Thank You and Welcome

18 February 2020

Good Morning Everyone, and Welcome to the InterPARES Symposium.

I would like to begin by thanking Dr. Nuria Gutiérrez Rojas, Ms. Beryl Corea, and their colleagues who have worked so hard to organize this Symposium for their generous hospitality. I would like to thank as well as the people in the audience for their interest in the work of InterPARES.

This Symposium is about 21 years of research findings, recommendations, concepts, methods, and products, as well as its future directions. But, before starting, I would like to say a few words about what I believe to be the most important outcome of InterPARES, which is not a theory, a method, or a tool. The greatest InterPARES achievement is **the creation of a network of researchers where none existed before**, a network that has contributed to the development of a large body of archival scholarship and educated hundreds of professionals around the world, as well as many academics born as researchers rather than as professionals, who now occupy archival positions in many universities worldwide.

When in 1998 I received from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada the first multidisciplinary international research grant for a project about the preservation of the authenticity of electronic records, I was fully aware that there was no established research community in the archival field, and my aim was to develop one. However I did not want to carry out a project controlled by my own understanding of the issues. I wanted to build a team where each member's knowledge, contextual understanding, and work would equally contribute to findings and products belonging to everyone, an international scholarly community whose members, on turn, could build new scholarly teams approaching new issues from multiple perspectives. To clearly convey my message to all participants, I called the project "*inter pares*" (Latin for "among peers") and transformed this name into an acronym "International Research on Permanent Authentic Records in Electronic Systems."

The name InterPARES has provided a continuing identity to the project throughout its four phases - an overarching ongoing idea – by conveying the spirit and ultimate goal of the research. It has also contributed to providing a research identity to the people involved in the research, conveying their own purpose.

InterPARES began with researchers from the public and private sectors of 12 countries, and, 21 years later – its financial support having been renewed 4 times – it comprises almost 500 researchers from 50 countries. During its life, InterPARES has developed theory, methods, models, frameworks, policies, guidelines, tools, standards, regulations, and thousands of publications; and its findings have contributed to more research projects being developed by a variety of teams all over the world.

I believe that the success of InterPARES is due a few old principles have guided us as a team:

1. "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together"
    - You will never have to convince your audience and stakeholders to buy into your findings and products if they have contributed to developing them
2. "It is amazing how much can be accomplished if no one cares who gets the credit."
    - Our funding agency has noted in its report that "There is no 'I' among the researchers, only 'we'. The outcomes of the research belong to everyone.
3. Nothing helps creativity more than heated arguments developing around a crowded table, face-to-face.
    - The researchers were required to show up in person every year at one plenary meeting and two research group meetings
4. Students are the greatest resource of any research project and will contribute to its continuity over the years
    - Graduate research assistants, once graduated and become either academics or professionals themselves, continued with the project as co-investigators and brought with them their organizations.
5. As archival science is both a pure science comprising a system of ideas about record that guide archival scholarship, and an applied science, as these ideas guide archival work, InterPARES researchers had to come from all kinds of organizations
    - multiple voices in multiple contexts for different purposes supported each participant's agenda
    - InterPARES did not address an audience; it incorporated the audience in the research project.

The work that will be presented during the two days of the Symposium will hopefully demonstrate the multidisciplinary and multinational contribution to each idea, method, and outcome, as well as the strength that this shared knowledge has given to the archival community worldwide.