



# CHECKLIST FOR THE IT-STAFF



## 1. Preface

Durable and reliable electronic record-keeping demands careful planning from the first moment of creation. The creation, management and record-keeping of electronic records is a shared responsibility for the IT- users, IT- staff and the archivists. A checklist is being prepared for each of the involved parties. This document contains a checklist with the most important points of interest for the IT-staff.

- developing or choosing a new application
- implementing a new application
- changing an existing application
- cutting back on an application
- transferring documents to another application
- the record-keeping

## 2. Records with archival value?

This check-list is only applicable for applications in which electronic documents are created with archival value. The archives, in collaboration with the administration, decide whether or not the documents have archival value. The archives need contextual information about the provenance, the work process, the function and the nature of the documents to determine if the documents have any archival value. It is therefore necessary that the IT-responsible keep a detailed day-to-day inventory of the electronic information systems. This is in the best interest for the IT-responsible: he/she can find out quickly if certain electronic documents will be archived and if they need any special care.

## 3. The checklist



### **... when developing or choosing a new application:**

- Keep documentation about the information system: workflow, architecture, file formats, data patterns, user manuals, etc.
- anticipate the necessary functionalities for the registration of contextual data (metadata) of the documents. Automatic registration is the most opportune way. If this isn't possible, then some the metadata fields have to be filled out manually by the user. These data, together with the related documents, have to be brought

outside the system.

- make sure that the electronic documents are accessible without or outside the information system within they were received or created.
  - Separate application software and documents within the information system.
  - apply as many (IT) standards as possible (f.i. encoding, compression applications)
  - Save the electronic documents in a transparent and accessible format that can be consulted with several applications. Use preferable open file formats with a standard status instead of closed, software or company dependent formats. (see: *Digital Archiving: guideline & advice record-keeping: guideline & advice number 4. Standards for file formats*)
  
- decide in consultation with the archives which documents have archival value and which computer files can be destroyed. When following this procedure, you know exactly which files may be eliminated (f.i. to relieve the system), which documents need a record-keeping solution and the impact on the restoring capacity.
- determine when documents will be archived: after reaching a certain file size? With a certain frequency?
- make regular back-ups to avoid data loss in case of an accident. Provide for a secure and clear-cut back-up procedure and appoint the persons who are responsible for it. Store back-up tapes off-site.
- install an high enough safety level to ensure the reliability of the electronic information. Prevent data manipulations or unlawful access of information. (f.i. access- and version checks & audits)
- A procedure for the record-keeping of data should be installed in dynamical systems where data is being written over, (f.i. snapshots periodically archived, keeping record of basic version and changes.)
- Make sure that documents can be definitely stored:
  - Avoid data being changed after their being recorded in dynamical fields.
  - Provide for version management when information is being re-used.
  - Prevent users from being able to change or erase recorded documents.
- Keep electronic documents as much as possible in your own custody. Try to avoid third parties from managing your data. If this management isn't within the own organisation, then you should provide for clean-cut agreements and engagements.
- provide for a procedure to grant access to electronic information to all concerned parties.



### **... when introducing a new application:**

- Record explicitly the necessary contextual data about the information system. (f.i. in the inventory): creator, function, workprocess, functionalities, information system, documents created within the information system, etc.
- Provide for the necessary training and education so each user can produce well created electronic documents. Indicate to the users that these documents belong to the organisation and that others need to have access. Inform co-workers of the archival value of electronic documents which are created or stored with this application.
- store the data at a safe location. Designate a storageplace (f.i. a certain folder) for electronic documents when the user can choose this option freely. (f.i. desktop

applications)

- indicate how users should classify electronic documents. (see: *Digital Archiving:guldeline & aDvice nr.3 Directory structures and file names for electronic documents*)



### **...when changing an existing application (extension, upgrade)**

- Document the changes: date, which changes, etc (f.i. in the inventory)
- Check if the changes have consequences for the accessibility of documents which were created in earlier versions. If necessary, transfer the documents to the new application and archive the documents who aren't transferred.
- Take into account the possible consequences of the changes for the creation, classification or archival value of the documents.



### **...when scaling down an application:**

- Start designing the scale down of an application a considerable time in advance. Inform the archival services as soon as possible after the decision to cancel an information system with records is taken, so that the necessary migration steps can be planned.
- Archive the electronic records who aren't being transferred to the new application. Indicate clearly which documents are being transferred.
- Make sure that the necessary record metadata is being archived or transferred.
- wait for the approval of the archives before running down the computer information system. Keep applications functional and destroy records only after the approval of the archives.



### **...when transferring documents to another application:**

- Research in advance the consequences for the content, structure and lay-out of electronic documents.
- Make sure that all the necessary data is being transferred together with the documents
- Document the transfer (practical realization, data mapping, los of information, etc.)



### **...when archiving:**

- Keep documentation on the record-keeping action: which migration was performed? Mapping of components? Which components weren't archived? Was there a los of information? For which time period were the documents archived?
- Transfer the electronic documents to a file format that is supported by the archival services.
- Check if specific hard-or software is demanded to consult the electronic documents. Verify if the archives have the necessary hard- and software, licences and manuals.
- Transfer the electronic documents without compression or encryption. If this isn't possible: make sure that the archives have the matching keys or software to

decompress or decrypte

- remove all passwords that protect the access to the documents.
- always check the records with archival value for computer virusses before depositing them at the archives.
- come to an agreement about computer files that have to be deposited: appropriate or maximum file sizes, construction of file names and folder structure in which the files will be transfered.
- don't just preserve the actual records, but also the related files which are necessary to get access: indexes, queries, stylesheets, etc.
- discuss with the archival services the way files have to be transfered: through a network? On a carrier (type medium, file system, writting method, density, recording speed, number, etc.)?
- liquidate or remove electronic documents in the active system only after approval from the archives. The archival services will perform the transfer only after a quality control. Computer files are only definitely erased when the area is over written or the carrier is gased or destroyed. Keep this in mind when liquidating confidential documents or documents who hold personal details.

#### 4. ? Questions? Suggestions ?



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