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CALIFORNIA STATE ARCHIVES

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Dear Records Managers:

As you know, the State Archives collects, catalogs, preserves, and provides access to the historic records of California state government. You may be familiar with the way the Archives appraises and "flags" records listed on retention schedules that have archival value. These records may be in various media and formats: paper, microfilm, maps, microfiche, motion picture film, and electronic formats. To comply with state law and to assist us in identifying records that have archival value, it is vital that all records--including electronic records--be included in your records survey and on your records retention schedule.

We realize that electronic records present different and unique challenges. They are often in proprietary formats and may also be so voluminous and widely distributed that a full accounting may be more difficult than with traditional formats. This makes good records management a vital step in the identification and preservation of these valuable records. Here are some tips to help you with this important task:

- Please remember that electronic records should be listed as a media type under the appropriate records description and not as separate series.
- If you have undertaken a scanning project, please remember to indicate on your records schedule that these records now exist in both their original format and as scanned images in electronic format. This will help us identify such document management systems and work with IT experts and you on methods of preserving those digital records that the Archives wants to preserve.
- Databases and electronic indexes are often essential supplements to other records, providing users with the only efficient method to identify the materials they need. As you prepare or update record retention schedules, please look for such databases and indexes and list them with the appropriate record series.
- Please include any websites on the retention schedule as records associated with the units and divisions who write or produce their content.
- Do look for records stored only in electronic format. For example, we all know that every division creates emails that are official public records. Please list email as a format under the appropriate records description. We recognize that printing out email is a solution that some agencies are using. Increasingly, however, users of public records are expecting that we will be able to provide access to the records in their original digital format.

This list is by no means comprehensive, but is simply designed to help us all in thinking about these records.

Early identification of electronic records is most critical to their long-term survival. I am available to talk with you, to work with you and your IT staff to identify these records, and (where appropriate) to discuss transfer strategies. There are technological and practical problems in terms of preserving these records and the State Archives looks forward to working with you on this pressing task.

Additional information regarding this topic can be found at the State Archives Electronic Records Management webpage <http://www.sos.ca.gov/archives/programs/electronic-records/>.

Sincerely,



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