



# InterPARES 3 Project

International Research on Permanent Authentic Records in Electronic Systems

TEAM Canada

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Case Study Report

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**Author:** The InterPARES 3 Project, TEAM Canada

**Writer(s):** Cristina Drego  
School of Library, Archival and Information Studies,  
The University of British Columbia

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## Case Study Report

### A. Overview

The Museum of Anthropology (MoA), located on the campus of The University of British Columbia (UBC), is a teaching museum committed to balancing research, teaching, public programs, visitor services and the development, documentation and preservation of its collections.

In September 2007, the Museum's Archivist, Krisztina Laszlo, accepted an invitation from the InterPARES 3 Project to join the Project as a test-bed partner and proposed a policy case study at the first TEAM Canada Plenary Workshop in November 2007. The study intended to examine the records management practices of the Museum's administrative and managerial framework, and to develop policies and procedures for the creation, management and preservation of digital records.

This final case study report is incomplete due to the MoA's decision, in January 2009, to withdraw as a test-bed partner from the InterPARES 3 Project.

### B. Statement of Methodology

The Graduate Research Assistants worked closely with the MoA Archivist to complete the study. As required by the case study procedures of the InterPARES 3 Project, information regarding the institution, its records and its operations was compiled through various interviews with both the Museum's Archivist and its Information Manager, producing the contextual analysis and providing responses to the policy case study research questions.

As a result of the submission of these two documents to the researchers at the May 2008 TEAM Canada Plenary Workshop, the Researchers recommended the following action items be completed for the November 2008 TEAM Canada Plenary Workshop: the development of Creator and Preserver Guidelines, and the submission of a Museum Assessment Report regarding the creation, use and management of digital records by the Museum. The Creator and Preserver guidelines were developed using the Creator and Preserver Guidelines developed by InterPARES 2,<sup>1</sup> in conjunction with the MoA's Contextual Analysis Report.<sup>2</sup> Further interviews

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<sup>1</sup> See [http://www.interpares.org/ip2/display\\_file.cfm?doc=ip2\(pub\)creator\\_guidelines\\_booklet.pdf](http://www.interpares.org/ip2/display_file.cfm?doc=ip2(pub)creator_guidelines_booklet.pdf) and [http://www.interpares.org/ip2/display\\_file.cfm?doc=ip2\(pub\)preserver\\_guidelines\\_booklet.pdf](http://www.interpares.org/ip2/display_file.cfm?doc=ip2(pub)preserver_guidelines_booklet.pdf).

with the Museum's Information Manager were necessary to complete the Museum Assessment Report.

### **C. Description of Context**

#### **Provenancial**

The MoA is a teaching museum located on the campus of UBC, a not-for-profit university and public institution. The MoA is committed to balancing research, teaching, public programming, visitor services and the development, documentation and preservation of its collections. It states its mandate to be to “investigate, preserve, and present objects and expressions of human creativity in order to promote understanding of and respect for world cultures.”<sup>3</sup> Additionally, the MoA seeks to “stimulate critical thinking and understanding about cross-cultural issues; and to pose questions about and develop innovative responses to museological, anthropological, aesthetic, educational, and political challenges.”<sup>4</sup>

The principles of cultural anthropology and museology form the philosophical foundations of the MoA, setting out clear expectations and guidelines for all staff. The MoA is committed to sharing its research with the public and works cooperatively with local communities, especially British Columbia's First Nations peoples, in a spirit of mutual respect.

The MoA is governed by the Director's Office and operates through its four departments: Administration, Curatorial, Collections Care and Management and Public and Community Services, each with its own head. A Management committee comprising the Director, the Associate Director and the heads of each department functions as MoA's logistical and strategic decision-making body, striving to reach decisions through consensus.

The MoA's six standing committees are under the jurisdiction of the various departments: the Exhibition and Review Committee under the Director's Office; the Information and Technology, Health and Safety, and Shop Advisory Committees under the Department of Administration; the Repatriation Committee under the Department of Collections Care and Management; and the Teaching and Curriculum and Acquisitions Committees under the Curatorial Department.

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<sup>2</sup> Jennifer Yuhasz and Timothy McMillan, “Case Study 07 Contextual Analysis: Museum of Anthropology,” InterPARES 3 Project, TEAM Canada (September 2008, v3.2).

<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.moa.ubc.ca/history/mission.php>.

<sup>4</sup> MOA, “Our Mission.” Available at <http://www.moa.ubc.ca/history/mission.php> (accessed 13 January 2008).

The Department of Administration is responsible for the management of the Museum, its finances, the Gift Shop, information technology infrastructure, archives, and its library and information systems. The Public and Community Services Department has jurisdiction over all of the MoA's buildings and grounds and is responsible for developing and managing public programs, exhibits and facility rentals, as well as coordinating with the Administration Department and UBC Plant Operations to ensure staff and patron safety.

The Curatorial Department and the Collections Care and Management Department manage the MoA's museological functions. The Curatorial Department ensures that the MoA's curatorial vision and practices are in line with the Museum's mission statement, and is mandated to work in collaboration with donor communities throughout the province and to nurture such relationships through an active policy of research dissemination. The Collections Care and Management Department is responsible for the care, management and preservation of MoA's artefact collections in alignment with written policy.

The MoA's Archives is under the authority of the Department of Administration. The Archivist, Krisztina Laszlo, reports to this department's head, Anna Pappalardo, Assistant Director.

The Information Technology Manager is part of the Administrative department and thus reports to the Assistant Director of Administration. IT is responsible for the maintenance of the MoA's IT infrastructure. Since beginning this Report, the IT Manager's position has become vacant.

### **Juridical-administrative**

The MoA is subject to specific laws such as copyright legislation, freedom of information legislation and privacy legislation. Museum guidelines state that all materials located in or owned by the MoA be available to permanent staff, subject to the British Columbia Freedom of Information/Protection of Privacy (FOIPOP) Act and subject to those restrictions that apply. The Museum's status as a publicly funded institution requires that the MoA's Archives holding be accessible to the public. These records are those that have been created or received in the course of the MoA's activities. The MoA Archives also holds private records.

The Archives may restrict access to some records in its custody if stipulated by FOIPOP. The records that may fall under the protection of the Act include those that contain personal information. These records also often involve intellectual property rights.

### **Procedural and Documentary**

Each department is responsible for the creation and management of its own records. Although a draft Records Management policy was developed in 1998, it was only implemented by a small percentage of staff to manage paper records, despite recommendations made by the current Archivist to implement it Museum-wide for both paper and digital records. The Archivist continues to discuss some records management concerns with staff but only in an informal capacity, as the Archivist is mandated only to assist with records management problems and decisions. Guidelines for managing e-mail have also been developed and distributed, but are sparsely implemented. Records created by the various MoA committees are assigned an office and/or officer of primary responsibility.

Administrative records are largely well maintained due to the legal requirements to which these records are subject. These records include: e-mails, correspondence, memoranda, grant applications and reports. In contrast, project records are managed in an ad hoc fashion.

As yet there is no formal arrangement for the capture of digital records other than once they have become inactive. Active records remain in their creators' offices, and the MoA maintains a server on which all digital files are to be stored and backed-up regularly. Some digital records are maintained on the creators' computer systems, although this is contrary to MoA policy. In these instances, creators have migrated those digital records they deem to be important to newer digital formats to ensure their personal access, as opposed to migrating for permanent preservation. Many records creators print and physically store important born-digital records, retaining these in their office. Some records are maintained within online databases, such as the collections database, although these databases are considered to be active in perpetuity and therefore are not transferred to the Archives.

Records are transferred to the MoA's Archives in an ad hoc manner. Records in the custody of the Archives include written, aural and photographic materials relating to all aspects of the MoA's mandate. At present, the vast bulk of the archival holdings is maintained in the original format; no active digitization process is underway.

The Museum also maintains a database that contains three-dimensional images of collection objects managed by the IT manager in conjunction with the collections department. Unfortunately, this database and its large quantities of born-digital records are not accessible through the MoA's Archives computers, nor are the records in the database transferred to the

Archives, due to their perpetually active nature. As a result, the Archivist remains unable to comment on any preservation strategy.

### **Technological**

The MoA operates on a local server-based system protected by a firewall, which presently consists of two servers. The system operates a mixed platform, allowing both Mac and PC computers to be used according to the wishes or needs of each staff member requiring a computer. The mixed platform is a legacy of the technological infrastructure, and system developers built the new system around this model. The MoA's mixed platform system is the cause of numerous system compatibility/interoperability problems, and certain technological requirements are needed to deal with these issues. The MoA uses FileMaker Pro due to its cross platform capabilities. However, the current collections management software, Mimsy XG (MXG) collections management system, has proved to be problematic with Mac computers.

Many types of media are created by the MoA, including: textual, audio, video, digital images, photographs, digital records and design files, although there are still no guidelines in effect concerning the creation of these media types.

Throughout the course of its activities, the MoA creates records in multiple formats, although there is no standardization. Examples include .pdf, .doc, .jpg, .raw and .tiff. Some projects require the creation of the same document or record in various formats.

### **D. Narrative Answers to the Project's Applicable Research Questions**

The Archives has one staff member working 60% of the time; this is the MoA Archivist, Krisztina Laszlo. Laszlo is the primary source of records/archives expertise, possessing a Master of Archival Studies (MAS) degree from the School of Library, Archival and Information Studies (SLAIS) at UBC. There are two work-study positions available for the Archives during each academic year to be filled by students in the MAS program at SLAIS. The Archives/library/information sector receives approximately \$20,000 per annum of the MoA's annual three million dollars budget.

The Archivist was unable to provide an estimate of the number of records received by the Archives each year due to an extensive backlog of unprocessed material. By conservative estimates, this backlog includes approximately thirty metres of textual records generated



internally by the Museum and approximately two metres of private fonds. A rough estimate provided by the Archivist indicated that approximately seven to fifteen fonds are processed per annum. The Archives does not hold any digital materials at present. The Archives expects to grow in conjunction with the expanded facilities of the Museum's Renewal Project and intends to actively pursue the collection of private records.

The Archives are available for use by internal and external users. An estimated 33% are academic users; 33% indigenous community representatives; and 33% MoA employees.

Although The MoA Archivist has made attempts to implement a records management program, there has been little success in this area. The Archivist has issued a number of circulars and memoranda to raise staff awareness of digital records preservation issues providing basic information and guidelines intended to foster records management best practices to new Museum staff; specifically, the preservation and retention of e-mail. Ultimately, the relationship between the Archives and the records creators is minimal; new staff members are introduced to records creation and records management best practices. These records creators and the creating departments only engage with the Archives when they are forced to dispose of records due to space constraints or employment termination; the Archives does not issue retention and disposition schedules.

The Archivist is nominally responsible for auditing the implementation of records/archives policy. However, no formal auditing procedures for records management are in place at the MoA. Although the Archivist is aware of the need for review and refinement of existing practices, due to the constraints imposed by other archives functions and the Museum's organizational culture, she has not been able to modify the existing practices. Unfortunately, records creation and management is constrained by the Museum's IT situation. The IT department is largely isolated from the records creation and management functions of the various offices. Currently, the position of IT Manager is vacant.

At present, there is a basic archives policy that addresses the preservation of inactive MoA records. This policy does not deal with the creation and maintenance of active records, including the Museum's digital records. Outdated draft Records Management Guidelines for the MoA exist, but their current relevance is diminished due to the rapidly changing technological context. Therefore, existing policies are in need of modification and augmentation.

The Archives has a records/archives policy for traditional records. This general policy was created prior to the employment of the current Archivist. At the time it was written, the Archives was under the administrative direction of the Department of Collections Care and Management; as a result, there are provisions that are in need of revision and further specificity is desired. Nevertheless, it manages to adequately fulfill the Archives traditional records needs at present.

The MoA adheres to the ethical guidelines set out in 1999 by the Canadian Museums Association<sup>5</sup> and in 2006 by the International Council of Museums.<sup>6</sup> These guidelines affect records creation and management at the MoA by ensuring that documentation pertaining to the legal acquisition of artifacts is maintained as evidence of transactions. Therefore, decisions on acquisitions, loans and transfers must be recorded and maintained as records that attest to the Museum's activities and allow for its accountability. These policies prohibit the use of inaccurate records to secure tax benefits for Museum donors. The guidelines do not, however, specify the precise forms that Museum documentation should take.

In accordance with the MoA's professed desire to work in partnership with the First Nations communities of British Columbia, the ethical guidelines state that information about culturally sensitive artifacts is not to be made publicly available without the consent of the communities involved. Additionally, as the documentation of the Museum's collections can be used to demonstrate its commitment to public service, the MoA's ethical guidelines specify that documentation be kept current, standardized and systematized to facilitate public access.

## **E. Bibliography of Relevant Material**

McMillan, Timothy, and Jennifer Yuhasz (July 2008), "Case Study 07 Contextual Analysis: Museum of Anthropology," InterPARES 3 Project, TEAM Canada.

McMillan, Timothy, and Jennifer Yuhasz (July 2008), "Case Study 07 - Museum of Anthropology (MOA): Policy Research Questions," InterPARES 3 Project, TEAM Canada.

McMillan, Timothy, and Cristina Newman (September 2008), "Case Study 07 – Museum of Anthropology Archives - Policies and Procedures for Creation, Management and Preservation of Digital Records: Workshop 02 Action Item 14 – Museum Assessment Report," InterPARES 3 Project, TEAM Canada.

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<sup>5</sup> See CMA (1999), "Ethics Guidelines." Available at <http://www.museums.ca/media/Pdf/ethicsguidelines.pdf> (Accessed 14 January 2008).

<sup>6</sup> See ICOM (2006), "Code of Ethics for Museums." Available at [http://www.chin.gc.ca/Applications\\_URL/icom/ethics.html#intro](http://www.chin.gc.ca/Applications_URL/icom/ethics.html#intro) (Accessed 14 January 2008).

McMillan, Timothy, and Cristina Newman (September 2008), “Case Study 07 – Museum of Anthropology Archives: Workshop 02 Action Item 02 – Creator and Preserver Guidelines,” InterPARES 3 Project, TEAM Canada.

## **F. Findings, Recommendations and Products**

The project was not completed as a result of the decision of the MoA to withdraw as a test-bed partner. Due to the challenging institutional culture, inadequate support from the IT department, and the Museum’s involvement in various large projects already underway, the Museum felt that it was unable to meet its commitments to the InterPARES 3 Project.

Despite the Museum’s withdrawal, it is important to recognize the valuable knowledge gained in this case study. Perhaps the most significant challenge the study faced was the institutional culture of the MoA. The MoA’s participation in the case study was agreed to by the MoA’s Director; however, once commenced, the study received little support from upper management. Communication between departments is limited, IT support is inadequate and the Archivist does not have the authority to implement policy. Staff members are permitted to make their own personal decisions regarding their computer operating systems and file structure, many of whom are long-time employees with little or no desire to change their management habits.

This institutional culture, coupled with the MoA’s involvement in various large-scale projects, including building renovations, an archival digitization project, a digital asset management system and a new oral history language lab, prevented the case study from becoming a priority within the MoA’s institutional system.

Many cultural institutions that do not operate for profit may be in a similar situation as the MoA. Loosely structured organizations with little or no IT, records management or archival policies may find it difficult to implement policy regarding the preservation and retention of their digital records, as this would involve not only changing processes and methods, but changing the opinions, practices and managerial style of many long-term employees already comfortable with their method of operations.

To successfully implement digital records policy and procedures, it is imperative that all managers concerned are briefed and buy into the project. Due to the lack of authority held by the Archivist at the MoA, it is necessary for the managers with policy implementation authority to be on board. Staff members should be informed of the movement of the institution towards new procedures so that they may grow more receptive to the changes.

Finally, it would be helpful to have a roll out plan for the implementation of the policy, beginning with its introduction in one department and moving through all departments until each is on board. The scope of the present case study as presented by the MoA may have been too ambitious in that the planned implementation was too wide to be feasible.

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