

Appraisal of Electronic Records: Findings of the InterPARES Project

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International Research on Permanent Authentic Records in Electronic Systems

*INTE*rnational *RE*search on *PER*manent *Authentic RE*cords in *Electronic S*ystems



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Research Goal

To develop the theoretical and methodological knowledge essential to the permanent preservation of authentic records generated and/or maintained electronically, and, on the basis of this knowledge, to formulate model policies, strategies and standards capable of ensuring that preservation.



Research Domains

- *Domain I:* Conceptual Requirements for Preserving Authentic Electronic Records
- *Domain II:* Appraisal Criteria and Methods for Selection of Authentic Electronic Records
- *Domain III:* Methods and Responsibilities for Preserving Authentic Electronic Records
- *Domain IV:* Framework for the Formulation of Policies, Strategies, and Standards



Domain 2: Methodology

- Archival science for the literature search and analysis, the comparative study of appraisal reports from archival institution, and the identification of the activities and entities being modeled and of their relationships
- IDEF0 modeling for the representation of the activities involved in appraisal, including the identification of controls, mechanisms, inputs and outputs of each activity, and the definition of the related terms



Domain 2: Results of the literature and documentation analyses

- Consent on the fact that electronic records must be selected according to the same theory and criteria used for traditional documents
- Importance of evaluating the entire context of the records
- Necessity of conducting selection very early in the life of the records
- Importance of having all the documentation related to the technological context of the documents
- Absence of authenticity among the selection criteria



Domain 2: Model

- Point of view of the preserver
- The function of selection includes the following activities:
 1. Manage the selection function
 2. Appraise electronic records
 3. Monitor selected electronic records
 4. Carrying out the disposition of electronic records



Manage the Selection Function

To develop strategies, rules and procedures of selection using information on decisions taken in the past and on the records' context, keeping into account the needs of the creator and of society and legal norms.



Manage the Selection Function

First output: appraisal strategies, including

- criteria for appraisal
- guidelines on how to apply authenticity requirements
- procedures for carrying out appraisal
- guidelines for reporting the results of appraisals
- procedures for reporting on appraisal activities



Manage the Selection Function

Second output: rules and procedures governing the disposition of records, including

- procedures for carrying out disposition (for example, the roles and responsibilities of the creator and the preserver)
- rules for disposition (for example, acceptable formats for transfer or the means of transmission of records)
- procedures for reporting about disposition activities (for example, reporting on the character and volume of records acquired and/or destroyed)



Appraisal of Electronic Records

Composed of the following activities:

- compiling information about the records and their contexts
- assessing the value of the records
- determining the feasibility of preserving them
- making the appraisal decision



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Compiling Information About the Records and their Context

- It includes information on the context of creation and on the technological context
- It allows to establish the basis upon which the records are considered authentic
- It allows to determine the value of the records



Assessing the Value of the Records

It includes three activities

- assessing the continuing value of electronic records
- assessing their authenticity
- determining their overall value



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Determining the Feasibility of Preserving the Records

- Deciding whether the digital components embodying the essential elements that confer identity and ensure the integrity of the records can be preserved, given the preserver's current and anticipated capabilities
- A digital component is a digital object that contains all or part of the content of an electronic record, and/or data or metadata necessary to order, structure, or manifest the content, and that requires specific methods for preservation



Determining the Feasibility of Preserving the Records

Comprises three steps:

- The appraiser determines both the record elements containing informational content and those elements that need to be preserved according to requirements for authenticity.
- The appraiser identifies where these crucial record elements are manifested in the digital components of the electronic record.
- The appraiser reconciles these preservation requirements with the preservation capabilities of the institution that is responsible for the continuing preservation of the body of records being appraised.



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Making the Appraisal Decision

The decision refers to two things:

1. What must be either transferred to the archives or destroyed (including the list of the digital components)
2. How and when this should happen

Documentation that explains and justifies the decision is essential not only for reasons of accountability, but also to provide information to those who manage the selection function



Monitor Selected Records

The records selected for preservation must be monitored, especially for changes in their technological context

In some cases it may be necessary to repeat the appraisal because of changes that can affect the feasibility of preservation

In most cases, monitoring produces minor revisions to the documentation on the selection and to the terms and conditions of transfer



Carrying Out the Disposition of Electronic Records

Comprises three steps:

1. Preparation of the records for disposition
2. Preparation of the records for transfer
3. Transmission of electronic records



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Preparation of the Records for Disposition

Includes copying and, if necessary, formatting the records selected for preservation so as to prepare them physically for transfer, and preparing records not selected for preservation for destruction, alienation to another entity, or such other disposition as has been determined in the appraisal decision



Preparation of the Records for Transfer

To package records selected for preservation with the necessary information for their continuing preservation, including the terms and conditions of transfer, identification of the digital components to be preserved, and associated archival and technical documentation needed for their treatment



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Transmission of Electronic Records

It consists of the transfer of the records to be preserved from the creator to the preserver.

This activity produces information about transferred electronic records and results in the transfer of electronic records selected for preservation. These electronic records are copied and, if necessary, reformatted for further transfer to the office responsible for the preservation function.



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Key Points About Appraisal of Electronic Records

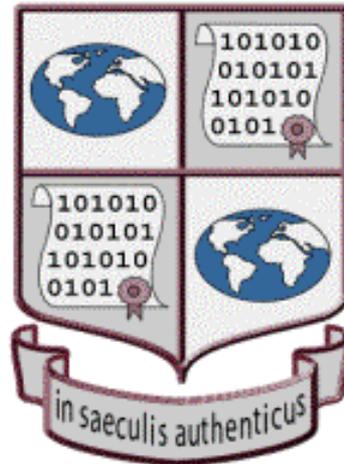
- It is essential for the appraiser to assess the authenticity of electronic records
- It is important to determine the feasibility of preservation
- It is necessary that electronic records be appraised early in their life cycle
- It is vital to monitor the appraisal decision



Reference

For the findings of the first phase of InterPARES and related models of appraisal and preservation see the book posted on the project's web site:

www.interpares.org/book/index.cfm



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