



10 reasons why electronic records need special attention

In recognition of Electronic Records Day 2014, here is a list of reasons why everyone should be thinking more about electronic records.

1. Managing electronic records is like caring for a perpetual toddler: they need regular attention and care in order to remain accessible.
2. Electronic records can become unreadable very quickly. While records on paper can sometimes be read after thousands of years, digital files can be virtually inaccessible after just a few.
3. Scanning paper records is not the end of the preservation process: it is the beginning. Careful planning for ongoing management expenses must be involved as well.
4. There are no permanent storage media. Hard drives, CDs, Magnetic tape or any other storage formats will need to be tested and replaced on a regular schedule. Proactive management is required to avoid catastrophic loss of records.
5. The lack of a “physical” presence can make it very easy to lose track of electronic records. Special care must be taken to ensure they remain in controlled custody and do not get lost in masses of other data.
6. It can be easy to create copies of electronic records and share them with others, but this can raise concerns about the authenticity of those records. Extra security precautions are needed to ensure e-records are not altered inappropriately.
7. The best time to plan for electronic records preservation is when they are created. Don’t wait until software is being replaced or a project is ending to think about how records are going to be preserved.
8. No one system you buy will solve all your e-records problems. Despite what vendors say, there’s no magic bullet that will manage and preserve your e-records for you.
9. Electronic records can help ensure the rights of the public through greater accessibility than ever before, but only if creators, managers and users all recognize their importance and contribute resources to their preservation.
10. While they may seem commonplace now, electronic records will form the backbone of the historical record for researchers of the future.

Remember, archivists are here to help you tackle these difficult problems. Contact your state, local or college archives to find out what they are working towards and what they need in order to make sure that electronic records remain accessible for generations to come!