InterPARES 2 Project
International Research on Permanent Authentic Records in Electronic Systems

Case Study Proposal
Archives of Ontario Web Exhibits
Focus 3 - Government

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Description of case study subject

The Archives of Ontario's mandate includes enhancing access to its "rich and varied holdings via the internet." This end the Archives' 2000-2003 strategic plan identifies the development and implementation of tools to communicate and promote its holdings as a key strategy. To fulfil this strategy the Archives has and continues to develop 'virtual' exhibits. These exhibits are open to anyone able to access the Archives' internet site (see http://www.archives.gov.on.ca/english/index.html).

The proposed case study would review the creation and posting of three exhibits at the Archives:

- *The Government of Ontario Art Collection,*
- *The Archives of Ontario Remembers an Eaton's Christmas,*
- *The Archives of Ontario Remembers Our Canadian War Heroes*

The exhibits are created by archivists, support staff, the Archives' Website Coordinator and are approved by management before they are placed on the website. The process of creation involves decisions by Archives' staff on the subject of the exhibit, on the choice of records used to create the exhibit, and on how to present the chosen records. The records that would be the subject of the case study are primarily the final format of the exhibit records, and secondarily the records created and used during the actual creation of the virtual exhibit. The records created to support the development and maintenance of a website exhibit can include conventional records such as meeting minutes, retrieval request slips, etc. The actual exhibits are created from scanned images, recorded sound, text files - all combined using HTML. Except for the first example, all records chosen for the exhibit are from a single archival fonds.

The records created in the process of creating a virtual exhibit at the Archives of Ontario form only a tiny portion of the operational records of that organization. The core activities of the Archives include

1) development of recorded information management policies and provision of policy advice;
2) development and management of the archival collection; and
3) provision of reference services (including microfilm interloan services).

These three core activities are the source of the vast majority of records created and used at the Archives.

Rationale

The records generated in the development of website 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.

Those touring the exhibit can choose what they want to see and what they want to hear. Those creating the exhibit make decisions about the qualities of the records displayed based, in part, on technological concerns such as freely available viewers (web browsers) and playback software (e.g., Quicktime, Mediaplayer). The case study would look at the process of creation for these records and at their present and potential uses within the government sector.

It is envisioned that the findings of the case study would address the following research questions (in whole or in part):

Domain 1
- What is the manifestation of authorship in the records of each activity and its implications for the exercise of intellectual property rights and the attribution of responsibilities?

Domain 2
- What does record accuracy mean in the context of a virtual exhibit? To what extent can the electronic records created in the course of developing a virtual exhibit be considered accurate and why? What controls on their creation would make us presume that these records are accurate?
- What does authenticity mean in the context of a virtual exhibit? To what extent is the definition of record authenticity adopted by InterPARES 1 relevant to the records resulting from each type of activity and from the use of increasingly complex digital technology?
- On what basis can the records created in the course of developing a virtual exhibit be presumed authentic? How, in the absence of such presumption, can their authenticity be verified?
- How is the authenticity of these records affected by their transmission across space and time? What controls on the process of transmission would ensure that these records will continue to be recognized as authentic?

Domain 3
- How do the appraisal concepts, methods and models developed by InterPARES 1 apply to the appraisal of the interactive and experiential records created in the development of a virtual exhibit?
- How do the preservation concepts, methods and models developed by InterPARES 1 apply to the preservation of these virtual exhibit records?
- What metadata are necessary to support appraisal and preservation of authentic digital records resulting from this activity?

Research Methodology

The research questions that this case study addresses require a matching variety of research methods. The Domain 3 questions would probably be best answered by testing the appraisal and preservation models developed by InterPARES 1. The Domain 1 and Domain 2 questions would probably be best answered by undertaking questionnaires sent to creators and those touring the exhibit and a diplomatic analysis of the records. Addressing the Domain 1 and 2 questions would be made easier by replicating the system.

Research Team

I am willing to be the research lead for this case study. It may be that the researchers involved in testing the appraisal and preservation models would be different from those undertaking the diplomatic analysis and questionnaires.

"Models" team (about 4-5 individuals)	"Diplomatics and Questionnaires" team (6)
- IP1 expert on the preservation model, - IP1 expert on the appraisal model, - someone with knowledge of web technology, - an archivist, and perhaps - an archival manager (to assess resources allocation issues - including human resource such as recruiting and workflow).	- Diplomatics expert, - IP1 expert on authenticity - an archivist, - a research assistant - a 'questionnaires' expert - a techie (among other things to assist in testing "transmission across space and time")

I have not recruited any individuals as yet. It is very possible that one team member could be recruited from the staff of the Archives of Ontario, in addition to those outlined above.

Timeline

The testing of the appraisal and preservation models would probably be best undertaken after the authenticity and accuracy study. The latter study could be completed by 31 October 2003. This provides time to develop and administer the questionnaire(s) needed, to complete a diplomatic analysis, and allows the case study researchers to meet "face-to-face" three times (according to the current meeting schedule for the Research Team). The Models portion of the study would be completed by 31 October 2004. The Models portion it seems to me would be a smaller part of the project and could be completed with confidence within a year, again allowing for two "face-to-face" meetings by the researchers. Each part of the case study would generate a report and in each case the final meeting of each of the case study teams would be to finalize the report.