InterPARES 2 Project
International Research on Permanent Authentic Records in Electronic Systems

Domain 3 Research Questions

Case Study 02:
Performance Artist Stelarc

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1. **What types of entities does the diplomatic analysis identify in this case study? (i.e., records, publications, data, etc.)**

    Diplomatic analysis identifies all entities posted on Stelarc's Web site as records. These include diagrams, sound files, still images, video files, Virtual Reality Modeling (VRML), QuickTime VR and Shockwave files.

    1a. **If there are no records, should there be records? If not, why not?**

    Not applicable.

    1b. **If there should be records, what kinds of records should be created to satisfy the creator's needs (as defined by an archivist)?**

    Not applicable

    1c. **What characteristics of records (as defined by an archivist) are missing yet necessary to preserve these entities?**

    None. The entities on Stelarc's Web site satisfy all requirements of a record as defined by InterPARES 1. The lack of a formal recordkeeping system, however, casts doubt as to the stability of the records' content over time.

2. **Are the entities reliable? If not, why not?**

    The lack of a recordkeeping system makes the reliability of entities difficult to assess, and the controls over the creation of Stelarc's entities are not adequately described to determine their sufficiency. The creator, however, considers the entities to be reliable because he has sole control over their posting to the Web site. The entities' reliability is

required only so that they may serve as evidence of Stelarc's artistic activities, as they are not used in any further actions.

3.   **Are the entities accurate? If not, why not?**

Accuracy is not specifically addressed by either the final report or the subsequent diplomatic analysis; however, the entities are considered accurate by the creator, as he has identified them as truthful representations of his artistic activities and collaborative projects.

4.   **To what degree can the entities be presumed to be authentic, and why**?

The creator believes the entities to be authentic by virtue of his position at the centre of the record-creation process, and by the nature of his work. While no recordkeeping system exists, it is possible to address the following Benchmark Requirements, in part.

Benchmark Requirements Supporting the Production of Authentic Copies of Electronic Records (these apply to the creator**)**:

1.   **Capture of identity and integrity metadata**
       The identity of the entities is assured by the presence of the following attributes:
       - Names of persons concurring in the formation of the record:
            o   Author: Stelarc
            o   Writer: Stelarc
            o   Originator: VirtualArtists.com
            o   Addressee: Stelarc and the general public
       - Name of the action or matter: the entities participate in the creation of Stelarc's work/performances, and are by-products of this action.
       - Expression of an archival bond: each entity is bound to others participating in the same action.
       - The dates of creation and transmission, and the indication of attachments, are not noted, and nor are those elements required to assess the integrity of the entities.

2.   **Enforcement of access privileges**
       Access to the backend of the Web site is restricted to the Webmaster, and is strictly password controlled. Access to the entities on the Web site, however, is not controlled, and users can freely copy and save text, images, audio, and video files.

3.   **Protection against loss and corruption**
       The Web site is hosted by an external company, VisualArtists.com, which ensures protection against viruses and hacking. The Webmaster maintains copies of the Web site's entities on CD-ROM, and hard copies of entities are maintained where existent.

4.   **Protection against media and technology obsolescence**
        Updates required to the Web site's software are handled externally by
        VisualArtists.com. While not directly addressed in the final report, it can be
        presumed that there are currently no protective actions undertaken, as some of
        Stelarc's entities are no longer accessible due to the obsolescence of the particular
        technology with which they were created.

5.   **Established documentary forms**
        No established documentary forms are identified in the final report.

6.   **Ability to authenticate records**
        The entities can be considered authenticated by virtue of their presence on the
        Web site; Stelarc chooses which entities to post, and in doing so, declares them to
        be an authentic record of his artistic activities. No formal authentication, however,
        is discussed.

7.   **Procedures in place to identify the authoritative record**
        Again, the identification of the authoritative record is a subjective process, in
        which Stelarc decides which entities are to be considered official records of his
        activities.

8.   **Procedures in place to properly document removal and transfer of records
        from the creator's originating system**
        A formal recordkeeping system does not currently exist. The Webmaster,
        however, does require Stelarc's authorization to both post and remove entities
        from the Web site.

**Baseline Requirements Supporting the Production of Authentic Copies of Electronic
Records** (these apply to the preserver):

As no recordkeeping system exists, the Baseline Requirements cannot be discussed.
There is no formal setting aside of the entities beyond their posting to the Web site.

5.   **For what purpose(s) are the entities to be preserved?**

The entities are to be preserved in order to ensure that documentary evidence of Stelarc's
creative activities is maintained. This is especially important in cases where a
performance cannot be recreated or represented because the original technology used has
become obsolete, and where the use of new technology would significantly alter the
work. Furthermore, the Web site is used by Stelarc as a means to gather his work in one
place, and to provide him with easy access to his records.

6.   **Has the feasibility of preservation been explored?**

Stelarc believes that the posting of records to the Web site is a viable preservation
strategy. The Webmaster also preserves both hard and digital copies.

6a. **If yes, what elements and components need to be preserved?**

The content reflecting Stelarc's artistic activities must be preserved, including text, image, sound, and still and moving images. The functionality and limitations of the technology used, and their effect on the performance/work, must also be preserved.

7. **Which preservation strategies might most usefully be applied, and what are their strengths and weaknesses, including costs and degree of technical difficulty?**

Currently, records are preserved through their posting to Stelarc's Web site, which involves the digitization of some material. Due to the amount of material to be preserved, it is difficult to estimate associated costs and the degree of technical difficulty.

7a. **Which alternative preservation strategies might be applied? What are their strengths and weaknesses, including costs and degree of technical difficulty?**

Currently, the following maintenance strategies are not being applied to Stelarc's entities:

A4. Transfer of data to new storage media on a regular basis

A5. Adherence to appropriate conditions for storage

A8. Disaster planning

Alternative preservation strategies that could be applied include:

B1.4. Conversion
Conversion may be a useful way to ensure that the conceptual content of Stelarc's work is accessible in future generations of technology.

B2.1. Technology preservation
This may be a useful alternative preservation strategy, as Stelarc's works/performances are both limited by and rely on the functionality of available technology. This would be especially useful for the technology specifically designed for Stelarc's artistic endeavours.

B2.5. Emulation
Emulation may be a way to ensure that the functionality of the technology with which Stelarc's original works/performances is represented throughout their preservation.

B.4 Data restoration
Data restoration may be a successful approach to the retroactive preservation of those works/performances currently inaccessible due to technological obsolescence.

8.   What additional information does the preserver need to know to facilitate appraisal and preservation?

To facilitate appraisal and preservation, the preserver would require an understanding of how the entities on the Web site were created, including whether they were born digital or digitized from analogue format, the project for which they were created, and the details of Stelarc's artistic process. The preserver would also need to be aware of the technologies used to create works/performances, and their effect on the type and nature of records created.

8a.   If required information is missing, where should it come from and how should it be made manifest?

It is necessary that records creation procedures are well documented, and that interviews are conducted with Stelarc to ensure that the purpose and relevance of records are understood.

9.   Are there any policies in place that affect preservation?

The lack of policies, and notably the lack of a recordkeeping system or procedures, has the greatest effect on preservation.

One consideration to note is that all entities created by Stelarc's collaborators during the course of a project remain part of the archives of these collaborators (to which Stelarc's Web site provides links). Preservation efforts would thus need to monitor these links and ensure that these entities remain accessible and preserved.

9a.   Are there any policies in place that present obstacles to preservation?

The final report does not mention any policies whatsoever.

9b.   Are there any policies that would need to be put in place to facilitate appraisal and preservation?

Policies related to the identification and establishment of formal record creation and management procedures would facilitate appraisal and preservation.