

Records Governance in Enterprise 2.0: Toward an Archival Understanding of Social Media and its Potential for Record Creation¹

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Abstract:

Social media use by both public and private organizations has dramatic implications for the reliability, authenticity and evidentiary capacity of their records and poses technological, resource and policy challenges. It is essential to find ways to ensure that social media technologies that are used in organizations and the policy frameworks that support their use are designed to mitigate risks associated with the open and ephemeral nature of the Web. This paper presents research to date that examines the records management and policy issues that arise from creating records in a social media environment.

The ubiquitous adoption of social media technologies² enabling participatory Web functions by both public (Osimo 2008; Wyld 2007; Chang and Kannan 2008) and private (Bughin, Manyika & Miller 2008; Shirky 2008) organizations is having an impact on the creation, use and management of records (Bailey 2008; Henhoeffter 2011). The rapid uptake in use of these technologies poses technological, resource and policy challenges that are continually evolving as technologies change and are utilized for contemporary records creation and recordkeeping practices. Ensuring that social media technologies that are used in organizations and the policy frameworks that support their use are designed to mitigate risks associated with the open nature of the Internet is becoming a priority. The means of control over information created with social media technologies are often in the hands of third parties, who may be residing in locations outside the jurisdiction of the country in which the information originates, and this raises concerns around privacy, security, ownership of information and proper access.

This paper presents our research to date on the nature of the material generated using social media and the policy requirements capable of controlling and protecting such material; it includes an examination of the literature on social media technologies and records, the identification of the issues that arise from records created using these technologies, and a report on early investigation into the policy requirements necessary to ensure these issues are adequately addressed.

What are social media?

Coined by Dale Dougherty of O'Reilly Media in 2004, the term Web 2.0 is commonly associated with the Internet as an integrated and dynamic service platform that

¹ This paper presents research conducted by the International Research on Permanent Authentic Records in Electronic Systems (InterPARES) 3 Project.

² Social media technologies include social media and networking technologies and collaborative document tools such as wikis, RSS feeds, Facebook and Twitter as well as cloud computing technologies.

is highly interactive and facilitates the generation of content by interconnected user communities utilizing Web applications that allow interoperability, collaboration and information sharing. While Tim Berners-Lee, who is credited with conceiving the World Wide Web, dismisses it, this term has gained traction and is generally linked to ideas such as: individual production and user generated content; harnessing the power of the crowd; data on an epic scale; architecture of participation; network effects; and openness. Social media technologies build on the foundations of Web 2.0, enabling users to develop, contribute, exchange and share user-generated content on the Web and Enterprise platforms. Social media comprises a variety of applications and services such as blogs and microblogs, wikis, RSS feeds, podcasts, multimedia sharing, tagging and social bookmarking, and social networking services (Anderson 2007).

Social media are consistently evolving with the ever-increasing ability to combine tools and information to create new forms of documents, such as mashups, that can pose challenges to traditional paradigms and raise questions of intellectual property, privacy and confidentiality, authorship and ownership. No longer passive recipients of information, users are now active participants in an interactive Web environment through the use of social media technologies. (Dearstyne 2007; Gerber 2006).

A shifting information landscape

Social media technologies have been used to support a range of organizational and government activities. Organizations and governments are adopting new ways of engaging with users and increasing the accessibility and usability of public and private sector information (Osimo 2008; Wyld 2007; Chang and Kannan 2008). Thus, many contemporary records requiring long term or permanent retention are being created using social media technologies, which are by their very nature ephemeral and collaborative. The democratic nature of these technologies has afforded greater connection, collaboration and knowledge creation in interactions amongst citizens, organizations, and governments (Benkler 2006). However, their adoption is fundamentally altering how the records resulting from those interactions are created, (re)used, managed and eventually preserved. An understanding of these potential new records necessitates a theoretical approach in order to comprehend their unique attributes and requirements before they become irretrievable or unusable.

Because of the potential of social media interactive platforms, the traditional boundaries of an organization's business processes are more malleable, no longer controlled by a traditional administrative paradigm, with the consequence that organizational records may be created and held outside of an organization's records systems. Discussing the loss of the recordkeeping procedures that separated "the back and front office", Moss states: "much of the 'individual production' championed by Web 2.0 enthusiasts lacks the mediation processes that are familiar in the analogue" (Moss 2011).

Managing social media records

In archival theory, a record is "a document made or received in the course of a practical activity as its instrument or by-product, and set aside for action or reference."³ It

³ "Record" is defined by the InterPARES Project, www.interpares.org.

has distinct attributes which support the presumption of its authenticity and ensure its reliability and accuracy through creation, use, maintenance, and ultimately, preservation. The authenticity of digital material is dependent upon the protection through time of its identity and of its integrity (Duranti 1995). Organizations use records to support accountability and compliance, that is, as evidence of their activity (Shepherd and Yeo 2003). In order for a record to act in an evidentiary capacity, it must be created, managed and preserved respecting applicable legislation, regulations, standards, codes of practice, and/or community expectations (Shepherd and Yeo 2003). The evidentiary capacity of a record depends on its reliability and is provided to it by its form, authorship, and control on the procedure of creation (Duranti 1995). In a traditional information environment these factors are easy to identify and assess. Not so in a social media environment.

Social media is causing a paradigm shift by transforming the information landscape from solely hierarchical to predominantly collaborative or horizontal, and business processes traditionally conducted in closed systems can now take place on open networks with the potential of decentralizing decision-making and records creation. Systems that were once static are now dynamic, facilitating the creation of ephemeral information that cannot be used as record (Henhoeffter 2011). Much of what social media technologies allow users to do raises questions about recordness, authenticity, reliability and accuracy. An analysis of how social media are used is required for developing appropriate records management policies, directives and guidance (Henhoeffter 2011).

A 2008 survey of 1,988 executives from across the globe on their company's business use of social media technologies showed that "companies are not only using more [social media] technologies but also leveraging them to change management practices and organizational structures," (Bughin, Manyika & Miller 2008). Experts agree that existing records management policies, principles and practices cannot be applied to this new interactive digital landscape due to its dynamic, ephemeral and interactive nature (Henhoeffter 2011; Jaeger, Lin & Grimes 2008).

Furthermore, many social networking applications (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) don't share the same standards and are constantly adding new features, changing terms of use and privacy settings in ways that are in direct contrast with existing standards for both analogue and digital records, such as the standards for email, which are fixed over time (Franks 2010). The changing features of social media raise the question of what to capture as a record and when to capture interactions as part of one or more records (Franks 2010). Additionally, as social media often reside on outside servers in third-party environments, capturing the information generated within them as records after having identified its function is labour intensive and inefficient (Franks 2010).

Policy implications

While the investigation into the record nature of the entities created using social media must be ongoing, due to the continuing change of the environment in which they come to exist, records management and social media policies (or a combination of them) can aid in addressing the issues already identified: reliability and liability, security, privacy and confidentiality (Jaeger, Lin and Grimes 2008), as well as authenticity,

accuracy, e-discovery, intellectual property, freedom of information legislation, and long term preservation and access (Orna 19).

Whether through inclusion in existing policies that address records and information management or through the creation of a new social media policy, every organization should provide:

- Guidance on how employees are expected to communicate and conduct themselves on behalf of the organization using social media;
- Guidance on what types of social media tools are approved by the organization to communicate organizational information;
- Clear identification of the categories of information considered permissible to be communicated via social media (clearly identify trade secrets, define personal information, etc.);
- Guidance on how to identify and manage records created with social media technologies -- including use, capture, storage, retention and disposition, and appropriate metadata application;
- Procedures for establishing, maintaining and closing social media accounts;
- Legal disclaimers in social media postings appropriate for the organization;
- Information on the use and posting of copyrighted works, trademarks and protected materials;
- Guidelines on data security;
- Information on laws relating to freedom of information and protection of privacy;
- Information on industry standards and guidelines that may be in conflict with social media use (e.g. industry rules and responsibilities, etc.);
- Indication of the consequences for violating the policy.

We are currently developing a policy analysis framework which will be utilized to support individual organizations in creating policies capable of addressing their own specific needs.

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