

This briefing paper summarizes the results of a cooperative project sponsored in part, by a research grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.

The project, called "Models for Action: Practical Approaches to Electronic Records Management and Preservation," focused on the development of practical tools to support the integration of essential electronic records management requirements into the design of new information systems.

The project was conducted from 1996 to 1998 through a partnership between the New York State Archives and Records Administration and the Center for Technology in Government.

The project team also included staff from the NYS Adirondack Park Agency, eight corporate partners led by Intergraph Corporation, and University at Albany faculty and graduate students.

Organizations need to create and maintain records to carry out their business activities and to document actions and decisions. Organizations are increasingly relying upon electronic information to manage work and make decisions. Many transactions that were once paper-based are now being performed electronically, as networked computer systems that once played a purely supportive role have moved to center stage. However, with the shift from paper to digital information, many organizations find that their current electronic records are not sufficient to support the evidentiary needs of their business functions. Others face the problem of linking documents created in different forms and formats to business transactions. Many organizations are in danger of losing access to records stored in personal computers, e-mail boxes, or personal local area network directories. From an archival perspective, focused on the long-term societal and organizational need for records, these problems result in partial or complete loss of records of enduring value.

In recent years, significant theoretical work has been done in the area of electronic records management; however, little of this work has been translated into practical, implementable solutions. This briefing paper bridges the gap between theory and practice by presenting generalizable tools that link records management practices to business objectives. This connection can be understood most readily at the business process level where workflow, information flow, and service delivery come together.