WYOMING STATE ARCHIVES

GUIDELINES FOR MAINTAINING AND PRESERVING RECORDS OF WEB-BASED ACTIVITIES

INTRODUCTION

The use of Internet websites to distribute information, provide services to, and transact business with the citizens of Wyoming is fast becoming a preferred method of State and local government. In many cases the information is merely graphic representations of information previously made available to the public in hard copy (brochures, reports, forms, etc.). However, many website pages published by government agencies exist only in electronic form, and in a multitude of locations and formats. The mounting use of websites adds yet another wrinkle to the spectrum of electronic records management issues facing government agencies.

LEGAL BACKGROUND

The need to manage these website resources is the same as for other records keeping systems - to ensure compliance with Wyoming statutes concerning the creation, retention, and continuing access to public records. Since the charge of the Wyoming State Archives (WSA) is to provide for long-term preservation and access to records of long-term historical, legal, or administrative value, these guidelines were created to provide government agencies with direction in managing their website records.

Wyoming Statute 9-2-401, "Public records' includes the original and all copies for any paper, correspondence, form, book, photograph, photostat, film, microfilm, sound recording, map, drawing or other document, ***regardless of physical form or characteristics***, which have been made or received in transacting public business by the state, a political subdivision or an agency of the state.." (Emphasis added.) Website source files meet the definition of a record as they are "made or received in transacting public business."

Because they meet the above criteria, all provisions of the Wyoming Statutes 9-2-401 through 9-2-419 apply. State and local government agency heads should ensure that dispositions of these source files be planned, managed, and carried out according to the Wyoming Statutes and using procedures of the Wyoming State Archives (WSA). Public officials should also note that the retention of records maintained in electronic files is the same as for similar records maintained in traditional paper formats unless otherwise specified in a separate retention schedule. It is the record and its content and function, not the media, which drive retention and disposition decisions, although the same record created in both paper and electronic format may have a different retention requirement for each format.

DEFINITIONS

The **Internet** is a system of inter-connected computers world-wide that allows users to communicate information to each other.

Websites are collections of information, documents, and databases that are provided to a user community utilizing World Wide Web formats and protocols.

Web page is a source file, maintained as ASCII text, provided by a file server, and subsequently executed on a local computer, that uses HTML/XML markup languages and external software tools to produce a representation and provide meaning.

HTML is a non-proprietary file format for describing the structure of hypermedia documents - plain text (ASCII) files with embedded codes for logical markup, using tags to structure text into tables, interactive forms, headings, paragraphs, lists, and more. It can be created and processed with a wide range of tools from simple text editors to sophisticated authoring software.

ACCOUNTABILITY EXPOSURE ANALYSIS
To help with the analysis of your agency's website, WSA has included an Accountability Exposure Analysis (AEA) table, which will allow you to determine the level of legal and/or managerial risk associated with your website. You may use the AEA as a guideline, since your future recordkeeping actions will be determined by the risk level under which you are currently operating.

WHY TAKE WEBSITE SNAPSHOTS?
Snapshots will capture the look, feel, and content of active agency websites at particular points in time, and ensure that the WSA, per its charge in the Wyoming Statutes, documents agency use of the Internet over time.

FREQUENCY OF CAPTURE
The frequency of website changes and revisions will vary greatly from agency to agency. Some that publish fairly static versions of policies, publications or images may not see major changes to their website design for months at a time. However, agencies with more advanced services (interactive forms, streaming video, etc.) might undergo major changes a number of times each year. Recognizing those differences, WSA recommends that website snapshots be taken at the time of each major version change to the website (different look, additional features, etc.) or at least every year, whichever occurs first.

WEBSITE DESCRIPTION FORM
WSA has prepared a standard description form (see attachment) that permits government agencies to easily capture information about the content, format and technical characteristics of their websites. Submission of this descriptive information, along with copies of all active source files and both electronic and hard copy versions of relevant log files, will allow WSA to provide continuing access to and an historical perspective for the provision of government information and services.

WHAT TO INCLUDE IN THE WEBSITE SNAPSHOT
You should include all active documents available to the public that are located on the agency's web server, including copies of agency documents that exist in another form elsewhere EXCEPT:

1) Databases
2) Files located on a web server external to the agency (e.g., another agency's website)

ACCEPTABLE MEDIA FOR SUBMISSION OF WEBSITE SNAPSHOTS
To ensure ease of transfer and standardization of the media being submitted for preservation, WSA suggests that agencies adhere to the following media specifics when capturing their websites:

1. Use a fresh CD-ROM (CD-R) with capacity of no more than 700 MB.
2. A gold reflective surface is preferred.
3. Source files should **not** be compressed.
4. The CD's case should be appropriately labeled, but the CD itself should not be. A volume label is automatically created during initial use of the CD, and may be edited to reflect your agency's nickname/acronym, date, and/or disc number within the allotted 11 characters. Place this number on the case and all related transfer documentation.
5. The CD writing should comply with the Joliet modifications to ISO 9660 specifications. These settings are available in your CD creation software options.

PROCEDURE FOR SUBMISSION OF WEBSITE SNAPSHOTS TO WYOMING STATE ARCHIVES

The media/documentation from the website snapshot may be transferred to WSA using the Website Description Form. Complete the form and submit it to WSA with the storage CD. A copy of the completed Transfer Document, showing the date of receipt by WSA, will then be returned to you for your file.

Effective July 1, 2002

ATTACHMENTS

Accountability Exposure Analysis Table
Website Description Form
Website Description Form Instructions