



InterPARES 2 Project

International Research on Permanent Authentic Records in Electronic Systems

Diplomatic Analysis

Case Study 22: Electronic Café International (ECI)

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INTRODUCTION

The InterPARES 2 case study 22, *Electronic Café International* (ECI), was conducted to determine the role policy, in particular practices and standards, has in the preservation and use of ECI's records. ECI has a 25-year-old multimedia collection that contains a wide variety of media types posed with the problem of obsolescent formats. This case study is set apart from its contemporary counterparts as it focuses on the problems posed by experiential, interactive and dynamic records many years after their creation. The investigators seek to identify media preservation criteria to apply to aging digital collections. Thus, it falls into the InterPARES investigation area of artistic activities that are carried out using experiential, interactive and dynamic computer technology.

The following text presents the results of the diplomatic analysis on the digital entity identified in the case study report. For the purpose of this analysis one ECI work has been examined, "Hole in Space." The artwork embodies the digital entity. This diplomatic analysis therefore centers on the identification of the artwork as the record.

The purpose of the diplomatic analysis is to assess the status of the identified digital entity as a record. Once the status of the digital entity has been determined, preservation strategies may be proposed by Domain 3.

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 content of the artwork is fixed.**

The artwork consists of a variety of media. Artworks are electronically stored on the following media: floppy disks, zip disks, Optical Memory Disks, and Optical Disk Cartridges. The choice of media was dependent upon the technology available during the time of creation of the telecollaborative work.

- **The documentary form² of the artwork may or may not be fixed.**

There are no formal recordkeeping practices for the retrieval and/or maintenance of the artwork; therefore, it is difficult to assert whether the documentary form of the artwork is fixed.

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 overall act is the composition of the telecollaborative work. Each element is developed to be a part of the work as a whole.

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).

Each element possesses an intellectual bond with every other element of the telecollaborative work that occurs. Due to the lack of information pertaining to record keeping practices, it is difficult to assert whether these practices identify the element's association with a particular stage of the telecollaborative work. However, because the elements are stored to their format type, the physical archival bond is explicit.

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).

² The definition of documentary from the InterPARES 2 Terminology Database is: "The rules of representation according to which the content of a record, its administrative and documentary context, and its authority are communicated. Documentary form possesses both extrinsic and intrinsic elements."

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 author is ECI, in particular Sherrie Rabinowitz and Kit Galloway who envisioned, developed and managed these telecollaborative works. They also have the intellectual rights over the entire project.

- The **addressee** the physical or juridical person(s) to whom the record is directed or for whom the record is intended.

The addressees are the public and the artistic community to which these multimedia works are directed to.

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

The writer is the artists who have contributed to a particular telecollaborative work, such as "Hole in Space."

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

The creator is ECI, however, custodian problems arise from the numerous artists that were commissioned to compose the telecollaborative work.

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

ECI is the originator since they own both the hardware and software in which the records are stored.

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.

ECI must adhere to various legal obligations as seen in contracts, third party rights as well as provide proper authorship for each work produced. The report does not state specifically which laws fall under the jurisdiction of ECI.

- The **provenancial context** refers to the creating body, its mandate, structure and functions.
- ECI is a multimedia international network, established in 1988, to showcase creative, multi-cultural, multi-disciplinary, and collaborative telecommunications. Their purpose is to build cross-cultural telecollaborations, resource sharing and informal community institutions that would foster collaboration, communication and community.³
- The **procedural context** comprises the business procedure in the course of which the record is created.

Diplomatic analysis of **procedural phases** in the creation of the telecollaborative work, “Hole in Space,” can be broken down as follows:⁴

- a. **Initiative:** the introductory phase of any procedure is “constituted by those acts, written and/or oral, which start the mechanism of the procedure.”⁵

The initiative phase of the procedure of creating “Hole in Space” is to document the ideas through drawings, writings, proposals, and audio and video tapes.

- b. **Inquiry:** this preliminary phase “is constituted by the collection of the elements necessary to evaluate the situation.”⁶

The inquiry phase of the procedure of creating “Hole in Space” is contacting companies, funders and artists who are interested in participating and contributing to the telecollaborative work.⁷

- c. **Consultation:** this phase is “constituted by the collection of opinions and advice after all the relevant data has been assembled.”⁸

The consultation phase of the procedure of creating “Hole in Space” is the correspondence and written reviews between the all of the writers/artists of the work.⁹

- d. **Deliberation:** this phase is “constituted by the final decision-making.”¹⁰

The deliberation phase of the procedure of creating “Hole in Space” is the instalment of the telecollaborative work.

³ Besser, Howard (2004), “InterPARES 2 and the Electronic Café International: Aging Records from Technology-based Artistic Activities,” presented at the Electronic media Group Annual Meeting of the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic works, June 14, 2004, p. 4.

⁴ The phases of procedure as dictated by Diplomatic Analysis; see Luciana Duranti, *Diplomatics: New Uses for an Old Science* (Lanham, Maryland and London: The Scarecrow Press in association with the Society of American Archivists and the Association of Canadian Archivists, 1998), 115.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Howard Besser and Shelby Sanett Interview with Sherry Rabinowitz and Kit Galloway, April 26, 2003. Transcribed January 2004 by Jessica Zacher and Reg White. Edited by Mark Wolfe, p. 27. (unpublished)

⁸ Duranti, op. cit.

⁹ Case Study 22 Transcript, op. cit., p. 30.

¹⁰ Duranti, op. cit.

- e. **Deliberation control:** this phase is “constituted by the control exercised by a physical or juridical person different from the author of the document embodying the transaction, on the substance of the deliberations and/or on its forms.”¹¹

The deliberation control phase of the procedure of creating “Hole in Space” is the artists and their re-examination of the event.

- f. **Execution:** “the documents created in this phase are the originals of those embodying the transactions.”¹² In other words, the execution phase results in the issuing of the first record capable of producing the consequences intended by its author.

The execution phase of the procedure of creating “Hole in Space” is the backing up and digitization of the artwork generated during the creation of the telecollaborative work.

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

The records of “Hole in Space” belong to the fonds of ECI. It is unclear, however, whether these records were maintained in a structured way. There are no procedures in place to control the storage, retrieval, maintenance or preservation of any of the components in the making of the telecollaborative work.¹³

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

The telecollaborative work “Hole in Space” employed satellites to create a collaborative environment where individuals could interact through giant rear projection screens.¹⁴ Please refer to pages 5 and 6 of Howard Besser’s 2004 paper (see footnote 3) for a detailed listing of all the hardware and software used.

CONCLUSIONS

The above diplomatic analysis of assessing the digital assets as records demonstrates that this case study does possess most of the elements necessary for being considered a record. The lack of written procedures documenting the record keeping practices does present one problem for the first component of a record: fixed content. Nonetheless, this diplomatic analysis does establish that the artwork generated in the creation of the telecollaborative work, “Hole in Space” is a record.

A second diplomatic analysis can be conducted on ECI’s living archive, located at <http://www.ecafe.com/>, to assess whether the Web site is regarded as a record. The creators

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., 116.

¹³ In 1997 and then continued in 1999, funded was given to ECI from the Getty Grants Program to begin to catalogue the entire collection and gain intellectual and physical control over the entire works.

¹⁴ Besser, op. cit., p. 10.

expressed an interest in maintaining the digital entities from ECI's collection only if their accessibility can be assured, as seen both in the preservation of the digital entities and formats produced and in the maintenance and operation of the website.¹⁵

¹⁵ Case Study 22 Transcript, op. cit., p. 47.