SLAIS HOME

ABOUT SLAIS

PEOPLE

ADMISSIONS & AWARDS

PROGRAMS

COURSES

RESEARCH & TEACHING

Research at SLAIS

Faculty Research & Teaching Areas -- Overview

Current & Recent Faculty Research

TECHNOLOGY

NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

RESOURCES

SEARCH SLAIS SITE

CONTACT SLAIS

# THE LONG TERM PRESERVATION OF AUTHENTIC ELECTRONIC RECORDS - INTERPARES 1 (1998-2001)

**Principal Investigator**: Luciana Duranti

**Major Sources of Funding**: SSHRC MCRI (Multidisciplinary Collaborative Research Initiative) grant; NHPRC, UBC

**Significance of Research**: This project focused on the preservation of the authenticity of electronic records that are no longer needed by the creating body to fulfill its own mandate, mission or purpose. The records examined were primarily textual documents produced and maintained in databases and document management systems. This first phase of InterPARES has produced a variety of findings, including conceptual requirements for authenticity and methods for the selection and preservation of authentic electronic records. All findings are presented in a book edited by Luciana Duranti and entitled The Long-term Preservation of Authentic Electronic Records: Findings of the InterPARES Project. The InterPARES 1 Project was based on the findings of a previous research project, entitled The Preservation of the Integrity of Electronic Records, otherwise known as the UBC Project. It was undertaken by researchers at the University of British Columbia from 1994 to 1997, in collaboration with the United States Department of Defense, and aimed at establishing standards for creating reliable electronic records and maintaining their authenticity during their active and semi-active life. One of its products was DoD Standard 5015.2 for recordkeeping systems.  By contrast, the InterPARES 1 Project sought to establish the means for assessing and maintaining the authenticity of electronic records once they become inactive and are selected for permanent preservation. The InterPARES 1 Project team comprised scholars and professionals in a variety of disciplines, such as law, history, computer science and engineering, information science, and chemistry, representing universities, archival institutions, businesses and industry in Canada, United States, United Kingdom, Australia, China and Hong Kong, France, Ireland, Italy, The Netherlands, Sweden, Portugal.

**Objectives & Methods**: The goal of the InterPARES 1 Project was to develop the theoretical and methodological knowledge necessary for the permanent preservation of authentic records generated and/or maintained electronically. On the basis of this knowledge, the project aimed to formulate model policies, strategies and standards capable of ensuring that preservation. In order to accomplish its goal, the research was divided into four domains of inquiry, each with its own goal and methodology. The **Authenticity domain** aimed to identify conceptual requirements for assessing and maintaining the authenticity of electronic records. It adopted two methodological approaches: 1) a theoretical and deductive approach, based on contemporary archival diplomatics and 2) an inductive and empirical approach that employed case studies selected on the basis of grounded theory to understand the records generated by a variety of existing electronic systems. The **Appraisal domain aimed to** determine whether the selection of electronic records should be based on the same or different criteria as those for traditional records and how digital technologies affect appraisal methodology. It adopted three methods in sequence: 1) a review of the literature on appraisal of electronic records; 2) a study of archival policies, procedures, methods and appraisal reports; and 3) modeling of the activities involved in the selection of electronic records.  The **Preservation domain aimed to** develop preservation methods for authentic electronic records. It adoped both an empirical and an analytical approach: 1) a survey of existing programs, plans, and technologies for preserving electronic records, and 2) a modeling of the activities involved in the preservation of authentic electronic records, that took into account the findings of the Appraisal and Authenticity Task Forces. The **Strategy domain aimed** to develop an intellectual framework for the articulation of international, national, and organizational policies, strategies, and standards for the long-term preservation of authentic electronic records. The intellectual framework was developed by distilling principles and criteria from the findings of the other three domains. It was then analyzed in the context of the national and jurisdictional environments in which the co-investigators operated, and discussed in national and multinational team reports.

**Related Links**:

- www.interpares.org
- http://www.interpares.org/UBCProject/index.htm

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**to top**

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