**TEST-BED PRESENTATION**
**BY THE AMS ARCHIVES**
**TO THE INTERPARES PROJECT 3 MEETING**
**November 27, 2006**

**Summary**
1) The AMS Archives is the archives and records centre for the Alma Mater Society (AMS) at the University of British Columbia (UBC).
2) The AMS is the UBC student society.
3) It oversees services, businesses, and clubs.
4) AMS records include correspondence, a website, Student Council minutes and documents, photographs, etc.
5) The main problem is with preserving the large and frequently changing website.
6) E-mail correspondence, which has largely replaced hardcopy letters and memos, is saved by printing it out.
7) Our records creators are young and thus increasingly likely to shun hardcopy in favour of electronic record creation, so the general concern is to make sure we have ways to preserve all the new forms of electronic records.
8) Our records creators turn over quickly and our resources are limited, so it is important to get simple, cost-effective preservation procedures in place that can be taught easily.

**Details**

*The AMS Archives and its Holdings: Introduction*

The AMS Archives is a combined archives and records centre for the Alma Mater Society (AMS) of the University of British Columbia (UBC). It houses semi-active and inactive records of the AMS, mostly to be used by the executive and managers of the AMS, but the records are also available for consultation by the public.

Older AMS records are transferred to the UBC Archives, where they are housed under an agreement between the AMS Archives and the UBC Archives, and made available to the public.

*The AMS*

Founded in 1915, the AMS is the student society at UBC in Vancouver and consists of close to 44,000 members (UBC's Vancouver students and students at UBC's affiliated colleges). The AMS executive is made up of students elected by the general membership. Senior AMS managers are full-time non-students, but about 500 students work part-time at the AMS, doing everything from serving beer at the AMS pub (the Pit) to assisting the elected executive members on various commissions and running various AMS services.

The AMS provides a number of services in such areas as tutoring, job hunting, ombuds and advocacy, and providing a safe escort across the UBC campus at night.

The AMS also runs a number of businesses: the Pit pub and several food outlets, a school supplies store, a postal outlet, a photocopying centre, the UBC Whistler Lodge, catering services, and an art gallery.

The AMS also oversees over 300 student clubs (the Dance Club, the Film Society, the Varsity Outdoors Club, etc.).

The governing body of the AMS, its board of directors, is the Student Council, made up of over 40 students elected from the various UBC faculties and schools.

*AMS Records*

The AMS staff and students produce large numbers of records, many still in hardcopy form but an increasing number electronic. There is extensive e-mail and some hardcopy correspondence, a website containing approximately 700 web pages, the minutes of Council, along with supporting documents, as well as various reports, posters, club constitutions and budgets, photographs (we have a collection containing several thousand photos), and publications (newspapers put out by the student societies in some of the faculties, the AMS *Insider* guide, and the AMS Code and Bylaws). The AMS Archives also maintains a clipping service of news articles relevant to UBC, the AMS, and post-secondary education generally.

*Current Approach to Electronic Records*

**1. E-mail.** In the late 1990s it became clear that AMS executives and managers were moving at high speed away from hardcopy memos and letters into e-mail. At that time, in collaboration with the AMS IT manager, I instituted a system that automatically captured copies of the e-mails sent by AMS executives and senior managers. These were directed to a special Archives e-mail account, and since we did not have the server space or other electronic resources to save them electronically, we began printing them out, so what we have are paper copies of our electronic correspondence.

**2. The website.** We have similarly sought to print out pages from our website for long-term preservation, but this has proved more problematic because of the nature of the website: its links, its frequent but unpredictable changes initiated by up to 40 different users, the difficulty of reproducing web pages in print form, etc. What we seem to need is some way to save and search the website electronically and to keep track of when it changes.

**3. News clippings.** Formerly, we subscribed to a hardcopy clippings service, but several years ago the service went electronic. However, as with e-mails, for long-term preservation we print out the electronically presented news articles. This is tedious, but effective.

**4. Photographs.** In recent years, photographs have been arriving in electronic form, in some cases burned onto CDs. We have no means currently of transforming these into hardcopies.

**5. Posters.** In our last executive elections, we were surprised to discover that the Elections Committee, our usual source of candidates' election posters, had not saved any hardcopies; indeed, they had not seen any hardcopies, but had merely reviewed electronic versions submitted by the candidates. Of course, hardcopy posters went up during the campaign, but came down and disappeared afterwards, and all the Archives was able to receive was the electronic versions, which we could not print out full size or in colour, and in at least one case could not print out at all. We have asked next year's Elections Committee to

make sure to obtain hardcopies for us, but the trend is obviously towards electronic records in this area.

       **5. Other reports.** Nowadays many of the reports generated or received by our executives and managers exist only in electronic form. We have to remind the executives and managers to send these to the Archives. If they do so electronically, we tend to print them out, which again is tedious. We do burn some reports onto CD's, but we have not really developed a system for saving these.

       **6. Council minutes.** The official version of these is in hardcopy, but it is produced from the electronic version, which we also save for searching purposes.

*What we are looking for*

       We first approached the InterPARES project director because of problems preserving our website. Although we do print out some pages from the site, we are able to preserve only a fraction of the site this way, and when the site changes, the old versions of it are lost.

       Or so we thought. At the same time that we approached InterPARES, some internal investigation turned up an external website that seems to save everybody's websites:

http://web.archive.org/web/*/http:/ams.ubc.ca

http://web.archive.org/collections/web.html

Called the Wayback Machine, it preserves various versions of websites. We found dozens of versions of the AMS website there, going back over ten years. This is something like what we would like, except we would need it to be searchable and under our own control.

       The larger issue for us is that more and more of our documents are being produced electronically. In some cases we can print them out, but in the long run it might be a good idea to develop some sort of electronic archives, something we really do not have yet. We have a few CDs and even a couple of DVDs with records on them, but I am not sure I trust such formats for the long term and we don't really have room on our server to save everything there.

       On the other hand, if we go the printing route, that is tedious, it is not always possible, and I do realize that the printed form of an electronic document is not really the same document. This is certainly the case for the website, but also even for e-mail, photographs, reports, etc.

       Last year we discovered that the AMS budget, created as an electronic document, contained some material that wouldn't print out. We had to get the Finance Commission to redo the electronic formatting in order to allow printing out.

       This year there is talk of having clubs submit their constitutions and budgets electronically instead of in hardcopy form. I have been assured that at some stage of the process, hardcopies will be produced and saved, but I can see the day coming when people will see that as a waste of time and we will have to figure out how to preserve those documents when they cease to exist as hardcopies.

There is also the issue of functionality. Electronic documents are easier to handle; one can just forward an e-mail, but a hardcopy document must be photocopied and physically delivered somehow (though we do in some cases scan hardcopy documents and then e-mail them). Also, links in e-mails can be easily used; this less true of the website addresses in a hardcopy document.

So the ideal might be some way to archive our electronic documents electronically.

*Concerns*

My overriding concern is to preserve the institutional memory of the Alma Mater Society at an affordable cost, given our limited resources. I would hope that the InterPARES project can provide us with some guidance and advice.

*Time Commitment*

I would be happy to devote whatever time is required, within reason, to come up with plans for preserving the electronic records of the AMS.

*Rationale for using the AMS Archives as a test-bed*

The AMS is unique among the test-beds in terms of the age of its record creators. The average age of the AMS executives, Council members, and student support staff is 20. This means the majority of our records creators are part of the generation that grew up with electronic media, are totally at home in it, and are quick to experiment with new forms of it.

Student Council meetings have been notable in recent years by the number of laptops that appear on the Council table, with Council members e-mailing the Speaker of Council during the meeting with amendments and motions, and the Speaker keeping track of debate participants electronically.

The record creators at the AMS use blogs, websites, new electronic forms like FaceBook, iPods, cellphones, blackberries, text messaging – all the latest electronic media.

So we have the potential of creating huge amounts of electronic records.

At the same time, our records creators themselves change frequently, usually every year. New executives and Council members are elected; new student support staff are hired. There is a huge challenge in preserving institutional memory and ensuring continuity, and this applies to the procedures of records preservation as much as anything else. We need simple procedures in place so that the records creators can easily be taught what to do to make sure that their records don't disappear.

Also, we have limited resources; we are a relatively small organization. So we need some easy, cost-effective way to control the burgeoning electronic records at the AMS.

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