



PREPARE

Preparing Archives for Records in Email

EA:BCC Symposium

Council of State Archivists

Maine State Archives

June 14, 2023



ABOUT US: COUNCIL OF STATE ARCHIVISTS

Nonprofit membership organization representing the state and territorial government archives of the fifty states, five territories, and the District of Columbia

Other projects include:

- SERI: State Electronic Records Initiative
- ARM: Archives and Records Management Survey
- BACKER: Building Archival Capacity for Keeping Electronic Records



PREPARE

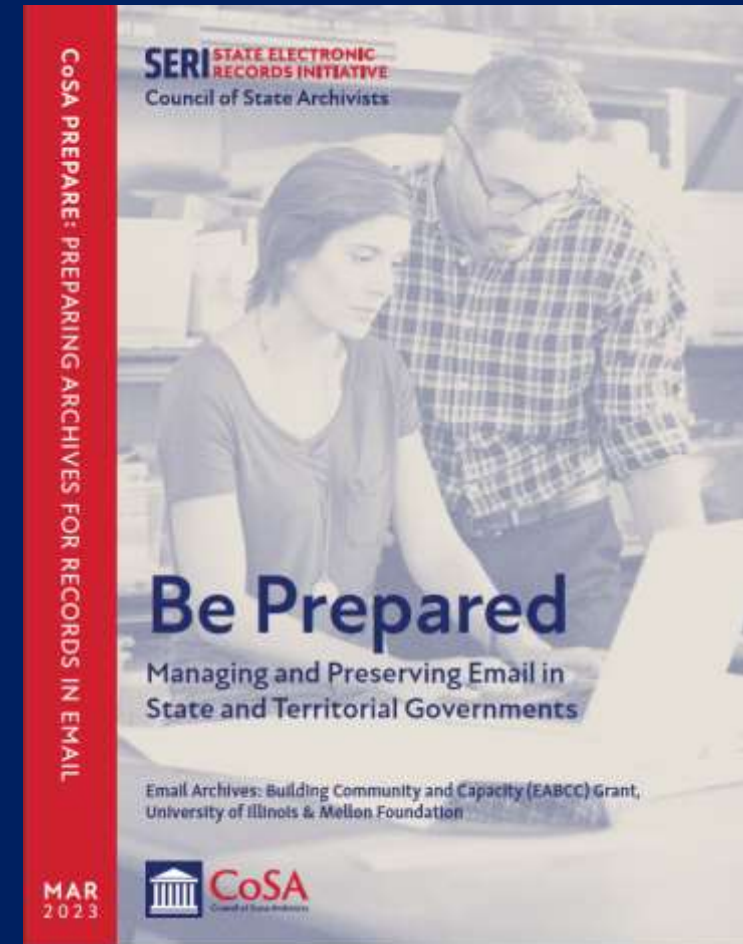
- PREPARE: Preparing Archives for Records in Email (2021-2022)
- Two-year, three-phase study of email challenges (and potential solutions) in state and territorial government
- For more information, please see our Project Briefing and website: <https://www.statearchivists.org/electronic-records/state-electronic-records-initiative/cosa-prepare>

PREPARE: PHASES

Phase 1: Needs Assessment

Phase 2: Tools & Protocols
Testing

Phase 3: Direct Assistance



PREPARE PHASE 1: IDENTIFIED CHALLENGES

Scale/quantity of email records (66% listed this as a challenge and 19% identified it as the biggest obstacle faced)

Insufficient statewide policy adoption (63% and 16%)

Lack of access to technology (63% and 13%)

PREPARE PHASE 2: TOOLS AND PROTOCOLS

Are widely-available email “processing” software suited to the scale and scope of public archives work?

Building consistency within *and* across digital preservation programs

Locked-down IT environments

PREPARE PHASE 3: ASSISTANCE & COMMUNITY

Direct Assistance Projects —> PREPARE

Indirect Assistance: Guidance Documents

Indirect Assistance: Be Prepared

ONGOING CHALLENGES

- **Governance**: Not everyone uses email like you'd expect
- **Technology**: Processing and access tools and workflows might not account for all circumstances
- **Requirements**: Thousands of categories of exemptions, classifications, protected and sensitive information
- **Future-Proofing**: Email is still changing (and we still haven't dealt with the backlog)

SERP: CORE DIGITAL PRESERVATION COMPONENTS

- Identification of essential recordkeeping requirements
- Assignment of roles and responsibilities
- Governance of digital systems
- Migration of data
- Provisioning of authorized access

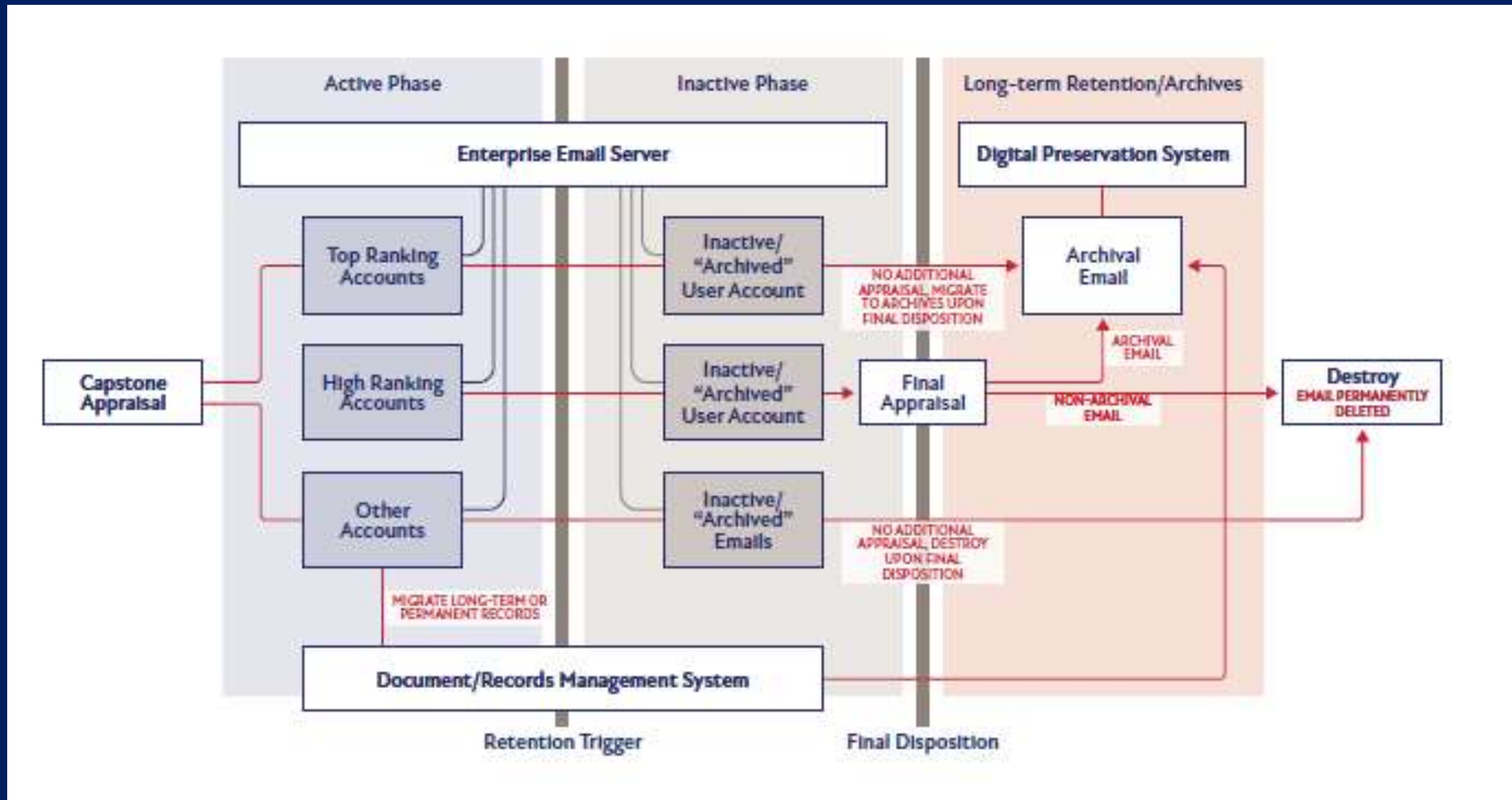
ESSENTIAL RECORDKEEPING REQUIREMENTS

- **Records schedules:** administrative, legal, technical requirements
- Super-category: Archival appraisal
- Position-based appraisal: Capstone
- Appraisal + legal requirements = moving pipeline

Position-Based Email Appraisal Categories + Estimated Percentage of Accounts	
Tier 1: Top-Level Officials	<1%
Tier 2: Top-Level Advisors + High-Level Policymakers	1-4%
All other accounts	95%

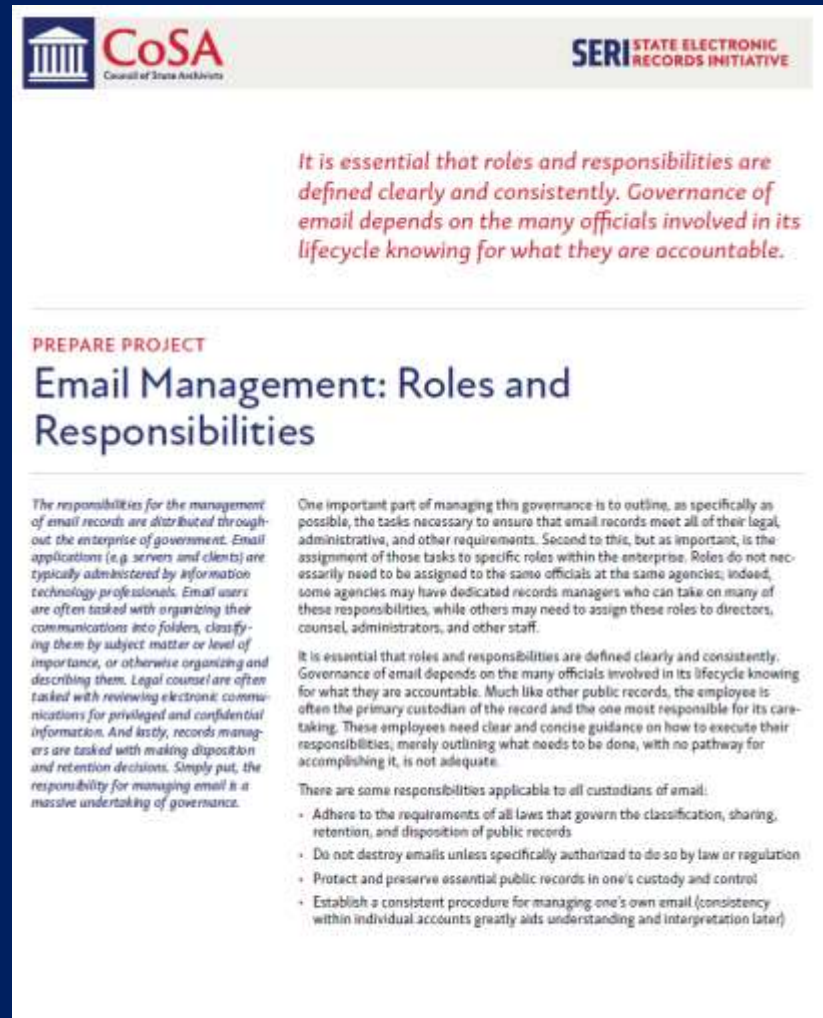
<https://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/email-management/capstone-training-and-resources.html>

POSITION-BASED APPRAISAL



ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Uncertainty in roles
- Appropriately placing responsibilities for management, access, discovery, preservation
- No single approach – individual definitions and assignments



The screenshot shows a document header with the CoSA (Council of State Archivists) logo on the left and the SERI (State Electronic Records Initiative) logo on the right. The main title is 'Email Management: Roles and Responsibilities' under the heading 'PREPARE PROJECT'. A key quote states: 'It is essential that roles and responsibilities are defined clearly and consistently. Governance of email depends on the many officials involved in its lifecycle knowing for what they are accountable.' The document is divided into two columns of text. The left column discusses the distribution of responsibilities for email records management, mentioning roles for information technology professionals, email users, legal counsel, and records managers. The right column discusses the importance of outlining tasks and responsibilities, the role of the primary custodian, and a list of responsibilities for all custodians of email.

CoSA
Council of State Archivists

SERI STATE ELECTRONIC RECORDS INITIATIVE

It is essential that roles and responsibilities are defined clearly and consistently. Governance of email depends on the many officials involved in its lifecycle knowing for what they are accountable.

PREPARE PROJECT
Email Management: Roles and Responsibilities

The responsibilities for the management of email records are distributed throughout the enterprise of government. Email applications (e.g. servers and clients) are typically administered by information technology professionals. Email users are often tasked with organizing their communications into folders, classifying them by subject matter or level of importance, or otherwise organizing and describing them. Legal counsel are often tasked with reviewing electronic communications for privileged and confidential information. And lastly, records managers are tasked with making disposition and retention decisions. Simply put, the responsibility for managing email is a massive undertaking of governance.

One important part of managing this governance is to outline, as specifically as possible, the tasks necessary to ensure that email records meet all of their legal, administrative, and other requirements. Second to this, but as important, is the assignment of those tasks to specific roles within the enterprise. Roles do not necessarily need to be assigned to the same officials at the same agencies; indeed, some agencies may have dedicated records managers who can take on many of these responsibilities, while others may need to assign these roles to directors, counsel, administrators, and other staff.

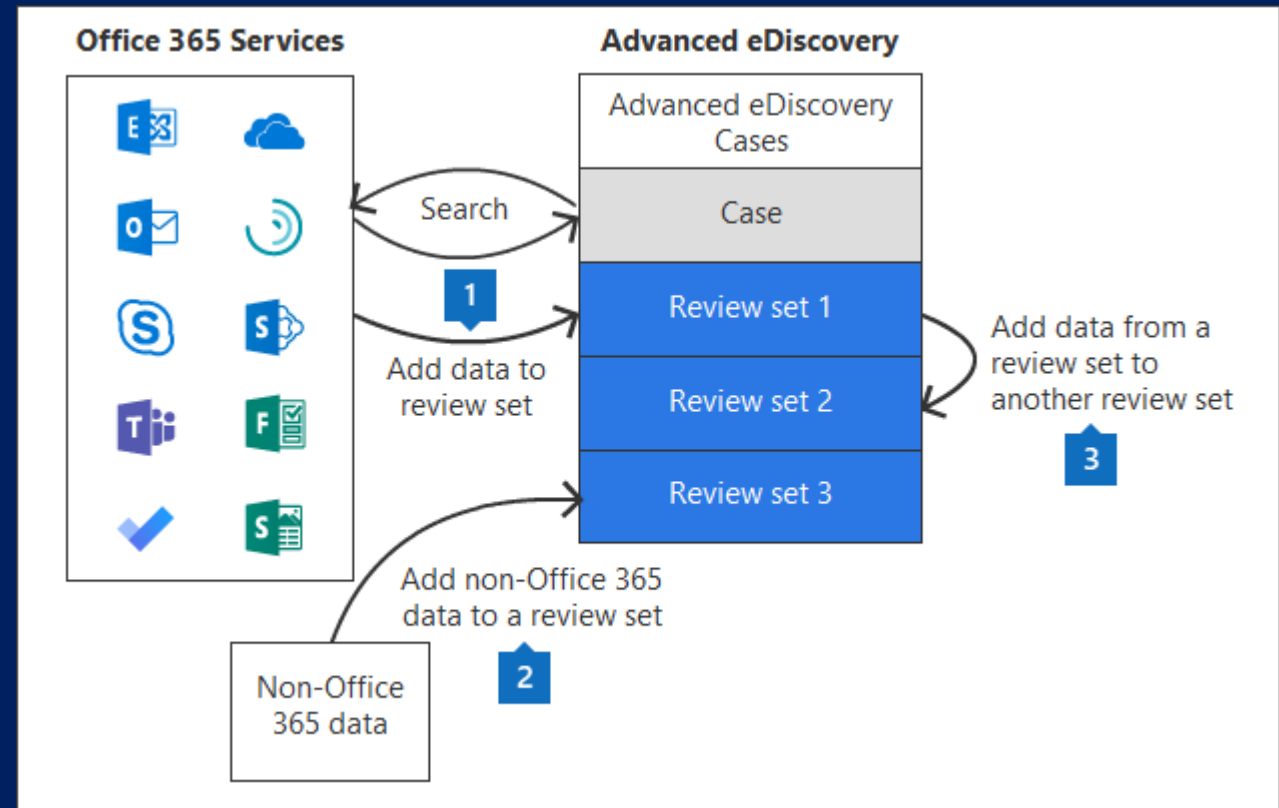
It is essential that roles and responsibilities are defined clearly and consistently. Governance of email depends on the many officials involved in its lifecycle knowing for what they are accountable. Much like other public records, the employee is often the primary custodian of the record and the one most responsible for its care-taking. These employees need clear and concise guidance on how to execute their responsibilities; merely outlining what needs to be done, with no pathway for accomplishing it, is not adequate.

There are some responsibilities applicable to all custodians of email:

- Adhere to the requirements of all laws that govern the classification, sharing, retention, and disposition of public records
- Do not destroy emails unless specifically authorized to do so by law or regulation
- Protect and preserve essential public records in one's custody and control
- Establish a consistent procedure for managing one's own email (consistency within individual accounts greatly aids understanding and interpretation later)

DIGITAL SYSTEMS GOVERNANCE

- How can email servers (and cloud-based licenses, etc.) be configured to best support digital preservation requirements?
- Who can make this happen?



DATA MIGRATION

- Systems
- Custodians
- Packages



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SERI STATE ELECTRONIC
RECORDS INITIATIVE

Emails are challenging records to preserve as they are valuable both as individual records and as aggregate collections. Planning how to structure and store email records can be essential to successful preservation of data.

PREPARE PROJECT

A Primer on Email Preservation Packages

One of the more challenging aspects of email preservation is the creation of preservation packages: structured groups of records that can be deposited in an Open Archival Information System (OAIS)-compliant repository or otherwise preserved for extended periods of time. Emails are challenging records to preserve as they are valuable both as individual records and as aggregate collections; therefore, planning how to structure and store email records (and similarly understanding legacy plans) can be essential to successful preservation of data.

The basic technology of email is generally quite simple: messages are sent from one email server to another, and organized and stored in the context of an account. Messages have required (and optional) metadata included in the message header, as well as a body of text and potentially other data. Additionally, one or more attachments (discrete files) can be included with email messages.

This simple specification for the interchange of electronic messages provides a great deal of flexibility which can present some challenges. Firstly, while there is a standard format for electronic messages¹, there is no standard implementation for tools that create, organize, and send such messages. Due to variations in the nature of the software that creates and sends email, the similarities between email records end with the creating program. Therefore, it is essential to understand the software that creates and receives email is an important part of its provenance.

Some messages are simply text. Others contain rich-text, common formatting modifications such as italics, bold, alternate fonts, colors, and other options. The formatting of information in the body of an email, and the text included, can be meaningful in itself. Furthermore, the organization of messages in an email account can typically be managed extensively by email software. Many email platforms allow users to create custom folders, subfolders, tags, and other "enhancements" to email that are outside of the standard specifications.

Simply put, not all email is created equally, and it's not stored equally either. Due to these variations, those who package email for long-term preservation must take the following details into consideration.

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PROVISIONING OF AUTHORIZED ACCESS

- Strict requirements for providing public access to records (e.g. FOIA)
- Appropriate moment for review + redaction
- “Turnaround time”, archival processing, and online public records

SERP: CORE DIGITAL PRESERVATION COMPONENTS

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DIRECT ASSISTANCE: MAINE PROJECT

- 2022 – Present
- Direct assistance = address unique circumstances and requirements
- Project Team = enterprise-wide collaboration and community building

STATE GOVERNMENT: EMAIL RESPONSIBILITIES

- Email is part of the State of Maine's General Schedule 5 - State Agency Correspondence. Agencies must:
 - At a minimum, agencies must submit "agency specific" schedules for approval. Where other state or federal laws dictate longer retentions, Intended for State agency use.

STATE GOVERNMENT: EMAIL ARCHIVING GOALS

- Ensure that important officials' email is not “lost to history” upon their departure.
- Handle “retention rules” within Microsoft 365 albeit with limited capabilities.
- Leverage Microsoft 365 functionality in which ALL email can be discovered/ recovered.

STATE GOVERNMENT: SIZE AND SCOPE

- Maine has approximately 12,000 @maine.gov email accounts.
- Former employees and officials also need management and archiving – est. 6,000 – 10,000 over a 10-year period.
- Mailbox volumes can be 20,000 email messages or more per year.
- Resulting in more than 200 million messages for current employees alone.

STATE GOVERNMENT: EMAIL GUIDANCE

- Retention guidance depends on Content and Governmental role. Official and leadership roles become Capstone accounts and require detailed management.
- Agencies must establish email folders by year and by subject whenever possible. Quickly delete any non-record or transitory correspondence.
- MSA staff are collaborating with CoSA to develop a policy and procedures that guide employees in managing their email. Plans include a position- based process using a tiered approach to record capture and a Capstone policy for email retention.

STATE GOVERNMENT: RETENTION DETERMINANTS

- Email retention requirements are based on content. Maine State Archives uses a “four-part content-value criteria” to determine retention of any record (including email) as outlined:
 - Administrative use;
 - Legal requirements;
 - Fiscal/ audit requirements; and,
 - Historical/ research value.

STATE OF MAINE – FREEDOM OF ACCESS ACT

- “... It is the intent of the Legislature that their actions be taken openly and that the records of their actions be open to public inspection and their deliberations be conducted openly. ...”
- “This subchapter does not prohibit communications outside of public proceedings between members of a public body unless those communications are used to defeat the purposes of this subchapter. “
- “This subchapter shall be liberally construed and applied to promote its underlying purposes and policies as contained in the declaration of legislative intent.”

STATE OF MAINE – CONTEXT OF GOVERNMENT INFORMATION

- Government is a “storehouse” of information – EVERYTHING IS PUBLIC.
- Individuals manage data and records in this storehouse .
- “Curate and convey” is core function in the ordinary course of government business.
- FOAA requests for records are a small segment of the flow of information.
- Agency response to FOAA request must comply with statutory requirements.

MAINE STATE ARCHIVES EMAIL ARCHIVING PROGRESS

- Digital Records Working Group.
- Collaboration with CoSA to develop Capstone plan.
- Identification of email archiving pilot target.
- Digital Preservation System:
 - RFP;
 - Vendor Selection/Contract; and,
 - Plans for implementation.

MAINE STATE ARCHIVES EMAIL ARCHIVING PLANS

- Collaboration with CoSA to develop workflow and user documentation for email archiving.
- Expand guidance into policy.
- Pilot email archiving in Secretary or State's office.
- Pilot outside of controlled domain.
- Integrate with Digital Preservation System.
- Develop and execute launch plans.

YOUR THOUGHTS



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