



## Format of records for public access

The purpose of this Advice is to explain the reasons for, and methods of meeting section 29 of the *Territory Records Act 2002*.

### **Format of records**

Section 29 of the *Territory Records Act 2002* enables a person to request access to a record, to which they are allowed to access, in a format of their choice. If it is a digital record, the person is allowed to request it in that format or a different format. If the record is a sound recording, or in shorthand or other encoded material access may be requested through a written transcript of the words.

However, the agency may give access subject to conditions to ensure the safe custody and proper preservation of the record and not in the format of the requestor's choice. The agency also may give access in a different format for other reasons, such as, it is not practicable because the agency does not have, and cannot readily obtain, equipment necessary to give access that way or would be unreasonable because of the cost to the agency in giving access that way.

The processes and policies made in relation to provision of material for access are included in the agency Records Management Program.

### **Criteria for digitisation for access**

Section 22 of the *Territory Records Act 2002* states that an agency must ensure the safekeeping and proper preservation of its records and section 23 sets out the measures for preservation. Territory Archives may be digitised for access or preservation. *Guideline No. 6 Digital Records* contains information on digital preservation strategy. Because of the varying condition, format and uniqueness of the archives, a priority list of those materials most in need of migration to preservation media should be made.

Where access or preservation copies have not been made, the criteria are:

1. the benefit to be gained by digitisation;
2. status as a Territory Archive;
3. condition, characteristics and suitability of the original record;
4. the obsolescence of the format of the original record;
5. the availability of playback or viewing equipment suited to the format of the original record;
6. the record is in a record series that is going to be digitised; and
7. the level of demand.

Where access or preservation copies have been made, the criteria are:

1. the condition of the copy;
2. the age of the copy;
3. the obsolescence of the format;
4. the availability of playback or viewing equipment suited to the format;
5. the level of demand.

Other agency material can also be digitised using the above criteria.

Physical and equipment considerations can also be evaluated as records may need to be processed separately. Some records are physically harder to scan than others. For example, large format records, plans and maps, records with reflective surfaces, handwritten in coloured ink, bound volumes or fragile material requires specialised scanning equipment and techniques.

There may be a business decision not to scan some records or to digitise new paper records in addition to access and preservation copies. Before these are made:

1. careful analysis to gauge the benefit is required;
2. goals and policies need to be formulated;
3. stringent risk management analysis is undertaken;
4. technical specifications are listed; and
5. the possibilities of collaboration are investigated.

Once material has been digitised, the source record may, under certain circumstance be disposed of. The *Standard for Records Management Number 9: Records Digitisation and Conversion* sets principles and minimum standards for the management of records that have been converted to a different format across the ACT Government to ensure compliance with all legislative and best practice recordkeeping requirements applicable to the ACT Government so that:

- records that are worth preserving as Territory Archives in their original or undigitised or source format as part of ACT's archival heritage are preserved;
- records that need to be retained in their original or undigitised or source format for a specified period to satisfy legal, financial or other requirements of public administration, are retained for the specified period;
- original or source records of converted records that do not fall into the above two categories may be disposed of.

### ***Intellectual property, copyright and privacy***

When digitising for access, for example, publishing images of maps or photos to a website, be aware of any copyright or intellectual property implications. Ensure that the item can legally be placed in the public domain.

Contact: [copyright@act.gov.au](mailto:copyright@act.gov.au) for further information on ACT Government copyright.