



The decision to scan your records involves many factors that you may not have considered. This decision tree can help you determine if you should undertake a scanning project.

The Illinois State Archives can help you make informed decisions regarding your records, making sure you remain compliant with all applicable laws and regulations.

1. Can the records be disposed of now? If the documents in question have no further operational value, they may be eligible for disposal and unnecessary to scan. Non-records can be disposed of without State or Local Records Commission approval. Records that have reached the end of their scheduled retention period may be disposed of only after a Disposal Certificate is filed with the State Archives and approval has been granted by the appropriate records commission.

2. Do you plan to dispose of all paper/film copies? A Records Disposal Certificate must be filed and approved prior to the destruction of any original records even if the records are being scanned. Depending upon the situation there may also be additional requirements for any agency that wishes to maintain only digital copies of records. Contact the Records Management section of the Illinois State Archives if you plan on doing so.

3. Are the records being scanned primarily to save space? The costs of scanning, combined with the increased maintenance costs of electronic records, will often be higher than the cost of storage for paper records. If the records in question are not heavily used microfilming may be a good alternative to scanning. Microfilm takes up very little space and can be relied upon for over 100 years in the proper storage environment with minimal maintenance. State agencies may also be able to utilize the State Records Center for storage of non-permanent paper records. Contact the Records Management section of the Illinois State Archives to discuss which options might be best for you.

4. Will the records be infrequently accessed or kept for less than 5 years? It is seldom cost-effective to embark on extensive scanning projects for records that are used very infrequently or those that are kept for only a short time. Microfilming is a better option for low-access records, and the storage costs for short-term paper records will almost always be cheaper than scanning.

5. Does the business, historic, or disaster recovery value exceed the cost to scan? The State and Local Records Acts require that all records be accessible for their full scheduled retention period, but the costs involved with the scanning process may not be justified in all cases. Costs to prepare files for scanning such as removal of staples, creation of coversheets, and formatting irregularly shaped documents all affect the cost of scanning. You will want to weigh factors such as risk of loss, value of records, and costs of either scanning or maintaining in paper when making the decision to scan.

6. Is access needed rapidly, remotely, or by multiple people simultaneously? Electronic access is often the best method for fast retrieval, full text search capabilities, and cross-reference metadata. Indexing costs increase as metadata is increased, however. Access can often be extended to distributed locations for “in the field” use. Collaboration is also enhanced by electronic access. Heavily used records thus are usually better candidates for scanning than those which are seldom touched.

Questions? Contact the [Illinois State Archives](#) for guidance on making crucial decisions about your records:

Local Records Section:
217-782-7075

State Records Section:
217-782-2647

For further guidance and resources visit:

http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/archives/records_management/home.html