



InterPARES 2 Project

International Research on Permanent Authentic Records in Electronic Systems

Overview

Case Study 22: Electronic Café International (ECI)

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The Creator Context / Activity

Creator: Electronic Café International (ECI)

Creator type: Artistic focus / private sphere (network of individuals)

Juridical context: ECI was established in 1988 as an international multimedia network, although its legal status is not available in the draft final report. Like the other case studies in the artistic focus, contracts and copyright are issues for this creator. ECI owns the rights to the telecollaborative works, but certain performances cannot be recreated until third parties have released their rights.

Activity: Producing collaborative, multidisciplinary, multimedia events. This is a nascent business practice, as stated by the aim of ECI to “Create a virtual space that [has] no limits, to create new contexts.” (DFR 4)

Nature of Partnership

The creator is a network of individuals, described as a “hybrid-networked environment.” By its mission, ECI is a partnership- or collaborative-based creator, seeking to “bring people together over distances in a global collaborative environment...to allow technology to be a catalyst for people to work and do things together...and to see how much human dynamics and collaboration was possible between people that actually spoke different languages.” (DFR 4)

The artists contributing to ECI may be commissioned by museums. In addition, the Getty Grants Program donated funds to catalogue the ECI collection and gain physical and intellectual control over the entire collection.

Bureaucratic/Organizational Structure

The creator is based in Santa Monica, California. The draft final report does not discuss the governance of ECI.

Digital Entities Studied

The digital entities being studied in this case study are the Electronic Café International project itself as well as the creator's documentation of these events and archives. The documents that result from ECI's projects include those related to the following stages of a work:

- Planning stages: drawings and written proposals, correspondence
- Execution of a work: software
- Performance of a work: digital art or collaborative writing
- Capturing/recording a work (or major portions it): video
- Documentation of a work: interviews, news coverage, e-mails

The draft final report notes that "the works that use and create digital entities are first described on paper." (FR 7) Formats for the creator's digital entities include:

- DC300 XL and DC6150 data cartridges
- Removable optical media and optical video disk
- Floppy Disks (various formats, including Yamaha Disklavier piano floppy disks)
- SyQuest
- Mini-Floppy (photographic), Kodak Photo CD and other photographic storage media
- CD-ROM and DVD

Documentary Practices Observed

Records Creation and Maintenance

There are informal processes and **procedures** for document creation that generally include planning activities, executing and performing/recording the work/event, documenting the work and reviewing it. The nature of the works produced was a barrier to sufficient documentation, in that "it is almost impossible to adequately document experiences such as these because it is all experiential and ephemeral." (DFR 8) Despite the informal processes described above, "there are no procedures in place to control the storage, retrieval, maintenance or preservation of any of the components created in the making of the telecollaborative work." (DFR 3)

"The creators did not discuss the processes or procedures used for **identifying**, retrieving and accessing their digital entities" (DFR 10) and it is not clear if the records are maintained in an **organized** or structured way. However, the creators have recognized the need to attach metadata to the digital entities for identification purposes and to provide contextual information. "The creators believe that the material in the collection is adequately comprehensible, but that it requires narratives to tell the different stories that can be told (i.e., the technical story, the human story, etc.). The records are going to need **metadata** attached to them to supply context." (DFR 7)

Recordkeeping and Preservation

ECI wants to create a 'living **archive**,' in the sense that their records will be available for access on the Internet in such a way that people will also be able to add their own contributions in response to a work/event. They want the "human story" to be made a part of the preservation of the records by capturing the informational context of a given work.

There are currently no formal recordkeeping **procedures** for the works in ECI.

ECI plans to use digitization as a **preservation strategy** for their records and as a means of providing online access to them. ECI digitizes three-dimensional objects (in QuickTime VR) and plans to **migrate** analogue and other records to digital form. The creators have started to assess the collection to create a plan to stabilize and catalogue it, as a prelude to digitization. “This is, however, only a temporary solution. It is hoped that this study will address what the key elements and digital components of records are, in order to devise a preservation strategy for the long-term preservation of ECI’s records.” (DFR 3)

The creator currently **stores** twenty-five years of records in a variety of media, from textual to obsolete multimedia formats. The electronically-generated materials are stored on hard disks, floppy disks, ZIP disks, optical memory disks, optical disk cartridges, analog recordings and a computer-networked bulletin board on a data spool tape.

Because of its technological situation, ECI faces the problem of **obsolescence**, which is the *raison d’être* for this case study. “The ECI InterPARES 2 study highlights the problems posed by multi-media record types many years after their original creation; in particular, the issues of ageing materials and technological obsolescence.” (DFR 1) ECI is not concerned about the physical medium or software necessary to recreate a work, because it does not believe that these elements are intrinsic to the art. This artistic philosophy may allow them to be open to migration or other strategies to combat technological obsolescence. In addition, “the creators generally believe that once material is digitized, it is preserved until it needs to be migrated.” (DFR 9)

Accuracy, Authenticity and Reliability

Accuracy

The terms “quality” and “faithfulness” seem to be synonyms of accuracy for the creators. ECI wants to ensure that the look of a work is faithful “in terms of aspect ratio, which is very important to the creators, along with a faithful reproduction of color, hue, size and sometimes font. The creators also want the informational content to be as faithful as possible.” (DFR 8)

Authenticity

“The creators are not very concerned about authenticity or reliability. They believe that...it is the forensic evidence of the work that is important and not the reinstalling of the work—a process that would require consideration of authenticity and reliability issues.” (DFR 8)

“The creators believe that most of the ECI archives can simply be migrated to digital surrogates without problems of authenticity...Value is assigned to the documentation and the ideas, not to what media type they are on, so migration is not seen as a threat to authenticity or integrity.” (DFR 8)

Reliability

See *Authenticity*, above.