

Focus Group Report

Automating Government Records Preservation in a Microsoft 365 World

September 2022

Produced in partnership by



About CoSA

The Council of State Archivists (CoSA) is a nonprofit membership organization of the state and territorial government archives in the fifty states, five territories, and District of Columbia. Through collaborative research, education, and advocacy, CoSA provides leadership that strengthens and supports state and territorial archives in their work to preserve and provide access to government records. CoSA facilitates networking, information sharing, and project collaboration among its member organizations to help state and territorial government archives with their responsibilities for protecting the rights and historical documents of the American people.

www.statearchivists.org

About Preservica

Preservica is transforming the way organizations around the world protect and future-proof critical long-term digital information. Available in the cloud (SaaS) or on-premise, their award-winning active digital preservation software has been designed from the ground up to tackle the unique challenges of ensuring digital information remains accessible and trustworthy over decades. It's a proven solution that's trusted by thousands of businesses, archives, libraries, museums and government organizations around the world, including the UK National Archives, Texas State Library and Archives, MoMA, Yale and HSBC.

www.preservica.com

Introduction

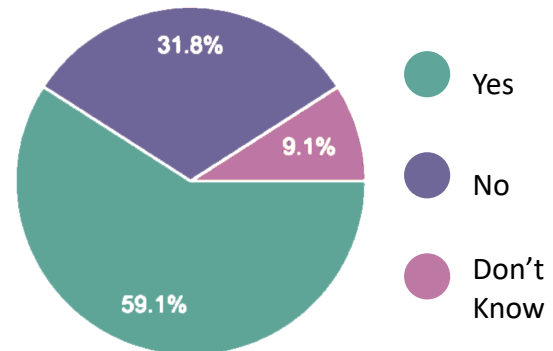
Efficient, effective deployment of information technology and the governance of electronic records is essential to modern government operations and continuity. And while 26 state archives reported increased capabilities to process and preserve electronic records transferred to their custody in the 2022 Self-Assessment Survey Report, records managers and archivists in all levels and branches of government remain deeply concerned about the capabilities of records systems and storage methods used by agencies and enterprise IT to ensure the long-term readability and authenticity of electronic records. This includes long-term (10+ year retention) records in agency or centrally managed applications that will remain in the custody of records producers as well as permanent records appraised for eventual transfer to a government archival institution.

“Recent surveying of CoSA members indicates that technology infrastructure and technological expertise have the greatest impact on digital preservation capability,” stated **Joy Banks, CoSA Executive Director**. “Our members face a variety of challenges when it comes to records management and preservation. As solutions are developed, state and territorial archives need ones that are straightforward to learn and use, provide a degree of flexibility in their application, and are cost effective.”

Public Sector Adoption of M365

The widespread adoption of the Microsoft 365 platform by central governments as well as the mass digitization of analog records and migration of legacy content from shared drives and ECM systems brings renewed focus to the persistent lifecycle management challenge – and presents an unprecedented opportunity - to systematically address electronic records lifecycle control.

Has your state/territory adopted or announced plans to adopt Microsoft 365 for enterprise?



Council of State Archivists. Survey regarding extent of M365 use, June 2022.

Microsoft 365 is a set of security, productivity and mobility cloud software capabilities designed to create and store controlled, unclassified information – just the type of collaboration and communication content that every public sector agency and department produces in spades. Of the many available features in the platform, the most deployed are SharePoint, OneDrive, Teams, and Exchange. Microsoft Purview (formerly Compliance Center) offers a unified data and records governance solution, but implementation requires a substantial commitment, deep knowledge of retention and disposition policies, and ongoing maintenance to deliver promised enterprise and user benefits.

The Same but Different

Requirements and techniques for preserving the authenticity and trustworthiness of long-term and indefinite temporary electronic records are identical to those for permanent electronic records – the essential differences involve legal and physical custody as well as access rights. This recognition is reflected in the ranking by CoSA members of Electronic Records Infrastructure as the second highest priority (tied with Staffing) for Joint Archives and Records Management (JARM) and Archives Only (AO) program after budget/funding.

Rankings of the top 3 priorities for JARM and AO programs in the next 3-5 years:

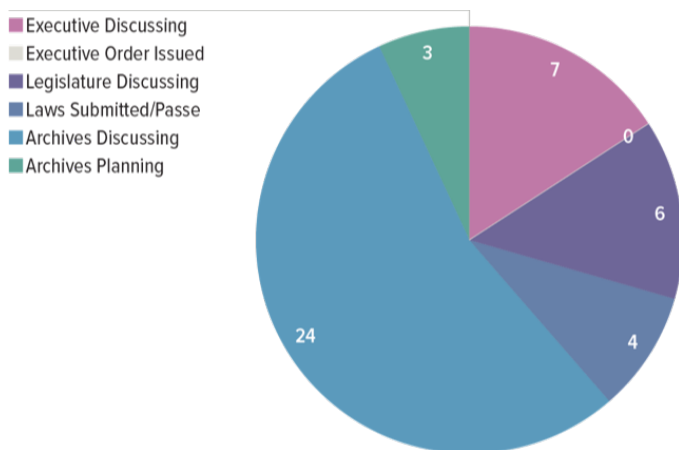
- 1 Budget/Funding
- 2 Electronic Records Infrastructure/Staffing
- 3 Archival Programming

Rankings of Top 3 Priorities: Council of State Archivists. The State of State Records. 2021. p. 17.

Integration and automation of preservation actions into operational records systems, “digital preservation in place,” can become part of government’s response to digital transformation. Potential benefits include improved compliance, reduced risk of information loss, timelier and more efficient agency-to-archives transfers, and reduced processing effort on permanent electronic records accessioned by archival institutions.

And if state and local government archives eventually follow the lead of the National Archives and Records Administration and accept only electronic records at some point in the future, upstream and scalable electronic records preservation actions, especially by executive branch agencies, will become an imperative.

Possibility of only receiving electronic records

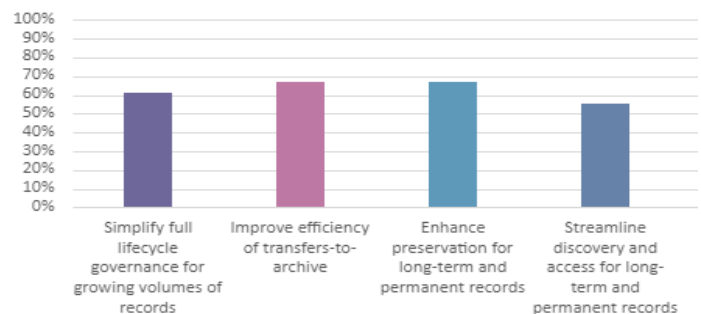


Possibilities of Only Receiving Electronic Records: Council of State Archivists. The State of State Records. 2021. p. 12.

Focus Group Highlights

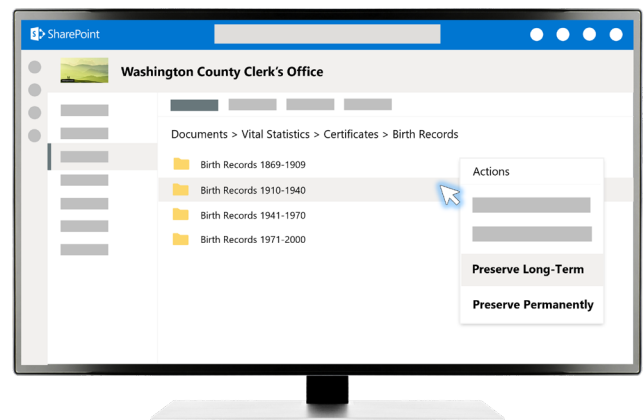
In June 2022 CoSA and Preservica sponsored a focus group to explore the potential for automated, integrated preservation actions in SharePoint. Priorities identified by participants who represented state archives, state agencies, private and public college and universities, cultural centers, and county government included:

Archives & Records Management priorities



What are your Archives & records Management priorities? CoSA-Preservica Focus Group. June 2022.

Preservica demonstrated its newest solution, Preserve 365, which will facilitate proactive preservation actions on records via retention labels and tags configured in the Microsoft Purview compliance center. Electronic records and their metadata can be automatically moved or copied to a trusted digital repository within the M365 ecosystem yet remain discoverable to users using familiar search and discovery tools.



Call to Action

Stewards of electronic government records and archives have a critical role to play in advocating and advising agency leadership and staff, elected officials, and technologists on the need to implement lifecycle records management controls and embedded preservation actions in Microsoft 365 apps. Their knowledge of enterprise and agency retention and disposition rules and their expertise in file structures, metadata standards, permissions and access rights,

and records preservation make them invaluable advisors to all Microsoft 365 implementation efforts. Incentives for whole-of-government and interagency collaboration include reduced storage costs, maximizing the taxpayer investment in M365, automated compliance with records retention policies and rules, and significantly improved discoverability at an enterprise scale.

ShopTalk Webinar with Preservica

Events > Event Description

Register for the **CoSA Shop Talk** listening session on transferring electronic communication and collaboration records from state agencies to archives on **November 10, 2022.**

[Register here](#)



To learn more about **Preserve 365**, expand your M365 records expertise and collaborate with other public sector practitioners, Preservica's **Preserve 365 Early Adopter Program** is available.

[Sign-up for early access](#)