

**State Records Commission**

**Report to the Governor and General Assembly**

**Status of the State Records Program**

Submitted by the State Historical Society of Iowa  
Iowa Department of Administrative Services  
January 15, 2024

**The State Records Commission is authorized under  
Chapter 8A.601-616 of the Code of Iowa**

*“The commission shall adopt government information policies, standards, and guidelines to do all of the following:*

- 1. Provide for economy and efficiency in the creation, organization, maintenance, administrative use, security, public availability, and final disposition of government records.*
- 2. Ensure creation of proper documentation of the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, and essential transactions of state government agencies to protect the legal and financial rights of the state and of persons directly affected by the government’s activities.*
- 3. Identify and preserve state government records that document the history and development of the state.”*

- Code of Iowa, 8A.604

*“The department (of Administrative Services), through the state archives and records program, is the primary agency responsible for providing administrative personnel and services for the commission.”*

- Code of Iowa 8A.607

*“The commission shall do all of the following:*

- a. Develop and adopt government information policies, standards, and guidelines for the creation, storage, retention, and disposition of records.*
- b. In consultation with the department of homeland security and emergency management, establish policies, standards, and guidelines for the identification, protection, and preservation of records essential for the continuity or reestablishment of governmental functions in the event of an emergency arising from a natural or other disaster.*
- c. Provide planning, policy development, and review for the government records program.*
- d. Adopt rules pursuant to chapter 17A that provide government information policies and standards.*
- e. Adopt and maintain an interagency records manual containing the rules governing records management, as well as records series retention and disposition schedules, guidelines, and other information relating to implementation of this subchapter.*
- f. Make recommendations, in consultation with the department, to the governor and the general assembly for the continued reduction of printed reports throughout state government in a manner that protects the public’s right to access such reports.*
- g. Provide advice, counsel, and services to the legislative, judicial, and executive branch agencies subject to this subchapter on the care and management of state government records.*
- h. Report to the governor and the general assembly on the status of the government records program.”*

- Code of Iowa 8A.608

Date: January 15, 2024

To: Mr. W. Charles Smithson, Secretary of the Senate  
Ms. Meghan Nelson, Chief Clerk of the House  
The Honorable Governor Kimberly K. Reynolds  
Lt. Governor Adam Gregg

I am pleased to submit the State Records Commission's status of the State Records Program to the Governor office and the Legislature. If you have any questions about this report, please contact Anthony Jahn, State Archivist of the State of Iowa, Iowa Department of Administrative Services and Secretary of the State Records Commission.

Sincerely,



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Michael Scott, Chair  
State Records Commission

## Table of Contents

State Records Commission Membership.....	1
Executive Summary.....	2
Key Policy Updates	
Format Neutrality for Records Retention.....	2
Transitory Records.....	2
Records Retention Schedules.....	3
State Records Manual.....	3
Agency Records Storage.....	3
State Archives Historical Records Management and Storage.....	4

### Members of the State Records Commission – As of December 2023

	<b>Officials</b>	<b>Designees</b>
<b>Secretary of State</b>	Paul Pate	Eric Gookin
<b>Treasure of State</b>	Roby Smith	Dustin McNulty
<b>Director of Revenue</b>	Mary Mosiman	Steve Gus
<b>Department of Management</b>	Kraig Paulsen	Tammy Winters
<b>State Librarian (Chair)</b>	Michael Scott	Tom Keyser
<b>Auditor of State</b>	Rob Sand	Susan Fager
<b>Department of Administrative Services</b>	Adam Steen	Joel Clutts

In FY 2023 the State Records Commission met on July 7, 2022; October 20, 2022; January 5, 2023; April 6, 2023. Approved meeting agendas and minutes 2014-present:

<https://history.iowa.gov/history/research/state-government-record-management/state-records-manual-and-schedule>

## Executive Summary

This 2023 State Records Program report summarizes the work of the State Records Commission ([Chapter 8A.601-616](#)) 2014-2023 which was created under the authority of State Archives and Records Act ([Sec. 8A.601](#)). The responsibilities for policy direction, management and implementation of the State records program is divided among the State Records Commission ([Sec. 8A.608](#)), the State Archives and Records Program within the State Historical Society of Iowa under the Iowa Department of Administrative Services ([Sec 8A.609](#)) and each individual agency ([Sec. 8A.610](#)). In short, the State Records Commission sets state records policy; the Department of Administrative Services manages the program as well as provides administrative support to the Commission; and the State Agencies ([Sec. 8A.610](#)) follow and implement policy. State records as defined in Iowa law ([Sec. 8A.602.9](#)) are created by the state government as state property requiring ongoing economic and efficient management, evolving policy and procedures to govern their use, identification and permanent retention of those identified records that document the history and development of the state.

During the time period covered in this report, the State Records Commission focused on updating existing and implementing new policies to meet the state's ever evolving records management needs. Adoption of updated procedures and best practices in response to the overall increased complexity of records management in the ongoing transition from paper to born digital records created by the State of Iowa government.

The State Records Commission, through the Department of Administrative Services staff, welcomes the opportunity to discuss the status of the State Records Program at the request of the Governor's office, any legislator or member of the public.

## Key Policy Updates

**Format Neutrality for Records Retention.** As technology and workplace practices have evolved, the State Records Commission fielded questions from agencies about the difference between paper and electronic records. For example, a common question was, "How long do we have to keep correspondence we've received in the mail versus what we receive via email?" The answer is that there is no difference; it does not matter in which form the correspondence was received, be it paper or electronic. The record is still "correspondence" and the retention period is the same for either format. To assist state agencies in understanding the role of format in Iowa law, the State Records Commission in 2016 issued a policy titled "[Format Neutrality for Records Retention](#)." Unless a format is specifically mentioned in statute, rule, or schedule - the recorded information regardless of format needs to be preserved by agencies for the length of the retention period.

**Transitory Records.** In 2016 the issue arose of how state employees should handle records tied to routine and publicly available information that require no administrative action, no policy decision, and no special compilation or research for reply. The Commission created as a response the [Transitory Records](#) Policy. Addressing records, irrespective of format, that facilitate the conduct of governmental actions on a temporary basis, that have only short-term interest or usage, and that have no or little value in conducting state business.

**Records Retention Schedules.** Under [Sec. 8A.602.12](#) “Records series retention and disposition schedule” the Commission has established and maintained timetables agencies or multiple agencies must use to retain records in active and inactive status. The schedules also provide authorization for a final disposition of the records series by destruction or permanent retention. The Commission classifies these retention schedules into two categories, general (which applies to all agencies) and agency specific (applies to only one agency).

In 2018 the State Records Commission restructured the then 171 general schedules down to 41 by adopting flexible scheduling principles which were developed and prototyped by National Archives and Records Administration for the Federal Government. More commonly known as big bucket schedules, this refers to the use of large aggregation schedules instead of item by item record schedules. The benefits of a flexible schedule included substantially reducing the number of disposition authorities that need to be implemented, leading to more consistent adoption by staff and efficient implementation. Especially when records of an agency are decentralized among individual agency staff (as opposed to being maintained in a file station that serves an entire organizational unit). Reducing the number of new and revised schedules an agency must submit for approval since big bucket schedule items have the flexibility to provide disposition authority when new series or systems are created. This benefit was envisioned by the State Records Commission as especially important for agencies that developed new or use existing electronic systems to carry out business processes. Absent big bucket schedules, the functions surrounding these activities would generally need to be scheduled individually using traditional schedules. Flexible schedules also accommodate an agency's functional and records structure evolution over time because flexible schedules can account for new series and systems. Moreover, if the records in a flexible schedule are based on agency work processes and functions, as opposed to its organizational structure, there is no need to revise the schedule every time the agency is reorganized. This consideration is particularly important for agencies that undergo relatively frequent reorganizations.

**State Records Manual.** In 2021 the State Records Commission under its authority in [Sec. 8A.608.1e](#) updated the interagency [State Records Manual](#). The manual is designed to help anyone who creates or maintains records for the State of Iowa Executive and Legislative Branches understand and fulfill their records management responsibilities as outlined in [Sec. 8A.610](#). The manual outlines and details principles, techniques and best practices for state agency records management responsibilities under Iowa law.

## State Records Center Closure

Under the authority granted in [Sec 8A.608.2h](#), the State Records Commission can establish and maintain a centralized records storage facility for non-permanent physical records storage. With an increasing number of state records being born digitally after 2014, the general assembly of the State of Iowa did not appropriate funds for the State Records Center in FY2021 and the facility was subsequently closed July 31, 2020 following the removal of all remaining non-permanent records by their respective custodial agencies.

## State Archives Historical Records Management and Storage

State Archives and Records Act under [Sec. 8A.609](#) provides authority for the Department of Administrative Services through the state archives and records program to collect, manage and preserve records having permanent value to the State of Iowa. The State Archives includes historical records of the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government including but not limited to records of the office of Governor, the laws of Iowa, Iowa Supreme Court opinions, the vital record statistics of every Iowan since 1880 and much more. The space also holds the State Historical Society of Iowa Special Collections which includes a wide variety of donated items including the personal and professional papers of elected officials, public and private organization records as well as the collections from thousands of everyday Iowans. In 1988 the State Archives was relocated to a 9,110 square foot room within the State Historical Building at 600 E. Locust St. on the Capitol complex. Funds to purchase powered and mechanical assist high density compact movable shelving was appropriated to accommodate 40,000 cubic feet, the shelving was installed and the collection relocated to the State Historical Building. Starting in the early 2000s, staff began to encounter significant functionality issues related to the shelving not working as designed. After years of attempting repairs through vendors, in 2017 the State Archivist of Iowa advised the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs leadership (responsible for the State Archives and Records Program prior to July 1, 2023) that the sections of the powered assist mobile shelving partly or completely did not move anymore. By 2013 the situation of non-mobile movable shelving has deteriorated to such an extent that entire sections of the state's collection are currently inaccessible as the shelving no longer moves, is irreparable, is now a danger to the collection and is unsafe for staff to operate and use.

In 2022 a \$49,751 National Endowment of the Humanities (NEH) grant was secured to fund a project team, led by the Department of Administrative Services staff and the State Archivist, to assess current conditions and develop a plan for a sustainable storage solution for the State Archives and Special Collections of the State Historical Society of Iowa. Beyond replacement of the shelving, the project team identified a number of other deficiencies within the storage room itself that will require a complete renovation of the space including prior to any new shelving installation: repairing the entire concrete floor, updating the electrical and lighting, removing plumbing and walls, etc. The proposed outcomes will meet industry-standard best practices for historical collection preservation storage, including efficiency of ongoing collection management, protection of materials while on the shelf and lighting. The final deliverables of the team included the creation of documents for a future project implementation phase including schematic design, construction and cost opinion estimate documentation, bidding documents.

In 2023, the State Historical Society of Iowa applied for a \$995,027 NEH Infrastructure and Capacity Building Grant to fund 20% of the overall project cost. Unfortunately, the State's application, while well received by NEH grant reviewers, was not approved for funding. The (NEH) program applied to received 138 applications in this cycle but only 22% of applicants were funded. In December 2023 the State also learned the NEH Infrastructure and Capacity Building Challenge Grants program has been discontinued so alternative sources of funding will be identified and secured to fund this important State Archives historical records access, management and preservation project.