

Info-shot:

## Storage and Preservation of Paper and Digital Records

What are the issues?

Non-archival paper records do not require the most rigorous storage standards. They need to be kept dry, cool and secure. Digital records need to be in systems which are secure, on formats that maintain their authenticity and the media and hardware needs to be housed in a physical environment which prolongs their life. They also need to be subject to a preservation strategy if they are being kept for longer than about five years. Sometimes you have no choice as to whether you have in-house or commercial storage but the principles for best practice remain the same and you should specify requirements along the same line for both.

### Commercially Managed Storage

- Prior to invitation to tenders scope out precisely what you need so you can assess bids against requirements. The specification should include:
  - the amount of space
  - the density of storage
  - fire and flood prevention, detection and combatting requirements and existence of disaster plan
  - Minimum environmental conditions and monitoring
  - space for records to be consulted if appropriate, including copying, faxing and phone facilities; for digital records might need computers, software etc.
  - exact nature of retrieval services – by box, delivery to your premises etc.
  - Security requirements (including staff access)
- Do not surrender control of your finding aids to commercial storage services as negotiating their release may prove expensive if you want to change contractors
- Be sure to have service requirements in the contract such as maximum retrieval times with a penalty for non-achievement
- With digital records specify standards to be met for storage temperature and humidity
- Itemise details of copying and migration processes for digital records together with validation and quality control procedures

## Managing In-house Storage

- If you are managing paper and digital media you need to ensure the environment meets requirements to ensure preservation for the full retention period
- Digital records media and formats should have refreshment and migration schedules when accessioned and you should incorporate acting on these into the management regime
- To effectively manage your own storage area you will need to develop:
  - Transfer procedures and documentation
  - Location register
  - Production or retrieval tracking procedures and documentation, including performance or service targets. With digital records you will need to consider whether copy records will be given to users, they can view records over the inter or intranet or they will be required to view on a computer in the storage area
  - Procedures for environmental monitoring and housekeeping/maintenance
- Situate records according to frequency of retrieval and/or randomly to make the best use of space
- Don't accept any records without a retention action date
- Stipulate that all records in a box must have the same retention date

## Destruction of Records

- Destruction procedures should include:
  - Accurate lists of records to be destroyed
  - Specification of method of destruction
  - Authorisation of destruction
  - Certificate of destruction
  - With digital records you may need to verify that the media is effectively destroyed, including hard disks

