

**UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE**

**FOR MANAGEMENT**

**WASHINGTON**

APR 04 2022

The Honorable  
David S. Ferriero  
Archivist of the United States

Dear Mr. Ferriero:

The Department of State is pleased to provide the Senior Agency Official for Records Management annual report for 2021.

Throughout 2021 the Department continued to embrace and leverage emerging technologies to transition to electronic recordkeeping in the hybrid work environment brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Department's progress in adapting to online work tools and virtual collaboration platforms better enabled the mobile workforce to manage electronic records.

Despite its success in managing born-digital records in an electronic format, the Department still faces complex challenges in achieving full compliance with the "Transition to Electronic Records," mandate (M-19-21). Particularly, the digitization aspect of Goal 1.1 – to manage and preserve all permanent records in an electronic format – requires intensive financial, human and information technology resources that have not been funded or prioritized. Additionally, the pandemic severely reduced NARA's and the interagency's operational capacity to transfer eligible permanent paper records to reduce the volume of paper needing to be digitized.

We look forward to our continued partnership with you and your staff. My point of contact for this effort is Deputy Assistant Secretary Eric F. Stein. He may be reached at 202-485-2051 or at [SteinEF@state.gov](mailto:SteinEF@state.gov).

Sincerely,



John Bass

Enclosures:

As stated.



## ***Senior Agency Official for Records Management 2021 Annual Report***

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) requires Senior Agency Officials for Records Management (SAORM) to provide an annual report demonstrating how agencies are handling important records management initiatives as identified by NARA.

NARA uses the reports to determine the overall progress of the federal government in managing its records and the transition away from paper to digital formats, and to identify best practices and model solutions within federal agencies.

On June 28, 2019, the Office of Management and Budget and the National Archives issued a memorandum: *Transition to Electronic Records* (M-19-21) to ensure that all federal records are created, retained, and managed in electronic formats by December 31, 2022. On January 1, 2021, Congress enacted the Preservation of Electronic Messages and Other Records Act, amending 44 U.S.C. Chapter 29, that requires the electronic capture, management, and preservation of such electronic records in accordance with the records disposition requirements of 44 U.S.C. Chapter 33. This year's SAORM report provides an opportunity for agencies to report on plans and progress towards electronic records keeping and preservation under both these

requirements, as well as other important records management initiatives.

**The reporting period begins on January 10, 2022, and reports are due back to NARA no later than March 11, 2022.**

NARA plans to post your 2021 SAORM report on the NARA website upon receipt. Please ensure that your agency's report is a publicly releasable version. This action is in the interest of transparency in government and to promote collaboration and communication among agencies. NARA intends to list any non-responding agencies in a summary report and on the website.

Instructions for Reporting:

- This template covers records management program developments towards the transition to electronic recordkeeping outlined in M-19-21 through December 31, 2021, and other aspects of agency records management programs.
- Please be brief and precise in your answers. Limit answers to each question to no more than 500 words.
- Please complete the questions/items below and send the report to [rmsselfassessment@nara.gov](mailto:rmsselfassessment@nara.gov). Include the words “SAORM 2021 Annual Report - [Agency Name]” in the subject line of the email.
- If you are responsible for records management in multiple agencies, components, or bureaus, please determine how you will submit reports to NARA. While NARA prefers a comprehensive report, you may submit separate reports for each component.

Provide the following information (required):

- Name of SAORM: John R. Bass

- Position title: Under Secretary for Management
- Address: U.S. Department of State  
2201 C St. NW  
Washington D.C., 20520

**1. What agencies, bureaus, components, or offices are covered by this report and your position as SAORM and which will be reporting separately?**

The Department of State.

**2. Has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted policies or practices related to records management at your agency?**

- Yes  
 No  
 Do not know

The Department's records program continues to adapt to growing demands placed on it by the adoption of information technologies that enables a mobile workforce. The Department's records program expanded outreach and guidance activities in response to these growing demands.

**3. Does your agency have an established information governance framework that connects records management, data management, and other agency information lines of business? (A relationship between CIO, CDO, SAORM, DRO/ARO, RM Staff, Security, Privacy Officers, and FOIA)**

- Yes  
 No

Do not know

The Enterprise Data Council (EDC) provides executive oversight and informed decision making on priorities and goals identified by its subgroup, the Electronic Records Management Working Group (ERMWG). These groups coordinate resources and institutional knowledge from records management, information technology (IT), cyber security, budget planning, the historians, technical experts and senior leadership.

**4. Will your agency meet the goal to manage and preserve all permanent records in an electronic format with appropriate metadata by December 31, 2022? (M-19-21, 1.2)**

Yes

No

Do not know

As reported in previous years, the Department's central archive, known as eRecords, is ingesting and preserving all formats of permanent, born-digital objects pursuant to the National Archives and Records Administration's (NARA) bulletin 2015-04. However, the Department's holdings of permanent, legacy paper records exceed approximately 30,000 cubic feet in volume of inactive records at the Department's Records Service Center and active records currently stored in agency space.

Digitizing the holdings pursuant to the "Transition to Electronic Recordkeeping" (M-19-21) deadlines, requires intensive financial, human and information technology resources that have not been funded or prioritized. While the Department has met several goals of M-19-21, the financial resourcing alone required to fund Goal 1.2 has proven very burdensome due to the scale of the Department's global paper holdings. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has substantially reduced the

interagency operational capacity to transfer custody of or accession permanent records to NARA.

Even with appropriate resourcing, the Department would not be able to digitize permanent paper records en masse because the regulation for permanent records digitization has not been codified.

**5. Will your agency meet the goal to manage and preserve all temporary records in an electronic format by December 31, 2022? (M-19-21, 1.3)**

- Yes
- No
- Do not know

The Department continues to transition paper-based business processes to electronic and digital platforms while updating records disposition schedules to reflect these new processes. As a matter of policy, the Department already manages and preserves temporary records that are created electronically. While the Department does not have the resources to digitize its legacy temporary paper records, especially those of short-term value, the Department's temporary paper holdings will decrease as individual domestic offices and overseas posts destroy them pursuant to the appropriate records disposition schedule.

**6. Does your agency have plans to submit to NARA a request for an exception to the M-19-21 requirements before December 31, 2022?**

- Yes
- No
- Do not know

The Department will continue working with the National Archives to finalize its exception requests prior to the deadline.

**7. Is your agency utilizing the General Services Administration's Special Item Number for Electronic Records Management (518210 ERM) to procure solutions to assist in transitioning to an Electronic Environment?**

- Yes
- No
- Do not know

Status updates regarding the adoption of this special item number are provided to General Services Administration and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) pursuant to OMB Memorandum M-19-16 reporting requirements.

**8. Has your agency developed plans to meet the requirements of M-19-21, 1.3 to store temporary records in commercial storage facilities by December 31, 2022?**

- Yes
- No
- Do not know

The Department has planned to leverage commercial storage facilities depending upon the adjudication of the Department's exception request and funding.

**9. Do you, as the SAORM, see challenges within your agency in meeting the goal of fully electronic recordkeeping?**

- Yes
- No

Do not know

The Department continues to embrace and leverage emerging technologies to meet the goal of fully electronic recordkeeping. Although the Department has met previous OMB Memorandum M-19-21 deadlines for managing born digital records electronically, digitizing most of the Department's paper holdings into an electronic format without additional resourcing will not likely be achievable.

**10. NARA is always working on ways we can make your role as SAORM easier, improve how we interact with you and how you interact with each other. Do you have any suggestions?**

Yes

X No

Do not know

The Department has no suggestions currently, but the Department welcomes additional opportunities for increased collaboration.