

# Electronic Records Archives Concept Paper.doc

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**Date:** 9/4/2007

**Project Name:** Iowa Electronic Records Archives

**Is this project in support of a program designated as an Iowa Great Place, pursuant to section 303.3c?:** No

**Requesting Agency:** Department of Cultural Affairs

**Project Point(s)-of-Contact:** (include name and phone number) Gordon O. Hendrickson, State Archivist 515-281-8875

**Project Sponsor:** (include name and phone number) State Records Commission, State Historical Society of Iowa – Gordon O. Hendrickson State Archivist, 515-281-8875

**Goal:** To develop an effective electronic archives to provide for the long-term permanent preservation of and public access to state government records that are created in electronic formats or have been converted to electronic formats.

**Project Purpose:** For at least the last twenty years state government records have been created in electronic formats. The percentage of state government records created or maintained in electronic formats is growing each year. The State Archives of Iowa has a well-established process for preserving state government records in paper and microfilm formats. Public access to those records is provided through the State Archives traditional reading room in the State Historical Building. Preservation of electronic records poses particular challenges for archival institutions – obsolescence of hardware, proprietary software and ever-changing storage media. In order to assure public access to state government records, it is imperative the State Archives of Iowa develop a means to store electronic records on a permanent basis and develop a means to provide public access to archival records.

**Background:** The State Records Commission, established in *Code of Iowa* Chapter 305, is responsible for determining how long state government records are to be preserved. Among state government records, a small percentage are identified as requiring permanent preservation based on the historical value of those records. Regardless of the media in which those records are created, the State Archives is required to preserve those records and make them available to the public so citizens can understand the actions and activities of government agencies, learn how our government has responded to particular issues, determine their own personal identity and rights and hold government accountable for its actions.

It is often said that the most basic tenet of a democracy is the right of citizens to determine what their government is doing or has done and to hold that government accountable for its actions. As our government becomes more and more based in an electronic world, the ability of citizens to know what government has done is becoming more difficult because records created in one environment are lost due to hardware changes and software obsolescence. As we move further into the 21<sup>st</sup> century it is not feasible for the State Archives to suggest that all permanently valuable state government records be converted to paper for permanent preservation. An electronic solution must be identified to provide for the permanent preservation of those electronic records identified as having permanent historical value. Citizens must be assured that the electronic records they access through the State Archives of Iowa are authentic, unchanged and reliable.

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**Expected Results in this Project:** As a result of this project, citizens of Iowa will have access to permanently valuable historical records, such as minutes of boards and commissions, correspondence of the State's Chief Executive, records of programs and services of state agencies, access to historical data on a wide range of topics. Citizens will be assured that the records they access have not been altered and are the same as when they were originally created. State agencies will realize significant savings in time and conversion costs if records no longer need to be converted to another medium such as microfilm for long-term archival preservation. Access to state government records will be enhanced.

**Request:** *(include dollar amount and description of what will be purchased - i.e. services, hardware, software)* \$20,000 to support services from DAS-ITE and potential outside vendors to determine feasible methodology to provide for archival care and preservation of electronic records

**Resources Being Contributed:** *(people or funds being contributed to the project by the sponsoring agency- include role/% of time or amount in dollars)* The staff of the State Archives and Records Program and the members of the State Records Commission will work with the research team to assure that the resulting project will serve archival needs and meet archival standards.

**Interested Parties:** The State Records Commission as the state body charged with oversight of the State Archives and Records Program; the State Historical Society of Iowa and its Board of Trustees; the Department of Cultural Affairs; all state agencies; historical and genealogical researchers throughout the state and the nation; members of the media; and government leaders in the state. Other state archival programs will also be interested in the development of this project as others in our profession are seeking answers to the question of permanent preservation of archival records.

**Recipients of this Service:** All Iowans, present and future, will receive the benefit of enhanced access to government records; and all state agencies (actually all tax payers) will eventually realize cost savings from electronic archiving of electronic records.

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