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GUIDELINES FOR DIGITIZING OR MICROFILMING RECORDS

This guidance document is intended to provide you some assistance in making an informed decision on whether to digitize or microfilm your agency's records.

To help you decide whether you wish to digitize and/or microfilm your agency's records, please use this guidance and the companion guidance: "Quick Guide to the Best Record Format" found on the RIMS homepage.

Advantages of Digitized Records

- Freeing up storage space in your office
- Increased access to records across several locations
- Increased access to information by publishing material online

Advantages of Microfilmed Records

- Freeing up storage space in your office - microfilm requires 2% of the space used for paper records
- Stability of medium over a long period of time
- You can create digitized images of records from microfilm

Digitizing and/or microfilming records can be an expensive process so you need to decide whether the cost/benefit ratio is acceptable to your agency. Please use the following table to determine whether the cost of digitizing or microfilming records may be worth it.

Situation	Total Retention Period-Less Than 10 years	Total Retention Period-Greater Than 10 years
Lack of storage space and increased access/online publishing not required	Don't digitize - send original paper records to a Records Center	Microfilm records or send original paper records to a Records Center
Lack of storage space and increased access/online publishing required	Consider digitizing but as the retention period is short, make sure the cost is justifiable	Consider microfilming for preservation of records and digitizing the microfilm for access/online publishing
Have storage space and increased access/online publishing not required	Don't digitize - keep original paper records	Don't digitize or microfilm records - keep original paper records
Have storage space and increased access/online publishing required	Consider digitizing but as the retention period is short, make sure the cost is justifiable	Keep original paper records and consider digitizing for access/online publishing

Access and Preservation

You may wish to utilize the advantages of both digitized and microfilmed records i.e. publish the records online and/or have easy distribution of the records and still have them in a stable medium for preservation purposes over a long time frame.

Central Micrographics Services can digitize and microfilm/fiche records at the same time, which will give you the electronic copy suitable for easy distribution and online publishing if required but also allows you to have the records on microfilm, which is the better format for preserving them over a long period of time.

Are Digitized or Microfilmed Records Allowed?

In the vast majority of cases, having a digitized or microfilm copy of the paper original as the only copy is allowable. However, there are isolated cases where the original paper copy is required to be maintained so before you start to digitize or microfilm paper records in the hope of destroying the paper originals, check the regulations relating to the records that you are hoping to digitize or microfilm and destroy to ensure that you are allowed to do so.

Updating Your Agency Records Retention and Disposition Schedule

If you are digitizing or microfilming records and your current agency records retention and disposition schedule does not show this, it must be updated to reflect your new business practice. Contact the RIMS immediately to begin the process of updating your schedule.

Destroying Original Paper Records

Once you have the digitized or microfilm version of the paper originals, do not destroy the originals until the copy has been verified as being a "true & correct" copy of the original.

The destruction of paper records needs to be carried out as per the procedures found in the RIMS Manual section 15. The Manual can be found on the RIMS homepage.