

**STATE OF NEBRASKA**  
**STATE RECORDS ADMINISTRATOR**  
**WEB PAGE GUIDELINES**  
**MARCH 2003**

Following is a voluntary guideline issued by the State Records Administrator (Secretary of State) for use by state and local government agencies in the State of Nebraska. This is a guideline only and does not have the force and effect of rule and regulation or of law. Realizing the potential budgetary impact should this guideline be made mandatory, the State Records Administrator has chosen not to reissue this guideline as a mandatory rule and regulation at this time. However, the State Records Administrator strongly recommends that this guideline be followed in the development of any new web pages and applied to existing web pages as resources allow.

This office needs your input. Please use the "Comments" form to submit your comments, recommendations and questions. If you would prefer faxing your comments/questions, our fax number is (402) 471-2406.

**State of Nebraska**  
**State Records Administrator**  
**Web Page Guidelines**  
**March 2003**

**001 Scope and Purpose**

**001.01 Scope.** These guidelines apply to all state and local government agencies in the State of Nebraska as defined in the Records Management Act (Revised Statutes of Nebraska, Chapter 84, Article 12). The term "agencies" means state and local government agencies.

**001.02 Purpose.** These guidelines do not require agencies to create, send, communicate, receive, store, preserve, or otherwise process records by electronic means or in electronic form. Rather, they provide guidance for agencies that choose to use the technologies for these purposes.

**002 Definitions**

**002.01 Record.** The Records Management Act (Revised Statutes of Nebraska, Chapter 84, Article 12) defines a record as: "any book, document, paper, photograph, microfilm, sound recording, magnetic storage medium, optical storage medium, or other material regardless of physical form or characteristics created or received pursuant to law, charter, or ordinance or in connection with any other activity relating to or having an effect upon the transaction of public business." A record is information that is inscribed on a tangible medium or that is stored in an electronic or other medium and is retrievable in perceivable form.

**002.02 Public record.** The Records Management Act (Revised Statutes of Nebraska, Chapter 84, Article 12) defines a public record as follows: "Public records includes all records and documents, regardless of physical form, of or belonging to this state or any agency, branch, department, board, bureau, commission, council, subunit, or committee of this state except when any other statute expressly provides that particular information or records shall not be made public. Data which is a public record in its original form shall remain a public record when maintained in computer files."

**002.03 Publication.** The Libraries and Museums Act (Chapter 51, Sections 411-412) defines state publications as follows: "State publications shall include any multiply produced publications printed or purchased for distribution by the state, the Legislature, constitutional officers, any state department or committee, or any other state agency supported wholly or in part by state funds." The Nebraska Publications Clearinghouse of the Nebraska Library Commission is authorized to "establish and operate a publications collection and depository system for the use of Nebraska citizens."

**002.04 Electronic record.** A record created, generated, sent, communicated, received, or stored by electronic means.

**002.05 Electronic recordkeeping system.** An electronic system in which records are collected, organized, and categorized to facilitate their preservation, retrieval, use, and disposition.

**002.06 Record copy.** A single copy of a record retained by its custodian as the official record of a government transaction and in accordance with the appropriate records schedule. All other copies are duplicate copies, held for convenience, and may be destroyed.

**002.07 Records retention schedule.** A listing of approved records retention periods governing the retention and disposition of all government records.

**002.08 Web page.** The World Wide Web Consortium [<http://www.w3.org>] defines a Web page as: "A collection of information, consisting of one or more Web resources, intended to be rendered simultaneously, and identified by a single URI. More specifically, a Web page consists of a Web resource with zero, one, or more embedded Web resources intended to be rendered as a single unit, and referred to by the Uniform Resource Identifier (URI) of the one Web resource which is not embedded. Examples: An image file, an applet, and an HTML file identified and accessed through a single URI, and rendered simultaneously by the Web client."

**002.09 Web site.** The World Wide Web Consortium [<http://www.w3.org>] defines a Web site as: "A collection of interlinked Web pages, including a host page, residing at the same network location. 'Interlinked' is understood to mean that any of the Web site's constituent Web pages can be accessed by following a sequence of references beginning at the site's host page; spanning zero, one or more Web pages located at the same site; and ending at the Web page in question."

**002.10 Web resource.** The World Wide Web Consortium [<http://www.w3.org>] defines a Web resource as: "A resource, identified by a URI, that is a member of the Web Core."

**002.11 Uniform Resource Identifier (URI).** The World Wide Web Consortium [<http://www.w3.org>] defines URI as follows: The URI specification defines a Uniform Resource Identifier (URI) as a compact string of characters for identifying an abstract or physical resource."

**002.12 Web Core.** The World Wide Web Consortium [<http://www.w3.org>] defines Web Core as: "The collection of resources residing on the Internet that can be accessed using any implemented version of HTTP as part of the protocol stack (or its equivalent), either directly or via an intermediary."

**002.13 Host page.** The World Wide Web Consortium [<http://www.w3.org>] defines host page as: "A Web page identified by a URI containing an <authority> component but where the <path> component is either empty or simply consists of a single '/' only." Example: the Web page identified by <http://www.nol.org> is a host page.

**002.14 Link.** The World Wide Web Consortium [<http://www.w3.org>] defines a link as follows: "A link expresses one or more (explicit or implicit) relationships between two or more resources."

**002.15 Client.** The World Wide Web Consortium [<http://www.w3.org>] defines a client as follows: "The role adopted by an application when it is retrieving and/or rendering resources or resource manifestations."

**002.16 Web client.** The World Wide Web Consortium [<http://www.w3.org>] defines a Web client as: "A Client that is capable of accessing Web resources by issuing requests and rendering responses containing Web resource manifestations."

**002.17 World Wide Web (WWW).** A communications protocol that allows multimedia access to the Internet.

**002.18 Web browser.** A program that enables the user to navigate the World Wide Web.

**002.19 Metadata.** The World Wide Web Consortium [<http://www.w3.org>] defines metadata as "machine understandable information for the Web." Metadata contains "information about information" - labeling, cataloging and descriptive information structured in such a way that allows Web pages to be properly searched and processed, in particular by computer.

**002.20 Records Management Application.** Software used by an organization to manage its records. Its primary management functions are categorizing and locating records and identifying records that are due for disposition. RMA software also stores, retrieves, and disposes of the electronic records that are stored in its repository.

### **003 Relationship of Web pages to records and publications**

**003.01 Records.** Since government Web pages are created "pursuant to law, charter, or ordinance or in connection with any other activity relating to or having an effect upon the transaction of public business," they may be records under the Nebraska Records Management Act.

**003.02 Publications.** In addition to being records, some Web pages also may be publications. If the Web page is a replacement for a previous publication or performs the same function as a publication ("multiply produced publications printed or purchased for distribution by the state, the Legislature, constitutional officers, any state department or committee, or any other state agency supported wholly or in part by state funds"), it is a publication and also falls under the Libraries and Museums Act.

**003.03 Scope of current guidelines.** Since these guidelines are being issued pursuant to the statutory authority of the State Records Administrator, they do not address the identification, preservation, and retrieval of state publications.

### **004 Basic Principles**

**004.01 Web pages should be handled as records.** Web pages created in the course of government business may be records and as such are subject to management under the Records Management Act, just as other types of media are subject to this act. Web pages with on-going record value may convey information on programs, policies, decisions, and essential transactions; or may document planning, discussion, or transaction of other business activities. The major task is determining when records need to be retained and when they should be discarded. This means determining which Web pages require long-term retention, determining who is responsible for making this decision, and establishing storage and disposition requirements for Web pages.

**004.02 A Web page, in and of itself, is not a single record series.** Web pages contain both important materials that are records and transitory items that can be quickly destroyed.

**004.03 There is no single retention period for all Web pages.** Retention and disposition of Web pages depends on the function and content of the individual pages. Thus, a universal rule that all Web pages will be deleted after a defined period is not a comprehensive solution to managing Web pages. The various types of Web pages require various retention periods - whether of a long-term or a more ephemeral nature.

**004.04 The originating agency or subunit manages Web pages.** Each agency or subunit is responsible for managing the Web pages it creates.

## **005 Access**

**005.01 Public records.** Web pages may be public records as defined by the public records laws. Web pages should be open for public inspection unless specifically exempt by statute.

**005.02 Public access.** Requests for access to non-confidential Web pages or documents should be treated in the same manner as requests for other public records. The difficulty of retrieval is not a legitimate reason to deny access. Throughout the retention period, Web pages should remain reasonably accessible.

## **006 Identification**

**006.01 Minimum requirements.** Each Web page with a retention period of ten years or longer should be identified by the following 7 elements (or their functional equivalent) from the 15 element "Dublin Core Metadata Element Set," an emerging standard for metadata description [For more information, see : <http://purl.oclc.org/dc/about/>]

**006.01.01 Title.** The name given to the resource by the creator or publisher.

**006.01.02 Creator.** The person or organization primarily responsible for creating the intellectual content of the resource.

**006.01.03 Subject.** The topic of the resource. Typically, subject will be expressed as keywords or phrases that describe the subject or content of the resource. The use of controlled vocabularies and formal classification schemas is encouraged.

**006.01.04 Description.** A textual description of the content of the resource, including abstracts in the case of document-like objects or content descriptions in the case of visual resources.

**006.01.05 Date.** The date the resource was made available in its present form.

**006.01.06 Format.** The data format of the resource, used to identify the software and possibly hardware that might be needed to display or operate the resource.

**006.01.07 Identifier.** A string or number used to uniquely identify the resource, such as the URI.

## **006.02 Hyperlinks**

**006.02.01 Active pages.** Hyperlinks should be verified for all active Web pages. The hyperlinks should be rechecked on a regular basis.

**006.02.02 Inactive pages.** Inactive Web pages should provide a means to see the full address contained in a hyperlink. Agencies are not responsible for verifying the current status of links in inactive Web pages.

## **007 Retention and Disposition**

**007.01 General.** Web pages and documents created by government entities fall into three broad categories: (1) Transitory items, including information that is routed through a Web page but is not captured (like video or audio streaming of meetings); (2) Records with a less than permanent retention period; and (3) Records with a permanent retention period.

**007.02 Transitory items.** There is no retention requirement for these items. Agencies may delete them immediately without obtaining approval of the State Records Administrator.

**007.03 Records with less than permanent retention.** These records are governed by the retention periods specified on an approved records retention schedule. The record should be in hard copy or electronic format that can be retrieved and interpreted for the full retention period. Public officials and employees creating Web pages should delete or destroy the records only according to an approved retention schedule.

## **007.04 Records with permanent/archival retention**

**007.04.01 Transfers to the Nebraska State Historical Society (NSHS).** The NSHS is responsible for the care, maintenance and reference use of state records with enduring value, regardless of media. The NSHS will accept electronic records of permanent value that are scheduled for transfer to the Society, or it will work with the agencies in preserving and accessing electronic records maintained in agency custody. Because of the variety of formats of

electronic records, issues of proprietary software and specialized hardware, decisions should be made in consultation between the NSHS staff, the agency staff, and the State Records Administrator about either transferring the records or maintaining them in the agency of origin. If the transfer decision is made, the method, frequency and format of the transfer should be determined cooperatively by the agency, the NSHS staff, and the State Records Administrator.

**007.04.02 Non-transfers.** If the decision is made to maintain the records in the agency of origin, the agency should be responsible for making the records accessible to the public in a manner consistent with the way the NSHS would perform this function. The originating agency should be responsible for upgrading the system to current technology standards so that data remain usable over time and for testing at regular intervals any storage medium used for accuracy or loss of data.

**007.05 Backup copies.** Information systems managers routinely back up servers and the backup media are recycled on a timetable. It is important not to rely upon this backup as a recordkeeping system.

**007.06 Analog storage.** Agencies that do not have the technical capability to maintain Web pages for the full retention period in an electronic format should create an analog copy (paper or microfilm). Agencies with computers capable of maintaining Web pages in an electronic format for the required retention may also decide that current agency use is best served by printing to paper or microfilm.

**007.07 Destruction.** All Web pages should be disposed of in a manner that ensures protection of any sensitive, proprietary, or confidential information. Magnetic recording media previously used for electronic records containing sensitive, proprietary, or confidential information should not be reused if the previously recorded information can be compromised in any way by reuse.

**007.08 Use of Records Management Application (RMA) Software.** Agencies may use Records Management Application (RMA) software to manage records in digital form. RMA software categorizes and locates records and identifies records that are due for disposition. RMA software also stores, retrieves, and disposes of the electronic records that are stored in its repository. Agencies should use RMA software that complies with DoD 5015.2-STD, "Design Criteria Standard for Electronic Records Management Software Applications," as issued by the U.S. Department of Defense.