

## IMPLEMENTATION TOOL

# Digitisation Projects FAQs

### WILL DIGITISING LEGACY RECORDS SAVE MY ORGANISATION MONEY AND STORAGE SPACE?

No, a digitisation project alone will not save you money and may not save you any storage space.

I've heard it said the cost of digitising a storage box of paper records is similar to the value of storing it for 99 years. If it's useless, there's no sense in that.

Hancox H (2019) 'Call off those "just in case" digitals and feel the savings', *iQ: The RIMPA Quarterly Magazine*, 35 (2): 27.

Digitising legacy records is not a quick fix. It is neither simple nor cheap.

Once you have digitised records, you need to manage and maintain them, sometimes for a very long time.

There are benefits to digitising records, but to get those benefits digitisation projects need to be well planned and carried out.

### WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF DIGITISING?

When programs and projects are planned and managed, digitisation can bring many benefits. Digitisation may allow you to:

- improve the accessibility of records within the agency, or externally
- integrate records with existing electronic document and records management systems (EDRMS) and business systems
- reduce reliance on hybrid paper and digital systems
- automate workflows
- enable and encourage data reuse
- preserve fragile paper records by using digital images instead
- reduce physical storage costs by destroying paper records after digitisation.

### WHAT TERMS DO I NEED TO UNDERSTAND?

We commonly refer to these recordkeeping terms when looking at digitisation:

Terms	Definitions
Legacy record	Closed records, also referred to as non-current records, created: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Under a previous / defunct recordkeeping system</li><li>2. Under a defunct function or activity</li><li>3. By a predecessor agency</li></ol>

<i>Terms</i>	<i>Definitions</i>
Permanent record	A record that will be transferred to the Tasmanian Archives to be retained permanently as State Archives.
Source document or Source record	A document or record that has been copied, converted or migrated or will be the input for such a process. A source record may be an original record, or it may be a reproduction that was generated by an earlier copying, conversion or migration process.
Temporary record	A records that can be destroyed under the authority of a retention and disposal schedule after a minimum retention period, or once certain requirements have been met.

### ARE DIGITISED RECORDS ADMISSIBLE AS EVIDENCE IN COURT?

Yes, they are.

Digitised images are admissible as evidence in court. However, the reliability or authenticity of the digital copy could be challenged. If recordkeeping policies and processes in your organisation are best practice and you can demonstrate this, then you can meet a legal challenge. You can do this with up-to-date, authorised policies and procedures, and digitisation specifications and quality control records.

### HOW DO I GET THE BENEFITS OF A DIGITISATION PROJECT?

Benefits can be realised by conducting thorough and long-term planning (including a cost-benefit analysis).

#### **OSA can help you plan your digitisation project.**

We often have clients contact us wanting to destroy digitised records but we have to say ‘no’ because the copies are not good enough. If you contact us early in the process, we can help you understand requirements and ensure project benefits.

Your plan should cover:

- reasons for the project and expected outcomes and benefits
- business needs and best treatment options for the different types of records
- records that have passed their retention time and can be disposed of
- records to be kept - you may need to maintain access to long term temporary records and permanent records
- file formats and specifications for digital copies to meet OSA standards
- equipment needed: for example, an office photocopier may not be able to digitise records to the required standard
- risk assessment: including security issues, ongoing retrievability and usability of records and the possible longer term consequences of inadequate digitisation processes
- metadata which must be captured to ensure records remain useful over time
- what records you will keep about your digitisation project.

### WHAT RECORDS OF A DIGITISATION PROJECT DO I NEED TO KEEP?

Keep records of:

- digitisation decisions and justifications
- planning documentation (project plans)
- relevant policies, scanning procedures and business processes
- details of the system and the digitisation or scanning specifications and controls
- quality assurance processes
- regular reviews.

Keeping good records establishes your credibility if there is ever a legal challenge to the validity of a digitised record.

### ONCE WE'VE DIGITISED RECORDS AND MET OSA STANDARDS, CAN WE DESTROY THE ORIGINAL (SOURCE) RECORDS?

In most cases, yes.

You can destroy temporary source records under *Disposal Schedule for Source Records (DA2159)* if:

- they are described in an authorised disposal schedule
- the digital copy is authentic, reliable, useable and complete (see *Guideline 8: Digitisation and Disposal of Source Records* for specifications).

You will need to retain the following types of source records:

- permanent records
- source records dated before 1960
- source records which may be needed for a current or pending Royal Commission.

You may also consider public perceptions or risk to reputation if you choose to destroy original source records when an inquiry is anticipated or underway. However, if you have a regular program of destruction of original source records, quality assurance processes etc, which you can demonstrate, this risk is lessened.

### WHAT ABOUT SOURCE RECORDS IN FORMATS OTHER THAN PAPER DOCUMENTS?

Legacy records come in all sorts of formats such as x-rays, maps, CD-ROMs, tapes, audio and/or visual recordings, and more. The same principles apply to these formats.

### WHAT ABOUT DESTROYING DIGITISED RECORDS THAT RELATE TO CHILDREN, WHICH ARE AFFECTED BY THE ROYAL COMMISSION FREEZE?

In December 2019, the State Archivist issued a freeze on the disposal of records relating to children. This was in response to the recommendations from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

You can destroy temporary child-related source records after seeking approval from OSA. Approved destruction may help manage your storage costs during the disposal freeze. Discuss your processes with OSA prior to destroying any hardcopy records which have been digitised.

A form in the [Royal Commission Toolkit](#) asks for descriptions of the records and details of your digitisation processes. OSA will review these details with you and give permission to destroy the source records if appropriate.

We recommend keeping a list of the hard copy records which have been destroyed.

### HOW DO I SAFELY AND SECURELY DESTROY THE ORIGINAL (SOURCE) RECORDS?

Destroyed records should be “unreadable and irretrievable”. For paper records this means pulping or shredding (not burning). For other formats, including digital, please refer to the *Australian Government Information Security Manual*.

If you use a service provider to destroy records, ensure that you get a Certificate of Destruction, which includes the method of destruction used.

You are not required to use a Register of Records Destroyed for source records.

### CAN DIGITISING RECORDS BE A WASTE OF MONEY?

Yes, you might be wasting money. Here are some examples:

- digitising records “just in case”, even though they have no business use, or they have passed their retention period
- using your photocopier to routinely scan important documents at low resolution. The State Archivist may not give you permission to destroy the source record. Many photocopiers have a very high resolution and can be used to scan to excellent quality – be aware that pre-set levels may not be good enough.

### REFERENCES

ASD (Australian Signals Directorate) (n.d.) [Australian Government Information Security Manual](#), ASD, Australian Government, accessed 23 September 2020. [The link targets a landing page, not a PDF.]

OSA (Office of the State Archivist) (2020) [Legal Admissibility of Records](#), OSA, Tasmanian Government, accessed 23 September 2020. [The link targets a landing page, not a PDF.]

OSA (Office of the State Archivist) (n.d.) [Royal Commission Toolkit](#), OSA Website, accessed 23 September 2020.

TAHO (Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office) (v1 2015) [Advice 21: Plan before you scan](#), TAHO, Tasmanian Government, accessed 23 September 2020. [The link targets a landing page, not a PDF.]

TAHO (Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office) (v2 2015) [Advice 30: Digitisation dilemmas](#), TAHO, Tasmanian Government, accessed 23 September 2020. [The link targets a landing page, not a PDF.]

TAHO (Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office) (v1 2015) [Checklist: Selecting Records for Digitisation](#), TAHO, Tasmanian Government, accessed 23 September 2020. [The link targets a landing page, not a PDF.]

TAHO (Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office) (v4 2015) [Disposal Schedule for Source Records \(DA2159\)](#), TAHO, Tasmanian Government, accessed 23 September 2020. [The link targets a landing page, not a PDF.]

TAHO (Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office) (v4 2015) [Guideline 8: Digitisation and disposal of source records](#), TAHO, Tasmanian Government, accessed 23 September 2020. [The link targets a landing page, not a PDF.]

TAHO (Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office) (v2 2015) [Guideline 21: Approved destruction methods for State Records](#), TAHO, Tasmanian Government, accessed 23 September 2020. [The link targets a landing page, not a PDF.]

### MORE INFORMATION

[Office of the State Archivist](#)

## CONTACT US

Office of the State Archivist | [www.informationstrategy.tas.gov.au](http://www.informationstrategy.tas.gov.au) | [osa@education.tas.gov.au](mailto:osa@education.tas.gov.au) | 03 6165 5581  
*Digitisation Project FAQs* is part of the *Tasmanian Government Information Management Framework*. It supports the *Information and Records Management Standard*. This is a living document and we will make minor changes as needed. If you notice anything that needs updating, please let us know.



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