InterPARES 3 Project
International Research on Permanent Authentic Records in Electronic Systems
TEAM Canada

in saeculis authenticus

Translating leading edge theory into bleeding-edge practice: the InterPARES experience

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Goal of InterPARES 3

To **enable small and medium-sized** public and private **archival organizations and programs** (units within records creating organizations)—which are responsible for the digital records resulting from government, business, research, art and entertainment, social and/or community activities—**to preserve** over the long term **authentic records** that satisfy the requirements of their stakeholders and society's needs for an adequate record of its past.

Action Research

Disciplined, material research practices that involve:

- collaborative dialogue,

- participatory decision making,

- inclusive democratic deliberation, and

- the maximal participation and representation of all relevant parties

Case Studies Hypothesis

The type of organizational setting and culture of the organization has an impact on what can be implemented and how, based on:

- **Giddens' theory of structuration**: mutual interaction between structures, functions, and actors

- **Adaptive Structuration Theory (AST)**: it studies the interplay existing between social structures, human action, and advanced information technologies

Duality of Technology

Orlikowski's concept of "duality of technology" allows us to see technology (including "records and archival technology") as created and changed by human action (i.e., as **an outcome**) and, at the same time, as a structure that both facilitates and constraints human action (i.e., **an instrument**)

Organizational Culture

- The specific collection of values and norms that are shared by people and groups in an organization and that control the way they interact with each other and with stakeholders outside the organization

- Hofstede's views and typologies of national and regional cultures

Action Research

- Research becomes practical, reflective, pragmatic action, directed toward solving problems in the world

- Research subjects become **co-participants** and **active stakeholders** in the process of inquiry

Ethnographic Approach

- A form of inquiry characterized by the position of the researcher vis-à-vis the phenomena being studied

- The researchers place themselves within an **archival environment** to gain the cultural perspective of those responsible for records.

- The **creators** of records (this includes records managers), their **users**, and **archivists** form a community of practice - the archival environment - for which social interaction creates meaning and defines values

Ethnographic Research Process

It includes observation of the environment involving

- **detailed description** (using contextual analysis, diplomatic analysis, and activity modeling),

- **extensive interviewing** (unstructured interviews aimed at answering three sets of questions common to all case studies), and

- **analysis of documentation of the test bed and of the documents** produced or accumulated in the first two activities

Subsequent Steps

- The analysis of this material by all researchers produces **action items** which are implemented and the outcome of which is reported back to the TEAM.

- The process continues in an **iterative** way until the archival environment and all TEAM researchers are satisfied with the solutions

- The entire process is guided by **a case study flowchart**, which ensures that all steps are followed in the correct order, and is concluded by **a final report**.

- Each document produced in the course of the case study is structured as to form and content on the basis of **a template used for all case studies**.

What We Found

- "institutional culture" as obstacle to completion of a case study
- organizational culture "uncommitted to good records management practices"
- similar E-mail case studies yielding drastically different outcomes
  - need of an e-mail general study
- similar recordkeeping case studies requiring drastically different development procedures
  - need for an organizational culture general studies

General Study on Organizational Culture

- to develop a consistent framework to analyze the impact of organizational culture on recordkeeping and preservation practices across various case studies

- It draws from organizational theory, sociology, information systems and information management perspectives

- It uses qualitative analysis of interviews, research proceedings, and documentary sources from case studies

Research Questions

- How does organizational culture **affect the selection and implementation of recordkeeping and/or digital records preservation systems?**

- To what extent does organizational culture **affect the ability of InterPARES 3 in carrying out its research in the test-bed sites?** What conditions would be necessary with respect to organizational culture for InterPARES 3 to carry out its research in the test-bed?

- What are the **fundamental similarities and differences** in organizational culture with respect to recordkeeping and/or preservation practices of different organizations within and across similar industries? Within the same organization, what are the **variations of sub- or professional cultures** that shape recordkeeping and/or preservation practices?

Research Questions (cont.)

- What are the **varying levels of expectations** stakeholders have in terms of their roles and responsibilities in recordkeeping/and or preservation as well as their expectations of other stakeholders?

- What are the **methodologies** for facilitating the selection and implementation of recordkeeping and/or digital records preservation systems?

Hypothesis 1

Corporate and/or occupational subcultures may lead to tensions and conflicts amongst stakeholders and are a significant barrier towards the successful implementation of recordkeeping and/or preservation system.

- Partially supported
- While conflicting subcultures exist and have an impact, other internal and external factors are at play, such as the creator's low awareness of the issues, lack of controls on access to records, belief that there is time to think about preservation, blind trust in technology, reliance on the memory of staff.
- Fiscal climate

Hypothesis 2

An organizational climate that values the sharing of knowledge with multiple stakeholders in an organization is more receptive towards developing a sustainable records and/or preservation infrastructure.

- Partially supported
- Support from management is important but commitment is crucial
- Have an advocate
- Collaborate with all users and get the support of all staff
- Establish an overall integrated governance structure, an incentive and a monitoring program

Hypothesis 3

The varying levels of support amongst the stakeholders of an organization are an impediment to the successful completion of research and product implementation.

- Supported
- Multiple roles of records professionals
- Conflict between one or more of the subcultures of the organization with those roles
- Need to withdraw from one or more roles

Hypothesis 4

There are both converging and diverging views of records as well as recordkeeping and/or preservation issues among various subcultures and in the same subculture.

- Supported

- There may be subcultures which identify more strongly with the prevailing institutional culture, while others may associate with their professional subcultures in the form of professional organizations and networks outside the formal organization structure.

- Within the records professionals subculture there is not a common view

Hypothesis 5

Different groups of stakeholders have differing understandings and expectations of their roles and responsibilities in recordkeeping and/or preservation as well as the roles and responsibilities of other stakeholders in recordkeeping and/or preservation. These differing levels of expectation are potential sources of tension and barriers for the successful implementation of a recordkeeping and/or preservation system. The implementation of a recordkeeping and/or preservation system in itself can bring about a change in the organization which can be a source of tension.

- Supported: contribution conflicts and systems conflicts
- No shared views among creators, archivists, and IT people about the role of IT; no shared goals and objectives for recordkeeping

Summary of Findings

- Developing, learning and teaching **how to use** the structural features of an application or a system **is important**

- **More important is learning the spirit behind those features**

- **Users who are not acquainted with archival principles and methodologies may** – intentionally or unintentionally – **appropriate an application or a system "unfaithfully"** more easily than records professionals

- **With digital tools**, which are **mostly developed by IT experts** outside the organization that will use them and often without consulting archival professionals, **unfaithful appropriations are likely to happen more frequently**

- **Interpretive flexibility** or lack of it may determine acceptance or rejection

Summary of Findings (cont.)

- **Training** for users of applications and systems **"emphasizes details of use rather than general philosophy."**

- **Time is important**: the moment of the launch of a new system is very critical for its success

- **Managers favor** the **explicit knowledge** that is incorporated in organizational artifacts like processes, structures, documents, and technology

- Thus, it has been common to design **systems primarily focused on the codified, explicit organizational knowledge**

- Management reporting systems, decision support systems, and ERMS, are all focused on the identification, collection, and dissemination of this knowledge type

Summary of Findings (cont.)

- We must pay more attention to **knowledge management** literature

- **A core competency for implementers requires _know-how_**, i.e., "the particular ability to put know-what into practice"

- **Fostering this more complex form of organizational capital should be the focus of our case studies**

- The outcome of our efforts will be successful only if

  - we are able to make the archival environment **understand the spirit of what we recommend**

  - we will be able **to incorporate into our recommendations the outlook and way of working of those whom it intends to serve.**