    - Preamble: first three paragraphs in the body; "Much of the magic…brightly coloured paper";

    - Exposition: the rest of the text and images;

    - Disposition: "This festive season…click here";

    - Salutation: "…wishes you…".

- **Eschatocol:**
    - Clause of corroboration: "This site is maintained by the Government of Ontario."

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[5] The Government of Ontario logo is a mandatory feature of every government Web page. The logo will likely change colour subsequent to a change of government.
[6] This element may be found in either the body or the eschatocol.

In conclusion, the Archives of Ontario produces Web exhibits as a public outreach tool. The by-product of this activity of producing outreach tools are Web exhibits on the development server, which are public records,[7] and narrative records of this activity. The records' status of transmission is original, and they are stored on the Archives' development server.[8]

Based on the above analysis, our recommendation for preservation is to maintain the links between Web pages to preserve intact each exhibit as a documentary unit, and to maintain the archival bond between related exhibits, and the exhibits, the database of photographs and the archival inventories.

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[7] As the files are authored by, and the server belongs to the Archives of Ontario, a public body, the nature of the files is public.

[8] We would like to establish a convention according to which we define as originals the files contained in the original server on which they have been developed if they have not undergone any upgrading or migration. Although it is understood that, technically, every time we recall a digital entity from storage we produce a copy, it can be stipulated that this entity as close to the original as any digital record can possibly be, so, rather than calling it "copy in the form of an original" we can call it "original" for the purpose of brevity.