

Managing digital records: 5.4

5.4 Managing web records

Many organisations are not aware that it can be important to create and maintain records of their website. Key information is made available via websites and significant business transacted there but often no recordkeeping is performed to support and document these activities. This section provides some guidance on managing web records.

Issue:	Resolution:
<p>We are having difficulties convincing management of the need to properly manage our web records</p>	<p>Your website is your public gateway. Significant numbers of people use it as their first stop for information, advice and increasingly services.</p> <p>You have business and legal requirements (under the State Records Act) to keep records of your website. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • website content • business transacted on your website • website administration <p>If you don't keep web records business continuity could be affected. For example, you may need information about online transactions to conduct ongoing business operations.</p> <p>If you don't keep web records there could also be legal and accountability issues. For example, could you provide the specific advice that appeared on your website on a specific day? If not, what are the potential legal, financial and credibility issues associated with this?</p>
<p>We don't know how to determine which web records to keep</p>	<p>You should develop a strategy that will allow you to make and keep an adequate record of the business published or transacted on your website.</p> <p>The extent of your recordkeeping should be based on risk assessment. Detailed and regular recordkeeping may be required for high risk business areas of your website. A less rigorous approach may be applied in areas that are subject to less risk.</p> <p>The level and method of web recordkeeping will differ from organisation to organisation. It all depends on the nature of your website. Websites can be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • relatively static information repositories • fluid repositories of public information • inclusive of form based interactivity • based on search or query based access to information • dynamically generated, or • all of the above. ¹ <p>Understanding the type of website you have, how business is conducted there and the risks or opportunities provided by web recordkeeping will</p>

¹ These different types of websites are discussed in detail in National Archives of Australia, *Guidelines for archiving web resources*, March 2001, viewed June 2008, <http://www.naa.gov.au/Images/archweb_guide_tcm2-903.pdf>.

	help you to determine the type of web recordkeeping that is right for you.
We need to understand our options for capturing and managing web records	<p>There are many different options that you can consider for your web recordkeeping. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • capturing the entire website at predetermined intervals • capturing every change that occurs but only where it occurs in the website • capturing records deemed to be 'significant' as they occur • capturing records to ensure a record of who authored and published the web page and when it was published is retained • building an interface between your web content management system and your records management system • activating the records management functionality in your content management system • periodically producing reports from your content management system about changes made to the site, including the authors and the dates of these changes • saving data when it is emailed to an account after a user completes an online form • saving a report from a database after information is input by a user completing an online form • printing each page as it is published and attaching it to a file • documenting the overall structure of your website, periodically saving a copy of your site map as a record • making sure that you keep the online forms that users access, not just the data that the users input • automating capture of web pages as they are published • manually capturing pages into a records management system • capturing changes at the web browser (harvesting) • capturing transactions at the web server • capturing records from back end sources • maintaining a replica online website archive ² • periodically capturing (potentially at website launch, review and decommissioning) details of the technology used to deliver the website, web content authoring procedures, policies and standards and relevant information management policies that show how the website was used and managed. ³

² The methods of capturing changes at the web browser, capturing transactions at the web server, capturing records from back end sources and maintaining a replica online website archive are taken from and discussed extensively in Public Record Office of Victoria, Advice 20b: *Technical issues for capturing web-generated records*, February 2008, viewed June 2008, <http://www.prov.vic.gov.au/records/Web_Advice/PROVRMAdvice20b.pdf>.

³ As suggested in Public Record Office of Victoria, Advice 20a: *Web generated records*, December 2007, viewed June 2008, <http://www.prov.vic.gov.au/records/Web_Advice/PROVRMAdvice20a.pdf>.

<p>We don't know how long to keep web records for</p>	<p>Web records are covered by the same legal disposal requirements that apply to all other government records.</p> <p>For NSW government organisations, General Retention and Disposal Authority – <i>Administrative records</i> (GA28) at <http://www.records.nsw.gov.au/recordkeeping/introduction_12727.asp> outlines retention requirements for web records in 17.5.0 Production. For local government organisations General Retention and Disposal Authority – <i>Local Government records</i> (GDA10) at <http://www.records.nsw.gov.au/recordkeeping/local_government_records_(gda_10)_4763.asp> outlines the retention requirements for web records in section 2.10.</p>
<p>We need to know where to obtain further information</p>	<p>See the State Records guideline <i>Keeping web records</i> at <http://www.records.nsw.gov.au/recordkeeping/guideline_20_keeping_web_recor_14810.asp> for more advice.</p> <p>For guidance on managing Web 2.0 records such as blogs and wikis see State Records' guideline <i>Records management and Web 2.0</i> at <http://www.records.nsw.gov.au/recordkeeping/government-recordkeeping-manual/guidance/guidelines/Guideline-24-Records-management-and-web-2.0/Records-management-and-web-2.0>.</p>

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ISBN: 978-0-9805148-9-6