



InterPARES 2 Project

International Research on Permanent Authentic Records in Electronic Systems

Overview

Case Study 25: Legacoop of Bologna Web Site

Peter Gagné, Université Laval

May 2006

The Creator Context / Activity

Creator: Legacoop Bologna

Creator type: Government focus / Private sphere (large cooperative: provincial body of a national cooperative). By its nature, it may be closer to a public organization than a private corporation.

Juridical Context: Legacoop began its activities in 1921 and was legally recognized as a representative association for cooperative enterprises in 1947. It must abide by European Union and Italian legislation (civil code) specific to private administration, including rules regarding the preservation of a limited number of records. Applicable norms include:

- Legacoop Bologna's Statutes
- ACI (International Co-operative Alliance), 1995
- *Lega Nazionale delle Cooperative e Mutue* (National Cooperative League) values paper, 1995

Activity: Legacoop Bologna acts as a representative for the Bologna cooperative sphere, particularly with public institutions and other major economic and social agents in the province. It also offers various promotional, development and assistance services to associate companies. Legacoop Bologna represents over 300 companies with a total of nearly 32,000 employees and 800,000 members and has a turnover of 5.5 billion euros.

The specific activity that is the focus of this case study is the maintenance and operation of a Web site. The site provides four types of services:

- Subscription to a newsletter (Italian or English)
- Job advertisements
- Publishing of consulting service explanatory documents (restricted area of the site)
- Online job application (restricted area of the site)

Nature of Partnership

By its nature, Legacoop Bologna is a cooperative of several business leaders in the community. An external agency runs the Web site on a day-to-day basis and internal management of the site is distributed. Legacoop Bologna's communication manager is responsible for the overall site organization and functionality. He is supported by IT specialists (for the restricted area), the Industrial Relations Office (for the job section) and the general secretary for updating sections of the intranet. In addition, external authors (cooperative members) compose their own CVs, which they post to the site themselves.

Bureaucratic/Organizational Structure

Legacoop Bologna has a set of statutes, which sets out its governance. Every four years, an assembly of the chairs of the various member cooperatives elects a Board of Directors, a Chair, a Board of Auditors and a Committee of Guarantors. The Board of Directors in turn elects a Management Committee.

Approximately thirty people work in the Legacoop Bologna offices in several departments, including: financial and tax advisor, labour legislation advisor, social politics, logistics, facility management and transportation enterprises, communication and external relations, culture and training.

Digital Entities Studied

The digital entity studied in this case is the Legacoop Bologna Web site, created in 2002. The site contains information related to the services of Legacoop Bologna, both to the general public and to its members (via a restricted area). The site is vital to the maintenance of the cooperative network of Legacoop Bologna's membership.

The Web site is in HTML and includes images, JavaScript and an SQL database of CVs. E-mail and text files such as circulars, regulations, final reports, etc. are converted to HTML prior to their upload to the Web site. An increasing number of records are born digital.

Documentary Practices Observed

Despite the fact that this creator is classified in the government focus of InterPARES, for a private company such as Legacoop Bologna, "statutory requirements for records systems (both paper-based or electronic)...are not as strict as they are for public administrations." (FR 4)

Records Creation and Maintenance

Document creation and maintenance **procedures** regarding the Web site are not documented. "There are no controls on the content of published documents except for what is prescribed by professional deontology of those responsible for any publication. No other defined audits or controls over documentary production are performed on the digital resources on the Web site." (FR 6)

The Web site management **system** (an editorial system built *ad hoc*) resides on a Web server that works on Unix and Windows. This system allows updating the pages without intervening directly on the code.

There is a **naming convention** for the Web site system that appears to generate a **unique identifier**. Files are assigned names automatically through the editorial system, according to precise rules. “Files are assigned a progressive identifier according to the category of information they belong to, a process that is transparent to users.” (FR 7) The identifier is an incremental number that functions as the primary key in the database system.

For traditional (paper) records, the originals are filed in folders organized on a very simple **classification** scheme. The electronic recordkeeping system provides the possibility to create shared folders on a server with the aim to avoid the duplication of paper records. However, “this functionality is used informally and it is not considered part of the records system.” (FR 6)

“The entities are aggregated according to the main logical categories of the site (i.e., documents of the association, news from the cooperative world, CVs and announcements, and other services related to the Bologna business area).” (FR 8)

There are some **metadata** recorded in the creator’s registry system for traditional records only. The application provides a profile of the registered incoming and outgoing documents. The following parameters are registered: classification code, recipients, object, date and type of document.

For the moment, each sector of Legacoop is free to **change** the digital entities that it creates, without any form of control other than limiting access by the use of passwords.

Recordkeeping and Preservation

Legacoop Bologna uses an electronic recordkeeping and archives (“registry”) **system**, although this official recordkeeping system is a separate entity not related to the Web site. In this system, the general secretariat performs registration and preservation of incoming and outgoing (traditional) records. The general secretary and secretary for the fiscal and labour consultancy service perform the recordkeeping.

With regards to preservation **strategies**, no strict rules are in place regarding registration, but special rules exist for some types of records. “The civil code defines a very limited number of records to be preserved for the long term. These include the minutes of the management board and the incorporation documents (statute), while the financial, business, and fiscal records have to be kept for five or ten years, according to the related functions.” (FR 4) However, the electronic records are not considered of the same value as the paper records. In general, paper records are actively registered, though no policies or strategies exist for the long-term preservation of digital resources. The Web site “has been conceived as a separate entity from Legacoop Bologna’s regular business procedures” (FR 5) and e-mail is not registered unless it is considered important. Even when preserved, e-mail “is very often printed, partly for distribution to personnel who do not use a computer.” (FR 6)

The effects of the **nascent business context** are quite perceptible on records preservation. The Web site is being regarded more and more as a type of recordkeeping system (although in this sense preservation may be confused with diffusion). “Although, initially, most recorded information present on the Web was an electronic duplicate of information/records existing in

the paper environment, an increasing portion is now original and more relevant than the records preserved in the recordkeeping system.” (FR 5) This situation has prompted the creator to rethink its creation processes and preservation strategies with regards to digital entities. “Although there are no real policies or strategies for the long-term preservation of digital resources...[w]ith the increasing reliance on the Web site, and the quantity of the material published there, the organization realized it needed to plan its records/documents/ information flows in relation to the Web site.” (FR 6)

“No explicit or formal preservation strategies exist” (FR 11) with regards to preventing hardware dependence or technical **obsolescence**.

Accuracy, Authenticity and Reliability

“Professional standards, ethical behaviour and informal quality and integrity controls are the only tools, weak indeed, to ensure quality, reliability and authenticity of the entities present on the Web site.” (FR 9)

Accuracy

“The creator has no obligations other than ethical ones relating to the correctness of what is available on the Web site.” (FR 11)

Authenticity

“Access issues are managed using expedients aimed at minimizing the possibility of altering documents archived in the editorial system and published online. These expedients are based on a very simple password control system. No other controls or systems (e.g., digital certificates), are in place to guarantee the authenticity of what is online and the paternity of the actions performed.” (FR 6) However, the creator plans on implementing a policy system to define the requirements, procedures and tools to ensure authenticity.

Reliability

“It is common practice to assume that what is published under the official Web site must be official.” (FR 6)

Due to the disparity between the perception of traditional and digital documents, “for the moment, the digital entities are not considered of the same value and reliability as the paper records, even if in many cases they are the only evidence of Legacoop activity.” (FR 9)

“The creator, who pays attention to its traditional records system, has not yet focused on Web-based entities with the same attention to the reliability and integrity of the information involved.” (FR 12)