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“Given that today more than ever before organizations are using digital technologies in conducting their businesses, perhaps there is a need for a reminder about the implications on records that are created. It is obvious that electronic records can increase an organization’s efficiency through many ways such as the ability to provide records to more clients in a clearer format and a timelier manner while saving money on record storage and staff...”

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ESARBICA NEWSLETTER

2007 Issue No: 19

March

For more information, contact the editors Mr. S. Katuu skatuu@yahoo.com or Prof. P Ngulube ngulubep@nu.ac.za

Events

March 2007

Advanced international records management training program (phase 2)

Conducted by the Swedish National Archives. Deadline for application was 1st March 2006 Contact: Riksarkivet C/o Hanna Eriksson Box 12541 SE-102 29 Stockholm, Sweden Fax +4687376474 Phone (+46)87376350 Website:

http://www.ra.se/ra/recordsmanagement/index_eng.asp

March 5th **Records and information management level 1** Workshop convened by Document Warehouse in Johannesburg. Contact Virginia Hendricks Tel:

(+27)112980700 Email: virginia@documentwarehouse Website:

<http://www.documentwarehouse.co.za/>

March 12th **Records and information management level 2** Workshop convened by Document Warehouse in Johannesburg. Contact Virginia Hendricks Tel:

(+27)112980700 Email: virginia@documentwarehouse Website:

<http://www.documentwarehouse.co.za/>

March 13th – 14th **Registry management workshop**. Training course to be convened by the Centre of Applied Communication at UNISA. Deadline for registration 2nd

March 2007. Contact Ms T Manganyi Tel: (+27) 114713896 Fax: (+27) 114713906

Email: mkokong@unisa.ac.za Website:

<http://www.unisa.ac.za/Default.asp?Cmd=ViewContent&ContentID=17563>

March 26th **Records and information management level 1** Workshop convened by Document Warehouse in Johannesburg. Contact Virginia Hendricks Tel:

(+27)112980700 Email: virginia@documentwarehouse Website:

<http://www.documentwarehouse.co.za/>

March 27th – 30th **ECM Master class certificate programme** workshop conducted by NOKUSA EI in Cape Town. Contact Rob Cells Te: (27)117911028 or Email:

rob.cells@nokusaei.com Website: <http://www.nokusaei.com/>

April 2007

April 11th – 12th **Records management – Managers' workshop**. Training course to be convened by the Centre of Applied Communication at UNISA. Deadline for registration 2nd

April 2007. Contact Ms T Manganyi Tel: (+27) 114713896 Fax: (+27) 114713906 Email: mkokong@unisa.ac.za Website:

<http://www.unisa.ac.za/Default.asp?Cmd=ViewContent&ContentID=17563>

May 2007

May 7th **Records and information management level 1** Workshop convened by Document Warehouse in Johannesburg. Contact Virginia Hendricks Tel: (+27)112980700 Email: virginia@documentwarehouse Website: <http://www.documentwarehouse.co.za/>

May 14th **Records and information management level 2** Workshop convened by Document Warehouse in Johannesburg. Contact Virginia Hendricks Tel: (+27)112980700 Email: virginia@documentwarehouse Website: <http://www.documentwarehouse.co.za/>

May 14th – 18th **Intermediate archives and records management**. Training course to be convened by the Centre of Applied Communication at UNISA. Deadline for registration **4th May 2007**. Contact Ms T Manganyi Tel: (+27) 114713896 Fax: (+27) 114713906 Email: mkokong@unisa.ac.za Website: <http://www.unisa.ac.za/Default.asp?Cmd=ViewContent&ContentID=17563>

May 29th – 31st **South African Museum Association** National Conference and Annual General Meeting to be held at Cradle of Humankind, in Krugersdorp, South Africa. Contact Website: <http://www.samaweb.org.za/conf.htm>

June 2007

June 4th **Records and information management level 1** Workshop convened by Document Warehouse in Johannesburg. Contact Virginia Hendricks Tel: (+27)112980700 Email: virginia@documentwarehouse Website: <http://www.documentwarehouse.co.za/>

June 5th **Records and information management level 1** Workshop convened by Document Warehouse in Johannesburg. Contact Virginia Hendricks Tel: (+27)112980700 Email: virginia@documentwarehouse Website: <http://www.documentwarehouse.co.za/>

June 5th – 6th **Registry management workshop**. Training course to be convened by the Centre of Applied Communication at UNISA. Deadline for registration **25th May 2007**. Contact Ms T Manganyi Tel: (+27) 114713896 Fax: (+27) 114713906 Email; mkokong@unisa.ac.za Website: <http://www.unisa.ac.za/Default.asp?Cmd=ViewContent&ContentID=17563>

June 11th **Records and information management level 2** Workshop convened by Document Warehouse in Johannesburg. Contact Virginia Hendricks Tel: (+27)112980700 Email: virginia@documentwarehouse Website: <http://www.documentwarehouse.co.za/>

June 18th **Records and information management level 1** Workshop convened by Document Warehouse in Johannesburg. Contact Virginia Hendricks Tel: (+27)112980700 Email: virginia@documentwarehouse Website: <http://www.documentwarehouse.co.za/>

June 20th -22nd **XIV Bi-Annual ESARBICA Conference** to be convened in Tanzania, hosted by the National Archives of Tanzania. For more information <http://www.geocities.com/esarbica/conf.html>

June 25th **Records and information management level 2** Workshop convened by Document Warehouse in Johannesburg. Contact Virginia Hendricks Tel: (+27)112980700 Email: virginia@documentwarehouse Website: <http://www.documentwarehouse.co.za/>

July 2007

July 5-6th **Proper records management as a driver for improved service delivery and good governance** workshop convened by Longsight Communication in Kruger National Park. Contact Saimon Chirume, Tel: (+27) 123206770, Fax: (+27) 123265080, Cell: (+27) 726610714 E-mail: saimon@longsight.co.za Website: <http://longsight.co.za/>

July 16th **Records and information management level 1** Workshop convened by Document Warehouse in Johannesburg. Contact Virginia Hendricks Tel: (+27)112980700 Email: virginia@documentwarehouse Website: <http://www.documentwarehouse.co.za/>

July 23rd **Records and information management level 2** Workshop convened by Document Warehouse in Johannesburg. Contact Virginia Hendricks Tel: (+27)112980700 Email: virginia@documentwarehouse Website: <http://www.documentwarehouse.co.za/>

July 30th **Records and information management level 1** Workshop convened by Document Warehouse in Johannesburg. Contact Virginia Hendricks Tel: (+27)112980700 Email: virginia@documentwarehouse Website: <http://www.documentwarehouse.co.za/>

August 2007

August 7th – 8th **Registry management workshop**. Training course to be convened by the Centre of Applied Communication at UNISA. Deadline for registration **26th July 2007**. Contact Ms T Manganyi Tel: (+27) 114713896 Fax: (+27) 114713906 Email

mkokong@unisa.ac.za Website:

<http://www.unisa.ac.za/Default.asp?Cmd=ViewContent&ContentID=17563>

August 13th **Records and information management level 2** Workshop convened by Document Warehouse in Johannesburg. Contact Virginia Hendricks Tel:

(+27)112980700 Email: virginia@documentwarehouse Website:

<http://www.documentwarehouse.co.za/>

August 20th **Records and information management level 1** Workshop convened by Document Warehouse in Johannesburg. Contact Virginia Hendricks Tel:

(+27)112980700 Email: virginia@documentwarehouse Website:

<http://www.documentwarehouse.co.za/>

August 27th **Records and information management level 2** Workshop convened by Document Warehouse in Johannesburg. Contact Virginia Hendricks Tel:

(+27)112980700 Email: virginia@documentwarehouse Website:

<http://www.documentwarehouse.co.za/>

August 28th – 31st **Basic archives and records management**. Training course to be convened by the Centre of Applied Communication at UNISA. Deadline for registration **17th August 2007**. Contact Ms T Manganyi Tel: (+27) 114713896 Fax:

(+27) 114713906 Email mkokong@unisa.ac.za Website:

<http://www.unisa.ac.za/Default.asp?Cmd=ViewContent&ContentID=17563>

September 2007

September 10th **Records and information management level 1** Workshop

convened by Document Warehouse in Johannesburg. Contact Virginia Hendricks Tel:

(+27)112980700 Email: virginia@documentwarehouse Website:

<http://www.documentwarehouse.co.za/>

September 10th-13th **Influence with Integrity** recordkeeping conference convened by the Records Management Association of Australasia in Wellington, New Zealand.

Contact RMAA Marketing and Event Manager, Ms Kristen Keley email:

marketing@maa.com.au website <http://www.maa.com.au>

October 2007

Advanced international records management training program (phase 3)

Conducted by the Swedish National Archives. Deadline for application was 1st March

2006 Contact: Riksarkivet C/o Hanna Eriksson Box 12541 SE-102 29 Stockholm,

Sweden Fax +4687376474 Phone +4687376350 Website:

http://www.ra.se/ra/recordsmanagement/index_eng.asp

October 1st **Records and information management level 1** Workshop convened by Document Warehouse in Johannesburg. Contact Virginia Hendricks Tel: (+27)112980700 Email: virginia@documentwarehouse Website:

<http://www.documentwarehouse.co.za/>

October 2nd – 3rd **Registry management workshop**. Training course to be convened by the Centre of Applied Communication at UNISA. Deadline for registration **21st September 2007**. Contact Ms T Manganyi Tel: (+27) 114713896 Fax: (+27) 114713906 Email mkokong@unisa.ac.za Website:

<http://www.unisa.ac.za/Default.asp?Cmd=ViewContent&ContentID=17563>

October 8th **Records and information management level 2** Workshop convened by Document Warehouse in Johannesburg. Contact Virginia Hendricks Tel: (+27)112980700 Email: virginia@documentwarehouse Website:

<http://www.documentwarehouse.co.za/>

October 15th **Records and information management level 1** Workshop convened by Document Warehouse in Johannesburg. Contact Virginia Hendricks Tel: (+27)112980700 Email: virginia@documentwarehouse Website:

<http://www.documentwarehouse.co.za/>

October 22nd **Records and information management level 2** Workshop convened by Document Warehouse in Johannesburg. Contact Virginia Hendricks Tel: (+27)112980700 Email: virginia@documentwarehouse Website:

<http://www.documentwarehouse.co.za/>

November 2007

November 19th – 23rd **Intermediate archives and records management**. Training course to be convened by the Centre of Applied Communication at UNISA. Deadline for registration **9th November 2007**. Contact Ms T Manganyi Tel: (+27) 114713896 Fax: (+27) 114713906 Email: mkokong@unisa.ac.za Website:

<http://www.unisa.ac.za/Default.asp?Cmd=ViewContent&ContentID=17563>

November 29th – 30th **Records management – Managers' workshop**. Training course to be convened by the Centre of Applied Communication at UNISA. Deadline for registration **19th November 2007**. Contact Ms T Manganyi Tel: (+27) 114713896 Fax: (+27) 114713906 Email mkokong@unisa.ac.za Website:

<http://www.unisa.ac.za/Default.asp?Cmd=ViewContent&ContentID=17563>

July 2008

XVIth International Congress on Archives to be convened in Kuala Lumpur,
hosted by the International Council on Archives Website:

<http://www.ica.org/calendrier.php?pcalendrierid=237&plangue=eng>

Fellowship for a Visiting Archivist from the Developing World at the Rockefeller Archive Center

The Rockefeller Archive Center invites applications for a Visiting Archivist Fellowship for a professional archivist from the developing world.* The Rockefeller Archive Center will host a visiting archivist for up to one month for the purposes of enhancing professional development, and extending knowledge of the Center's collections. Applications must be postmarked by January 31st each year, and awards will be announced at the end of April.

Terms of Selection, Conditions of the Award, and Responsibilities

Candidates

Applicants must be, or recently have been, employed as archivists, and demonstrably able (1) to improve their archival skills through a fellowship at the Center, and (2) to contribute to a better understanding of the Center's documentation of the applicant's nation or region. The successful applicant will have a B.A. or equivalent, professional archival training, and 2-5 years experience as an archivist. He/she should be seeking to expand his/her experience in order to develop new services or technologies in his/her home institution. The candidate must have a strong command of spoken and written English, and must provide evidence to that effect. Application materials will be mailed to prospective applicants on request.

Responsibilities

At the Archive Center, the visiting archivist will first observe the Center's operations, and participate in the Center's activities. The visiting archivist will then undertake an archival project planned in consultation with the Center's executive director and staff prior to his/her arrival. Examples of appropriate projects include:

- Processing a series of documents related to the visiting archivist's interests
- Studying the preparation of documents for microfilming, and microfilming standards
- Learning about procedures and standards for assisting scholarly researchers
- Surveying the archival resources at the Center relevant to the visiting archivist's nation or region, including photographs and films
- Studying the Center's use of computers and computer databases to manage its collections

In accord with the visiting archivist's professional goals, Center staff also will arrange for the visiting archivist to tour other archival facilities. Since the Center is open only on weekdays,

the visiting archivist may use weekend days for professional and personal travel.

The visiting archivist will prepare a brief written result of his/her project at the Archive Center, possibly for publication on the Center's web site or in its Newsletter.

Stipend and Expenses - The visiting archivist will receive a \$5000 stipend for a four-week fellowship, reduced proportionately if the fellowship is for a shorter period. The fellowship must be for at least two weeks.

The visiting archivist's stipend is intended to cover the costs of housing, food and local transportation. The visiting archivist also will be reimbursed for reasonable round-trip travel expenses from his/her place of residence. The visiting archivist is responsible for keeping round-trip travel costs to a minimum by purchasing the lowest-cost airfare. Round-trip travel costs must be kept under \$3500.

*South and Central America, including Mexico; the Caribbean; Africa; south and central Asia; China; Korea; Taiwan; the Philippines; Indonesia; and the Pacific Ocean states.

Additional information and for application forms see

<http://archive.rockefeller.edu/grants/visitingarchivist.php>

For additional information on other Rockefeller grants see

<http://archive.rockefeller.edu/grants/>

Digital technology – a blessing or a curse for records managers and archivists? Understanding the problems posed by information and communications technologies (ICTs) in generating records

By VivanTafor

Using technology to create records

Techno-phobia and paper mindedness in an electronic environment are only two of the many phrases that have been coined to partly explain the very low rate at which attention is being paid when it comes to managing electronic records particularly in developing countries. Electronic records are, simply put, records that contain machine - readable information and cannot be read simply by the use of human eye. Examples of electronic records include electronic mail, database records, word-processed documents, hybrid records (these consist of more than one type of records such as electronic mail with an attachment). It has been noted that government is the largest collector and disseminator of records and documents in Sub Saharan Africa (SSA). As Ngulube (2001) points out, traditionally, the bulk of the information has been paper based.

However, increasingly, many governments, both in the developed and developing worlds, as well as more organizations are now taking advantage of new technologies to conduct an increasing amount of their businesses electronically. According to Kowlowitz and Kelly (1997), these governments and organizations are implementing technologies such as word processing applications, intra-nets, email, Electronic Data Interchange (EDI), e-commerce, data imaging etc, to support paperless transactions. In the same light, the Committee on Electronic Records of the International Council on Archives (ICA) (1997) has observed that the evolution of information technology falls into three overlapping phases: the mainframe era, the era of the Personal Computer (PC), and the networking era. According to the ICA, each succeeding innovation in information technology (IT), made new uses for IT feasible without necessarily displacing older systems. This means that depending on when computers were introduced into an organization, archivists and records managers may encounter electronic records that were accumulated under any of the phases.

And with the acceleration in networking and the development of paperless transactions, archivists and records managers have become increasingly concerned about the long-term preservation of electronic records.

Technological changes are obviously having a substantial impact on organizational abilities to create, manage and use records to support legal responsibilities and business needs. The new archival and records management concerns arise out of both the capabilities of the new technologies and the ways in which these new technologies are being used in organizations. Therefore, there is a dire need for a trusted system for managing electronic records. A trusted electronic records management system is “a type of system where rules govern which documents are eligible for inclusion in the recordkeeping system, who may place records in the system and retrieve records from it, what may be done to and with a record, how long records remain in the system, and how records are removed from it”

www.interpares.org/book/.

The need to manage records with a focus on digital records

Why do we need to manage and preserve our records anyway? Many reasons have been advanced to respond to this question. We manage records so as to preserve organizational memory. Without records, citizens will not be able to account for their actions. Also, records are managed so as to facilitate access to them whenever they are needed. Furthermore, managing records allows us to keep them only for as long as they are needed. These reasons can be summarized in the explanation offered by the ICA which is noted to be “dedicated to the advancement of archives worldwide. Archives, by providing evidence of human activities and transactions, underlie the rights of individuals and states, and are fundamental to democracy and good governance. Archives safeguard the memory of mankind by preserving records of its past. In pursuing the advancement of archives, the ICA works for the protection and enhancement of the memory of the world.” It must be pointed out that even though allusion is made exclusively of governments, it goes without saying that the advantages of proper management and preservation of records also apply to the corporate world. But why are electronic records more complicated and difficult to handle than their paper counterparts? Why do they need special and expert care?

Perhaps the answer to this preoccupation should be preceded by the following observation. The Preservation Task Force of the InterPARES Project points out that strictly speaking, it is not possible to preserve an electronic record. It is only possible to preserve the ability to reproduce an electronic record. The explanation to back this observation is that as findings of the project demonstrate, if there was no need to preserve records beyond the life expectancies of hardware, software, and digital media, there would not be any preservation problem. Similarly, technology cannot determine the solution. It is archival and records management criteria that determine the appropriateness and adequacy of any technical solution. It further notes that the question “what is the best technological method for preserving electronic record” is as meaningless as the question “what is the best medicine for making people healthy?” Neither can be answered without specifying the conditions they are meant to address.

Difficulties with electronic records

Even though the principles for managing both paper and electronic records remain fundamentally the same, practically and technically, they are different. The following are some of the outstanding factors that differentiate the two forms of records, hence begging for special attention when it comes to managing the electronic versions: electronic records can be duplicated with ease. Therefore, copies and originals are similar hence making it difficult to find out the authentic original. Here, there is a serious security problem, if we think for instance of the issue of privacy. electronic records are strictly speaking, dependent on hardware technology. Hardware manufacturers may go out of business leaving their clients with no technical support. This means that information that can be accessed using exclusively a particular hardware package is doomed if the manufacturers go out of business.

This also applies to software applications. Electronic records are also dependent on software technology. If the software manufacturers go out of business, their clients will be left with no technical support if and when clients run into difficulties. furthermore, the hardware technology on which electronic records depend, can become obsolete within a short time. New hardware products appear every few

years and are sometimes not compatible with older ones. The same fate also befalls software technologies.

Another important and delicate factor that distinguishes paper based from electronic records making the latter difficult to handle is the fact that electronic records can easily be changed and its storage media has shorter lifespan than paper. Here again, there is a delicate problem of security

The implications of these differences can have far-reaching consequences and difficulties as far as managing electronic records are concerned. This of course also taking into consideration the very high costs involved in implementing efficient electronic records management systems, given that training of personnel in electronic environment can be very costly as many studies worldwide have shown. For example, according to Steve Stuckey in Harris (2003), the successful implementation of the Australian National Archives' electronic records management program was due in large measure to just over 80% of the budget being dedicated to staff training. The challenges posed by electronic records are significant. Therefore if any electronic records management program has to succeed, far-reaching measures, as a matter of necessity, have to be implemented to address these problems. For instance, looking at the challenges posed specifically by hard and software technologies, it is known that if one had created a text document 12 years ago using any of the most popular commercial word processing software programs, one would not be able to read it today. Even if one had kept the exact machine and software program that created the document, there is a good chance that the storage medium would have degenerated over the years.

There is little if any doubt that digital technology has had a positive impact in the way many businesses are run today. Unfortunately, many governments and businesses are hardly adequately informed about the challenges that they stand to face by opting to conduct their businesses electronically particularly as far as managing their electronic records is concerned. This situation has even been compounded by the 'easy talk' that technology 'will solve every problem', even though little or no mention is made of those that could be created. The merit or demerit of the view about the things that technology can accomplish is indeed beyond the scope of this paper. My

preoccupation however is at the level of preparedness prior to introducing digital technology to run one's business and generating records electronically. The fear of a possible 'exclusion from the global economy', the fear also of 'widening the gap in economic competitiveness' (Cain and Thurston 1998:13), has led some institutions into going digital not because it was necessary but because they just felt they had to. The illusion that 'all will be fine' once they go the IT route helps to prevent organizations from seeing the bigger picture which is beset by many significant challenges.

Whether the reason that led organizations to embrace IT in running their businesses was because of need and preparedness or just the excitement of it, is absolutely immaterial if such institutions have already done so. The onus now lies with the institutions concerned to do what they have to do in order to manage and preserve their electronic records properly. For organizations that are still planning to adopt IT, a considerable amount of thinking has to be done. There has to be the conviction that it is not only necessary but above all, that they are ready for it so that they can be able to cushion the challenges that come with electronic records. Studies have shown according to Cain and Thurston (1998:13) that developing countries are entering the 'information age' from a starting point of extreme vulnerability. Not only do they face huge obstacles in affording and obtaining access to the new technologies, in many cases their existing paper records systems – the foundation for automating are in a very poor state or even collapsed. Automating a chaotic system is obviously likely to create more chaos. Far from being in a position to take advantage of new technology, developing countries face formidable difficulties in attempting to build upon unstable foundations. Public sector records, which are the most fundamental source of government information, are only just beginning to be managed as a strategic resource, and there are still widespread problems in retrieving and storing them. Considerable amount of effort has to be invested in solving these old-standing problems before embarking on even more complicated ones that are presented by electronic records.

Way forward

Given that today more than ever before organizations are using digital technologies

in conducting their businesses, perhaps there is a need for a reminder about the implications on records that are created. It is obvious that electronic records can increase an organization's efficiency through many ways such as the ability to provide records to more clients in a clearer format and a timelier manner while saving money on record storage and staff. Digital systems can also greatly reduce the amount of physical space required to store paper records. However, while digital technology promotes broad and rapid access to records, it also carries the danger that those records and the information contained there in can be easily lost if they are not properly taken care of. It is imperative for organizations to ensure that because of changing technology, electronic records are not rendered unusable before their retention and preservation requirements are met (White 2001).

While acknowledging for example that records management software can solve many electronic recordkeeping problems, top administrators however, must accept responsibility for ensuring that their agency's records are properly managed. Without their support, according to Wojcik et al (2003) sophisticated software tools will be useless. Only when sound and comprehensive records management is incorporated in a government and in organizations do citizens and employees have an opportunity to achieve better and more accountable government and organization based on accurate, authentic and reliable evidence found in well-managed records.

References

- Cain, P. and Thurston, A. 1998. *Personnel records: a strategic resource for public sector management*. London: Commonwealth Trust/International Records Management Trust.
- Harris, V. 2003. 'The challenges of preserving electronic memory overtime.' Paper presented at the Records Management for Government Conference – Johannesburg 2-5 December 2003.
- International Council on Archives, Committee on Electronic Records 1997. *Guide for Managing Electronic Records from an Archival Perspective*. Paris: International Council on Archives.
- InterPARES Project – Preservation Task Force – <http://www.interpares.org/book>
- Kowlowitz, A. and Kelly, K. 1997. 'Electronic Recordkeeping: Models for Action: Developing Practical Approaches to Electronic Records Management and

- Preservation'. *Records Management Bulletin*. June/July.
- Ngulube, P. 2001. 'Government and Digital Information – A Vanishing Record Strategies for Managing Digital Records and Documents in the Public Sector in Sub Saharan Africa'. Paper presented at the 67th IFLA General Conference, Boston, USA, 16 – 25 August 2001.
 - White, J. 2001. Guidelines for Electronic Records. *Records Management Bulletin* June/July.
 - Wojcik, C., Gouin, D. and Dionne, M. 2003. Managing electronic records in the 21st Century. *The Information Management Journal*. Nov./Dec.

About the author

Vivan Tafor is a Cameroonian citizen with a keen interest in the records and archives issues. He obtained his Masters degree from the University of Kwa Zulu Natal in Petermaritzburg. He has published several articles on a variety of topics. His email address is fuhtv@yahoo.co.uk

Additional information

- Clever recordkeeping metadata – a project developing prototype on standard compliant metadata.
<http://www.sims.monash.edu.au/research/rcrg/research/crm/index.html>
- eDAVID – a center of research and knowledge in digital archiving
<http://www.expertisecentrumdavid.be/eng/index.php>
- ERPANET – a European consortium that aims to make viable and visible information, best practice and skills development in the area of digital preservation of cultural heritage and scientific objects <http://www.erpanet.org/>
- InterPARES – International Research on Permanent Authentic Records in Electronic Systems – a two phased project that aimed to develop theoretical and methodological knowledge essential to the long-term preservation of authentic records created and/or maintained in digital form. <http://www.interpares.org/>