THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
STANDARD PRACTICE GUIDE

SECTION:	General University Policies and Procedures	**Number:**	601.8-1
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SUBJECT:	Identification, Maintenance, and Preservation of Digital Records created by the University of Michigan	**Date Issued:**	5/20/97
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APPLIES TO:	All University Employees		
ISSUED BY:	Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Bentley Historical Library		

I. Policy

The University of Michigan has a responsibility to create, maintain, and preserve records that document institutional policies, procedures, and activities of the University as it performs its official functions. For the purposes of this policy, "University records" are defined as all records, regardless of their form, prepared, owned, used, in the possession of, or retained by administrators, faculty acting in administrative capacities, and staff of University units in the performance of an official function. It is the shared responsibility of the aforementioned administrators and staff, including systems administrators, in cooperation with the Bentley Historical Library's University Archives and Records Program (UARP) (see http://www.umich.edu/~bhl/bhl/uarphome/uarphome.htm) to ensure that these records are maintained appropriately and that those records which document the history and activities of the University community are transferred to the archives for retention.

As stated in Standard Practice Guide 601.8 "University Archives and Records," the Records Policy and Procedures Manual of the Bentley Historical Library's University Archives and Records Program provides record keeping procedures for the University community in this regard. See http://www.umich.edu/~bhl/bhl/uarphome/ppmanual.htm. The Bentley Historical Library also serves as the official archives of the University and as such preserves and provides access to select records, including digital records, for which there is an ongoing administrative and historical value. For further policy on faculty work, see Standard Practice Guide 601.3-2, "Ownership of Copyrighted Works Created at or in Affiliation with the University of Michigan," and the "Faculty Papers" guidelines within the University Archives and Records Program website, at http://www.umich.edu/~bhl/bhl/uarphome/facpapers.htm.

II. Definition

Records document institutional policies, procedures, and activities of the University. They may be created, disseminated, and maintained through a variety of technologies and they may include electronic mail, websites, word processing files, databases, images, audio and video content, and other emerging digital genres. The University of Michigan Freedom of Information Act Office notes that, regardless of technology or genre, "The Freedom of Information Act defines a public record as a writing prepared, owned, used, in the possession of, or retained by a public body in the performance of an official function, from the time it is created."

For further description of standard types of official records generated by University units and related recommendations for retention or disposal, refer to Bentley Historical Library Records Policy and Procedures Manual, Section 4: "Implementation Procedures for University Units," at http://www.umich.edu/~bhl/bhl/uarphome/manual/implunits.htm. Note that there are specific record types not in the Bentley purview which are governed by other University policies and procedures. These include:

Financial records, see Standard Practice Guide 604.1, "Department Record Retention For Business and Financial Records"

Patient/Client records, see Regents Bylaw 11.48, "The University of Michigan Hospitals and Health Centers: Disclosure of Hospitals' and Health Centers' Records"

Personnel records, see Standard Practice Guide 201.46, "Personnel Records – Collection, Retention and Release"

Student education records, see Office of the Registrar, "Student Rights and Records" at http://www.umich.edu/~regoff/ferpa/.

III. Guidelines for the Organization, Maintenance, Transfer, and Access of Digital Records

This document is intended to provide general principles and to refer to recommended practice regarding the organization of records in digital format, their maintenance and manipulation during active use, and the appraisal and documentation necessary for long-term preservation and access. Such guidance is required in order to ensure that the University fulfills its obligations to the continuing administration of the institution and the citizenry of Michigan.

Creation and Organization of Digital Records

Each unit should identify and evaluate the types of official records it creates digitally. Procedures should be established to create and organize records with administrative and long-term historical value into secure and reliable record keeping systems. Maintaining procedures and providing access to digital records over time is a shared responsibility. Establishing and operating effective digital record keeping systems and good business practices are best achieved through a multidisciplinary approach. University offices shall make effective use of the necessary range of expertise available throughout the University. Effective teams would include individuals with expertise in archives and records management, information technology, data and information management, business system analysis and design, auditing, risk management, and law.

An organized directory structure can present a hierarchy of folders and sub-folders that logically organize files by date, content, relationships, purpose, and originator. It is recommended that each University unit follow standards for digital directory and file naming conventions. Designing a file structure builds upon the initial outlining of record types and systems. For an example of best practice for a unit's central records, see the Bentley Historical Library Records

Policy and Procedures Manual on "Organization of Digital Records," at http://www.umich.edu/~bhl/bhl/uarphome/digiorg.htm.

Two particularly complex communication genres containing digital records are electronic mail and websites. Guidelines, including sample best practices, are available for the creation and preservation of electronic mail systems and websites. These are within the Bentley Historical Library Records Policy and Procedures Manual, for "Electronic Mail Communications," at http://www.umich.edu/~bhl/bhl/uarphome/digimail.htm and for "Guidelines for Web-Disseminated Records," at http://www.umich.edu/~bhl/bhl/uarphome/digiweb.htm. The University Archives has to date had limited involvement in the archival preservation of electronic mail in digital format. There is no established long-term reliability for electronic mail systems. Some units have elected to print electronic mail as the version for the archives. The University Archives recommends the involvement of a systems administrator in creating and maintaining any electronic mail system.

Maintenance and Long-Term Preservation

To ensure that active digital records are readable for future use, it is recommended that a proactive maintenance plan be implemented. The maintenance plan would involve monitoring and migrating records when operating systems and/or software applications are changed or upgraded. It is best practice to create a documentation trail when files are migrated from one system to another. Documentation should include: systems and software applications, date of migration, name and job title of person responsible for migration, and description of any loss of information that may occur during the migration process. For examples of best practices, see the Bentley Historical Library Records Policy and Procedures Manual on "Managing and Preserving Records in Digital Form," at http://www.umich.edu/~bhl/bhl/uarphome/digitalpro.htm; "Digital Storage Media," at http://www.umich.edu/~bhl/bhl/uarphome/storage.htm; and "Guidelines for a Website Snapshot Record," at http://www.umich.edu/~bhl/bhl/uarphome/digipres.htm.

Transferring Digital Records to the University Archives

If digital records are transferred to the archives, the transfer can utilize either secure file transfer protocol (SFTP) or digital storage media. The UARP staff recommends secure transfer via SFTP. For further recommendations and guidelines, see the Bentley Historical Library Records Policy and Procedures Manual on "Transferring Digital Records to the University Archives," at http://www.umich.edu/~bhl/bhl/uarphome/transfer.htm.

The UARP staff makes every reasonable effort to preserve digital records for which there is a long-term informational and/or evidential value appropriate for preservation and access from within the archives. To better ensure the preservation of digital records over time, a stable file format is recommended. For further guidance on preferred file formats for digital records, see "Maintenance and Long-term Preservation" guidelines at http://www.umich.edu/~bhl/bhl/uarphome/maint.htm or consult the UARP staff.

Access to Digital Records

University records are public records and once those accessioned by the Bentley Historical Library are fully processed, they are generally open to research use. They are cataloged in the University of Michigan online public access catalog, Mirlyn (see http://mirlyn.web.lib.umich.edu/.) The Bentley Historical Library provides reference service; the reference staff may be reached at 734.764.3482 or by sending email to Bentley.ref@umich.edu. Consult the Bentley Historical Library website at http://www.umich.edu/~bhl for directions to the library and reading room hours.

Certain records are restricted in accordance with University policy. As of January 1, 2001, University records generated by the University's Executive Officers, Deans, Directors and their support offices are restricted for a period of twenty years from date of accession by the Bentley Historical Library. The restriction of University records is subject to compliance with applicable laws, including the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Personnel related records, including search, review, promotion, and tenure files, are restricted for thirty years from date of creation. Student educational records are restricted for seventy-five years from date of creation. Patient/client records are restricted for one hundred years from date of creation. For further information on restrictions, please see Bentley Historical Library Records Policy and Procedures Manual Section 3: "Access Policies" at http://www.umich.edu/~bhl/bhl/uarphome/manual/access.htm.