The InterPARES Project (*International Research on Permanent Authentic Records in Electronic Systems*) is a three-year, collaborative research initiative directed by Dr. Luciana Duranti and is based out of the University of British Columbia's School of Library, Archival and Information Studies. The project will investigate and develop the theories and methodologies required for the permanent preservation of authentic electronic records.

The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada has awarded the InterPARES Project a $850,000 grant, supplemented with a further $200,000 from UBC, to fund the activities of a Canadian working group, to coordinate the activities of its international participants and to guide the overall direction of the research.

The SSHRC grant is backed by a further $9 million in funding commitment from the international participants which include academic institutions, national archival institutions, and private industry groups from the United States, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Australia..

The collaborative nature of this research is dictated by the ubiquity and urgency of the problems related to the permanent preservation of electronically generated records. After the Y2K bug, it is the greatest dilemma brought on by the modern information age. Everyday, governments, corporations and individuals around the world produce terabytes of information to conduct their affairs. As with their paper analogues, many of these electronic records will need to be preserved over the long-term for operational, legal, or historical reasons. However, the constantly evolving nature of electronic systems has meant that many electronically generated records risk being stranded in obsolescent, incompatible technologies. Furthermore, as by-products of their transactions and daily activities, records are the primary means by which governments, organizations and individuals are held accountable for their actions. However, given their electronic form, the task of proving the authenticity of these records is made more difficult. Finally, unlike paper-based records which have a very long life span if properly preserved, electronic records are stored on relatively fragile media which calls for rigorous media migration that, again, risks the long-term accessibility and authenticity of the electronic records.

The InterPARES Project will address these significant issues. It is the second phase of a research project entitled "The Preservation of the Integrity of Electronic Records," which was carried out by Luciana Duranti and Terry Eastwood at the School of Library, Archival and Information Studies. The "U.B.C. Project," as it came to be known, garnered international attention which eventually translated into the widespread collaboration of the InterPARES Project. The UBC Project investigated requirements for active electronic recordkeeping systems from an archival perspective. It worked in close collaboration with the U.S. Department of Defense Records Management Task Force to identify requirements for Records Management Applications (RMA). The resulting 5015.2 standard is now being used by the U.S. Defense Information Systems Agency to certify RMA vendors and is quickly evolving into a *de facto* standard in both the public and private sector.

The InterPARES Project will pick up where the UBC Project left off and investigate the requirements for inactive electronic records which need to be preserved. Specifically, the goal of the InterPARES research will be "to develop the theoretical and methodological knowledge

essential to the permanent preservation of electronically generated records, and, on the basis of this knowledge, to formulate model policies, strategies, and standards capable of ensuring their preservation." Although preliminary organizational work had begun in April 1998, the InterPARES Project was officially launched on January 1, 1998.

For more information consult the project website at www.interpares.org.