

# Template Electronic Records Policy for Repositories

[Name of Repository]  
[Name of overarching organization/institution]

## Electronic Records Preservation Policy

Specific procedures for the accessioning and processing of electronic records are included in [name of repository's] Processing Manual

### [Name of Repository] Mission:

[Mission of Repository]

### Electronic Records Preservation:

Electronic records preservation is the whole of the activities and processes involved in the physical and intellectual protection and technical stabilization of electronic records through time in order to reproduce authentic copies of these resources.

### Electronic Records Preservation Principle Statement:

The [name of repository]'s Electronic Records Preservation Policy supports the preservation of electronic records within the [name of repository]'s collections, and created by or licensed by the [name of repository].

These electronic records are subject to the same criteria for acquisition, retention, and preservation as all other records in [name of repository]'s collections. Electronic records preservation decisions are made on the basis of this policy and the [name of repository]'s collection development policy as well as in conjunction with the records' enduring value and the feasibility of their preservation. These decisions are made by the [person managing e-records, including any collaboration with institutional constituents and stakeholders deemed appropriate], as experts on the value of the content.

The [e-records manager, possibly in conjunction with collaborators] must identify the specific preservation requirements for individual electronic records. Responsibility for their preservation is retained by [name of repository]. Preservation of electronic records may include any actions necessary to provide continued access to the material, ensure its authenticity, and mitigate and/or reverse the effects of hardware and software obsolescence and media decay.

This policy recognizes that the maintenance and the reliable long-term access to [name of repository]'s electronic records are supported by a preservation strategy and/or planning function. Monitoring of current technologies that support electronic records

management and the professional standards within the archival community is a core activity to preservation planning, as well as outreach and education regarding policies, procedures and best practices for electronic records.

Content, context provenance, and original order of the electronic records should be preserved. For electronic records the decision to preserve, as noted above, is based upon their enduring value and the feasibility of preservation and not necessarily upon an electronic record's content, format type, or source. This policy also recognizes that preservation strategies and actions vary according to these attributes and characteristics.

Sources of Electronic Records include:

- Born digital resources and digital surrogates created by [name of repository];
- Electronic records acquired by [name of repository] through purchase or donation; and
- Electronic records licensed by [name of repository] with perpetual access and archival rights.

### **Life cycle:**

Throughout the life cycle of electronic records a series of interrelated strategic and procedural decisions and the work of a number of different stakeholders contribute to help ensure that electronic records survive through time and changing technologies. The information life cycle is a framework for understanding the cyclical sequence of activities that all electronic records undergo during their existence. Eventually, electronic records may reach the end of their active lives and be re-born as reformatted, transformed resources. The life cycle for electronic records may include, but not limited to:

- Create and/or receive
- Appraise and select
- Ingest
- Preservation action (authentication, migration, etc.)
- Store and back-up
- Access
- Transform

Although this policy primarily focuses upon the preservation stage of the electronic records life cycle, the prospects for and the costs involved in preserving electronic records through time and technological change rest heavily upon decisions taken at different stages of the life cycle. By adhering to a proactive concept of preservation management, the [name of repository] staff seeks minimal loss in content, functionality, and accessibility while seeking to ensure the electronic records retain their integrity, authenticity, and reliability over time.

**Storage:**

Due to the nature of electronic records the electronic records archivist of the [name of repository] will need to order large quantities of storage for electronic records over time to deliver the basic services of backup, access, and disaster recovery.

[name of repository] is best served when distributed and disparate systems conform to standards and best practices that make communication between storage systems possible. The ability to integrate or interoperate within and between storage systems is likely to make backup, disaster recovery, and hardware migration services less risky across all storage systems and more economical. For example, common import and export services will enable one storage system to serve as a backup for another thereby reducing [name of repository]'s total investment in redundancy for these systems. In addition, to satisfy the custodial requirements of depositors for trust and security, the management of storage will require specialized technology, software and management skills. To ensure that [name of repository] makes the right investments in storage for electronic records preservation, this policy recommends the acquisition and management of storage be guided by the advice of [technical support staff?/outside sources] and current archival best practices (where they exist). This policy also maintains that storage technologies must be seen as chronically obsolescent and subject to continuous hardware migrations over time.

**Authenticity:**

[name of repository] strives to ensure the authenticity of electronic records; the changeable nature of electronic records opens the possibility for unauthorized and undetectable alterations. Confidence in the authenticity of electronic records over time is particularly crucial owing to the ease with which alterations can be made. From the moment that electronic records are created or acquired, [name of repository] undertakes protective procedures to prevent, discover, and correct loss or corruption of electronic records due to either inadvertent or malicious intent. In addition, supporting evidence, ideally in the form of metadata, must be provided to enable users to evaluate the authenticity of all preserved electronic records.

**Metadata:**

Metadata is fundamental to preserving [name of repository]'s electronic records. Preservation metadata includes a number of different types of metadata: administrative (used in managing information resources including rights and permissions), technical (describing hardware and software needed to maintain an information object) and structural (identifying the relationships between objects such as *part of*, *dependent upon* that form intellectual entities). Particular attention is paid to the documentation of provenance and relationships among individual electronic records and items within [name of repository]'s individual collections.

The preservation process must be able to ingest and maintain metadata submitted with the electronic record while creating its own metadata to manage the preservation of that

resource. The Dublin Core metadata schema, the minimum fields necessary to record for [name of repository]'s electronic records are located in the Description of Electronic Records section of [name of repository]'s Processing Manual.

**Access:**

In preserving the accessibility of electronic records, [name of repository] will:

- Maintain information regarding rights and permissions governing access;
- Maintain the means of accessing an acceptable presentation of the electronic record; and
- Maintain the ability to locate the electronic record reliably.

**Intellectual Property:**

The preservation of electronic records will include complying with the Intellectual Property rights and/or other legal rights related to copying, storage, modification and use of the specific resource.

**Financial:**

Enduring preservation of electronic records requires substantial and ongoing financial commitments over time. Electronic records preservation is dynamic; responses to technological obsolescence or media decay must be taken more quickly and the life expectancy of a preservation treatment is shorter because the technologies utilized are evolutionary. Consequently, [name of repository]'s electronic records archivist must periodically update training and monitor and reassess preservation strategies as the technological environment that supports standards, protocols, and formats, etc. evolves.

While the overall financial commitments to digital preservation are understood to be substantial, the exact costs of preserving electronic records over time are now difficult to identify and define. Normal digital preservation activities may include several different ongoing costs, primarily purchasing technical infrastructure and possible outsourcing.

**This policy was adapted from the following sources:**

Yale University Library Digital Preservation Policy, <http://www.library.yale.edu/iac/DPC/final1.html>

Minnesota Historical Society, Electronic Records Management Guidelines, <http://www.mnhs.org/preserve/records/electronicrecords.htm>