Guideline for Managing E-mail

ARMA International
Prairie Village, Kansas

Table of Contents

Foreword

Electronic mail (e-mail) is a relatively new technology that continues to evolve. The fact that e-mail is used more and more frequently to exchange information during the normal course of conducting business requires guidance on how to manage it to ensure information contained in e-mail messages is created, received, maintained, identifiable, accessible, retrievable, protected, and dispositioned properly.

Information contained in e-mail messages and their attachments must be evaluated as is any other information such as reports, forms, documents, etc. They can be "discovered" in the course of litigation, and they can be used as evidence. As such, e-mail should be accorded the same care and consideration as any other recorded information created or received by the organization. The Standards Development Committee of ARMA International provides this guide as a resource to assisting organizations in the proper management of this unique records technology.

This guide to managing e-mail is the result of the efforts of over 100 individuals who have volunteered their time, talents, and knowledge. The E-mail Task Force notes that this guideline is offered with specific focus on U.S. public and private business organizations. This focus is appropriate because ARMA International is a formal standards development organization for the United States. Although the term "nonrecords" appears in this guide, a term that is found mainly in the government environment, readers in organizations that do not use that term may interpret its use here to mean information of short-term value, if any, and which should be dispositioned almost immediately after reading it. However, it is expected and hoped that much of the content will be relevant to organizations in other countries as well. Although the legal and regulatory requirements will vary, much of the guideline addresses management and operational issues that must be considered in any responsible e-mail policy. Our hope is that many will benefit from the work contributed toward this publication.

The writers dedicate this guideline to the memory of two valued contributors who passed away during production: Christine Zanotti, CRM, ARMA International, Director of Publications and Technical Services, and Frances E. Chartier, The Coastal Corporation.

Acknowledgments

Guideline for Managing E-mail

Create, Approve, and Implement an E-mail Policy (See Sections 1.0 and 2.0)

E-mail Policy

Create or Receive an E-mail Message (See Section 3.0)

Does e-mail message have continuing value?

No

Yes

Identify, Classify, Label, File, Catalog, Maintain, Preserve, Protect, and Migrate (See Section 4.0)

Manage E-mail Messages

Disposition the E-mail and Its Attachments, If Any (See Section 5.0)

Disposition the E-mail Messages