The Electronic Records Archives

ERA will authentically preserve and provide access to any kind of electronic record, free from dependency on any specific hardware or software enabling NARA to carry out its mission in the future.

"ERA will give us the means to preserve and provide sustained access to Federal Government electronic records of continuing value and to provide economical storage and retrieval services for electronic records that remain under the legal control of the originating agencies."

-- John W. Carlin, Archivist of the United States

The Challenge of Electronic Records

* Explosive number of diverse and complex digital records created by federal agencies *
* High rate of technological obsolescence * The Federal Government is losing digital data on a daily basis *
* No current system to preserve digital records over time *

What is An Interactive Electronic Records Archives?

The Archives of the Future will not consist of many buildings scattered across the country. Instead, the Archives of the Future will be available on the desktop of anyone who chooses to explore the records of the United States.

The Need for an ERA System

ERA will provide NARA with the capability of preserving electronic records of continuing growth in volume, complexity, and diversity. ERA will continue to utilize new technologies to *preserve*, *manage*, and *provide sustained access* to electronic records. NARA will work to provide standards for transferring new types of records to NARA, ensuring the records are *authentically* preserved and accessible once they are transferred. NARA will continue to support new technologies in order to meet the full end-to-end requirements for ERA.

ERA Benefits Across Government

The ERA system will enable NARA to fulfill its mission in the future. It will also be of direct value to other federal agencies. ERA will enable NARA to improve its services to other agencies, and it will make it easier for agencies, the Congress, and the President to transfer their electronic records to NARA. Advances in technology stimulated by ERA will also be available to agencies – not only across the Federal Government, but also in state, local, and tribal governments – which need to keep electronic records to fulfill their missions.

ERA Benefits Outside of Government

E-commerce, e-government, manufacturing, research, education, and cultural activities are all hampered by technological obsolescence. Developments in technology make it easier, faster and less expensive to produce, use and share information, but they threaten the survival of information needed in business and other activities. The ERA system will be a catalyst to the development of innovative ways that any institution can use to carry digital information into the future as easily as they can send it around the world today.

ERA program includes three elements. It is responsible for the research partnerships … it manages the effort to acquire a system which will enable us to manage the lifecycle of electronic records and to preserve them for American citizens … and it supports business process redesign and change management activities to ensure that NARA and its staff are able to use the ERA system successfully.

-- L. Reynolds Cahoon, Assistant Archivist for Human Resources and Information Services

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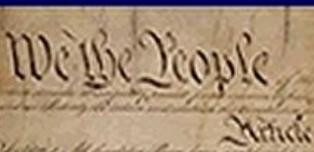
ERA Acquisition Approach

ERA's incremental acquisition approach consists of a base contract period for the design of the ERA system followed by five increments for system development.

– *Base Contract Period:* NARA plans to award up to two (2) contracts for the development of the *system design*. This design competition will provide NARA with insight on how each competitor will handle the complex challenge of building the Archives of the Future. Each competitor will present a system design and working prototype that demonstrates the design in action. At the end of the base contract period of one (1) year, NARA will pick the best design and the best team to proceed with developing the ERA system.

– *Five (5) Subsequent Increments:* The ERA system will be built with each increment building upon the functionality of the previous one.

  • *Increment 1* will lay the foundation for all future IT applications in NARA by building the Enterprise Architecture which these applications will share. It will deliver an ERA system that provides *workflow*, *document management*, and *records management* capabilities for NARA's end-to-end process for managing all types of records. It will increase NARA's ability to *preserve* electronic records in their native formats. And it will provide a "proof of concept" of the possibility of preserving electronic records for the long term, independently of the hardware and software originally used to create them.

  • *Increments 2 through 5* will each add more capacity and capability as well as enhance existing features, all the while reflecting lessons learned in earlier stages of the development.

ERA Program Status

The ERA Program has worked closely with other agencies, universities, archives, libraries, and institutions to develop its vision of the Archives of the Future. NARA has engaged the IT industry in an extensive dialogue on the possibilities for building ERA.

FY04
- Congress passes and the President signs a 2004 budget for ERA to support the design competition.
- NARA publishes the Requirements Document, Transition Plan, Life Cycle, and Enterprise Architecture.
- NARA issues a Request for Proposal for the design and development of the ERA system.
- The Program Management Office implements a detailed work breakdown structure to track progress.
- The Program Management Office completes the hiring of experts needed to manage the acquisition.
- In the *Base Contract Period*, NARA will award up to two contracts for system specifications and design.
- Selected contractor(s) will develop design specifications for the ERA system.

FY05
- NARA will select the best design and development team to build ERA.
- NARA will exercise the first of five (5) increments to develop the system.

FY06
- Development of a test version of the *Increment 1* system. Additional funding is required to complete *Increment 1*, allowing NARA, other agencies, and the public to use the ERA system.

FY07 – 2011:
- *Increment 1*, Initial Operating Capability *(IOC)* in FY07, provides end-to-end functionality for managing, preserving and providing on-line access to NARA's electronic records.
- Four more annual Increments will be brought online
- Full Operating Capability (*FOC*) will be achieved in FY 2011

12/03	3rd Qtr. 2004		Inc 1	Inc 2	Inc 3	Inc 4	Inc 5
		1 year	2 years	1 year	1 year	1 year	1 year
Release of the Request for Proposal	**Base Contract Period**	**3Q FY05 Select Single Developer**		**FY07 Initial Operating Capability (IOC)**			**2011 Full Operating Capability (FOC)**

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