



InterPARES 2 Project

International Research on Permanent Authentic Records in Electronic Systems

Characterization of Case Study Validated

Case Study 17: New York State Department of Motor Vehicles On-line Services System

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Version 2, April 2007

Relevance of the Case Study to InterPARES 2

The purpose of this case study is to investigate legal and financial transactions completed in a networked and online environment. It provides an opportunity to analyze “issues relating to records creation and maintenance within the online system, issues relating to ensuring accuracy, authenticity and reliability in the DMV’s recordkeeping system, and issues relating to technology.”¹ The relevance of this case study is therefore to enable InterPARES to reach its goals with respect to the study of e-government activities that are conducted using interactive, experiential, and dynamic computer technology.

Information about the Creator

The creator in this case is the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), a department in the executive branch of the New York state government that is responsible for the mandatory examination and registering of all drivers in the state. The creator operates according to laws and regulations of the state, of the federal government, external bodies such as credit card companies, and internal standards. It is also empowered by New York's e-commerce initiative, NYeNet, which is attempting to create a “government without walls.”

The creator is a significant presence within the state government. It is led by the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles, who is appointed by the Governor with the approval of the State Senate. Reporting to the Commissioner is an Executive Deputy Commissioner. There are also Deputy Commissioners for Operations and Customer Services; Administration; Legal Affairs; and Safety, Consumer Protection and Clean Air. The Deputy Commissioner for Administration controls the online system, and the Deputy Commissioner for Operations is responsible for the accurate creation of records in the system.

¹ InterPARES 2 Case Studies, Case Study 17 abstract. Available at http://www.interpares.org/ip2/ip2_case_studies.cfm.

As stated in its mission statement, the creator “promotes traffic safety, provides consumer protection and information services and assists other government agencies to achieve their missions.”² The functions through which the mission is carried out include: issuing driver licenses, vehicle registrations, and vehicle titles; overseeing driver education and rehabilitation programs; monitoring driving schools, instructors, and safety and emissions inspection stations; registering auto dealers and repair shops; certifying vehicle inspectors, salvage businesses, and damage estimators; adjudicating traffic violations; and conducting research and developing programs that promote public safety, reduce drunk driver problems, and encourage safe driving practices.

Information about the Administration / Management Function

No formal records management or archives program exists at the DMV, although guidelines and retention schedules control the lifecycle of records generated and maintained by the mainframe system. The creator follows the retention and disposition policies set by the New York State Arts and Cultural Affairs Law, and also the retention schedule provided in section 201 of the New York State Vehicle and Traffic Law. Because many records are mandated for retention for a minimum of seven years, they may be deemed “legally unavailable” once this period has expired. No consideration is given to long-term preservation since the records are never transferred to the State Archives.

Information about the Digital Entity Being Studied

The digital entities being examined in this case study are those generated by the DMV's On-line Services system, which consists of a mainframe system and a Web-based interface. The documents that they generate include digital watermarked documents, database entries, paper documents, and paper and digital abstracts of DMV records. The two systems are administered separately but often work together when information is created or required. While the interface is only responsible for managing electronic transactions, as opposed to the mainframe, which manages all DMV records, it also interacts with the mainframe system by accessing core records and updating customer files. Core records are those created only by DMV personnel and that serve as the principal record for each customer. It is surmised that vital data such as name, address, social security number, and birth date are the elements that are contained within core records. Attached to the core record are a driver's license file, a registration file, a vehicle title file, and an audit trail detailing all changes that have been made to the record. These entities are considered by both the DMV and from a legal standpoint to be records, as they are the authoritative records used in court in paper form. Because the core records are live and open to change, only the current record is accessible. For staff to access the history and information of older transactions, the core records must be combined with those from a separate backup file system.

Although no long-term preservation methods have been undertaken, the digital entities are regularly backed up and stored at a separate location. In addition, some inactive entities are moved to a new medium for storage. When migrating to new

² Case Study 17 Final Report, p. 2.

technology, the creator duplicates and stores all records and software systems involved. Throughout the process of migration, old and new copies are compared against one another, and also transactions are tested to ensure the outcomes are identical in the old and new systems.