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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

InterPARES Project receives SSHRC funding

The InterPARES Project (*Inter*national *R*esearch on *P*ermanent *A*uthentic *R*ecords in *E*lectronic *S*ystems) is a three-year, collaborative research initiative based at the University of British Columbia's School of Library, Archival and Information Studies under the direction of Dr. Luciana Duranti. 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 an $850,000 grant, supplemented with a further $200,000 from UBC, to fund the activities of a Canadian team of researchers who will coordinate the activities of the project's international participants and guide the overall direction of the research.

The SSHRCC grant is backed by additional funding commitments 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 fact that the problems related to the permanent preservation of electronically generated records are international in scope, and, apart from the Y2K bug, constitute the most complex and imminent crisis facing modern society at the end of the millenium. Everyday, millions of electronic records are generated by governments, corporations and individuals in order to carry out their affairs. Many of these records will need to be preserved over the long-term for operational, legal, or historical purposes. Because of the constantly evolving nature of electronic systems, however, these records risk being stranded in obsolescent and/or incompatible systems. Moreover, the ease with which electronic records can be invisibly altered, makes it increasingly difficult to prove their authenticity over time. Given that records are the primary means by which governments, organizations and individuals are held accountable for their actions, this difficulty creates considerable cause for concern. Finally, unlike paper-based records which have a very long life span if properly preserved, electronic records are stored on relatively fragile media. To preserve them over time it is necessary to migrate them to new hardware and software environments, a process that also, has the potential to compromise the records' long-term accessibility and authenticity.

All of these critical issues will be addressed by the InterPARES Project. The project, which was officially launched on January 1, 1999, is the second phase of a research project entitled "The Preservation of the Integrity of Electronic Records," 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, developed requirements and methods for ensuring the reliability and authenticity of active electronic records. It garnered international attention, which eventually translated into the widespread collaboration of the InterPARES Project. The InterPARES Project will pick up where the UBC Project left off and investigate the requirements for ensuring the long-term preservation of authentic inactive electronic records. 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." For more information consult the project website at www.interpares.org.