

Development of an Ontology of Functional Activities for Records Management and Archival Systems

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Abstract:

The development of an ontology of functional activities for archival systems is part of the InterPARES Trust project. The aim of this project is to create an overarching ontology for archival and records management environments in which current, semi-current and non-current records are managed in a coherent system. The project seeks to represent all the functions and activities that are performed throughout a record's life-cycle. In order to achieve this goal, the contents of widely spread international standards on records management and archival functions are distilled into subject-predicate-object statements. The research for the development of the ontology is divided into three interconnected steps. The first step involves the identification of the relevant and most commonly used standards such as the ISO 15489 series, the ISO 16175 series or the OAIS Reference Model, to cover every aspect from recordkeeping to preservation. The second step comprises a systematic analysis of the selected sources and the modelling of statements drawing from the content of the sources. This step involves adapting, refining and merging statements, which means that the final statements used as the basis for the ontology are the result of controlled and consistent interpretation. The third step is the development of a visual representation of the results of the analysis by means of a mind-mapping approach. The project aims at creating a representation consisting of numerous linked sub-maps describing the involved functions. This ontology may serve various purposes in records management and archiving. An ontological representation of the functional activities would provide records professionals, stakeholders and clients with a clear image of the functions and activities that need to be implemented and performed in records management and archives. The ontology might prove useful as a guideline for software and system development, as well.

About the Author:

Georg Gaenser studied History in Graz (Austria). Afterwards, he earned a MA in Archival Science at the University of Vienna (2015). There, he finished his doctoral-studies in contemporary History, as well (2017). He worked as an intern in the German Federal Archives in Berlin (Summer 2013) and the Municipal and Provincial Archives of Vienna (Summer 2014). In addition, he fulfilled several contracts for historical research and archival processing. From February 2016 until April 2016, he was an intern at the International Atomic Energy Agency, Archives and Records Management Section, in Vienna. From May 2016 to July 2017, he was employed as an archivist at the Municipal and Provincial Archives of Vienna. Since May 2016, he is an Independent Consultant for InterPARES Trust. He is currently enrolled in the MAS programme at the School of Library, Archival and Information Studies, University of British Columbia.