



## **UTARMS Best Practices for Scanning Original Paper Source Records**

### **1.0 Introduction**

University of Toronto offices planning on scanning or digitizing original paper source records should consider the following best practices.

These recommendations have been developed in consultation with the following legislations, standards, and guidelines:

- *Electronic Records as Documentary Evidence* (CGSB-72.34-2005)
- Ontario's *Evidence Act* (R.S.O. 1990, c. E.23)
- *The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FIPPA)
- Ontario's *Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act* (PIPEDA)
- College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario *Medical Records* (Policy Statement #4-12)
- University of Toronto Policy – *Guide to Financial Management - Imaging of Financial Documents*

### **2.0 Before you Begin**

#### ***2.1 Determining Retention Periods***

Before beginning a scanning project, offices should ensure that the records that are being scanned have been scheduled and appraised in terms of all legal, fiscal, and historical value. To aid in this process, the University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services has over 600 records schedules to help offices determine if their records – whether paper or electronic – can be destroyed after their retention period expires, or if they must be transferred to the Archives for permanent retention due to their long-term legal, fiscal or historical value. Remember, records schedules and retention periods apply to both paper and electronic records.

#### ***2.2 Assessing your Goals***

Any office undertaking a scanning project must identify whether the purpose of the project is intended to improve office workflow (3.0 Scanning for Reference), or to replace the original paper source records after scanning is completed (4.0 Scanning to Replace). Different procedures and requirements must be met depending on the purpose of the scanning project.

Before any scanning project is initiated, offices should ensure a system is in place that allows scanned records to be retrieved by those who need access to the records. This requires establishing an organized electronic records system. It is also important to remember that scanned records will have to be destroyed or transferred to the Archives once the retention period is reached. More information on electronic records systems and retention periods is available through the [UTARMS website](#).



### 3.0 Scanning for Reference

#### *3.1 Technical Requirements*

In order for scanned records to remain usable for their entire retention period, records will need to be scanned at a resolution and in a format that will continue to be supported in the future.

UTARMS suggests that all textual records being scanned for convenience adhere to the following minimum requirements in order to maintain usability;

- **Textual records:** Scanned at 300 dots per inch (DPI), and scanned in Portable Document File (PDF) is required for optical character recognition (OCR)
- **Photographs and other graphics:** Scanned at a minimum of 300 DPI as a Joint Photographic Experts Group (JPEG, JPG) file

### 4.0 Scanning to Replace

#### *4.1 Technical Requirements*

Before any office initiates a scanning project to replace and eventually destroy paper records, units should confirm that the digital versions will meet the requirements of all colleagues who are a part of the workflow that generates or collects the record. Units must also contact UTARMS to ensure the proper disposition of the original paper source records and ensure their project also meets any relevant Financial Services requirements<sup>1</sup>.

If the scanning project and destruction of paper source records can proceed, the following requirements *must* be met to ensure electronic scans can stand in place of the paper source records in a court of law:

- A formal procedure manual must be in place documenting the methods used to scan and store electronic records.
- Methods have been established to ensure that the digital copies are reliable – meaning the electronic records are held in a secure, trustworthy repository with limited access and are of a consistent quality.
- Quality assurance tests must be established, followed and documented to ensure that scanned records are accurate representations of the paper records. The number of original paper records must be compared to the number of scanned records to ensure that every item has been scanned.
- The scanned records must be saved in a format that is “read-only”, meaning the files can be read but never changed.
- **Textual records:** Must be scanned at 300 dots per inch (DPI) in Portable Document File (PDF). Preferably scanned into Portable Document File/Archival (PDF/A) format.
- **Photographs and other graphics:** Must be scanned at 600 DPI and scanned as an uncompressed Tagged Image File Format (TIFF)

---

<sup>1</sup> [GTFM – Imaging of Financial Documents](#)