Office of the
State Archivist

Digitisation Toolkit FAQs

IMPLEMENTATION TOOL

DIGITISATION TOOLKIT: KEY TERMS EXPLAINED

Digitisation refers to creating digital files from legacy or original records through a process of scanning, copying, converting, or migrating. In the *Digitisation Toolkit*, we are usually referring to scanning paper records.

Legacy records are closed, inactive, or non-current records, created:
- under a previous / defunct recordkeeping system
- under a defunct function or activity
- by a predecessor organisation.

Permanent records are records that are transferred to the Tasmanian Archives to be retained permanently as State Archives.

Source records are documents or records that have been scanned, copied, converted, or migrated. A source record may be the original record, or it may be a reproduction generated by an earlier process. It may be paper or another format, such as microform, videotape, magnetic tape, etc.

Temporary records are records that can be destroyed under the authority of a Disposal Schedule after a minimum retention period, or after certain requirements have been met.

WHAT IS THE DIGITISATION TOOLKIT FOR?

The *Digitisation Toolkit* helps you digitise and preserve your high-value, high-risk information.

Using this Toolkit will help you meet the standards set by the State Archivist so you can legally destroy source records.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF DIGITISING?

- You can find, copy, and share digital files faster and easier than paper records. Multiple versions may be created for **preservation** and **access** purposes.
- You do not have to pay for storage or office space to store boxes of records.
- You can protect vital records from loss, theft, or damage due to fire, water, mould, or other disasters.
- You can control who can see or change digital files and keep track of them through audit logs.
- You can make copies and backups of digital files to protect the originals.
- You may make business efficiencies and improvements by using digital tools and systems.

WILL DIGITISING PAPER RECORDS SAVE MY ORGANISATION MONEY AND STORAGE SPACE?

Not always. You can waste time and money by choosing the wrong records to digitise or by using the wrong digitisation methods. The factors below should be considered.

Tasmanian Government

Cost

- Some records may not be worth digitising or may not digitise well.
- Some records may need special equipment or techniques to digitise them, and this can be expensive.
- You need permission to destroy the original records. If destruction is not authorised, you need to keep and store the originals, which can be costly.

Risk

- You can lose important information by not following digitisation standards. If you do not scan or store the digital copies properly, they may not be used as evidence.
- If you destroy the originals without checking the digital copies are of good quality, information may be permanently lost.
- You can damage your paper records by not handling them carefully during or after digitisation.
- You can lose information if you do not securely store your digital copies or keep track of them. They may be stolen, changed, or deleted by someone who does not value them as you do.

COMMON DIGITISATION MISTAKES

- Digitising records when they no longer have a business use. Good planning and stakeholder consultation will help determine if the records have ongoing value and are worth digitising.
- Digitising records that have passed their retention period. This increases the risk that redundant, trivial, and obsolete information, or personal and sensitive information may be exposed in digital systems and incorrectly used to make business decisions.
- Using your photocopier or personal devices to copy important documents at low resolution. You may not receive permission from the State Archivist to destroy the originals. Many photocopiers have a very high resolution and can scan to excellent quality but be aware that pre-set levels may not be good enough.

ARE DIGITISED COPIES ADMISSIBLE AS EVIDENCE IN COURT?

Yes, they are. However, the reliability or authenticity of the digital copy could be challenged. If you have a digitisation framework in place, and you follow it consistently, then you can meet a legal challenge.

WHAT DOES A DIGITISATION FRAMEWORK LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICE?

You may need to provide proof that your organisation has a trusted, reliable framework for digitisation.

This means making sure that your scanning project has:

- documented rules and guidelines that everyone understands and applies
- documented actions and decisions, for example in a project plan or Digitisation Plan
- trained staff, who know what to do and who do it consistently
- processes that are monitored through quality checks.

WHAT RECORDS OF A DIGITISATION PROJECT DO I NEED TO KEEP?

Create a project plan or Digitisation Plan to keep records of:

- your decisions and justifications
- digitisation or scanning policies and procedures
- approved storage systems and scanning specifications and controls
- quality assurance processes
- reviews and audits of your digitisation projects or programs.

This establishes your credibility if there is a legal challenge to the validity of a digitised record.

ONCE WE'VE DIGITISED, CAN WE DESTROY THE SOURCE RECORDS?

In most cases, yes.

You can destroy Temporary source records under the *Disposal Schedule for Source Records* (DA2159) if:

- they are described in an authorised Disposal Schedule, and
- the digital copy meets the *Information and Records Management Standard* (ie is accurate, provides evidence of business, and meets legislative and regulatory requirements and stakeholder expectations).

You can destroy Permanent source records under the *Disposal Schedule for Source Records* (DA2159) if:

- they are described in an authorised disposal schedule, and
- the digital copy meets the *Information and Records Management Standard* (ie is accurate, provides evidence of business, and meets legislative and regulatory requirements and stakeholder expectations), and
- the State Archivist is satisfied that the digitised copies meet the relevant standards.

You may need to retain the following types of source records:

- records which may be needed for a current or pending Royal Commission or other inquiry.

You may also consider public perceptions or reputational risk if you choose to destroy source records when an inquiry is anticipated or underway. If you have a regular destruction program for source records and quality assurance processes, this risk is lessened.

WHAT ABOUT SOURCE RECORDS IN FORMATS OTHER THAN PAPER?

Legacy and source records come in many formats such as x-rays, microfiche, film, maps, tapes, audio and/or visual recordings, and more. The same principles apply to these formats. Contact us to discuss source records in any of these formats.

HOW DO I SAFELY AND SECURELY DESTROY THE SOURCE RECORDS?

Destroyed records should be unreadable and irretrievable. For paper records this means pulping or shredding (not burning). Until our *Destruction Methods Technical Standard* is released, for other formats including digital, refer to the *Information Security Manual*.

If you use a service provider to destroy records, request a *Certificate of Destruction*, which includes the method of destruction used.

WHAT ABOUT DESTROYING RECORDS THAT RELATE TO CHILDREN?

The State Archivist has issued two freezes on the disposal of records relating to children:

1. The first was issued in 2019 in response to the recommendations from the *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse*. This is in place until 2029.

   You can destroy temporary child-related source records after getting approval from OSA. Approved destruction may help manage your storage costs during the disposal freeze. Discuss your processes with OSA before destroying any hardcopy records which have been digitised. Consult the *Royal Commission Toolkit*. Our team will help you and give you permission to destroy the source records if appropriate.

2. The second freeze was issued in 2021 in response to the *Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings*. This applies until further notice.

   There is no process in place that allows the destruction of records covered by this freeze.

MORE INFORMATION

The Digitisation Toolkit helps you digitise and preserve your high-value, high-risk information. Using this toolkit will help you meet reproduction standards so you can destroy original or source records. The Toolkit includes:

- *Application to Dispose of Permanent Paper Source Records* – a checklist to help you prepare your application to our Office.
- *Digitisation Projects: Plan Before you Scan* – will help you manage large volume digitisation or back-scanning projects.
- *Digitisation Standard: Technical Standard for Permanent Paper Records* – describes minimum requirements for preservation quality digital copies. Use this Standard for permanent records and to meet the conditions in our *Disposal Schedule for Source Records* (DA2159).
- *Digitisation Toolkit FAQs* – your guide to the Toolkit.
- *Disposal Schedule for Source Records* (DA2159) – the legal instrument you use to dispose of the source records.
- *Sustainable Digital File Formats for Creating and Using Records* – this CAARA publication recommends and lists digital formats.
- *Three Steps for Better Scans* – a staff educational poster.

REFERENCES

Australian Signals Directorate 2024, *Information Security Manual,* ASD, viewed 21 May 2024, <https://www.cyber.gov.au/resources-business-and-government/essential-cyber-security/ism>.

Office of the State Archivist 2020, *Legal Admissibility of Records*, OSA, viewed 21 May 2024, <https://www.osa.tas.gov.au/information-management-framework>.

Office of the State Archivist (n.d.) *Royal Commission Toolkit*, OSA, viewed 21 May 2024, <https://www.osa.tas.gov.au/royal-commissions>.

CONTACT US

Office of the State Archivist | www.osa.tas.gov.au | osa@libraries.tas.gov.au | 03 6165 5581

Digitisation Toolkit FAQs is part of the *Tasmanian Government Information Management Framework.* It supports the *Information and Records Management Standard* and the *Digitisation Standard.* This is a living document and we will make minor changes as needed. If you notice anything that needs updating, please let us know.

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Document Development History

Version	Date	Comments
2.1	09/11/2026	Update to unscheduled records (pre-1960)
2.0	21/03/2024	Edits to all sections, new template
1.1	28/09/2020	Formatting changes (References, More Information)
1	16/07/2020	Initial release