

National Archives and Records Administration
Pre-Accessioning: A Strategy for Preserving Permanent Electronic Records
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What is pre-accessioning?

- Pre-accessioning is when agencies transfer to the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) a copy of permanently valuable electronic records while retaining legal custody and control over access to the records.
- NARA archivally processes and preserves these records and maintains physical custody until the time at which records are scheduled to transfer into NARA's legal custody.
- Agencies will keep their duplicate copy of the records and retain responsibility for responding to discovery efforts, Freedom of Information Act requests, or reference inquiries until legal custody of the records is transferred to NARA.

How does pre-accessioning benefit my agency?

- An agency benefits from free, off-site security copies and long-term preservation of electronic records scheduled as permanently valuable.
- An agency protects its dissemination program while turning long-term preservation over to NARA.
- An agency maintains access control over highly sensitive records while ensuring their long-term preservation.

Why is pre-accessioning important?

- Pre-accessioning enables NARA to ensure the long-term preservation of electronic records scheduled as permanently valuable.
- Pre-accessioning allows NARA to process electronic records early in the life cycle before potential loss of access and intellectual control due to technological and program change.

How do agencies transfer records for pre-accessioning?

- Contact NARA for consultation.
- Complete and sign an SF-258, indicating in Block 11 the date at which the records are eligible for the transfer of legal custody.
- Send the signed SF 258 to NARA along with a copy of records.
- NARA will process the records, sign Block 3A, and return a copy to the agency.

How will the legal custody be transferred to NARA?

- At the time of the date indicated in Block 11, NARA will contact the agency to ensure that legal custody can be transferred.
- If the agency has no objections, NARA will sign Block 16 and accept legal custody of the records. Only at this time will NARA assume responsibility for providing reference services for the electronic records.

For more information on pre-accessioning and transferring electronic records, visit our website at <http://www.archives.gov/research/electronic-records/info-for-archivists.html>.

Contact the Electronic and Special Media Records Services Division:

cer@nara.gov
(301) 837-3420