

Government Records Modernization

Executive Summary

Citizens look to government to maintain documentation that supports the legal certainty of their properties and businesses. Governments can improve public registry services by streamlining procedures and services as part of modernization. The best strategy must also encompass legacy records that may be stored on a variety of media—including paper—in a variety of formats. In decades of working with government records, Kodak has identified fundamental principles for making modernization more affordable and less disruptive.

Introduction: governments hold the official memory of the people they serve.

A civil and orderly society depends on public records to maintain the rights of its citizens. Property records provide legal evidence of transfers and ownership claims on tangible assets. Vital records document major life events, such as birth, marriage, divorce and death. Other records, such as permit and license applications, vehicle registrations, criminal records and tax receipts, provide verification of interactions between citizens and government authorities.

Many of these records may remain filed away and inactive for years. However, when records are required to provide proofs for civil, business or legal activities, the parties usually need them quickly. Because most records are paper documents, the task of filing them and locating them is a time- and labor-intensive process. But the world of computers, networks, and global economies moves at an ever-faster pace, even as the sheer number of documents grows.

It's time to proceed with maintaining the past.

Today, governments are under increasing pressure to provide the timely delivery of records that are trustworthy and complete. That is difficult to do with paper records and stand-alone electronic systems, which may be a patchwork of multiple generations of technologies, systems and associated work processes. With a records management environment like this, the level of service that government agencies provide is often disappointing to the constituents they serve.

The answer is to modernize record-intensive government services such as Public Registry of Property. Ideally, governments can adopt best practices and procedures that can easily scale to meet constituents' demands. By delivering familiar services more efficiently and expanding how it serves citizens with new services, government can foster a more positive image. This progressive thinking can also make the country or state a more attractive location for investment, bringing new economic wealth to the region. The challenge is to adopt sustainable strategies that achieve modernization in a sensible and systematic manner.

Records management inefficiencies are too costly to ignore.

As noted earlier, the records management environment is often a collection of work processes and technology platforms that have evolved over time.

There may be legacy physical assets such as paper, registry books and microfilm as well as aging digital imaging technologies. It is a costly financial drain on government to maintain a diverse records environment such as this. It is also prohibitively expensive to upgrade each process and platform individually.

Each platform involves special work processes to capture, store and retrieve records. Records officials are blocked from implementing consolidated records processing that could serve multiple needs efficiently. Records in the queue to be filed or captured electronically are not available for retrieval. Physical records on paper

or microfilm can be misfiled or lost and degrade with handling. As a result, it may be impossible to produce a trustworthy record in time to avert legal and personal consequences that would be avoided if the record were available. This can create situations where a record cannot be produced in a timely fashion, which in turn can create legal issues and missed deadlines.

Problems with current records management schemes

- Inefficient and costly
- Prone to risk and error
- Lost revenue opportunities
- Constituent dissatisfaction

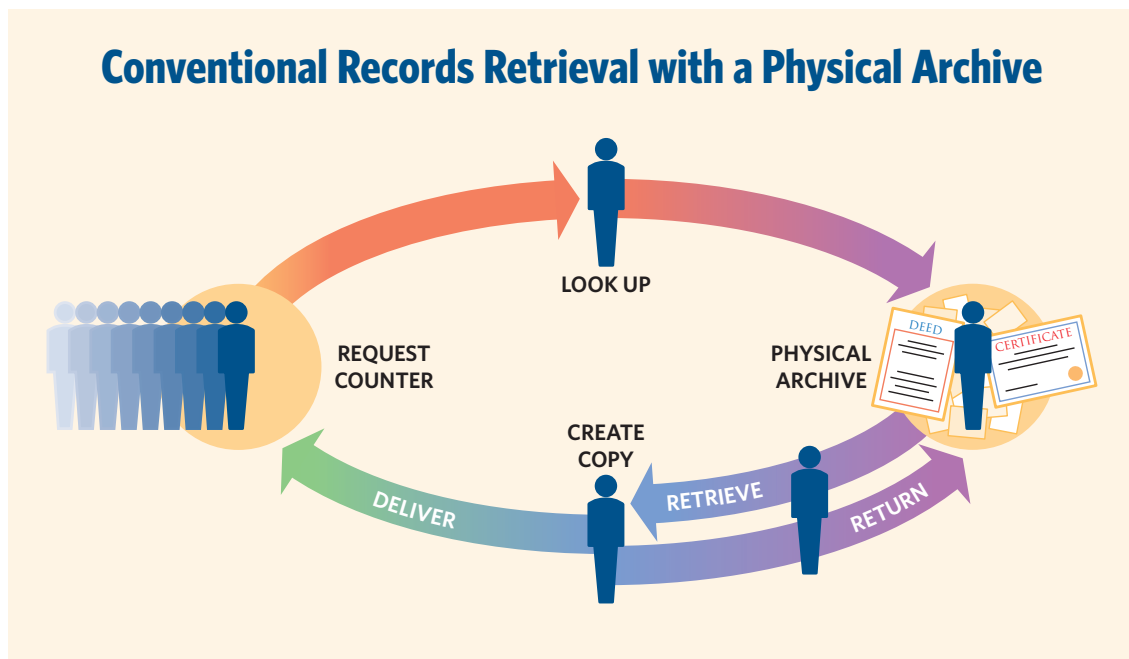
Consider the frustration felt by a citizen from an outlying town. Suppose he must travel to the capital to obtain a copy of the record he needs to settle his mother's estate. Once he arrives at the records office, he is told to fill out a request form. Then he learns that his record will be available in five workdays—if all goes well.

The diagram below simplifies the manual steps that follow as his request moves through the work process as part of a larger batch of requests.

The citizen waits five days and loses two days of work to obtain a piece of paper. But suppose he cannot wait. He may seek third-party services to expedite retrieval. The government may lose revenue to those who counterfeit official records—as well as goodwill and trust in genuine documents.

Clearly, a records management process with a combination of older record formats and manual records wastes money and is a barrier to quick service of citizen requests. The government is seen as inefficient, a higher share of taxes is required for operations and revenue opportunities are lost.

Many steps and many minutes—or hours, or days—are involved when employees must locate, retrieve, copy and deliver a requested document by hand. And unless the original is refiled correctly, it could be lost forever.



Modernize by creating a digital registry.

These issues can be overcome by computerizing the processes and changing how records are stored. By using technology sensibly and automating work process steps, government can build a records management operating model that can operate efficiently and be scaled to serve constituents.

Digital Archive Modernization Model Key Benefits

Efficiency via modernization

- Space savings

Reduced risk

- Durability of records

New service opportunities

- Customer self services
- Records distribution services
- Expedited services

Constituent satisfaction

- Positive perception of government
- Records platform for e-government

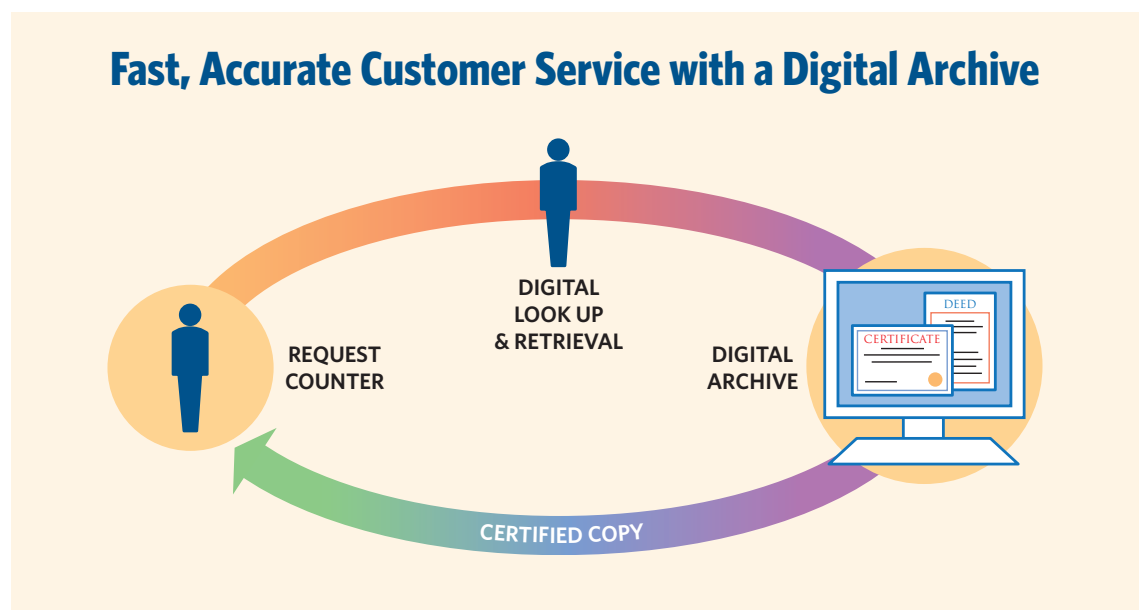
Two actions make this change transparent to citizens and affordable to government authorities. First: begin storing new records electronically. Second: convert legacy documents to electronic form. Doing this creates a digital archive that can be easily searched using a computer.

Copies of records in a digital registry can be accessed by computer, marked to indicate that they are certified and then printed. The digital archive itself can be easily backed up. If required, source documents, books, maps and microfilm can be vaulted in less expensive offsite storage facilities. This reduces the risk of loss due to fire, flood or other disasters. Instances of records loss due to misfiling are also virtually eliminated.

The major benefit to citizens is that the look-up, check-out, copy, delivery and check-in process will take minutes, rather than hours or days. And the savings in taxpayer dollars and labor resources can be applied to other government programs and other means of serving constituents.

With a digital registry in place, reduced queue times and improved financial responsibility can enhance a government's image. And it is easier for government to expand services and offer new delivery methods, such as networked local offices and electronic requests from almost anywhere. Fast, reliable access to trustworthy records also facilitates business development.

A digital archive allows employees to quickly search the archive database, verify a document, and print a certified copy for customer pickup—all within a few minutes or less. This saves time and labor and improves customer satisfaction.



Follow a modernization roadmap that leads to success.

In Kodak's experience, once the people involved in a modernization project recognize and understand the strategic, "big picture" issues, the journey from current records management operations to a digital archive registry can begin. The first task is to develop a roadmap that includes a plan for managing the risk associated with change. Throughout the modernization effort, existing services to citizens must be maintained.

A senior-level steering committee must be convened to develop and execute the roadmap. The committee's ownership ensures that issues encountered along the way are resolved and that communications flow smoothly to convey project status and reemphasize the benefits of change.

Kodak builds a stage and gate process into its roadmaps to mitigate risk. At each phase of plan execution, project value is validated and the completeness of deliverables is reported to all stakeholders. This ensures awareness of the action's value and risks before any investment or changes occur. This also presents an opportunity to redirect the project, if needed, before additional cash is expended.

Following a Roadmap for Change

Efficiency via standardization

- Convene senior steering committee
- Communicate, communicate, communicate

Mitigate risk

- Leverage stage and gate process
- Build achievable work plans
- Plan for contingencies

Celebrate early success and build momentum

Engage a partner with experience that becomes part of the team

The plan should be developed within the stage and gate context. The work to be performed in phases between each milestone should not overstretch the capabilities of the organization. Instead, work must be organized in increments that the organization can reasonably expect to absorb. The plan should also develop contingencies based on probable outcomes to guard against surprises.

This approach enables the new operating model to emerge in an accelerated, yet controlled, manner. Government policymakers and administrators can confirm value, prove the digital archive registry model works, and easily scale to the end state with minimum disruption to current operations. Early trial successes can be celebrated to help maintain momentum.

To obtain the skill set required to drive back-office transformation, government can engage an experienced partner. Such a partner will guide development of benefits quantification and convey key learnings to the team. Leveraging the partner's expertise will enable government to accelerate transformation while minimizing costs. The most desirable partners are those that act in the capacity of a trusted advisor, become a part of the team, and help drive the success of the transformation from beginning to end.



Summary

The management of public records is a vital role that a government performs for its citizens. Effective records management is only possible with archives that are trustworthy and accessible.

Modernization of government records processes is a logical and necessary journey that governments must embark upon. It can eliminate considerable cost and risk for managing records, improve constituent satisfaction and create new revenue opportunities for the state. To maintain continuity of the public register, this journey must also incorporate older technologies and associated work processes.

Progressive government leaders will embrace this opportunity and guide the organization in a disciplined pursuit of the benefits promised by a modernized records management process.

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