

Capturing emails into an eDRMS

This Public Records Brief outlines how capturing emails into an eDRMS can improve recordkeeping in public authorities and provides recommendations for addressing issues associated with this procedure. It applies to situations where an eDRMS has been deployed to all desktops.

Email is an important communication mechanism for Queensland public authorities and has become a frequently used tool for conducting business. Like records in other formats, emails that document business activities, decision-making or transactions are public records and must be captured into an identifiable and authorised recordkeeping system.

In most situations, only the person sending an email and the person receiving an email are aware that an email has been created. When the email is a public record, the responsibility for initiating its capture resides with both the sender and receiver of the email. For internal emails sent within the same public authority, business rules need to be developed to specify whether capture is the responsibility of the sender or receiver, to prevent duplication.

Electronic Document and Records Management Systems (eDRMS) can simplify the capture of emails that are public records and make it possible for employees to fulfill their recordkeeping responsibilities with minimal effort. While this Public Records Brief focuses on capturing emails in an eDRMS, public authorities that have not yet implemented an eDRMS can manage emails as public records through capture on relevant paper files.

Why should emails be captured into an eDRMS?

Email systems are not designed to manage emails that are public records and consequently have limited recordkeeping functionality. A recordkeeping system enables the record to be captured, placed in context on an appropriate file, accessed by authorised staff and retained for as long as required. In comparison, storing emails on back-up tapes and in email archive repositories does not meet requirements for the proper capture, accessibility, management, security and disposal of emails that are public records.

The capture of emails that are public records reduces public authorities' risk of not being able to conduct business or satisfy accountability requirements. Capturing emails into an eDRMS can assist public authorities to achieve recordkeeping compliance in accordance with the provisions of the *Public Records Act 2002* and *Information Standard 40: Recordkeeping (IS40)*.

When an email system is integrated with an eDRMS, emails that are public records can be easily captured. End users are able to transfer emails from the email system directly into an eDRMS file folder, so that the email is managed as a record, linked to other related records, regardless of format.

What are the benefits to public authorities?

Capturing emails into an eDRMS provides a number of benefits that support business and recordkeeping compliance requirements, including:

- Improved efficiency and a reduction in response time for information requests due to greater accessibility of emails that are public records
- Simultaneous access to emails that are public records by multiple users from a variety of locations
- Capture of emails in electronic format, rather than a paper format, into an eDRMS enhances their authenticity and reliability as public records
- Improved ability to systematically manage full and accurate records of business activities as emails are linked to related records in other formats.

Addressing associated recordkeeping issues

A number of recordkeeping issues relate to capturing emails into an eDRMS.

Issue	Suggested actions
Ensuring email system users initiate capture of emails that are public records	<p>Building the capacity of email users to identify and capture emails that are public records is essential. This can be achieved by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developing corporate procedures for identifying and capturing emails that are public records into the eDRMS and assigning staff responsibilities for ensuring this occurs.• Conducting training to ensure that email system users have the capacity to identify and capture emails that are public records into the eDRMS.• Providing ongoing access to a channel for communicating concerns and issues and to seek assistance (e.g. a recordkeeping help desk).• Developing checklists, 'hints and tips' or other ready reference tools to assist users.
Timing for capturing emails into the recordkeeping system	<p>Emails that are public records should be captured into an eDRMS as soon as they are sent or received or as soon as possible thereafter. However, emails often involve a thread of communication that can continue for a period of time. Public authorities should implement a corporate approach for the timing for capturing emails into the eDRMS. Options may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Capturing each email as it is sent or received – as capture becomes a routine component of the business process, the risk of non-capture of records is reduced; however this option may increase storage requirements.• Capturing at the very end of the communication thread – this may increase the risk of non-capture of the record into the recordkeeping system, as the end of the thread may not always be apparent.• Capturing at significant points throughout the communication thread, where key decisions are made, subjects change, or key issues addressed.
Capturing email attachments	<p>The information contained in an email may provide the context for an attached document. In these situations, the email and the attachment need to be linked when captured into the eDRMS. Public authorities should consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developing procedures to ensure email attachments are captured and retained with the email when it contains contextual information.
Titling of emails	<p>When capturing an email into an eDRMS, the subject line of the email might automatically be adopted as the title of the email in the eDRMS. For this reason, is important to ensure the subject line of the email accurately reflects the topic of the email. Public authorities can consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developing advice on the titling of emails to assist staff when composing emails, and directing staff that receive emails that are public records from external organisations to develop meaningful record titles when they capture them in the eDRMS.
Disposing of emails that have been captured in the eDRMS	<p>Emails that are public records can only be destroyed in accordance with an approved Retention and Disposal Schedule, authorised by the State Archivist. Public authorities should consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Issuing advice that emails that are public records may be deleted from user inboxes only after they have been captured into the eDRMS system.
Technology obsolescence	<p>Capturing emails into an eDRMS will not automatically ensure that the records remain accessible for as long as they are required. While an eDRMS is a key tool in the appropriate management of electronic records, like any other business system it may be subject to technological obsolescence. Public authorities should consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developing and implementing processes for preserving and ensuring electronic records remain accessible over time.

For further information regarding email management or eDRMS, see Queensland State Archives' publications:

- *Managing Emails that are Public Records* policy and guideline
- Public Records Brief – *What is an eDRMS?*
- Public Records Brief – *File Management in an eDRMS*

For more detailed guidance on the management of public records visit the Queensland State Archives' website at <http://www.archives.qld.gov.au>, or contact us on:

Telephone: (07) 3131 7777

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