InterPARES 2 Project

International Research on Permanent Authentic Records in Electronic Systems

International Research on Permanent Authentic Records in Electronic Systems (InterPARES) 2: Experiential, Interactive and Dynamic Records

APPENDIX 6

Call for Case Study Proposals

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Call for Case Study Proposals
InterPARES 2
April 2002

Overview

Beginning in 2002, researchers in the InterPARES 2 Project will undertake a set of case studies in an effort to address in part the research questions assigned to each domain task force and cross-domain research team. Each case study will focus on the records (or some portion of the records) and records management process of a specific creator. Within the context of a case study, it may also be possible to test the appraisal and preservation models developed in InterPARES 1 and/or develop a prototypical system for the preservation of the records in question.

In March 2002, many InterPARES researchers participated in an exercise involving the sketching of records creation processes related to an activity with which they were familiar. This exercise has proven fruitful in identifying potential case study subjects and specific issues of concern. A number of case studies are currently in development based on these activity models, with more to follow in the coming months.

At the International Team Meeting in June 2002, the chairs of the various working groups and cross-domain teams will review the case study proposals that have been developed, offer suggestions to make the conduct of each case study more efficient and effective, and allocate resources as needed. Thus, the goal of the review as envisaged will not be to approve or reject case study proposals, but rather to coordinate the efforts of researchers, allow for the streamlining and sharing of research tools and offer advice and support to researchers conducting case studies.

This call is designed to assist researchers in the development of case study proposals. It is expected that researchers interested in proposing and/or leading a case study will be in contact with the chairs of their working groups as well as the InterPARES administration as their case study is developing. The International Team will review case study proposals as they are ready; those wishing their proposal to be reviewed at the meeting in June should submit their proposals by June 10 2002 to allow for distribution prior to the meeting.

InterPARES 1 Case Studies

The Authenticity Task Force (ATF) of the InterPARES 1 Project undertook more than thirty case studies (in four rounds) of a variety of electronic systems. The initial goal of the ATF was to identify the formal elements shared by all electronic records, the elements that allowed for their differentiation by type, and the elements that allowed a record's authenticity to be verified over time. (It was further hypothesized that answers to these questions would lead to conclusions regarding the possibility of migrating electronic records from one system to another without compromising their authenticity.) Such analysis of a record's formal elements is *diplomatic* analysis; diplomatics as a science encompasses a set of principles and terminology that have been used to analyze records since the 17th century. Given that electronic records in most cases serve the same administrative functions that paper records have in the past, InterPARES 1 researchers were looking for possible parallels between paper and electronic records, specifically in their formal elements. To this end, the ATF developed a template for analysis of electronic records, enumerating and describing a large set of formal elements that might be potentially

found in an electronic record. Once the template had been finalized, a number of case studies of electronic systems were undertaken to empirically ascertain whether or not these elements manifested themselves in records contained within actual electronic systems.

To gather information about actual electronic systems and records, the ATF developed two tools: a Case Study Interview Protocol (CSIP) and a Template Element Data Gathering Instrument (TEDGI). The CSIP was a set of questions posed by a researcher to individuals familiar with the workings of the electronic system being studied. Based on the interviewees' responses to the CSIP questions, the researcher noted (in the TEDGI) the presence or absence of formal record elements. This two-step process was deemed necessary in light of the interviewees' unfamiliarity with diplomatic terminology. The ATF reported that the case study analysis did indeed confirm the presence or absence of certain formal elements and further indicated potential weaknesses in many of the records management system studied. It was also observed that many of the formal elements upon which a record's authenticity was presumed, which in the past had been visibly manifested on the face of the record, were supplanted in many electronic systems by procedural and technological controls.

In general the ATF concluded that the case study approach was very useful in addressing their assigned research questions, but had certain limitations and could be improved upon. The ATF recommended that in future case study research that 1) the record-keeping system be studied as a whole (including its paper elements), 2) the study begin with a careful analysis of the business procedures of the record creators in question in order to identify the actions in which records participate, 3) formulate a questionnaire (or revise and shorten the CSIP) with terminology familiar to the interviewees and 4) delve further into the technological context of the records under study. (Footnote 1: see the Authenticity Task Force Report on the InterPARES Web site http://www.interpares.org/reports.htm.)

It is hoped that in InterPARES 2 we can implement these methodological findings of InterPARES 1. Please keep these findings in mind when developing case studies and case study tools.

The Case Study Proposal

Case study proposals will include a description of the case study subject, the rationale for choosing that case study subject, the research methodologies to be employed, a description of the research team and their roles, and a timeline.

- Description of the case study subject: briefly describe the case study subject in terms of their business mandate and business processes. If the records of interest to us are only a portion of the creator's records, contextualize the records within the creator's records as a whole.
- Rationale: why are this creator and these records of interest to InterPARES 2? Which research questions will be addressed in this case study?
- Research methodologies: how will the case study be conducted? What sorts of data will be gathered? How will the data be represented? What tools will be used in gathering the data? Below are listed a handful of possible methodologies and related issues:
  a. Interviewing records creators: much information can be gathered by interviewing the creators of records. The questionnaire used in InterPARES 1 and the research questions for InterPARES 2 form a starting point for developing a set of questions; further questions may be appropriate for specific creators.

b. Modeling records creation processes: collaboratively creating a model of the creator's business process may illuminate issues unanticipated in a questionnaire. Where applicable, the process models sketched in March, 2002 may serve as an outline. Also, a formal work-flow model may already exist for a given organization.

c. Application of IP1 Appraisal model: as much of the information that needs to be gathered is similar to the information typically gathered by archivists conducting appraisals, it may be a useful exercise to use the InterPARES 1 appraisal model to guide the study.

d. Replicating systems for hands-on study of records: though difficult with large systems, creators working on desk-top computers may be willing to make copies of all or a portion of their records which can be installed on an InterPARES computer for subsequent study. It may also be possible to replicate a larger system (such as a government Web site) and create a set of records for testing. This methodology would greatly facilitate diplomatic analysis of the records in questions, as they could be examined in their native environment.

e. Testing preservation strategies: it may be advantageous to transfer a sampling of records to an InterPARES computer to test various preservation strategies, or to walk through the InterPARES 1 preservation model. It may also be beneficial to prototype a preservation system for the records in question.

- Case study team: each case study will be conducted by a team of researchers. This team will comprise a lead investigator, other interested researchers, and research assistants as necessary.

- Timeline: a timeline will outline the sequence and timing of activities in the conduct of the case study, as well as the researchers responsible for those activities (individually or collectively). Keep in mind that the team will have a chance to meet at the workshops in September 2002 and February 2003; further meetings may be conducted electronically. If further face-to-face meetings are necessary and require travel, include a estimate of the costs involved. In developing the timeline, consider the time and effort necessary to make arrangements with the case study subject, to develop a questionnaire, model or prototype, to seek human subjects approval, to represent and analyze the data, to follow up with the case study subject (pursuant questions, clarification of responses, validation of a process model, etc.) and to prepare a case study report.

Reporting Procedure

Given the flexibility in the conduct of case studies, it is important that the reporting procedure be harmonized among case studies so as to facilitate comparison. The case study report will begin with information included in the proposal (description of subject, rationale, methodologies used), noting any modifications made in actually conducting the case study. The report will also include the case study data or summary of same, the observations and comments of the case study team and an evaluation of the effectiveness of the methodologies employed. Ultimately, case study reports will be reviewed by the appropriate task forces and will serve as the basis of much of their deliberations.