
Glossary Committee Report

Committee Members

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The InterPARES glossary is a controlled vocabulary of terms used in the InterPARES research. Its purpose is: to facilitate the communication of ideas and findings by offering clear definitions of the key terminology used in the InterPARES research: to maintain consistency in the use of such terminology within the project itself: and to ensure that the meanings of such terms will be communicated effectively to the world outside the project. The fact that the glossary in its entirety amounts to just over a hundred terms should serve to indicate that it is not intended as a comprehensive vocabulary of archival or electronic records terminology. It is hoped, however, that the glossary will have applications beyond being an aid to understanding of the work of the project. It is offered as a contribution to the dialogue that must take place across those disciplines containing the knowledge and expertise required to effect the long-term preservation of authentic records in digital systems. The representatives of those disciplines who have contributed to the InterPARES research, whether as investigators or as record creators, have included archivists, records managers, IT systems managers, computer scientists, and members of the pharmaceutical industry. It is a fact that distinct disciplines tend to develop their own currency of language, which, while easing the flow of knowledge and understanding within that discipline, may conversely impede the flow of ideas and understanding between disciplines. It is most important, therefore, that an interdisciplinary research project such as InterPARES should strive for precision in the use of key terms.

For archivists in particular, the need for precision in defining key concepts governing their work has become more important since the advent of digital technology. Traditional diplomatics and archival science informs much of the InterPARES research and one of the underlying principles of that research has been that much of what archivists need to allow them to identify records in electronic systems and to articulate their requirements for preserving those records over time is already available to them in traditional diplomatics and archival science. Within the digital landscape, many features of the record-keeping environment that seem unfamiliar at first glance begin to take on familiar shape when viewed through this prism. In drafting this glossary, therefore, the emphasis in the first instance has been on using where possible the language of diplomatics and archival science.

The compilation of the glossary has been overseen by a committee drawn from the task forces within and around which the main work of InterPARES has been organized. One representative each from the Appraisal Task Force, the Authenticity Task Force, and the Preservation Task Force served on the Glossary Committee along with the project director and a neutral chair. The committee conducted its business at face-to-face meetings held during the thrice-yearly InterPARES workshops, and electronically on a dedicated section of the InterPARES Web site which functioned as a glossary forum. Research work undertaken on the nominated terms to ensure consistency of use and compliance with the agreed criteria was undertaken by postgraduate research assistants from the School of Library, Archival and Information Studies at the University of British Columbia.

As each task force undertook research, it identified terms that it believed should be entered into the InterPARES glossary. Terms were eligible for nomination and inclusion in the glossary if they had been used in any part of the InterPARES research—whether in meetings, workshops, forum discussions, models, or other products of the research—or if they appeared in supporting literature used in the research. For a term to be eligible for inclusion it also had to meet one at least of the following seven nomination criteria demonstrating that it:

- represented an entity or concept that was key to understanding the research questions or findings of an InterPARES research domain (e.g., electronic record, appraisal)
- was specific to one discipline or sector and InterPARES researchers from another discipline or sector would be unlikely to be familiar with it
- had conflicting definitions and/or meanings between disciplines or sectors

- had conflicting definitions and/or meanings within a discipline or sector
- had multiple meanings
- had one or more synonyms
- was an obscure word or phrase that the majority of InterPARES researchers would find unfamiliar.

Terms for inclusion in the glossary were submitted from the task forces, by the task force representatives on the committee, from the International Team by the project director or by any member of the Glossary Committee.

The work flow of the committee was regulated by a clear set of procedures detailing the precise manner in which new terms or proposed revisions should be submitted and voted on and how, once accepted, work on them should progress through the various stages. Time limits were set for all stages. A software-based system monitored this work flow and held the documentation created during this process.

Proposed new terms or proposed revisions of existing terms, along with their proposed definitions, were submitted formally to the Glossary Committee on standard template forms called "Term Proposal, Research and Nomination Forms" or "Term Record Revision Requests," which were then posted to the glossary forum. Minimum information required on the "Term Proposal, Research and Nomination Form" before it could be accepted for nomination included the name of the term, the proposed definition, the source for the definition, the context in which the term was used in the project, and how the term complied with stated nomination criteria.

Each nominated term was automatically accepted into the *Glossary System*, to be researched by the research assistants, unless an objection to its inclusion was signalled by a member of the Glossary Committee during a "quick vote" period. The quick vote period comprised the ten days following the first date of posting of a term to the glossary forum and was designed to effect a steady work flow by ensuring that undisputed terms advanced quickly by default to the next stage of the research process. Members of the Glossary Committee who were unhappy with a term could register an objection by replying to the posting of the term within the quick vote period, using the single word "opposed." A term disputed in this way came up for consideration at the next meeting of the Glossary Committee. If no opposition was signalled during the quick vote period, the term passed into the *Glossary System* and was researched by the research assistants who checked for previous occurrences of the term in the archival literature or other definitions that might conflict with the InterPARES definition.

Before a term that had passed into the *Glossary System* became a part of the published InterPARES glossary, a number of other steps were necessary. As already mentioned, each term that passed into the system was then researched by a research assistant, to ensure consistency of use and compliance with the agreed criteria. The research assistant also ensured that the term and its definition complied with agreed rules of style governing grammatical form, use of the singular and plural, spelling, capitalization, and use of acronyms. The style format rules were based on *ISO 5964: Documentation—Guidelines for the Establishment and Development of Multilingual Thesauri* and on the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

Based on this research, the research assistants made recommendations which were added to the appropriate section of the "Term Proposal, Research and Nomination Form."

Researched terms were then resubmitted to the Glossary Committee using the quick vote system once again and, once again, terms failing to pass the quick vote were discussed at the next face-to-face meeting of the Glossary Committee. Although any member of the Glossary Committee could veto a term, the aim of the process throughout was to achieve consensus and thereby unanimity on all terms to be included in the glossary. The terms that are included in the final

glossary as it appears can be considered, therefore, as having passed through a rigorous process of research and examination. It is worth noting also that while the InterPARES glossary comprises merely the alphabetical list of terms and definitions, the *Glossary System* that has managed the process will continue to hold all the data on term histories, usage notes, and research on alternative definitions that have been generated in the course of the glossary's compilation.