MoMA Electronic Records Archive (MERA)

The Museum of Modern Art

Operating Principles | *Last revised January 8, 2016*

Purpose

This document outlines the scope and underlying principles guiding the development and operation of The Museum of Modern Art's Electronic Records Archive. In combination with the MERA Mission Statement and Preservation Strategy, these principles are the conceptual basis for the Museum's electronic records program, which guide decision-making regarding the policy, procedure, and services.

Scope

The MoMA Electronic Records Archive is responsible for:

- Specification of Museum policy for all components of records management, preservation, and access, including:
    - File plans and retention schedules defining records classes, disposition status, and assignment of the office of record,
    - Identification of records with sufficient operational and scholarly value to warrant permanent preservation by the Archives,
    - Preservation planning for maintenance of records' fixity and authenticity, and
    - Provision of access according to applicable laws and contractual agreements governing use and distribution of Museum records.

- Definition and implementation of procedures for management and disposition of temporary records, long term preservation of permanent records, and access of records by Museum staff.

- Oversight and administration of Museum systems supporting the functional elements of records management, preservation, and access.

- Communication with service providers regarding implementation and troubleshooting of software applications supporting records management, preservation, and access workflows.

- Publishing and distribution of policy and procedural documentation, including guidelines for use of MERA systems and tools.

- Provision of guidance regarding interpretation and implementation of MERA policy and procedure through staff training and ongoing troubleshooting.

- Governance and review of Museum staff feedback on development and revision of records management policy and procedure.

- Periodic review and, as necessary, revision of records management policy and procedure to meet emerging operational needs, to comply with new laws and regulations, to incorporate new records classifications, and to clarify unclear documentation.

Designated Community

The designated community of MERA includes the employees, officials, and others directly affiliated with the Museum. Members of the designated community have existing knowledge of Museum operations and the role and purpose of its electronic records within this context. They have basic computer skills and are familiar with common file formats, their use, and their visual and functional characteristics when rendered.

Roles and Responsibilities

Implementation, administration, and ongoing management of the MERA program is the responsibility of the Archives. Operation and support of these efforts is the chief responsibility of the MERA Project Manager, with assistance from Archives leadership and staff as needed. Where additional expertise and input are required to effectively carry out the program's duties, Museum staff and outside experts are consulted.

Participation in records management practices is mandatory for all Museum departments. Staff positions responsible for arrangement and submission of records are identified in the exhibitions and departmental retention schedules. All departments are assigned a records management liaison, tasked with the oversight and management of records management requirements within their department. A full list of records management liaisons can be found **[insert link]**.

Application of protocols for local storage of electronic records and potential future integration of Museum systems to support exchange of records and metadata requires collaboration between the Archives and the Information Technology Department. The following IT staff will be directly involved in the implementation and management of local MERA software and hardware infrastructure: Director of Technology, Database Administrator, Technical Infrastructure Manager, System Administrator.

MERA utilizes services provided by commercial vendors, namely Preservica, a proprietary digital preservation application. Preservica sub-contracts storage services to Amazon Web Services. MERA relies on the provision of these services according to the service level agreements of both Preservica and Amazon Web Services.

Preservation and Metadata Standards

MERA adheres to accepted international standards for records management, digital preservation, and metadata management, including:

- Space data and information transfer systems -- Open archival information system (OAIS) -- Reference model (ISO 14721)
- Space data and information transfer systems -- Audit and certification of trustworthy digital repositories (ISO 16363)
- Information and documentation -- Records Management (ISO 15489)
- The Dublin Core Metadata Element Set (ISO 15836)
- PREMIS Data Dictionary for Preservation Metadata (version 3.0)
- METS: Metadata Encoding and Transmission Standard

Legal Requirements

MERA is accountable to the following legal requirements for retention and management of institutional records:

- Section 802 of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act
- 8 CFR 274a.2
- 26 CFR 31.6001-1 (IRS)
- 26 CFR 301.6501 (IRS)
- 29 CFR 825.500 (FMLA)
- 29 CFR 1602.14 (CRA)
- 29 CFR 1627.3 (ADEA)
- 29 CFR 1630.14(c)(1) (FMLA)

All records subject to pending or threatened litigation or investigation shall be retained for the duration of the litigation or investigation.

Accountability and Trustworthiness

Adhering to the requirements of a trustworthy digital repository, as defined in ISO 16363, MERA accepts full accountability for the authenticity and integrity of the records it manages, preserves, and provides access to. Accountability to Museum stakeholders is demonstrated through readily available documentation of policy and procedure outlining the actions of the program with conceptual justification grounded in accepted standards and best practices. A documented history of change to MERA policy, procedure, and infrastructure is openly available to illustrate the development of services over time.

MERA also documents, to the best of its ability, a full account of all actions taken on records under its care. Metadata establishes an auditable trail of evidence that traces the history of records from the present back to their moment of submission.

MERA is subject to a regular schedule of self-assessment to ensure ongoing adherence to the requirements for trustworthiness and effective operation as defined by ISO 16363.

Cooperation/Collaboration

MERA recognizes the value of cooperation and collaboration within the Museum to develop effective services and engender participation in effective records management practices. Governance structures enable controlled and considerate proposal, review, and implementation of new requirements for management, preservation, and access. Staff are encouraged to provide feedback on MERA policy and procedure through the proper channels.

The MERA program is also committed to collaboration and participation in the wider digital preservation community towards the improvement of preservation practice and development of new technology.

Interoperable and Independently Understandable

MERA recognizes the importance of system independence and interoperability to the long-term preservation of digital information. MERA services include the maintenance of local preservation copies of all Museum records packaged and described in compliance with open standards that support interoperability. Metadata within these packages ensure that the content of a record does not require the intervention of the preservation system to interpret their contents.[1] Records are therefore not bound to the structures and services of proprietary systems.

Access to Electronic Records

Digital preservation of electronic records is in the service of ongoing access to electronic records to support Museum operations, legal obligations, and internal research. Access to electronic records will be restricted according to associated rights and permissions dictated by departmental policy and legal requirements.

Disposal

Proper disposal of temporary records must be conducted in a controlled manner to ensure complete removal of all required information elements. MERA uses the tools of Preservica to

---

[1] Records still require the procurement of the appropriate rendering environment, including software and hardware, for original records or access copies. These elements are not included in MERA's archival packages but are thoroughly documented by the record's metadata.

automate disposal, where applicable, and collaborates with IT to properly remove local copies from storage. Truncated metadata documents of disposed electronic records will remain in the MERA preservation environment to retain the history of the record should such information be necessary for future operations or investigation.

Sustainability of MERA Services

MERA is committed to the long-term viability of its services. Towards this goal, MERA adopts the General Principles for Sustainable Preservation, as defined by the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Sustainable Preservation and Access:

- Recognition of the benefits of preservation by decision makers
- Selection of material with long-term value
- Incentives for decision makers to act in the public interest
- Appropriate organization and governance of preservation activities
- Ongoing and efficient allocation of resources to preservation
- Timely actions to ensure access

The Blue Ribbon Task Force report contextualizes digital preservation as a cost/benefit exercise. Digital preservation must have an equivalent benefit, whether for the public good (research, reuse) or operationally that justifies the related expenditure of resources. Digital preservation occurring in a vacuum is not sustainable due to the limited scope of potential benefits that may be realized. To establish the necessary buy-in and ongoing support from institutional decision-makers, MERA's preservation services aim to benefit all Museum constituents, directly and indirectly, by supporting all facets of the Museum's mission through access for research, repurposing, and ongoing care and operations of the Museum and its properties.

Infrastructure Flexibility

MERA is not permanently bound to the current systems and hardware infrastructure. Ongoing development and optimization of the program's infrastructure is essential to the ability to meet the needs of the designated community and remain viable within a changing technological environment. The Archives remains aware of developments in the field of digital preservation, records management, and digital storage. New technology will be pursued according to the needs of MERA's records and users or in response to potential obsolescence of software and hardware components of the system's infrastructure.

Finances

Funding in support of MERA's systematic elements (e.g., software and outsourced storage) is approved through Fiscal Year 2016. Ongoing funding of these components will be included in

the Museum's operating budget. Administrative support for the specification and implementation of MERA services is currently funded as a capital expenditure through FY2018.

The Archives is committed to ongoing monitoring of costs and procurement of the necessary resources to sustain operation of MERA's programmatic and systematic components. In the early stages of this initiative, it is not yet feasible to establish comprehensive models of the ongoing cost of managing and preserving the Museum's records. Once the necessary services are established and the scope of the collection is clarified, the Archives will develop clearer estimations of the necessary resources and seek a long-term commitment from the Museum for the operations of this program.

Succession Planning

MERA is aware of risks inherent in the use of an external service provider to support management and preservation of MoMA's records. To avoid loss of Museum records and associated metadata, MERA maintains up-to-date system-independent copies of all archival objects managed by Preservica. Should the preservation service cease operations, MERA will maintain control of the Museum's property without requiring a complicated exit path from Preservica and Amazon Web Services.