

Preservation Action Plan: Web Records

National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)

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Web Records

A collection of information, documents, or database that is sent from a server to a browser via Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP) when a URL has been activated and meets the definition of Federal record and is provided via an agency's web site.

Component parts of web content may include other record types where it may be necessary to address the significant properties of those record and data types within a separate series of records. However, similar to the category "email," when encountering another category within web records, they are not treated as a separate category.

Significant Properties of Web Records

The rapid evolution of the web, the complexity of the web, and the variety of ways agencies make use of it, limits defining properties only in the manner in which NARA can currently accept the transfer of web content.

The presentation of web content, although it may be intended to be fixed, is most often changed or mutable, as is the content over time. The website's appearance is variable, as it is altered for the user depending on user preferences, browser characteristics, network limitations, frequency, and topic of use.

The Structure and Appearance/Layout are the most important properties. The manner in which elements are organized, interrelated, and displayed can be found in one or more of the following: source code, record layout, table and frame structure, and linkage, site map, and hypertext.

Web content is either static or dynamic. The static portion of web content does not maintain additional behavior properties beyond hypertext/internal links. Dynamic "deep" web content is usually managed through the use of databases and style sheets, which are component parts of the web. If static, capturing the source code of web content generally will encompass content and aspects of the appearance, and structure properties. If dynamic, you may encounter another record category, such as a database. Defining properties for these component parts should be addressed within a separate series for that component and its record type.

Appearance

Name	Definition	Function Description
Layout/Inline	Inline or embedded layout and look and feel of page content. Includes but is not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Style• Format Elements• Class• Heading• List• Table• Form• Canvas• SVG (Scalable Vector Graphics)• Client-side Script instructions	Part of the page/source code
Layout/External	External file(s) that identifies layout and design elements, or are required for layout. Includes but is not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Linked objects/files to be embedded in the layout, such as images, video, audio, dynamic or static output from external applications/APIs/web services• Server Scripts• Cascading Style Sheets	External to the page, must be captured to accurately capture full content and layout

Structure

Name	Definition	Function Description
Links to External Sites	Significant links should be described and documented in external documentation. Linked content in a different domain should be redirected and considered a significant property	All links are part of the page/source code. Externally referenced content (e.g., accessed via hyperlink) that resides in a different domain and is not managed for an agency under a formal

	only if associated with the agency or externally hosted for the agency through a formal agreement.	agreement will not be accepted for transfer.
Site Organization	Logical organization of web content, including navigation, embedded objects or actions.	Part of the page/source code and documented through an external Site Map file
Schema for Dynamic Content	If Database driven, the schema for the database is required. See the significant properties for Database Records.	The schema should be present because if there are serious shortcomings in descriptive and technical documentation then according to NARA guidance the web records should not be considered for transfer.

Behavior

Name	Definition	Function Description
Intended Function	The purpose, audience, and functionality of the site.	Accompanying documentation that describes the intended audience and functionality.

Context

Name	Definition	Function Description
Descriptive Metadata	Information contained within the record (intrinsic) that refers to the intellectual content of material and aids discovery of such materials. Includes but is not limited to: Title Meta/Author Meta/Description Meta/Keywords Caption/Subject/Date/Event/Transaction can all add value to the record.	Part of the page/source code
Crawl/Capture Metadata	Metadata about a web capture (date, mechanism, etc.) needs to be preserved with the website.	

Current NARA Transfer Guidance for Web Records

Bulletin 2014-04

- Preferred:
 - None specified
- Acceptable:
 - Web ARChive Format (WARC)
 - Archive File Format (ARC)

Current NARA Format(s) for Public Access and Reference for Web Records

Formats for Public Access are those made available online through the National Archives Catalog. Formats for Reference are defined as those made available to researchers upon direct requests for digital copies.

Format(s) Available for Public Access: Content created or delivered for public access in the Catalog is delivered primarily in the following file formats: PDF (Textual and Image), JPEG (Textual and Image), MP3 (Audio), and MP4 (Audio/Video) and ASCII (Datasets). Other file formats may be present depending on when they were added to the Catalog. For Legislative web content made available through the Center for Legislative Archives, public access is provided through <https://www.webharvest.gov/>

Format(s) Available for Reference: When available, records may be delivered to researchers in the formats in which they are preserved.

Comments and Notes

Where possible, access should be provided in the native formats for the site as captured, including HTML and all associated media sites and files required for look and feel. This can be provided in a container format, e.g., WARC or ARC.