



Personal Digital Records

You probably have resumes, school papers, financial spreadsheets, presentation slides or other digital documents. You might also have digital copies of original hard copy documents such as letters, maps or family histories.

Some of this information may have enduring value.

For this type of information it is important to decide which documents to save. Think about different versions, such as drafts and earlier copies. Drafts, for example, can provide important details that do not appear in final versions.

Archiving Tips

Identify where you have your digital document files

- Locate all digital document files on computers and removable media such as CD-ROMs and floppy disks.
- Include any of your individual documents on websites.

Decide which documents have long-term value

- Pick the documents you feel are especially important.
- You can pick a few documents or many.
- You can pick just final versions of documents or you can also include drafts and revisions.

Organize the selected documents

- Give individual documents descriptive file names.
- Create a directory/folder structure on your computer to put the documents you picked.
- Write a brief description of the directory structure and the documents.

Make copies and manage them in different places

- Make at least two copies of your selected documents—more copies are better.
- One copy can stay on your computer or laptop; put other copies on separate media such as DVDs, CDs, portable hard drives, thumb drives or Internet storage.
- Store copies in different locations that are as physically far apart as practical. If disaster strikes one location, your important documents in the other place should be safe.
- Put a copy of the summary description with your important papers in a secure location.
- Check your document files at least once a year to make sure you can read them.
- Create new media copies every five years or when necessary to avoid data loss.