



# Questions and Answers: Electronic Records Management and Scanning

An Additional Help Document for ADS 502

New Edition Date: 11/16/2012  
Responsible Office: M/MS/IRD  
File Name: 502sac\_111612

## **Questions about Electronic Records Management and Scanning**

The Office of Management, Management Services, Information and Records Division (M/MS/IRD) has implemented scanning guidance for offices equipped to scan paper records thus converting record to electronic format. This guidance is provided in [ADS 502, The USAID Records Management Program](#). As more offices are reducing work spaces and digitizing paper records scanning is being utilized to convert these paper records to electronic format. Here are some questions and answers you should be familiar as your office prepares to implement scanning procedures.

### ***Does the retention schedule apply to electronic records too? What are the advantages of using the scanned records as opposed to paper records?***

Yes. The retention schedules cover the records created or received by USAID employees, whether in hardcopy or electronic format. A record is information in any format used in the course of business and reflects the decisions or actions of USAID, so by definition, an email, a word document, or the documents produced in our various information systems are records providing they meet the above definition. The advantages of using scanned records are:

- Records are quicker and easier retrieved;
- Because scanned records are stored in computer server's cabinet and file space for paper records are reduced;
- Records automatically managed throughout lifecycle;
- Records are easily made accessible to others; and
- Records are more secure because unlike physical records they are housed in servers which may not be affected by catastrophic damage to facility where record is created or generated.

### ***In order to reduce the amount of paper my office is keeping, we want to scan and destroy the paper. Is this okay?***

The short answer is it depends. It is imperative that your office strictly adhere to the guidance we have provided. If an office wants to change the format of a record from a hardcopy to electronic via scanning and intends to destroy the hardcopy, the office must have the technology and must adhere to the following:

- Scanned images of paper copies must be clear and readable;
- Temporary records must be scanned using Optical Character Recognition (OCR)

scanned images;

- All scanned records must be managed according to sound records management practices, with safeguards in place to prevent accidental modification, or accidental deletion of the record.
- Permanent records must be scanned using PDF Archive (PDF/A) scanned images;
- Permanent scanned records must be inserted in the ASIST application (where available); and
- When scanned records are placed in ASIST, precautions must be taken to prevent unauthorized access, accidental modification, or accidental deletion of record files.

***What if we decide to scan the records and then send the records to the IRD Retirement Vault on B2? Is this okay or do we need to go through the approval process first?***

If the scanned record meets the above requirements as indicated in the guidance it will be the official record and it will not be necessary to send the hard copy to the vault. However, be aware that electronic records follow the same retention schedule as hardcopy records.

***We have switched from creating paper records to electronic records for a certain function/process. Is this okay?***

Most records are created electronically today. We must ensure that these electronic records are managed according to sound records management practices, for example: They must be managed according to disposition, all precautions should be exercised to avoid accidental deletion, modification, or unauthorized access.

***How long do I have to keep my backups?***

Backups are considered to be duplicates. Duplicates can be destroyed once they have served their purpose and no longer needed. USAID ISSO backs-up data on the “U” drive daily, as well as other drives. These are not the official record and are not managed as such.

***What if my files are a mess? What do I need to do to get them ready for scanning?***

You must apply sound records management policy and procedures before consider your records for scanning. This includes proper filing procedures:

- Deleting unnecessary files,

- Properly arranging files,
- Ensuring that dispositions are properly applied, and
- Preparing files for scanning.

***How do you know how to label my files so I can find them in my system?***

We have provided electronic filing guidance in the revised ADS 502. I would add that before processing any of your files you should implement filing schemes that support your business practices.

***What kind of Data Security is there? Could someone change the data in a scanned file?***

Good Question! NOBODY will be able to alter any data on your PDF's and this is why we scan records using the guidance we have provided in the ADS 502.

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