Regaining the Rights to Records

Trusted Online Access to Distributed Digital Holdings

Michelle Spelay

School of Library, Archival and Information Studies

mspelay@mail.ubc.ca

Introduction

The overwhelming majority of public records are never transferred to archival custody, but remain in the custody of their creating or controlling agencies – often for many decades.

This research aims to determine whether government archives have a leadership role to play in ensuring that access systems that are put in place for the holdings in their institutional repositories can be extended to encompass distributed holdings of digital public records in the custody of government agencies.

Method

- Conducted literature review of journal articles, books and other scholarly materials as well as grey literature and government websites and information policies.
- Travelled to Wellington, New Zealand to present current findings to archivists and records professionals at International Symposium. Gained valuable feedback from professionals in the field and have adjusted project scope in reaction to this feedback.
- Semi-structured interviews are forthcoming. Have established a contact at Archives New Zealand to facilitate interviews.

Contexts to Consider

Technical elements: the practical elements and actual technology for enabling access and discovery. What kind of system can be used to make records available and how will it work.

Cultural elements: Determining the cultural barriers. Figuring out how do to get custodians to open up. How to get governments to take open government seriously.

Research Questions

Literature surveyed overwhelmingly said YES government does have an obligation to make public records available even when they exist outside of direct custody. There is a responsibility to provide access to public records no matter where they are located. This lead us to two important research questions:

- How can government make digital public records that are kept in the creating agency’s custody available in a trustworthy and user friendly manner?
- How can government deal with privacy and ethical concerns that come with making public records available online?

Next Steps

We will be conducting an contextual analysis of the Queensland State Archives and Archives New Zealand.

References


Full bibliography available at: https://interparestrust.org/assets/public/dissemination/AAP/2010_A13_TrustedOnlineAccessPublicRecords_LiteratureReview_FINAL.pdf

Acknowledgements

Thank you to InterPARES Trust and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for funding this research.

Access
records
Government
Open
Digital