Overview

• Objectives
• Research Projects
• Dissemination Activities
• Preliminary Findings
Objective

• ...the primary role of **Focus Task Forces** is to gather and analyze case studies and other data of relevance to each type of activity across multiple domains of inquiry

(Milestones Report, item 1.5, page 2)
Focus 1 Case Studies (1)

- CS01 Arbo Cyber, théâtre (?)
- CS02 Performance Artist Stelarc
- CS03 Horizon Zero/Zéro Horizon
- CS09 Digital Moving Images
  - Computer-based Animation Studio
  - Altair 4 Multimedia
  - National Film Board of Canada
  - WGBH Boston
Focus 1 Case Studies (2)

- CS10  The Danube Exodus
- CS13  Obsessed Again
- CS15  Waking Dream
- CS16  Unstable and variable techniques
- CS22  Electronic Café International
General Studies

• MUSTICA
• Composers’ Survey
• Photographers’ Survey
Bibliography

- Accuracy, Reliability and Authenticity
Dissemination Activities

- Wedelmusic (2003)
Preliminary Findings (1)

- Individual artist vs. corporate entity
- Digital vs. traditional records
- The work vs. the performance
Preliminary Findings (2)

- Re-use
- Authenticity
- Intent
- Metadata
Good morning.

My presentation this morning will include a brief review of the objectives of the Focus 1 Task Force, and the research projects and dissemination events it has undertaken in the first half of the project. I will conclude with some preliminary findings suggested by the research to date.

As the Milestone Report so succinctly put it: the primary role of Focus Task Forces is to gather and analyze case studies and other data of relevance to each type of activity across multiple domains of inquiry.

As anticipated in the original research proposal, the Focus Task Forces have directed a good deal of energy into case studies. An early decision was made to create a core case-study questionnaire designed to elicit all the information required by the 3 Domain and the 4 Cross-Domain groups. This was, in part, suggested by the experience of InterPARES 1, which used a standardized set of questions in their case studies, a method which greatly facilitated subsequent comparative analysis.

But the wider scope of inquiry of InterPARES 2 was also recognized, in that the case study questionnaire could be adapted for use in artistic, scientific or government environments and even more specifically, could reflect the known vocabulary and practices of the many specialized groups we would be investigating, be they composers or choreographers, biologists or geomatics experts, bureaucrats or information technology personnel.

In the case of Focus 1, this scope of inquiry is of course limited to records generated in the course of Artistic Activities. Focus 1 profited considerably from the fact that issues related to music using digital technologies had already been raised in InterPARES 1, particularly through the participation of John Roeder, the Associate Director of the Music School at the University of British Columbia who will be addressing you later today, and Brent Lee, InterPARES 1's first post-doctoral fellow who now teaches at the University of Windsor. Their extensive knowledge of InterPARES 1, its findings, and the relationship of those findings to the digital concerns of musicians and composers helped the many new Focus 1 researchers to situate their work within InterPARES 2's research parameters.

From the very first meeting of Focus 1 members, Focus 1 began forming groups and developing case study proposals. Focus 1 has had 9 case studies approved, though Case Study #9 on Digital Moving Images could more properly count as four case studies in their own right, making the total 12.

It is difficult to be absolutely precise about which artistic disciplines these case studies cover because, as is the case with so many things in the early 21st century, boundaries are blurring. But there is a discernible pattern to the disciplines cover because as the case studies are organized into the three domains of Artistic, Scientific, and Governmental, the case studies range from performance art, theatre, dance, moving images, installation art, music, and online publication. In several cases, we will study different manifestations or perspectives on the same discipline.

The case study on digital moving images covers computer-based animation in a corporate, for-profit environment; in a non-profit government production house; and in a non-profit, non-government broadcaster - all three operating in a North American setting. The fourth partner in this case study is a smaller, independent European production company focused primarily on computer-based products.
Performance Art is the focus of Arbo Cyber théâtre and Stelarc, though on closer examination both will also provide information on websites, which will link with case studies in Focus 3 (e-government). Danube Exodus, and Unstable and Variable Artistic Techniques deal with installation art with digital components. Music is the focus of Obsessed Again and a significant aspect of Waking Dream. The Electronic Café began experimenting with interactive art in the 1970s, originally using analog video formats.

Focus 1 has not, however, limited itself to case studies. Three General Studies have also been designed and approved. The first of these, MUSTICA, stands as a good example of Focus 1 of a collaborative research project with external partners. MUSTICA presented an opportunity to become part of a research initiative with two major French research institutes - the Institut national de l’Audiovisuel (INA) and the Institut de recherche et coordination Acoustique/Musique (IRCAM). The development of this collaboration was primarily driven by Jill Teasley, a Graduate Research Assistant, and her interest in electro-acoustic music. As with other Focus 1 projects, the project will attempt to identify the various generations of digital components generated during the artistic creation and performance processes, and confirm which ones are necessary for long-term preservation and access. It will also be able to map and analyze significant long-term experience at IRCAM with metadata, its creation and subsequent utility in providing long-term access. Finally, the project hopes to facilitate the development of a typology of digital music files. There are two posters across the room describing this project.

Focus 1’s second General Study involved a research methodology which would complement the case studies. It was developed by Professor Michael Longton, Director of the School of Music at University of Victoria. Rather than the in-depth study of a small number of composers, the project will attempt to identify a wide range of composers using digital technology. The results of this first general survey were reported at our last research workshop in February 2004.

A web-based survey instrument was developed with the assistance of Vincent Schillaci-Ventura, one of the Graduate Research Assistants at UBC. Potential respondents were invited by e-mail to complete the questionnaire. The results of the first general survey were reported at our last research workshop in February 2004.

The Composers’ Survey gathered information about the use of digital technology, composers’ intentions and strategies for maintaining records, and the forms that their records might take. With a 33% response rate, the survey gathered data from a wide range of composers and revealed interesting insights about their work. The survey was developed with the assistance of Vincent Schillaci-Ventura, one of the Graduate Research Assistants at UBC. Potential respondents were invited by e-mail to complete the questionnaire. The results of the first general survey were reported at our last research workshop in February 2004.

One disadvantage of this early enthusiasm in Focus 1 was that most of the case studies were approved before the questionnaire was ready, causing a delay. And the questionnaire, unfortunately, was required for Ethics Clearance in various Canadian or American universities, generally generating a second source of delay.

The concept of what actually constitutes the "work" or the "score" continues to vary widely in this community, reflecting the diverse needs and desires of different composers. This means that the scope of digital components will also vary widely in what can be considered "interactive" or "dynamic" in this context. The concept of what actually constitutes the "work" or the "oeuvre" continues to vary widely in this community, ranging from the score to the performance, with a significant segment in this survey insisting that the "score" does not exist. Clearly, for this group, preservation will mean different things to different people. This mirrors the wide divergence among artists in their choices of what, if anything, needs to be preserved to correctly represent their artistic intent.
These survey findings reflect to a large extent the findings of a number of other Focus 1 case studies, with one exception - there is no mention of hardware dependency problems, though these have been a significant aspect of the study of digital composition and performance in "Obsessed Again", in the performance piece "Waking Dream" where it was affecting a visual component of the work, and in Brent Lee's personal experiences as a composer using digital technology, which were first described at an InterPARES 1 symposium in 2001. One of the first suggestions for a preservation strategy in this field is to attempt to end this hardware dependency problem by moving the functionality to the software. This will not solve the problem, but it will reduce the scope of the problem to the software.

For Focus 1, the first completed case studies were presented at the February 2004 workshop. These were Stelarc's "Obsessed Again" and "Waking Dream", which are both digital composition and performance works. As of this writing, three more case studies have produced full reports for this workshop. Of these, Arbo Cyberthéâtre, Horizon Zero and Altair 4, with interim reports by the Computer-based Animation Studio, WGBH Boston and Danube Exodus. They will not be subjected to in-depth analysis by the group until the February 2005 research workshop, when we will clearly have enough completed case studies to identify, with some degree of confidence, overall similarities and differences, trends and practices, problems and potential solutions applicable to the arts.

Slide 9 - Preliminary Findings (1)

Conference and Other Speaking Engagements

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But even six months ago, based on the first 3 completed studies and a number of interim reports, some preliminary findings were already suggesting themselves. These will be re-visited as the analysis is expanded in February 2005.

We are seeing large differences - in attitude, in procedures and in concerns - between individuals, or small groups of artists and the business/entertainment environment. For the most part, the early adopters of any specific digital technology are not part of a mainstream industry; they are individuals working on the cutting edge and exploring new forms of expression. They do not maintain recordkeeping systems, and they tend not to write down their procedures because they are very small operations.

In the corporate environment, such as the Computer-Based Animation company, there are significant financial interests to protect. They adopt digital technology once it is reasonably well-established and a favourable cost-benefit analysis can be done. The digital technology continues to co-exist with traditional record management practices which were already in place, such as printing to paper, or generating analog audio or video recordings. However, these traditional record forms are incapable of capturing truly interactive or experiential aspects of digital objects, meaning some digital solutions do have to be found. Conversion to more stable analog forms is inadequate.

I have already mentioned the continuing debate between the "work" and the performance. We are uncovering conflicting information about the need to preserve the "means of production" vs. the record of performance. The first approach allows artists to re-use the work, and potentially to continually change the work, with or without the preservation of earlier versions.

The lack of concern about intellectual property rights among individual artists studied to date is obviously a major area of divergence from the corporate environment. The completed case studies suggest that, where there are large corporate interests at stake, copyright is protected using traditional methods which have been tested and accepted by the legal system.

For individual artists, a number of current practices are offering some measure of protection, either by accident or design. A standard technical configuration sees files stored on a personal laptop, with back-up copies created on the write-once CD-R format and stored in various geographic locations (home, school, and work). I have already mentioned the continuing debate between the "work" and the performance. We are uncovering conflicting information about the need to preserve the "means of production" vs. the record of performance. The first approach allows artists to re-use the work, and potentially to continually change the work, with or without the preservation of earlier versions.

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