



InterPARES 3 Project

International Research on Permanent Authentic Records in Electronic Systems
TEAM Canada

General Study Research Proposal Web 2.0/Social Media

Version 1.2, May 2010

Background and Rationale for Study

Social networking systems are defined as Web based services that utilize social software, allowing users to create profiles, interact, share and communicate information. Social media is defined as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content.”¹ Coined by Tim O’Reilly, the term Web 2.0 is commonly associated with the Internet and refers to an integrated and dynamic service platform that is highly interactive and facilitates content generated by interconnected user communities utilizing Web applications that allow interoperability, collaboration and information sharing.

At least one of the TEAM Canada case studies is currently examining the preservation of social media content—CS09: AMS: Policies and Procedures for Web site Preservation—in relation to its Facebook page. Additionally, other TEAM Canada test-bed participants have mentioned the use of social media tools within their institutions. The adoption of social media tools to conduct business activities is on the rise and the use of these tools and technologies poses significant challenges for records management and long-term preservation.

In June 2008, a survey was conducted of 1,988 executives from across the globe on their company’s business use of Web 2.0 technologies. It found that Web 2.0 technologies are having a fundamental effect on the way that companies are operating and how they are creating and utilizing information. “As Web 2.0 gains traction, it could transform the way companies organize and manage themselves, leading to what some have dubbed Enterprise 2.0.”² According to the study’s authors, “companies are not only using more [Web 2.0] technologies but also leveraging

¹ Andreas M. Kaplan and Michael Haenlein (2010), “Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media,” *Business Horizons* 53 (1): 59-68.

² Jacques Bughin, James Manyika and Andy Miller (2008), “Building the Web 2.0 Enterprise: McKinsey Global Survey Results,” *The McKinsey Quarterly* (July): 7. Available at http://www.mckinseyquarterly.com/Building_the_Web_20_Enterprise_McKinsey_Global_Survey_2174.

them to change management practices and organizational structures,”³ indicating the potential for companies to be utilizing these Web 2.0 technologies for the creation of records.

To understand the importance of the possible implications of social media for records creation and archives, one need only look to the recent announcement that the Library of Congress will be archiving all public tweets since Twitter launched in 2006.⁴ Commenting on the announcement, David S. Ferrero the Archivist of the United States posted to his blog:

In the world of electronic records, this is a historic announcement. In my first post, I said “electronic records are now a fundamental part of our documentary record.” The donation of billions of tweets to the Library of Congress is a profound example of the changing fabric of our records.⁵

Not only is *what* Ferrero said important, but *how* he said it, through his blog “AOTUS: Collector in Chief,” is also worth examination. The evolution of the Web to Web 2.0 and the tools and technologies of social media are contributing to the “changing fabric of records” and records creation and requires further investigation in order to understand contemporary record creating practices and the potential implications for archival and records management theory and practice.

With the adoption of Web 2.0 and social media tools and technologies in the creation of records, the potential exists for organizations to cede internal control over the records management process and storage of records within dedicated, proprietary corporate recordkeeping systems to external third parties. This raises concerns about privacy, security and ownership of information as well as an organization’s ability to preserve authentic records created with these tools over the long term.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are to identify and evaluate the potential consequences of the use of Web 2.0 technologies on existing records management and archival theory and practices and, on the basis of such analysis, to make recommendations for future research to examine these consequences in greater detail with the aim of devising concrete Web 2.0 policy and procedure recommendations.

To achieve this goal, two key objectives have been identified:

- to identify whether, and in which ways, the production of digital information objects using Web 2.0 technologies is resulting in records creation; and

³ Ibidem.

⁴ Nate Anderson, “Why the Library of Congress cares about archiving our tweets,” ARS Technica. Available at: http://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/news/2010/04/why-is-the-us-govt-archiving-your-tweets-we-ask-them.ars?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=rss (accessed April 19, 2010).

⁵ David Ferrero, “Tweets: What We Might Learn From Mundane Details,” AOTUS: Collector in Chief blog, The National Archives, April 16, 2010. Available at: <http://blogs.archives.gov/aotus/?p=172> (accessed April 19, 2010).

- to assess the potential impact of the use of Web 2.0 technologies on the ability of records managers and archivists in different jurisdictions, regardless of the legal-administrative or socio-cultural environment, to effectively identify, manage and preserve possible records generated by public and private sector organizations and their clients, customers and business partners, using such technologies.

Research Questions

- In what ways are individuals and organizations using Web 2.0 technologies to conduct their activities or business?
- Do the information by-products produced by these business practices, and the Web 2.0 technologies being used to enable them, have the characteristics of a record? If they do, are they being treated as records? If they do not, can the Web 2.0 systems be modified to ensure that if they generate digital records, these records can be effectively managed and preserved?
- Can the existing theoretical and methodological constructs and strategies for creating/identifying, managing and preserving digital records in interactive and dynamic systems adequately accommodate any identified changes:
 - (1) in the concept of recordness; and
 - (2) in the way that digital records are generated, used, managed and preserved in Web 2.0 systems?

Research Methodology

The research methodology for this study will involve:

1. Definitions of Web 2.0 and social media terminology gleaned from the literature;
2. An analysis of existing scholarly and grey literature, and user surveys on the adoption of Web 2.0 tools and technologies by public and private sector organizations in relation to the impact of these technologies on corporate culture and records management practices—particularly with respect to changes to traditional management practices, organizational structures and business processes;
3. Analysis of the technological context of Web 2.0 systems and social media tools and technologies in light of the concepts associated with, and the characteristics integral to the identification of, digital records as identified by the InterPARES Project;
4. A Web-based survey of the use of Web 2.0 technologies to support business activities within public and private sector organizations and the impact of such practices on the creation, use, management and long-term preservation of digital records;
5. Semi-structured interviews with InterPARES 3 test-bed partners investigating their use of Web 2.0 and social media tools for the creation, maintenance and preservation of records; and

6. Draft strategies and policies for the use of Web 2.0 and social media tools and technologies to support business activities and the creation of records.

Plan of Action

Activities	Target Dates
1. Present research proposal, draft terminology and in-progress literature review.	TEAM Canada Plenary Workshop 06
2. Continue with literature review and address any gaps based on feedback/comments from TEAM Canada Plenary, May 2010.	Spring/Summer 2010
3. Develop draft survey. Develop framework for the analysis of the technological context of Web 2.0 systems and social media tools and technologies. Develop a set of semi-structured interview questions.	Summer 2010
4. Submit survey and interview questions to UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board.	Summer 2010
5. Conduct survey. Identify interview participants and begin interviews. Begin analysis of the technological context of Web 2.0 systems.	Fall 2010
6. Present progress of research to date.	TEAM Canada Plenary Workshop 07
7. Address any gaps identified from feedback from TEAM Canada Plenary, November 2010. Complete interviews and code responses; analyze interview data. Analysis of literature review. Continue analysis of technological context of Web 2.0 systems.	Fall 2010/Winter 2011

Research Team

Lead Investigators: Luciana Duranti and Patricia Franks

Research Assistants: Elizabeth Shaffer, Lisa Snider and Anneleen van Dijk

Dissemination Activities

Conferences

- ACA Conference, 2-4 June 2011
- AABC Conferences Spring 2011
- SAA Conference 22-27 August 2011

Journals

- AABC Newsletter
- American Archivist
- Archivaria
- First Monday