Transforming Online Mail with Embedded Semantics Collaborative Project

Frequently Asked Questions—

TOMES—What is it?

Transforming Online Mail is a multi-state grant funded by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) to investigate and test possible solutions for preserving and making accessible permanently valuable email of state government. TOMES will utilize best practices of the archival community to develop sustainable approaches for the identification, transfer, and preservation of archival email. The Division of Archives and Records (State Archives) will work collaboratively with state agency chief records officers, state agency IT managers, state agency legal counsels, the Department of Information Technology, and human resource offices in these efforts.

We recognize that not every email needs to be retained permanently, and some email will need to be processed to ensure that confidential information is not disclosed when access is provided. The TOMES project will focus on investigating and testing existing tools to:

- Identify personally identifiable and confidential information
- Identify permanent e-mail
- Identify email eligible for deletion; and
- Apply archival principles, state and federal statutes, and modern technology ensure that information is preserved and managed.

Developing training is also a component of this grant. As we move through this process and learn more about user behavior and existing tools, we will create training to complement this effort and ensure that the State Archives receives emails slated for permanent retention.

Tangential to this work will be an investigation of solutions for email that needs to be retained longer than five years, but isn't of permanent value. Many functions of state agencies produce records requiring retention of records for periods exceeding five years. The State Archives will leverage work in the TOMES grant to develop solutions for emails fitting this description.

<u>**Possible Solutions—Capstone Approach**</u>

1. What is Capstone?
   The Capstone approach to managing archival email, developed by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), is based on the position of the account holder. With the Capstone approach to email management, the disposition of email records are managed at the account level instead of by the content of individual messages. Email users who create and receive permanently valuable email records will have their email accounts captured for

permanent retention, while other positions not deemed as Capstone positions will be designated as temporary and preserved for a set retention period.

2. How does the State Archives envision using this approach?
   The State Archives will work with state agency chief records officers to identify positions in agencies that create, approve, or issue policies that document state business or record the essential functions of state government. We feel this method will ensure that permanent email is identified and saved regardless of who may hold that position. During this project, we will develop a workflow for capturing permanent archival email, as well as test specific tools that will aid in the processing of these emails.

3. What is the statutory authority for the State Archives to preserve state agency emails?
   Under G.S. 132-1 email made or received in connection with the transaction of public business is a public record. G.S. 121-4, 121-5, 132-3(a), and 132-8 regulate destruction of records through the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. The State Archives utilizes records retention and disposition schedules that describe the records and prescribes their disposition. These retention and disposition schedules address minimum retention periods for public records created by agencies and are written in agreement with state and local government authorities. Many of the current records retention and disposition schedules currently identify certain bodies of correspondence as archival.

The Forms

4. Why do I have to complete this form?
   This is simply an information-gathering exercise to identify what positions in state government have email with potential archival value.

5. Are you asking all agencies for this information?
   We are requesting this information from all state agencies, with the exception of some small licensing boards and commissions.

6. What if my agency does not have anyone at these levels? Is it okay to leave the table blank?
   Yes.

7. What if my agency has undergone major organizational changes since January 1, 2011, and do not have access to information about prior employees?
   Please fill out the form as completely as possible. Please describe your agency's organizational changes and how the changes affect the email addresses and positions provided. Some positions may be captured on other agencies' forms.

8. How can I obtain personal names and email addresses of past employees who held these positions?
Please work with your human resources department or any other colleague who may have access to historical information. You can also consult old organizational charts and the State Archives' [portal to archived versions of agency websites](#).

BEACON

9. Why are you requesting BEACON position numbers?
One process we are exploring is linking a BEACON position number to a position that will create archival email. This would allow us to automatically capture and retain email, regardless of turnover in the position. Current tools in the email software enable information to be "locked" thus meaning they will not be deleted. Please note, it is the BEACON position number we are requesting not an employee's personal BEACON number.

10. What if my agency doesn't use BEACON?
Describe your agency's personnel management system. On the form, write the position numbers as used in your agency's personnel management system.

Transferring Emails

11. What if my email is not provided through NC DIT or is not retained on DIT's server? And what if we retain all of our emails in office permanently?
The TOMES project is independent of the technology used to produce and capture email. It was not designed to be DIT centric. As we move into developing the tools to transfer email accounts, we will be in conversation with agencies—and particularly with those that are using systems independent of DIT.

If your agency does not participate in DIT's offering for email services and your retention schedule specifies that your email is permanent, your agency will have to make provisions to manage, preserve and provide access to that email. Please contact your records analyst to speak further about what additional requirements you need to complete.

12. Is this like the old Mimosa archive where all email was captured when it reached my inbox and when it left my outbox?
No. We envision that the email from a particular account holder will be transferred to the custody of the Archives only when an individual has separated from the position. This also means that the account user's existing file structure will be maintained.

13. So when I complete this form, will the State Archives immediately start transferring email accounts?
No. We have not begun transferring email, nor will we do so without the consent of your agency.

14. What about junk email or confidential information in my email account?
   After an email account is transferred, additional steps will address preservation of digital content (virus checking, fixity checking, etc.), processing (de-duplicating, removing junk, insignificant, or personal email, etc.), and providing appropriate access (redacting confidential information). We will maintain records in accordance with access restrictions defined by state and federal statute

15. How will email be transferred to the State Archives?
   We hope to capitalize on tools and current processes available for email processing. Many state agencies currently use an email client through DIT called Microsoft 365. Generally speaking, email is retained on the state's instance of the Microsoft cloud and inactive email is moved to each user's "archive". It will remain as such until it meets its disposition or unless a user leaves government work (whichever comes first). For accounts that are identified as archival, those emails will remain in the Office365 Archive until they are transferred to the State Archives. . In order to transfer emails, we anticipate using current tools to identify accounts and publish them to a personal storage table format (.pst) that can be read and accessed using Microsoft tools. In doing so, we will be able to move a select number of messages or accounts out of the "cloud" and into our digital repository. No agency emails or email accounts will transfer to the State Archives without express written permission by the originating agency.

   If an agency has archival email accounts and does NOT participate in the DIT Office 365 solution, the Division of Archives and Records will work closely with agency personnel to develop an appropriate methodology for that transfer.