Digital transfer - interim operating model

1   Managing the digital transfer process

Archives New Zealand will manage digital transfers in a staged way, similar to our physical transfer process. In our interim operating model, these stages are:

0. Transfer initiation

1. Transfer planning

2. Transfer preparation

3. Transfer

4. Post-transfer

Given the interim nature of the methods and the fact that they will continue to evolve, we will take a modular and iterative approach to guidance development. Over time, existing and new guidance material will be linked to each stage to assist with navigating the process. At this point in time, we are developing what is required for 'Transfer Initiation'. If you are involved in a digital transfer, we will encourage you to assist with shaping the guidance and to share your experiences with others in the sector.

'Transfer planning' will include agreement on a set of expectations about the process, as well as a transfer plan. These documents will ensure that all parties understand the roles, responsibilities, resources, expectations, benefits and risks of the exercise.

2   Working with us

You will need to appoint a member of staff to lead the work required of your organisation. You are also likely to need to assemble a small team with the relevant skills. These can include information and records management knowledge, systems knowledge and possibly coding ability. You should be prepared for regular discussions, correspondence and meetings. There will be frequent meetings with us at the beginning of the process to discuss current issues and questions from both sides. These meetings will be crucial for the transfer to be successful. Certain steps in the process will require more intense activity of you, but there can also be periods of apparent inactivity while we work through our internal steps. The exercise will be a partnership, from which all parties can benefit.

As with physical transfers, we will manage the flow of potential digital transfers according to our internal resources. We will aim to focus on one transfer at a time to begin with.

3   Understanding digital transfers

It may be tempting to imagine that digital transfer is simply a metadata dump, a file copy and transfer of files to us. The reality is more nuanced than that and it requires strong collaboration between both parties.

There are many parts of the process that are similar between physical and digital transfers, for example, activity around disposal authorities and access authorities. However, the order of events with digital transfers does not always match that of physical transfers. One key difference is that a great deal of the detailed work that would be in the Transfer Preparation stage for physical transfers, actually takes place in Transfer Initiation. This may seem odd, but detailed analysis work needs to be done up front in order to determine the feasibility

of the transfer and then to plan the transfer realistically. This requires you to provide us with an initial extract of files and metadata.

Another characteristic of digital transfers is the repetitive nature of some of the processes. There are likely to be loops in the process, where analysis is done and then issues with files, metadata or tools are discussed and addressed, and then the process is repeated. Complete test runs are also necessary with digital information and records, as opposed to the sample checks done with physical information and records. This means that flexibility is required in the planned timescales.

4   Metadata and file formats

For the purposes of these initial transfers, we are setting no fixed requirements for the format or structure of metadata. However, it is important that metadata is structured consistently, and that you have someone who understands the metadata enough to assist us in understanding it. This is to facilitate mapping of the metadata to our systems. At a minimum we would expect you to be able to provide the metadata elements required by the *Information and records management standard*.[1] You should also understand the export format options for your information and records management system. Some systems have metadata export functionality, but for others scripting may be required to extract metadata. This is why it is important that you have someone with the technical knowledge to participate in our discussions.

As part of our initial conversations, it is important for us to be aware of any specialist formats, or any deliberate format modification that may have taken place (e.g. Microsoft Word documents migrated to Adobe PDF). However, as part of this interim model we are not setting restrictions on which file formats we will accept.

Checksums are a key tool in checking the integrity of information and records during a transfer. We can assist you in understanding these, so that you can generate them for each file.

5   Information and records characteristics

Initially, we are interested in transfers of a manageable size. Based on what we have processed already, we are interested in approximately 5000 records or less in a transfer. We anticipate that the quantity of technical research required will increase with higher numbers.

It is important that only information and records that have been sentenced as "Transfer to Archives NZ" are included in the transfer. This means that you need to have a current disposal authority. Depending on your systems and knowledge of the information and records, you need to allow for sufficient time and effort to sentence them accurately against your disposal schedule. Ideally information and records will have met their minimum retention period, but we are open to discussing this for each transfer.

There may be some duplication in the information and records and you will be encouraged to use appropriate tools to assess the risk of this and address prior to transfer. Duplication can also occur when digital information and records were being created at a time when the official information and records management policy was 'print-to-file'. This can require considerable work for you to identify what constitutes the authoritative record.

At this point in time, potential digital transfers need to contain only information and records that can be classified as "Open" access on transfer, so you will be encouraged to do a thorough sensitivity review in advance[2]. This is not the same as your organisation having an internal 'open-by-default' policy for staff access.

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[1] See *16/G7 Minimum requirements for metadata*
[2] See Section 43 of the Public Records Act 2005

Printed copies are uncontrolled

Once they have been fully processed by us, digital information and records classified as 'Open' on transfer will be viewable immediately by members of the public online. Focusing on 'Open' access records means we can share the experience with other organisations more easily and you can share with your stakeholders.

The context of information and records can be represented in our system (e.g. folder structures, or other contextual metadata), but not yet record-to-record relationships. Therefore, information and records with complex relationships that need to be maintained after transfer are unlikely to be suitable candidates for transfer at this time.

Information and records that are known to have or may have password protections on them will need to be identified ahead of transfer.