

How to Preserve a Million Digital Records When Everyone has a Million Other Things to Worry About

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Abstract: How do you preserve digital records in a million-dollar organization when everyone has a million other things to worry about? This case study presents a synthesis of archival and organizational theory to inform policy and procedures development for long-term preservation of digital records in an established post-secondary institution with 16,000 full-time and 32,000 part-time students. We discuss the process of documenting current practices and developing policy that embraces best practices and seeks to implement change in today's reality of cutbacks and unique particularities of organizational culture. Offering practical solutions to policy development for digital records preservation, we present a model that integrates archival requirements into a dynamic and complex environment. This is a case study in InterPARES 3 (International Research on Permanent Authentic Records in Electronic Systems). The InterPARES 1 and 2 projects have researched theory and methods ensuring the preservation of the authenticity of digital records and their reliability and accuracy during the entire lifecycle from creation to permanent preservation. InterPARES 3 puts theory into practice, through case studies with archives and archives / records units in organizations. The project is funded by The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada's Community-University Research Alliances (SSHRC-CURA). (This presentation presents in detail the model of policy development summarized in the poster presented at the SAA 2010 Student Poster Session.)

About the authors:

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How do you preserve a million records when everyone has a million other things to do?

Development of Policy and Procedures for the Long-term Preservation of Digital Records

InterPARES 3 Case Study: BCIT

Elizabeth Shaffer & Corinne Rogers

Research Methodology

Abstract

How do you preserve digital records in a million-dollar organization when everyone has a million other things to worry about? This case study uses the InterPARES 2 Framework for Policy Development and the InterPARES 2 Creator Guidelines to find pragmatic solutions to the integration of archival requirements into a dynamic and complex environment. Challenges include integrating with existing policies and procedures, respecting institutional culture and adhering to best practice requirements and standards.

Background

British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) is the province's largest post-secondary institution, offering certificate, diploma and applied bachelor's degrees. Over 2,000 faculty and staff have created more than 100 million digital records in need of management, disposition and long-term preservation. www.bcit.ca

The InterPARES 3 Project is the third phase of the International Research on Permanent Authentic Records in Electronic Systems, which aims to develop the knowledge essential to the long-term preservation of authentic digital records. www.interpares.org

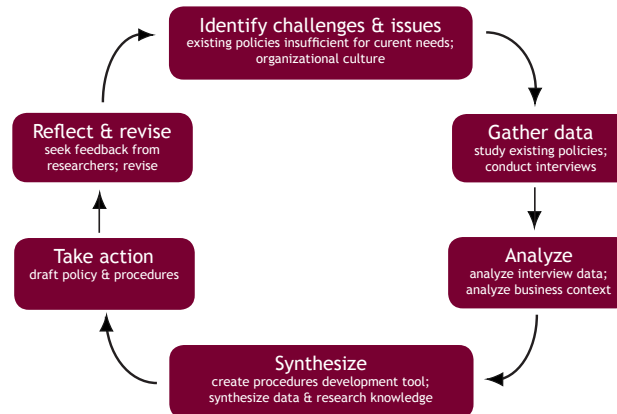
Objectives

To create a policy and procedures for the long-term preservation of authentic, reliable digital records, that will integrate with existing BCIT records management policies and be implementable within BCIT's organizational culture.

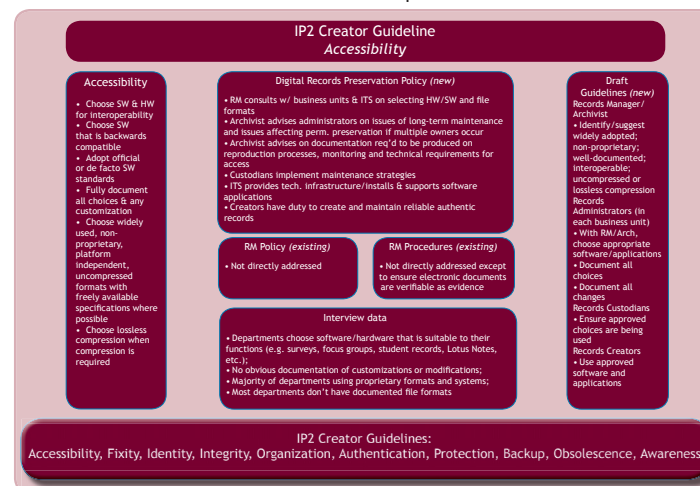
Challenges

- Two existing records management policies (RM, Archives & Special Collections);
- Established procedures to assure long-term preservation of analog records;
- 100 million digital records and growing;
- No policy or procedures for long-term preservation of digital records;
- Digital records subject to classification & retention, not fully implemented;
- Records at risk of loss due to technological obsolescence;
- FOI and privacy requirements.

We employed case study methodology, using semi-structured interviews and participatory and iterative analysis between researchers and subjects.



Procedures Development Tool



Research Outcomes

Creation of procedures development tool to:

- synthesize existing policy and procedures with research data;
- respect existing organizational culture;
- adhere to the IP2 Framework for Policy Development;
- incorporate IP2 Creator Guidelines.

Policy & Procedures that integrate with existing instruments, are supported by management, and are easily adopted by all business units, and support the long-term preservation of authentic, reliable digital records.

Next Steps

- A generic template for the development of procedures based on the matrix developed for this case study will be created for use in other sites;
- Implementation of policy and procedures will be tested in key business units throughout BCIT;
- Review existing records management and archives policies and procedures and update as necessary to align with new policy and procedures.

References & Acknowledgments



InterPARES Project: International Research on Permanent Authentic Records in Electronic System <http://www.interpares.org>. Dr. Luciana Duranti, Director. Corinne Rogers and Elizabeth Shaffer, graduate research assistants (current). Helen Callow and Brian Sloan, graduate research assistants (graduated).

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