



Event: InterPARES 3 Project: Third International Symposium
Date & Time: May 29, 2010 8:45 a.m.
Location: Forest Sciences Centre, Room 1005, 2424 Main Mall
Speaker: Dr. John Hepburn, VP Research & International

Good morning. It's my great pleasure to welcome you all to UBC and to the third international symposium of the InterPARES 3 project.

As the executive in charge of UBC's research and international portfolios, I spend a good deal of time forging relationships with government, industry and other universities around the world, to promote outstanding research that benefits our global society. In my work, there are three recurring themes which I feel are strongly reflected in the work of InterPARES. They are: interdisciplinarity, international collaboration, and innovation.

Clearly, InterPARES is a thriving international collaboration. I understand there are representatives here today from fourteen countries. The fact that this is only a *partial* number of the participants in the InterPARES 3 project is evidence of the robust partnerships that support this project, and of the global significance of your work.

As you all well know, archives of any kind evolve according to the needs and norms of a culture or society. Because of this, an archival system or technology that suits one area of the world may not be appropriate for another. They are influenced by language, cultural history, economic constraints, access to technology, political climate, and a host of other socioeconomic factors that go far beyond the simple need to record information. Even between two nations of differing cultures, addressing fundamental differences in how we record information can be a significant challenge. On a global scale, the challenge of normalizing and maintaining digital archives is enormously complex, and it requires more than just political or academic goodwill. It requires focused and detailed *international collaboration*.

The InterPARES 3 project has a level and diversity of international participation that many researchers can only dream of, and I believe this has been a critical factor in its success over the past 11 years. Furthermore, you are an impressively *interdisciplinary* group. Attending today's symposium are records and information managers, archivists, IT professionals, librarians, administrators, lawyers, auditors, law enforcement professionals, historians, students of a variety of disciplines, and decision makers who are responsible for digital records policies and procedures. Although the collective output of InterPARES 3 is rooted in archival science and diplomatics, the project involves participants from a wide range of academic and professional fields, from geography and musicology to computer engineering and law. Even its research assistants come from a variety of graduate programs, including linguistics, film history, journalism, public administration, photography and computer science.

These two elements of interdisciplinarity and international collaboration are increasingly important themes in research in the 21st century, and as InterPARES celebrates its eleventh anniversary this year, it is clear that your work is at the forefront of this international trend. One might even say that your work makes this trend possible: in today's digital era, international research collaborations



would be extremely difficult without access to trustworthy digital repositories! As Luciana Duranti says, “Records are what research is conducted on, and if you do not know whether your sources can be trusted, your research is worth nothing.” Obviously, your collective efforts to preserve these archives in the face of rapidly emerging technologies makes an essential contribution not only to how we conduct research, but to how we access and maintain our personal and societal records.

The third theme that I frequently encounter, and which is one of the most popular themes in applied research today, is “innovation.” In Canada, a great deal of Federal research funding is directed to projects that create new technologies or build on existing ones. These projects are frequently important: they seek to meet the needs of society, to save lives, or to improve the state of the world. But as you all know, blind innovation can be problematic. What do I mean by blind innovation? I mean new technologies that serve their own purpose, but which do not thoughtfully integrate with existing technologies and with the purposes for which they are used.

A current example of this comes from the computer company, Apple, which makes popular desktop computers, laptops, mobile phones, and MP3 players. Their newest offering is the iPad, which seems to be half mobile phone and half laptop. It was unveiled earlier this year to much fanfare, but the reviews are mixed. Why? In short, the iPad doesn’t offer many advantages over Apple’s other devices. Apple appears to be forcing users to buy a new device rather than working to make their current devices more scalable, more efficient, and more useful for a variety of needs. When something as basic as a large file transfer can be quickly and seamlessly accomplished from my iMac to my iPhone to my iPod, they will have realized innovation. Until then, their devices will be related by design but not functionality, and this is their critical flaw. Blind innovation, then, must give way to *thoughtful* innovation, which takes a broader view of the innovation landscape and considers the needs of the end-user.

I believe this is where the work of InterPARES is profoundly important. Your focus is to *support* innovation, to create a technological and procedural framework that allows archivists, records managers and policy makers to respond to innovation, while retaining the integrity and authenticity of the records they steward. This is no small challenge, and I commend you for your dedication.

Today’s symposium will discuss research conducted in the context of the InterPARES project by Brazil, Korea, Italy, Mexico, Spain and Turkey, but will highlight primarily the work of TEAM Canada, and it is only appropriate to give some examples of how InterPARES 3 is working to support small-to-mid-sized organizations at the local, regional and national levels.

InterPARES 3 has had a significant impact here in British Columbia and in greater Vancouver at all levels, in both the public and private sectors. It advises policy at UBC. And on a larger scale, it provides input to Canadian federal policy and to international standards. The project has also received a number of prestigious awards, including the Jacob Biely Research Prize, which is UBC’s premier research award, the UBC Killam Research Prize, and the British Columbia Innovation Council Award, which recognizes groundbreaking research throughout the province. I particularly value the latter prize, because it is usually given to the industry for its research and development, and for InterPARES to obtain it has been an extraordinary recognition.



Here at UBC, InterPARES has provided valuable input to our own University policies on privacy and on records management, which have impacted on how we safeguard the academic and personal records of hundreds of thousands of students, faculty, staff, donors and alumni over the past 100 years. On the national stage, last year InterPARES provided recommendations to two federal government agencies – Industry Canada and Heritage Canada – to improve the federal Copyright Act as it applies to university institutional repositories. InterPARES has even ventured into space... sort of. In 2006, NASA requested a review and commentary on its international standard for archiving space data, called OAIS. InterPARES responded, and NASA incorporated every suggestion into its revised standard.

Whether we look down the street at UBC's own Belkin Art Gallery archives, or up at the space satellite gathering data from kilometres over our heads, InterPARES is playing a role in ensuring that the accumulated knowledge of our society can be digitally preserved for future generations. For this dedication we owe you all a sincere debt of gratitude, and I would like to especially acknowledge our host today, Dr. Luciana Duranti, for her tireless leadership of this tremendously important project.

Finally, I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge the steadfast support of the Government of Canada, which has provided major funding to InterPARES through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada's Community-University Research Alliances. Matching funds have been provided by UBC through the Vice President Research Development Fund, the Dean of Arts, and the School of Library, Archival and Information Studies.

On behalf of UBC, thank you again for committing your valuable time to attend this important event. I wish you a successful symposium and a pleasant stay in Vancouver. Thank you.