
National Archives of the Netherlands Report

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Introduction

European context

The Dutch National Archives participated in the InterPARES Project both on its own merit and as part of the multinational European team, which also included the Public Records Office of England, University of Glasgow (HATII), Dutch Archives School, Archives Nationales of France, National Archives (Riksarkivet) of Sweden, and the National Archives of Ireland. Europe has a long history of archival practice. Currently, each European country has its own legislative framework for records management and archives, incorporating a variety of cultural variations. As a result, despite commonalities, each country will ultimately differ in its assessment of the principles for ensuring authenticity of electronic records as identified by the InterPARES Project.

Dutch context

Records management and archives in the Netherlands are governed by the Archives Act (adapted in 1995) and subordinate regulations such as the Archives Ordinance (1995) and ministerial regulations on archives buildings; accessibility and arrangement of archival records; and sustainability of archival records. The ministerial regulation on accessibility and arrangement of archival records, in force since 1 January 2002, most notably provides guidelines for preserving authenticity; metadata; and the arrangement, accessibility and preservation of records (including the identification of standards for XML, TIFF, and PDF).¹

Aside from the National Archives, the Ministry of the Interior plays a coordinating role for information management in central government, and the provincial "Eldermen" and the municipal councils play similar roles at their respective levels of administration. In 2001 the Dutch government adopted *ISO Record Management Standard 15489* as a framework for proper record keeping, including electronic records. This created a need for further requirements and practical guidelines to help organizations meet the standard. Encouragement and support will be provided by other more generic legislation—covering such areas as freedom of information, privacy, and information security—that was being prepared and promulgated in 2002.

Legislation, policies, and approved standards that were already in place in 2002 provide a firm basis for the principles for ensuring authenticity of electronic records as identified by the InterPARES Project. As in most other countries, the changes and developments due to the increasing use of information technology raise many questions and create some confusion about the way in which traditional archival concepts have to be applied now. In several projects within the Dutch government, especially the Digital Longevity project, those issues are being addressed, and support and guidelines are provided for implementing proper records management in an electronic environment.

¹ In the Dutch context no distinction is made between records and archives. Dutch legislation uses the word *archiefbescheiden* to indicate both. The Archives Act articulates the responsibility of government organizations of all administrative layers (including provinces and municipalities) for managing records and the related processes.

Principle	Dutch comments
<p>1. address records specifically rather than digital objects generally; that is, it should address documents made or received and set aside in the course of practical activity.</p>	<p>This is already a widely accepted principle. However, theoretically it can be stated that records are records because of their nature, even if they are not set aside. It is in order to guarantee their authenticity as long as the records are needed that they are managed and preserved in a safe and controlled environment. The principle is firmly based on the existing legislation and applies to government organizations and the records management community alike.</p>
<p>2. focus on authentic electronic records.</p>	<p>In a digital environment the authenticity of records raises questions, in the sense that it is not always clear what is meant. The issue is especially addressed, be it implicitly, in the new ministerial regulation on accessibility and arrangement (2002), which says in Article 2:</p> <p>“The responsible authority ensures that it will be possible at all times to establish for each record</p> <p>the content, structure and form at the moment that it was received or drawn up by the administrative authority as by its nature destined to be kept by this organization, to the extent that the content, structure and form had to be recognizable for the accomplishment of the task or action by reason of which it was received or drawn up;</p> <p>at which time and by reason of which task or action it was received or drawn up by the administrative authority;</p> <p>the relationship with other records received and drawn up by the government organization.”</p> <p>The Dutch government's adoption of <i>ISO RMS 15489</i> supports the requirement of authenticity too.</p>
<p>3. recognize and provide for the fact that authenticity is most at risk when records are transmitted across space (i.e., when sent between persons, systems, or applications) or time (i.e., either when they are stored offline, or when the hardware or software used to process, communicate, or maintain them is upgraded or replaced).</p>	<p>The main risk at the moment is that, in Dutch government organizations, electronic records are not really managed. The most obvious example is e-mail messages.</p> <p>In an electronic environment, records management requires a completely new infrastructure (organizationally, technically, culturally, etc.). In the emerging world of electronic service delivery, this is even more so and it will be necessary to integrate records management into those processes. There is an increasing awareness of this issue and it is included in guidelines for developing electronic services.</p> <p>Apart from that, the Digital Longevity project offers practical tools (www.digitaleduurzaamheid.nl) and the Dutch Testbed project provides guidelines for preserving specific types of records and migration strategies (www.digitaleduurzaamheid.nl/).</p> <p>Dealing with those issues, has created a huge need for training and education. There is a lack of knowledge, skills,</p>

	and experience in the whole area of digital preservation (and electronic records management) and in understanding the new world of digital information/records. New courses and curricula are being developed to meet this need.
4. recognize that preservation of authentic electronic records is a continuous process that begins with the process of records creation and whose purpose is to transmit authentic records across time and space.	The concept of records continuum is gaining support. The question is, how will it be realized organizationally? There is still a gap between government organizations and archival institutions (life-cycle thinking). The National Archives currently focuses on making cultural sources accessible on the Web, but there is an increasing awareness of the responsibilities for electronic records to have archival value. The current point of view of the National Archives is that government organizations in the first instance are responsible for their own records and that the NA should not be involved, except for appraisal and transfer of these records. The task of coordination and guidance in this area of government organizations has been taken up by the Ministry of the Interior through the already mentioned program of Digital Longevity (of which also the NA is a partner, in the area of digital preservation).
5. be based on the concept of trust in records keeping and records preservation and specifically on the concepts of a trusted record-keeping system and the role of the preserver as a trusted custodian.	This principle is already included in existing legislation and normal (traditional) practice. Archival institutions especially have fulfilled that role for 200 years.
6. be predicated on the understanding that it is not possible to preserve an electronic record as a stored physical object: it is only possible to preserve the ability to reproduce the record.	This is an issue that has to be explained. It requires thinking in a way that many people, including members of the archival community, are not used to. Many people still look at records as physical entities. This is closely related to the issue of authenticity as well. It implies the necessity of having metadata for describing the essential characteristics of authenticity. That is included in the ministerial regulation on accessibility and arrangement (see above under 2).
7. recognize that the physical and intellectual components of an electronic record do not necessarily coincide and that the concept of digital component is distinct from the concept of element of documentary form.	As under 6.
8. specify the requirements a copy of a record should satisfy to be considered equivalent to an original.	The Archives Act and the Archives Ordinance address the issue of substitution. For electronic records, it will be necessary to identify the essential characteristics for maintaining authenticity. That is addressed in the ministerial regulation on accessibility (2002).
9. Integrate records appraisal in the continuous process of preservation.	This is the consequence of principle 4 (records continuum) and is already a long-standing tradition in Dutch archival legislation. Also, according to <i>ISO RMS 15489</i> , appraisal should be incorporated in records management applications.
10. integrate archival description in the continuous process of preservation.	As above, under 9.

<p>11. explicitly state that the entire process of preservation must be thoroughly documented as a primary means for protecting and assessing authenticity over the long term.</p>	<p>The Netherlands government has adopted <i>ISO RMS 15489</i>, which also identifies this as a requirement. In the case of electronic records, one impact will be the creation of stricter requirements for a records management application or preservation function. The ministerial regulation on accessibility (2002) includes this requirement as well.</p>
<p>12. explicitly recognize that the traditional principle that all records relied upon in the usual and ordinary course of business can be presumed to be authentic needs to be supplemented in the case of electronic records by evidence that the records have not been inappropriately altered.</p>	<p>This is stated explicitly in <i>ISO RMS 15489</i> and it is included in the requirements of the ministerial regulation on accessibility (2002) of archival records.</p>
<p>13. recognize that the preserver is concerned with both the assessment and the maintenance of the authenticity of electronic records. The assessment of the authenticity of electronic records takes place before records are transferred to the custody of the preserver as part of the process of appraisal, while the maintenance of the authenticity of copies of electronic records takes place once they have been transferred to the preserver's custody as part of the process of long-term preservation.</p>	<p>The issue of assessing the authenticity of electronic records needs more attention, particularly the implication of implementing records management systems that could support it. This is therefore included in policies for implementing appropriate records management in an electronic environment as now emerging in government organizations in the Netherlands.</p>
<p>14. draw a clear distinction between the preservation of the authenticity of records and the authentication of a record.</p>	<p>This principle is already accepted, though some people still need help to understand that a digital signature is not required for a record to be authentic. Authentication is seen as a means to secure the authenticity of a record, e.g., while preserving it. This is the case for both government organizations and the records management and archival communities.</p>