

APPRAISAL CRITERIA FOR STATE AGENCY EMAIL *November 2018*

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PURPOSE

The State Archives of North Carolina (SANC) is tasked with the preservation of historically valuable public records, regardless of form or characteristics.¹ Email has become an indispensable platform for the creation of public records by North Carolina state government employees; hence, to fulfill its mandated role, SANC must identify state agency email that contains records of enduring historical value in order to capture, preserve, and provide access to those records.² To that end, SANC has chosen the Capstone method of appraisal originally developed by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)³ to analyze positions within state government agencies to determine whether their related email accounts contain records that warrant permanent retention at the State Archives. This document delineates SANC's Capstone-informed appraisal criteria for the selection of email of enduring historical value.

APPROACH

State agency records retention and disposition is governed by the *Functional Schedule for North Carolina State Agencies*, a comprehensive guide to the record types created by North Carolina state government, how long agencies must keep those record types, and which record types are eligible for transfer to the

¹ See North Carolina General Statute 121, section 5(d), and General Statute 132, section 1(a), for the role of the State Archives in collecting and preserving public records with enduring value and the definition of *public record* in North Carolina, respectively.

² For more information, see North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, "Transforming Online Mail with Embedded Semantics," <https://www.ncdcr.gov/resources/records-management/tomes>.

³ See National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), "White Paper on the Capstone Approach and Capstone GRS," April 2015, www.archives.gov/files/records-mgmt/e-mail-management/final-capstone-white-paper.pdf.

State Archives.⁴ Email communication, however, challenges the standard approach to records scheduling, because any one account likely contains myriad record types with record retentions varying from eligible for destruction when reference value ends (e.g., lunch invitations and forwarded memoranda) to permanent (e.g., formal directives and advisory opinions).

The Capstone approach to email appraisal shifts the focus of initial records appraisal from the individual emails, or the records therein, to the account owner by analyzing the functions of positions within state government to identify those most likely to create records of enduring value within their state email accounts. Once Capstone (i.e., archival) accounts are identified, SANC will transfer those email accounts out of proprietary platforms (e.g., Microsoft 365) and convert them to a sustainable open-source language, increasing the feasibility of their long-term preservation.⁵

The nature of the Capstone approach—wherein the repository collects all the email related to a government position rather than only those email messages that contain records that have been scheduled for permanent retention—will result in voluminous collections of mixed archival and nonarchival value. SANC will use an automated natural language processing (NLP) tool to conduct iterative processing⁶ (see “Processing Procedures,” below), tagging messages to facilitate both limited message-level appraisal and retrieval. This processing will aid in filtering out nonarchival material, like junk email and so on; will identify and tag records containing personal identifying information (PII) and other information restricted by statute; and will also help archivists to provide access to emails of enduring value.⁷ The first step toward limiting the volume of nonarchival material captured is to develop and consistently apply robust position-level appraisal criteria.

GENERAL APPRAISAL CRITERIA

Archival value—aka historical value, enduring value, permanent value, or continuing value—is defined as “the ongoing usefulness or significance of records, based on the administrative, legal, fiscal, evidential, or historical information they contain, justifying their continued preservation.”⁸ The *Functional Schedule for North Carolina State Agencies* provides criteria in the form of clarifying questions. A position’s associated email accounts may be archival if the answer to any of the following questions is yes:

⁴ See State Archives of North Carolina, *Functional Schedule for North Carolina State Agencies* (2018), Raleigh, NC, July 2018. <https://archives.ncdcr.gov/government/retention-schedules/state-agency-schedules/functional-schedule-north-carolina-state>

⁵ See NCDNCR, “Transforming Online Mail,” for more information on how SANC developed its processes for transferring and converting state agency email.

⁶ *Archival processing* is the “the arrangement, description, and housing of archival materials for storage and use by patrons” (“A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology,” s.v. “archival processing,” Society of American Archivists (accessed November 6, 2018), <https://www2.archivists.org/glossary/terms/a/archival-processing>). In the case of Capstone email accounts, processing will be iterative in the sense that at retrieval, an initial round of analysis is performed to tag the emails for storage and use, but processing doesn’t stop there: another round of tagging is initiated by description archivists, and any time a patron requests an account, additional tagging may take place to facilitate access. See the “Processing Procedures” section of this document for more information.

⁷ NLP will also be used to identify confidential material, including personal identifying information [PII], that might require redaction.

⁸ “Glossary,” s.v. “archival value” (accessed April 13, 2017), www2.archivists.org/glossary/terms/a/archival-value.

- **Do the records protect the rights and property of citizens?** These would include legal and vital records held at the state level. Staff who have final approval on permits or registrations involving rights or property, and document that approval via email, would be Capstone candidates.
- **Do they have a long-term impact on citizens?** For instance, records involving environmental pollution and clean-up efforts may document events or programs that affect the health of citizens for generations.
- **Do they document the core functions of an agency?** Core functions or programs are those that directly support the agency's goals and/or mission statements and serve significant populations and/or geographic areas. Records from the Office of the Governor related to the issuance of disaster declarations (RC No. 626.A), for example, document a core function of that office and have been scheduled as archival.
- **Do they document high-level decision-making that shapes an agency's policies or initiatives?** This criterium is particularly relevant to email. There are many positions within state government that involve email communication documenting high-level decision-making; for example, administrative staff tasked with managing the day-to-day operations of important boards or commissions likely send and receive archival email.
- **Do they summarize an agency's activities?** Annual reports and agency histories fall into this category; although these are not likely to be created and stored via email, if they were, the email would be archival.⁹

Other considerations for determining historical value include

- **Inherent interest** is created by nonroutine events, by the involvement of famous parties, and by compelling contexts. For instance, foreclosure proceedings from the 1930s have high historical value because they date from the era of the Great Depression.
- **Extraordinary documentation** is found in records that shed light on political, public, or social history. For instance, the records from the replevin case that returned the Bill of Rights to North Carolina hold more historical value than most property case files because of the political history intertwined with this case.¹⁰

Agency representatives are best situated to know whose email accounts might include records that meet these criteria. *The Functional Schedule for North Carolina State Agencies* should serve as a guide to which record types SANC has identified as archival. See the appendix to this document for additional guidance.

CAPSTONE APPRAISAL CATEGORIES

As noted above, when applying the Capstone approach to identify email for permanent preservation, "final disposition is determined by the role or position of the account user, rather than the content of each individual email."¹¹ State agency representatives are instrumental in identifying the positions within each state agency that meet the criteria for archival retention. To help agencies identify the users

⁹ Ibid., G-2.

¹⁰ SANC, *Functional Schedule*, G-1.

¹¹ NARA, "White Paper," D-1.

most likely to send or receive email that meets the appraisal criteria described above, SANC has developed the following appraisal categories.

Appraisal Category 1

Definition: High-level, senior positions at the top of agency hierarchies. These positions include North Carolina Human Resources Act (GS 126-5) exempt policy-making and managerial positions. The email users in these positions are specifically responsible for decision-making that shapes an agency's policies or initiatives and core agency functions. These positions include

- **The head of the agency, such as the secretary, commissioner, Council of State member, superintendent, executive director, president, or equivalent.** This includes the very top executives of the agency; some agencies will have only one position for this category, although that one position may have multiple email accounts.
- **Principal assistants to the head of the agency (second tier of management), such as assistant and deputy secretaries, deputy directors, commissioners, assistant and deputy commissioners, and/or their equivalents.** The number of positions at this level will vary greatly from agency to agency. Some agencies will have only one, while others may have multiple.

Exclusions: None.

Retention: Permanent (archival).

Appraisal Category 2

Definition: Roles and positions in which users routinely use email to document the core functions and programs of an agency. This includes positions whose holders are on governing boards, conduct research supporting core programs, oversee outreach and/or educational efforts, manage time-limited projects with agency-wide impact, capture the history of core programs, or are responsible for communicating the accomplishments of these programs. These positions might include

- **Principal management positions, such as chief operating officer, chief information officer, chief technology officer, chief financial officer, and/or their equivalents.** These positions tend to be those executives who have operational and management responsibilities within an agency. These positions may be required by statute. For some agencies, these positions may be reflected in Category 1.
- **Roles or positions that routinely and directly advise the positions above, including general counsel, chiefs of staff, deputy chiefs of staff, and so on.** Many management positions routinely provide advice and oversight to the agency in the course of daily business and are involved in mission-related policy formulation, implementation, and/or interpretation. This may include general program oversight, legal protection and oversight, and daily operations and management. This does not include those who advise on purely administrative issues.

Exclusions: If the emails generated by one of these positions do not contain records that meet the criteria above or are already being captured by the email account of an executive-level position included in Category 1, including instances where the executive in that position has been copied on these emails,

the position should not be included on the Capstone list. Not every agency will have positions in every category.

Retention: Permanent (archival).

Appraisal Category 3

Definition: Positions that create official records that document agency policies, decisions, or functions that *are not* represented in the accounts of personnel already listed for Categories 1 and 2 but require long-term retention.

- **Roles or positions with regulatory approval, regulatory sign-off, and rulemaking responsibilities, such as rulemaking coordinator.** The duties described here might not be position-specific but might rather float from position to position depending on the institutional structure and individual employee. See the appraisal note in the “Retention” section below for more information.
- **Supervisors and heads of significant divisions, branches, sections, and units.** This includes supervisors who oversee and manage major program offices or lines of business that support the agency mission. For some agencies, these positions may already be covered by other categories.
- **Staff assistants to heads of agencies and their deputies, such as special assistants, executive assistants, and/or aides.** Important work is often carried out by special assistants, aides, executive assistants to the secretaries, etc. They may send email on behalf of senior officials; act as clerks or secretaries for boards or commissions; and/or their email account may contain email closely related to the responsibilities and actions of the senior officials they support.
- **Any other position that likely creates or receives email content with long-term value,** as defined above in the general appraisal criteria. Depending on the employee and current agency procedures, there may be positions that fall outside those suggested above whose email accounts contain records of enduring value. See the appendix to this document for tips on how to identify these positions.

Exclusions: If emails generated by one of these positions do not contain records that meet the criteria above or are already being captured by the email account of an agency position listed in Category 1 or 2, including instances where the executive in one of these positions has been copied on these emails, these positions should not be included on the Capstone list.

Retention: Permanent (appraisal required). Appraisal note: These positions should be reappraised on an employee-by-employee basis to determine whether archival material is being sent or received by the current occupant of the position. It is critical to review Category 3 Capstone positions whenever the agency or office is reorganized or position responsibilities change.

PROCESSING PROCEDURES

Accounts identified as archival will be held within the originating email system until the employee associated with the account has separated; after separation, SANC will capture and formally transfer the contents of the account into the archives’ collection, with agency approval.

At ingest, email accounts will be deduplicated and processed using the TOMES software tool. This software will create an XML preservation copy of the email account with embedded natural language processing (NLP) tags, as well as a Metadata Encoding and Transmission Standard (METS) document and a statistics spreadsheet in order to facilitate long-term preservation and retrieval at the account level. One of the goals of that step is to identify and filter

- received mass emails of nonarchival or personal content, including emails from listservs;
- calendar-related messages;
- and textual “noise,” such as email signature blocks.

In addition, SANC has developed procedures to use NLP to tag emails that might include confidential information, including

- Personally identifiable information (PII; e.g., social security numbers, drivers’ license numbers, and other sensitive personal information);
- health data;
- or content made confidential by statute.¹²

State agency representatives are, again, instrumental in determining which Capstone accounts are likely to contain messages or attachments with confidential content and are asked to provide search criteria for identifying confidential records within their agency’s email accounts.

Descriptive tags will help archivists engaged in arrangement and description pull out key pieces of descriptive information, including

- email subject-line text;
- personal names;
- place names;
- and other topical data related to the business of government that might be of interest for discovery and access.

These descriptive tags will not only allow for retrieval based on specific search terms, including names and topics, at the message level but will give archivists the capability of indexing the content of Capstone accounts.

Taken together, TOMES-generated tools, workflows, and tagging will allow SANC to capture, preserve, and provide access to state agency emails—with sufficient stops in place to assure confidentiality of sensitive material—on a much larger scale than has ever been possible before.

¹² Bromley, Christman, and Page, “Tim Kaine E-mail Project,” 35.

APPENDIX: IDENTIFYING CAPSTONE POSITIONS

When identifying positions in your agency whose email accounts may contain archival material, it may be useful to consider the archival record types listed in the *Functional Schedule for North Carolina State Agencies*. There are 3 groups of record types you should think about.

1. Archival record types created by *only* your agency. These are the record types with double black borders on the *Functional Schedule*. Your records management analyst can help identify archival record types that are unique to your agency's functions. Positions whose emails include those record types should be designated as Capstone positions.

2. Archival record types that can be found in multiple agencies. Here is a quick guide to record types all agencies should consider. P = Permanent (appraisal required), and A = Permanent (archival); consult the *Functional Schedule* description to determine your records' disposition. Your records management analyst can help you with any "appraisal required" record types. Positions whose emails include record types that transfer to the Archives should be designated as Capstone positions.

1. Agency Management

- 111.P Agency Histories
- 113.P/A Structure/Restructuring Records
- 133.P/A Correspondence
- 139.P Project Documentation
- 142.A Reports Written by the Agency
- 151.P Agency Policies
- 154.P Strategic Plans

2. Asset Management

- 217.A Protections Records

4. Education

- 421.A Coursework

5. Financial Management

- 533.A Grants Issued by Agency
- 535.P Grants Received by Agency
- 542.P Bond Records

6. Governance

- 633.P Governing and Advisory Body Correspondence
- 634.P Governing and Advisory Body Member Files
- 635.P Governing and Advisory Body Minutes
- 641.A Administrative Code
- 643.P Government Affairs Records

12. Legal

- 1262.P Declaratory Rulings
- 1265.A Legal Case Rulings

13. Monitoring and Compliance

- 1313.P Audit Reports
- 1323.P Environmental Impact Statements (EIS)
- 1325.A Licenses and Permits
- 1332.A Evaluations and Inspections

15. Public Relations

- 1521.P Awards
- 1541.P Advertisements
- 1542.P Audio-Visual Materials
- 1544.P Press Releases
- 1545.A Speeches
- 1551.P Agendas, Exhibits, and Programs

16. Risk Management

- 1624.P Forest Fire Incident Records

3. Permanent-in-office record types on the *Functional Schedule*. SANC is not currently collecting record types that are scheduled as permanent in office, but agencies should use this opportunity to identify positions that *do not* create archival record types but *do* create permanent record types—*those emails will need to be preserved in office long-term*. Your records management analyst and your agency's IT department can give you some guidance on how to isolate those email accounts for preservation.