

**Guidelines for Electronic Records
Management On
State and Federal Websites**



**GUIDELINES FOR ELECTRONIC RECORDS MANAGEMENT ON
STATE AND FEDERAL WEBSITES**



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Records managers will need to devote resources immediately to ensuring that state and federal web-based electronic records are managed and preserved as are other official records of government. Findings from a one year study completed by Co-principal investigators Charles R. McClure and J. Timothy Sprehe, and funded by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) include the following:

- Policy for electronic records management (ERM) of websites at the Federal and state level is confusing, ambiguous, and contradictory.
- The "state of the art" for ERM of state and Federal websites is rapidly changing and evolving; there are new practices and techniques being developed by selected Federal agencies are developing new practices.
- At the Federal level, until there are better guidelines and policy, individual agencies will have to develop their own policy and "best practices" for ERM of websites.

- For a number of states, issues related to ERM of websites are only now being recognized as to their importance and impact.

These and other findings resulted from a range of data collection activities including site visits to state and federal agencies, surveys and interviews at professional conferences and meetings, and online analysis of state and federal websites.

A major product from this research project is "Guidelines for Electronic Records Management of State and Federal Websites," co-authored by McClure and Sprehe. The Guidelines are available on McClure's homepage <<http://istweb.syr.edu/~mcclure/>>. These guidelines should be seen as a first step in an ongoing process of developing both policy and specific strategies for ERM of state and federal websites.

Two main perspectives offered in these guidelines are critical for the overall success of any government ERM initiative related to websites. First, is the idea of "accountability exposure analysis" which suggests that different websites have different levels of accountability exposure for ERM and must plan accordingly. For example some websites have very sensitive information for which the agency liability could be substantial. Second, successful ERM of websites will require careful coordination among key positions such as the records manager, the webmaster, and the creator of the electronic information.

State and Federal agencies must recognize that they are accountable for maintaining accurate information on a website, for managing the content of that website, determining what is appropriate for inclusion on that site, preserving as per traditional disposition requirements "significant" or "historically important" information, and being able to justify why records are removed and under what time requirements -- to name but a few of the issues. McClure and Sprehe will conduct a conference on April 22, 1998 in Washington DC to provide in-depth review and discussion of these and other issues and policies related to ERM of websites.

This project briefing will review selected key issues related to the development of guidelines for ERM of state and federal websites; it will discuss key aspects of the proposed guidelines and the final report written by McClure and Sprehe; and it will offer recommendations for next steps in the development and refinement of the existing guidelines.