Automated Intelligence

20-Year Rule: Managing the Digital Deluge

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Overview

The Public Records Act requires government and certain public bodies to transfer records of historical value for permanent preservation to The National Archives.

Under the Constitution Reform and Governance Act 2010, the closure period was reduced from 30 years to 20 years.

The transition began in January 2013, with two years' worth of government records now being transferred to The National Archives every year until 2022.

From 2023, the 10-year transition period will have ended, and one years' worth of records will be sent for archival every 20 years.

This document outlines the challenges Government Departments are now facing as a result of the introduction of electronic records in the early 2000s.

In this paper we'll cover how Automated Intelligence can help with historical data, as well as implementing the processes and getting the controls in place to manage the information for future record transfer.

Introduction of digital records

In 2022, government departments will send records from 2001 and 2002, when digital records were in their infancy.

The National Archives need to know what the data is and why it is being sent as a record.

Therefore, before digital records can be transferred to The National Archives, they must be appraised and selected for permanent preservation and reviewed for sensitivity.

Once the digital records have been prepared and delivered to The National Archives, they can be viewed and downloaded from anywhere in the world.

The problem for many Government Departments is that, at that time, they didn't have the same records management systems or controls in place as they do now. There were new and often poor approaches to handling electronic data.

In a document which outlined the government's response on the move from 30-years to 20-years, it was noted that:

> ***"Successfully addressing this digital challenge will drive a refocus of resources from paper records to digital and bring extensive benefits. Not only will Government be able to improve transparency and public accountability and secure the historical record, but we will also be able to support the more efficient management of information that has value, improving public service delivery through ready access to the right information, at the right time."***

Government organisations now understand that addressing this digital challenge will not only aid the digital transfer process, but will result in digital continuity, ensuring that information is complete, available and useable for organisational needs.

Challenges now faced

As a result of changes to technology at the turn of the century, Information Managers are now facing a number of challenges when it comes to finding and preparing the digital information for transfer.

These include:

> Data is residing in old systems which can no longer be accessed

> Legacy systems have been decommissioned and the data archived, so it is difficult to locate and retrieve the information

> Over time some of the data may have been migrated to newer repositories, such as the Cloud, resulting in information dissonance across multiple platforms

> Due to a lack of confidence around regulations, users have not applied relevant data policies, such as retention, and these therefore need to be reviewed as part of the appraisal process

> Metadata has not been captured correctly so if the users who created, owned and managed the data have left the organisation, it is difficult to know what the data is and subsequently, if the record needs to be captured, or not

> Government Departments purchased large Enterprise Content Management systems. Users found the technology complicated, frequently leading to premature disposal. Verifying premature data disposal requires audit logs which are often missing or are incomplete

> Data is not of a high quality and contains a substantial amount of DROT (Duplicate, Redundant, Obsolete and Trivial information) so the manual process of deciding what is important is time-consuming and takes up a lot of resource

> All of these challenges are exasperated by the fact that the data has not been indexed and so, is not easily searchable

How Automated Intelligence can help

Automated Intelligence (AI) is a market-leading data management solution provider with significant experience supporting transformation projects in both Central and Local Government, as well as public sector bodies.

AI can help government departments to bring their data under control in order to address the digital challenge.

This is carried out in a four-stage approach detailed below.

Data Access and Analysis for appraisal and selection

AI.DATALIFT by Automated Intelligence is a cloud-hosted solution which can scale to support Petabytes of data.

All file storage facilities can be scanned, regardless of age and location, so **AI.DATALIFT** can locate and retrieve data which is decades old in legacy systems which can no longer be accessed through current technology

It can then analyse it to understand if it needs to be selected for permanent preservation or deleted.

This is through processes such as:

Metadata Search:

This includes descriptions such as file format, size, age of information, dates last modified, and document owner, enabling important information to be inferred about the document. Using **AI.DATALIFT**, organisations can confirm whether accurate metadata is present.

For instance, metadata may suggest the retention policy has expired, but this may have been for one regulation and the data needs to be kept for another directive.

Content Search:

Government Departments will have a record of key events that happened that year which are significant and need to be captured for historical reference. Using **AI.DATALIFT,** organisations can analyse their data at content level, using freehand search for the keywords and phrases which pertain to these incidences.

Data Categorisation:

AI.DATALIFT creates pre-defined categories so that the data is captured accordingly. Structured queries in the form of classifications are trained to identify types of data.

There will be a set of keywords built around categorisation that help organisations to locate information via automation, beyond the ad-hoc analysis detailed above. This helps to appraise and select records at a macro-level for efficiency and scalability purposes.

Data Cleansing

Through analysis, **AI.DATALIFT** can look for keywords that are relevant to that organisation so they can easily identify and delete obvious ROT (Redundant, Obsolete and Trivial) information.

It's estimated that up to 70% of an organisation's unstructured data is DROT, resulting in an excessive retention of low-value content which does not need to be captured as a record.

Rules are defined to enable an accurate and fully audited deletion process.

Cleansing this data to quickly remove ROT ensures that the information is accurate, up-to-date and useable.

AI.DATALIFT can also detect exact duplicates in order to minimise the volume of information.

Confidence that the data needs to be transferred to The National Archives will improve.

Sensitivity Review and associated data governance

Government departments preparing records for transfer to The National Archives should undertake sensitivity reviews to identify records containing sensitive information.

The records can be transferred as 'opened' or 'closed' or material may be retained by the Department as the records cannot be transferred due to their sensitivity, for example, national security. Retention will also apply if the records are still in use by the department.

If this is the case, then the records may need to be maintained against the organisation's own retention or disposition policy, i.e. retained within the department beyond the 20 years

AI.DATALIFT classifies the data, with Automated Intelligence working with the organisation to establish the rules to bring that data into that classification schema.

Once the data has been classified, governance, including retention and disposition will be maintained over the document for the rest of its lifecycle.

Moving forward, appropriate policies and classifications are also automatically applied to new data as it is being created in line with the organisation's information management strategy.

The result of ongoing data governance will ensure organisations have a manageable data set that can be easily reviewed and approved for release to The National Archives.

Preparation for transfer

Once the data is ready, **AI.DATALIFT** can easily export the data and move it into an agreed folder structure for transfer to The National Archives.

Government Departments have to provide validated metadata, as well as records. The DROID software generates metadata including file path and file name, but manual input is also required.

AI.DATALIFT provides an overview and reporting extract of files with associated metadata and relevant information as provided by DROID.

This ensures the organisation can easily report to The National Archives about the reasons for sending the information across for public release and ensure the overall success of the transfer.

Our team

For more information on how Automated Intelligence can help you address any challenges you might be having around moving to the 20-year rule, contact our Public Sector team below:

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Alternatively, visit
www.automated-intelligence.com
to find out more about our intelligent data management platform, **AI.DATALIFT.**