Transferring Permanent Electronic Records to NARA

ANSWERS TO THE TOP 5 QUESTIONS

WHEN DO I TRANSFER MY PERMANENT ELECTRONIC RECORDS TO THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES?

- First, ensure that the records are scheduled as permanent on a Standard Form 115 (SF 115), Request for Records Disposition Authority.

- Transfer records when they are no longer needed for agency business, or earlier if possible.

WHAT TRANSFER FORMATS CAN I USE?

The format depends on the type of records being transferred. For transferring specific types of permanent electronic records, please refer to NARA guidance on our web site at *www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/initiatives/erm-products.html*. Some general guidelines include

- Textual records — plain ASCII or in **Portable Document Format** (PDF) format or scanned images.

- Scanned images of textual records — the preferred formats are **Tagged Image File Format** (TIFF) and **Portable Network Graphics** (PNG). **Graphics Interchange Format** (GIF) and **Basic Image Interchange Format** (BIIF) are also acceptable.

- Data files and databases — convert tables to files with fixed-length fields or fields defined by delimiters.

- Digital geospatial data — **Spatial Data Transfer Standard** (SDTS) or **Geography Markup Language** (GML). Preferred formats for these records are evolving, so contact NARA for assistance.

- Digital photographic records — **Tagged Image File Format** (TIFF) and **File Interchange Format** (JFIF, JPEG) are also acceptable.

- Web records — **Hypertext Markup Language** (HTML) and other formats such as TIFF or PDF that either are embedded in the HTML or referenced by it.

WHAT TRANSFER MEDIA CAN I USE?

It is probably easiest to transfer records on compact disk, read-only memory (CD-ROM), because agencies typically have the drives for this media and it's inexpensive. Other acceptable media include magnetic tape and tape cartridges, such as Digital Linear Tape (DLT). You may also use File Transfer Protocol (FTP).

WHAT ELSE SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT TRANSFERRING PERMANENT ELECTRONIC RECORDS?

- Electronic textual records should be logical collections of related records.

- NARA also accepts e-mail messages with attachments.

- Data files and databases require more extensive documentation than other electronic records, and a record layout and codes are required for each file.

- A completed Standard Form 258 (SF 258), Agreement to Transfer Records to the National Archives of the United States, accompanies the transfer. For electronic records, NARA signs the SF 258 after the processing is completed, not upon receipt of the records.

WHERE CAN I FIND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION?

Complete information about NARA regulations for transfer can be found at *www.archives.gov/research/electronic-records/transfer-records-to-nara.html*

For additional information and when ready to transfer electronic records, please contact the Electronic and Special Media Records Services Division:

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