

# Improving Electronic Records Programs in the SUNY System

## Needs Assessment Guide

September 2014

### **1. Introduction and Background**

Include a brief description of the repository, and its parent organization including when the repository was founded, where it fits in the overall organizational structure and any relevant projects undertaken by the repository. The introduction should also include a brief description of why the repository is undertaking the electronic records planning process.

### **2. Authority and Purpose**

Review any documentation authorizing the creation of the repository and defining its authority to collect, preserve, and make available historical records.

### **3. Personnel**

Describe the number of archives staff (including interns and volunteers), their background, training and their current responsibilities. Highlight archives staff's technical skills or any special computer or other technical training they have received. If Information Technology staff are participating in the development and implementation of a preservation system include information about their expertise and training.

### **4. Policy Review**

Ascertain if digital materials are mentioned in any of the repository's or parent organization's policy documents including, but not limited to

- Mission Statement
- Collection Policy
- Preservation Policy
- Access Policy
- Arrangement and Description Policy
- Strategic Plan

Determine if these policies are regularly reviewed and updated, or if they are in need of updating.

New York State Archives  
SUNY Plattsburgh  
National Historical Publications and Records Commission

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## **5. Budget and Financial Resources**

Examine the budget for both the repository and the information technology department. Do these provide adequate financial resources for the repository to operate and implement any recommendations for improving electronic records preservation? Summarize information collected in Section 1 of the *Technology Scan Checklist* here. In addition to information about annual budgets, it is important to determine if the repository has a long-term business plan that contributes to its overall sustainability.

## **6. Permanent or Archival Digital Records**

Certain active and inactive digital materials will eventually become the responsibility of the repository to preserve. Planning requires information about volume, storage media, file formats, and location of these archival or permanent digital record series. Information about these series was collected during the *Electronic Records Inventory* phase of the planning process.

You should also make note of any recordkeeping systems used to manage these records and any trigger events or retention periods that would initiate a transfer of records to the archives. Include a summary of information collected in section 6 of the *Technology Scan*.

## **7. Current Digital Holdings**

Describe what digital materials (born digital and digitized) are in the custody of the repository. Planning requires information about the number of collections with born-digital and digitized materials, their volume, storage media, file formats and location. This information was collected during the *Electronic Records Inventory*.

## **8. Information Technology Resources**

Digital preservation depends on an adequate technological infrastructure including a full spectrum of equipment, policies, staff, and resources. Include the information about funding, staffing, storage, backup, and security collected in sections 1 through 9 of the *Technology Scan Worksheet*.

## **9. Preservation Requirements**

Based on the information collected during the *Electronic Records Inventory* and the *Technology Scan* and the requirements outlined in the *Electronic Records Storage Requirements*, make specific recommendations for preserving the digital records on campus. These should include recommendations for the current holdings of the

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repository as well as any active digital materials that will eventually be transferred to the archives. Recommendations should account for standardizing storage media, migrating unstable file formats, capturing metadata, and providing access. Clearly defining preservation requirements will assist with creating an appropriate digital preservation environment on campus.

### Summary of Preservation Challenges

Having identified the preservation needs for your digital holdings and the available information technology resources; summarize the obstacles to implementing a digital preservation program on your campus. Clearly defining the problems you face will ensure your Needs Assessment and Electronic Records Plan meet the unique needs of your campus.

### Recommendations

The needs assessment recommendations identify corrective actions for any deficiencies or challenges identified in the previous sections. The recommendations will identify specific ways the repository can meet the *Electronic Records Storage Requirements* and build a sustainable program to manage and preserve digital materials. It is likely that one or more solution is available for any problem, and you will need to outline the pros and cons of each possible solution before making any final recommendations. Ultimately the recommendations from the needs assessment will form the backbone for the *Electronic Records Plan*.

When developing your recommendations it is important to prioritize short, medium and long-term problems and solutions. Short term solutions are easily implemented with existing resources or are ones that address permanent records in danger of becoming inaccessible. For example, transferring electronic records from CDs and DVDs to network storage. Medium term goals can be accomplished with small increases or adjustments in resources. Seeking out additional electronic records training opportunities for the College or University Archivist is a medium term goal. Longer term goals such as installing and testing digital repository software, require larger financial investment and use additional staff time. Prioritizing short medium and long-term goals will provide attainable measures of success for your Electronic Records Plan.

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## Advocacy

A concise outline of the challenges you face and recommended solutions can serve as an effective advocacy tool with campus administrators. It is likely you will need to request additional resources to implement the recommendations included in your Needs Assessment. Clearly defining the problems specific to your campus, recommending solutions and identifying the resources necessary to implement those changes, will help justify the increased investment.

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