

The National Archives and Records Administration

The Electronic Records Archives (ERA) Status: December 2010



The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) has been developing, testing, and refining the Electronic Records Archives (ERA) System since 2005. ERA is a technology system designed to preserve and manage NARA's electronic records and to manage the lifecycle of paper records and other holdings, including support for records retention schedules and the accessioning process for all Federal records. ERA is being developed in increments between 2005 and 2012 to build on prior accomplishments and add capabilities and capacity over time.

NARA is building ERA to fulfill its mission in the digital age: to safeguard and preserve the records of our government, ensure that the people can discover, use, and learn from this documentary heritage, and ensure continuing access to the essential documentation of the rights of American citizens and the actions of their government. This sheet summarizes NARA's progress to date in building ERA.

What We Have Accomplished

NARA has completed the production Data Center and Systems Operations Center at Allegany Ballistics Lab, Rocket Center, WV, and has deployed three instances of ERA. One of NARA's primary challenges was to preserve different types of records along with the processes and documentation required for each type. ERA accomplished this by designing separate subsystems, or instances, for each category of records governed by different rules, with shared access to universal services, such as public access and preservation.

Federal Records Instance (Base): Deployed June 2008

- Ingests, processes, and stores permanent electronic records
- Supports online creation and approval of records schedules for records in all formats
- Supports the accessioning of records in all formats into NARA legal custody
- Enables agencies to send electronic records to NARA using the ERA Packaging Tool
- Currently used by NARA electronic records staff, appraisal and accessioning archivists, and staff from 16 Federal agencies participating in the ERA deployment pilot
- Contains 6.6 TB of Federal records, including both legacy holdings and new accessions

Executive Office of the President Instance (EOP): Deployed December 2008

- Rapid ingest, search, and retrieval of electronic records from the George W. Bush Administration, including:
 - ✓ 82 TB of data
 - ✓ 250+ million electronic records indexed and available for search
 - ✓ 200+ million e-mail messages
 - ✓ 3+ million digital photographs
 - ✓ 30+ million other electronic records
- Currently used by approximately 30 archivists responding to special access requests
- 66,000+ searches conducted in the system so far

Congressional Records Instance (CRI): Deployed December 2009

- Designed for the unique requirements of Congressional records with dedicated ERA storage. It was developed for the use of the Center for Legislative Archives at NARA, the Office of the Clerk of the House, and the Office of the Secretary of the Senate.
- Flexible two-part model: ability to ingest and preserve Congressional e-records, regardless of format
 - ✓ Local reference and access copies are available at the main National Archives Building, which is only one mile from the Capitol
 - ✓ “Deep” preservation at ERA’s facility in Rocket Center, WV
- Both House and Senate records have been ingested, much more expected during 2010 and beyond

Online Public Access Prototype

- Defining the functionality and design of ERA’s online public access interface within context of NARA’s web presence and the Internet
- Prototype goals:
 - Integrated online search of catalog records (ARC), Archives.gov content, and electronic records holdings
 - Usable and appealing search and navigation
 - Results that present the record itself front and center
- Launched to staff for review and comment—July 2010
- Launch to general public—December 27, 2010

Transformation Framework Prototype

- Provides a framework that will enable us to easily swap in and swap out transformation tools and approaches
- Ensures that transformations result in authentic records
- Captures preservation metadata, including preservation actions taken and the relationship of the new version to the original
- Takes advantage of the work of other archives, institutions and archival prototypes

What Remains to be Done

- Integrate Online Public Access prototype into the production system
- Integrate Transformation prototype into the production system
- Provide ERA instance for classified records
- Support review of George W. Bush records for public access
- Fully deploy scheduling, accessioning, and electronic records transfer processes to Federal agencies
 - ERA will be NARA’s preferred way of doing business with agencies by July 2011
 - ERA use will be mandatory for Federal agencies in 2012