

Scanning paper records can be useful for broadening access to important information, integration with University enterprise systems, and streamlining business and recordkeeping practices. However, document imaging projects should not be embarked upon simply to combat storage problems or to “go paperless” without a project management plan in place.

Remember: a record is a record, regardless of format. Imaged records with active retention periods must be applied and managed, and appropriate disposition action taken as necessary. While the University has no standardized imaging guidelines*, there are a number of factors that should be taken into consideration when planning an imaging project:

Imaging Considerations

- Common minimum scanning resolution is 300dpi; 200dpi may be acceptable for clean, typed, black and white documents.
- Consider your minimum imaging specifications based on document quality; grayscale, 8 bit depth, etc...
- For OCR purposes, 600dpi black and white bitonal settings may be preferable.
- Consider open source, sustainable file formats such as PDF/A, TIFF, or JPEG2000.
- Standardized file naming and metadata should be applied consistently.
- Visual quality control should be applied to all imaged documents.

Management Considerations

- Are these official records your office is responsible for providing access to?
- If imaging active records, how will version control be maintained to ensure authenticity?
- How are your imaged records being backed-up, either by your department or the University?
- How will you migrate your records from the current platform should the software become obsolete?
- What safeguards are in place to ensure appropriate access and to avoid accidental deletions?

Guidelines and Best Practices

- The Federal government provides codified electronic records policies via the [Federal Agency Digital Guidelines Initiative](#) and the [National Archives and Records Administration](#) recommends selecting sustainable formats to ensure accessibility throughout records lifecycle.
- The [Pennsylvania State Archives](#) recommends using PDF/A format for long-term storage of electronic records, as outlined in [Policy Regarding Long Term and Archival Records in Electronic Format](#). All records “must be...findable, retrievable, and renderable for the entire length of the retention period.”
- The [Ohio Electronic Records Committee](#) identifies best practices and resources for the access and management of the electronic records of Ohio public entities.
- The [Northeast Document Conservation Center](#) publishes a number of guidelines and best practices concerning scanning and digitizing records.
- The Association for Library Collections & Technical Services, a Division of the American Library Association, offers [Mini-mum Digitization Capture Recommendations](#).

For more information on imaging paper records, contact the Archives & Special Collections in the University Library System using the [Ask-an-Archivist form](#).

* The University of Pittsburgh does not contract with a preferred University vendor for scanning or digitization services. Scanning services are not covered under the University’s contract with Access. Departments that contract with third party vendors assume all financial responsibility and content liability associated with such projects.