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Policy Design for Managing Electronic Messages



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An American National Standard



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FOREWORD

The purpose of this American National Standard is to define requirements for developing an organizational policy for managing electronic messages. It includes suggestions for formulating a records management policy for electronic messages that will be useful throughout the life cycle of such messages—from creation to final destruction or disposition.

Developing and incorporating a policy for managing electronic messages will eliminate confusion regarding which messages should be designated as records, what the retention period should be, and what additional information must be included with electronic messages designated as records.

[Annex A](#) contains recommended provisions for an electronic messaging policy that organizations should follow in formulating their own policies.

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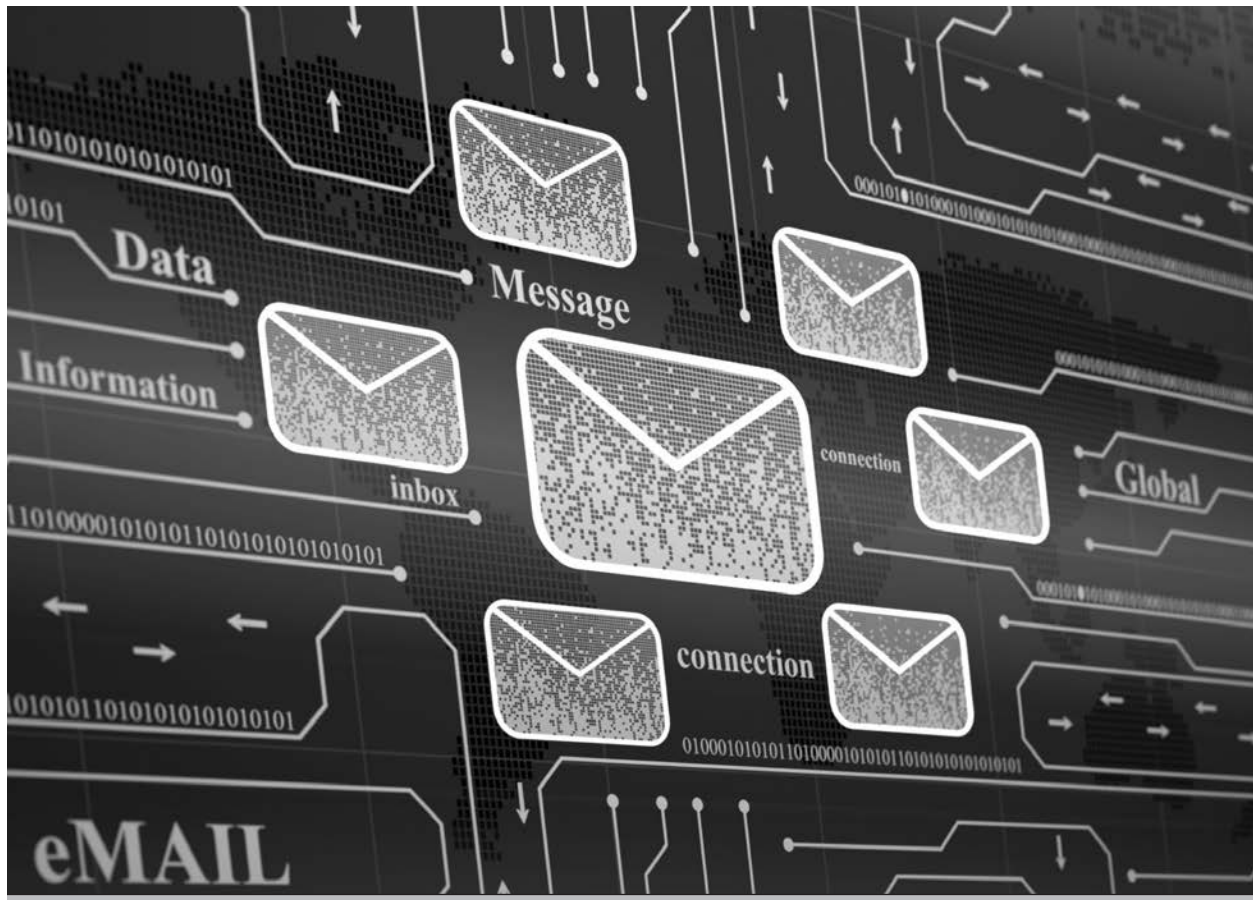
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► 1 Scope and Purpose

This standard sets forth the requirements for a policy guiding the management of electronic messages as records. The policy extends to text-based electronic messages or communications, including e-mail (and related attachments/metadata), instant messaging (IM), and text messaging (SMS). This publication will not include requirements for: video messaging, voicemail/audio-based messaging applications, and other electronic messaging platforms within the context of social media.

This standard is designed to aid in the formulation of records management policy for the life cycle management of electronic messages. It is for use by records and information management practitioners and educators, and it may be of interest to archivists, consultants, IT professionals, and individuals employed in a legal setting.

Nothing in this publication is intended to preclude the application of new methods, technologies, or techniques for managing electronic messages.

► 2 Terms and Definitions

This section contains only those terms and definitions essential for clarification of this standard. Definitions followed by (*ARMA Glossary*) were adopted from ARMA international's *Glossary of Records and Information Management Terms*, 3rd edition. Information on other referenced sources may be found in the [Bibliography](#).

authentication:

The process of verifying that a record is what it purports to be. (*ARMA Glossary*)

authenticity:

The sum of the qualities of a record that establish the origin, reliability, trustworthiness, and correctness of its content. (*ARMA Glossary*)

backup:

A copy of information created as a precaution in case the original is lost or destroyed. (*ARMA Glossary*)

business continuity:

An organization's ability to continue to operate in the event of a disaster or disruption. (*ARMA Glossary*)

conversion (backfile conversion):

The process of changing a document to a different format or medium.

digital signature:

An electronic signature based on public key cryptography. (*InterPARES 1 Project Report*)

disaster recovery plan:

A written and approved course of action to take after a disaster strikes that details how an organization will restore critical business functions and reclaim damaged or threatened records. (*ARMA Glossary*)

discovery:

The required disclosure of relevant items in the possession of one party to the opposing party during the course of legal action. (*ARMA Glossary*)

disposition:

A final administrative action taken with regard to records, including destruction, transfer to another entity, or permanent preservation. (*ARMA Glossary*)

electronic message:

A message (i.e., structured content meant for communication) sent between networked computing stations. The timing of delivery depends on the availability of connections on the network. It may take the form of e-mail, instant messaging, or text messaging.

Note: Electronic messages are potentially complex in that, in addition to content and structure, they may comprise several sets of metadata (e.g., identity, transmission, security, content-type, content-transfer-encoding, or format metadata), embedded links, attachments, etc.

electronic messaging system:

One or more computer applications used to create, receive, and transmit messages and other documents electronically. It differs from other computer applications in that its purpose is communication, along with the collecting and conveying of context information.

encryption:

The rendering of electronic data or documents unintelligible to unauthorized users by using a code.

information:

Data that has been given value through analysis, interpretation, or compilation in a meaningful form. (*ARMA Glossary*)

instant messaging (IM):

An electronic messaging system that allows users to exchange text messages and files in real time.