

# MoMA Electronic Records Archive (MERA)

## The Museum of Modern Art

Collection Policy | *Last revised January 8, 2016*

### Purpose

This policy specification identifies the scope of MERA's electronic records, defining the types of information the program does and does not support.

### Electronic Records

MoMA's electronic records include any and all digital information that is created, received, or maintained by MoMA and its employees, officials, volunteers, and others relating in any way to the Museum's mission, activities, or operations. This definition encompasses content in all formats stored by personal computers both at home and at work, by network servers, or other shared computing resources (e.g., Drop Box, Google Drive, etc.), including but not limited to:

- Electronic documents, including memoranda, meeting agendas and minutes, business forms (e.g., contracts, loan agreements, etc.), reports, checklists, and charts
- Databases and other informational components of Museum technology
- Design and project files, including graphic design elements (e.g., InDesign and Photoshop files) and architectural and engineering drawings (e.g., CAD files)
- Email correspondence distributed or received by Museum staff (see further specification below)
- Internal and public-facing Museum websites, including [www.moma.org](http://www.moma.org) and all Google Sites
- Photographic images related to Museum activities and operations (e.g., exhibition installation, talks and lectures, etc.)
- Audio and video recordings related to Museum activities and operations

Electronic records include documentation at all stages of completion, including notes, working papers, and drafts.

The MERA repository accepts all submitted file formats and will preserve these according to the capabilities of the Preservica system and the program's [preservation policy and services](#).

### Exclusions

The following information-bearing content objects are considered non-records and, as such, are excluded from the services provided by MERA. Museum collections and assets within this group may have inherent value to the museum and require long-term preservation, but are not

supported by MERA systems and administration. These may be supported by other management and preservation services provided by the Museum (e.g., DRMC, DAM).

- Collection objects, including media artworks managed by the DRMC and representations of artworks managed by the DAM
- Electronic books, periodicals, pamphlets, catalogs, photographs, and other materials acquired, collected, or maintained by the Museum Library or other departments solely for the purpose of reference or research
- Digitized collections and research materials acquired, collected, and maintained by the Archives
- Duplicate copies of electronic records not maintained for backup or preservation purposes, as defined below
- Personal documents and digital files of Museum employees, officials, volunteers, or other persons affiliated with the Museum, as defined below
- Software programs required for rendering or playback of electronic records
- moma.org and affiliated websites

## Duplicate Copies, Notes, Working Papers, and Drafts

The Museum definition of electronic records encompasses duplicate copies, notes, working papers, and drafts of documents that are created, received, or maintained, in the course of Museum business.

By definition, duplicate records contain the same information as official copies of a record or a subset of that information. Duplicate records never contain information that is absent from official copies.

Drafts containing substantial alterations and annotations, preferably in the form of tracked changes or comments, are considered unique records and are collected as such. Staff should avoid creation of numerous and extraneous drafts. Versions of a record *must* be properly identified to show the progression of a draft from creation through the final record. For more information on recommended practices for managing draft copies, identifying versions of records, and organizing such records for submission please consult [MERA's Record Preparation Guide](#).

Where the same records are held by multiple departments—as is the case with some financial and personnel records—the Museum's retention schedules designate one department as the office of record. This department's final copy is the official record for retention purposes. Copies held by other departments are considered duplicate records. Similarly, where multiple copies of a record are maintained within a given department, only one copy is collected for retention.

Working papers and notes may be created during the transaction of Museum business or during the preparation of Museum records. Collection of these must be limited to those with continuing

value. Records generated in the course of administrative and routine duties (e.g., meeting scheduling, to do lists) have no legal, operational, or scholarly value and are not within the collection scope of MERA.

## Email Correspondence

Email correspondence includes all messages sent or received by staff in the course of Museum business, including documents, media, and other records included as attachments. Calendar appointments, chat transcripts, notes, and reminders managed by Google services are considered non-records and are not collected by MERA.

Spam, personal, and transitory messages are considered non-records and are not collected by MERA, as they do not relate to Museum operations and do not contain information of continuing, substantive value. Transitory messages include:

- Messages received as an FYI or cc'd to the recipient, which require no decision or action in response, including institution-wide communications
- Messages whose usefulness has expired, often documenting administrative information (e.g., meeting notices, appointments, etc.)
- Incomplete message chains (e.g., forwarded segments of email threads)

MERA utilizes a capstone approach to conduct targeted collection of the Museum staff's email accounts and messages. Accounts of select senior staff members (e.g., directors, chief curators, curators) are collected in full at regular intervals or following retirement, resignation, or termination. Lower level staff correspondence of operational and historic value that is not duplicated in senior staff accounts is collected in targeted efforts. Collection of these messages is limited to those pertaining to certain functions or events overseen by the staff person (e.g., exhibitions, departmental business) and is organized as such within the MERA repository. All other correspondence is considered temporary and will be disposed of according to the Museum's retention schedule.

## Personal Papers

Personal papers are defined as records of a private nature that pertain solely to the private life or personal activities and interests of a Museum employee, official, volunteer, or other person. These records have no relation to that person's assigned duties or to the Museum's mission, goals, objectives, operations, or activities. Examples of personal papers include:

- Documents created before hiring or appointment by the Museum and were not used for subsequent Museum business
- Records relating to professional affiliations
- Personal research records created and maintained by curators or other Museum employees

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- Diaries, journals, and calendars that related exclusively to personal appointments, activities, or other personal matters
- Notes and correspondence (including personal email accounts) unrelated in any way to Museum operations or activities
- Family photographs or video recordings
- Diplomas and citations unrelated to Museum operations or activities

Personal papers are considered non-records and therefore outside the scope of MERA. While personal papers may be kept on MoMA computing and storage systems, the policies and retention schedules of the MERA program do not apply.

Staff members who contribute significantly to the Museum's official activities through personal scholarly interests have been and should be encouraged to give the Archives such papers as relate to their professional careers. These personal collections are an essential supplement to the Museum's official records.

*If information about personal matters and Museum activities is included in the same record, and the record was created in the course of Museum business, the record is considered a Museum record.* When in doubt about the distinction between Museum records and personal papers, employees should contact the Archives or the MERA Project Manager for clarification.

Employees, officials, volunteers, and other affiliated persons should not keep large quantities of personal papers on Museum computing and storage systems. Museum records and personal papers should not be commingled; they should be maintained in separate and clearly labeled directories of the computing or storage file system.

The Museum of Modern Art reserves the right to prohibit employees, officials, volunteers, or other persons from using Museum property or Museum resources to create and maintain all or specific personal papers.

## Ownership of Museum Records

All records created, received, or maintained by the Museum of Modern Art or its employees, officials, volunteers, or others in relation to the Museum's mission, goals, objectives, activities or operations are Museum property. No Museum employee, official, volunteer, or other person has, by virtue of his or her position, any personal or property right to or property interest in such records, even though he or she may be named as the creator, recipient, or custodian of them.

Employees, officials, volunteers, or other persons are permitted to store original or duplicate records in personal or cloud-based computing and storage systems for the sole purpose of performing specific duties or sharing records outside Museum premises. Original records must be submitted to the Archives and all copies purged according to disposition schedules.

Employees may not retain copies of electronic records when they retire, resign, or otherwise

terminate employment. Department representatives must ensure all relevant electronic records in non-MoMA computing and storage systems are retrieved and submitted to MERA following the retirement, resignation, or termination of any employee.

### Ownership of Contractor Records

Ownership of records created by consultants, service companies, or other contractors hired by the Museum to provide specific services and that relate to the Museum's mission, objectives, operations, or activities should be addressed during contract negotiations and governed by agreed-upon contractual provisions.

SAA Museum Archives Section Working Group Example