



## 10 Reasons Why Electronic Records Need Special Attention

From the Council of State Archivists  
[www.statearchivists.org](http://www.statearchivists.org)

*For Electronic Records Day, CoSA invites you to think more about electronic records!*

1. Electronic records require ongoing attention and care to remain accessible, useable, and authentic.
2. Electronic records can become unreadable very quickly. While records on paper are readable after thousands of years, digital files could be inaccessible in just a few years.
3. Digitizing paper records is not simply scanning paper records and placing the files somewhere. Successful scanning projects are planned in detail and include ongoing management expenses to ensure the digital files are available in the future.
4. There are no permanent electronic storage media. Hard drives, CDs, magnetic tape, or any other storage formats need to be tested and replaced on a regular schedule. Proactive management is required to avoid catastrophic loss of records.
5. The lack of a “physical” presence can make it very easy to lose track of electronic records. Care must be taken to ensure records are in controlled custody and do not get lost in masses of other data.
6. Authenticity of electronic records can be questioned, as it is easy to create and share copies. Extra security precautions are needed to ensure e-records are not altered inappropriately.
7. The best time to plan for electronic records preservation is at the time of creation. Don’t wait until software is being replaced or a project is ending to think about digital preservation issues.
8. Purchasing a records management or digital preservation system will not solve all your e-records problems. Attention is needed from staff, no matter what system you purchase.
9. Electronic records create greater accessibility and ensure the rights of the public, if creators, managers, and users recognize their importance and contribute resources to their preservation.
10. While they may seem commonplace now, electronic records will form the backbone of the historical record for researchers of the future. Without proper preservation, a digital dark age will occur.

**Remember, archivists are here to help tackle these challenges. Contact your state or local government archives to find out how to make electronic records accessible for generations to come.**