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Dilemmas in Early Disposal of Scanned Routine Records in Israel

Most Israeli governmental, state and local authorities' routine administrative records have retention schedules. The Israeli law basically does not allow destruction of records prior to their scheduled time. Creating paper records uses many resources (space, manpower, equipment). Various attempts to harness modern technology to aid in minimizing expenses while at the same time making retrieval more efficient are constantly being made worldwide. One of the basic approaches had been the creation of copies of the records which have met the necessary standards of the source records. One example of such a technology that had been approved is microfilming. Meeting these criteria can enable destruction of the records prior to their scheduled disposal date. The current article discusses the various dilemmas, as well as the archival, organizational, technological and legal processes taking place in the attempts to resolve them in Israel

Introduction

Israeli government ministries, State offices and local authorities create each year a huge quantity of archival material, most of which is to be disposed of according to the archival regulations. In the new digital era more and more offices are interested in scanning the paper documents and receiving permission to dispose of the original documents prior to the scheduled time, thus having the scanned copy replace the original paper document.

Such a process could save storage space and improve effectiveness of retrieval, and the State Archives have initiated a plan to move in that direction.

In 2005 the "Evidence regulations" authorized the legal validity of scanned documents of original paper documents that were disposed of so that they could serve as evidence in legal processes, if the scanned document meets certain criteria.

On the other hand the "Archival regulations" which do allow destruction of original documents which were microfilmed were not changed yet accordingly to allow destruction of electronically scanned material too.

This discrepancy was related to by the Israel State Archives and the accompanying dilemmas and processes taken to overcome it will be presented in this paper.

Decision making

One of the major issues that emerged during the decision making process was what criteria and standards should the Israel State Archives adopt as threshold requirements allowing the offices to dispose of scanned routine records prior to their scheduled time. The decision was to adopt the British standards for electronic records management[1]. These standards list the basic requirements that should be met in order to ensure proper records management prior to disposal permission.

1. BS ISO 23081-1:2006.

The Israel State Archives developed a three-step procedure[2] that will allow offices to destroy scheduled routine records that aren't meant to be kept permanently after scanning, in a manner that will minimize the danger for loss of information and without hurting their evidential value. This process is part of an overall adaptation towards Electronic management of records in Israel.

Threshold requirements

The basic threshold requirements demanded of every office requesting to dispose of paper documents that were scanned prior to their scheduled time- were set up by the Israel State Archives. Those requirements were based, as mentioned earlier, on the British Standards (BSi).

Amongst others, the requirements include the following:

1. The existence of a records manager in the office agreed upon by the State Archivist.
2. Existence of an organizational standardized filing plan.
3. An ongoing systematic deposition of records by the ministries in the State Archives.
4. Ongoing cooperation of the ministries with the State Archives and working out issues as they arise.
5. The ministry has specific regulations regarding safekeeping and disposal of records, which were approved by the Israel State Archives.
6. The ministry systematically disposes of routine records due to be disposed of in full accordance with the disposal schedule.
7. The ministry scans paper records for at least two years.
8. The ministry has appropriate computerized infrastructure allowing orderly file management:
    a. Filing according to filing system.
    b. Differentiates between files that are to be kept permanently and those due to be disposed of, according to the records schedule.
    c. Rapid and clear information retrieval.
    d. Allowing inserting and updating metadata of the scanned documents.
    e. Proper regulations ensuring the safeguarding of information – both information theft and removal by malicious elements (such as hackers), and fast recovery after such events.
    f. The scanning hardware and software allow scanning the whole document in a way allowing full retrieval of the material so it will be precisely the same as the original.
9. Scanning is done in at least a 300 DPI resolution in .tif or .gif format.

and to allow early destruction of paper records which were scanned. An "early disposal of scanned paper records" pilot program being implemented in several ministries- is presented as well.

La maggior parte dei documenti amministrativi israeliani ha una data di conservazione. In linea di principio la legge israeliana non permette la distruzione di documenti prima che sia spirato il termine per la loro conservazione. La creazione di documenti cartacei prevede l'utilizzo di svariate risorse (spazio, manodopera, macchinari). In tutto il mondo vengono effettuati molti tentativi di forzare la moderna tecnologia per far sì che concorra a minimizzare le spese ed al tempo stesso per rendere più efficiente la ricerca. Uno degli approcci basilari approvati è stato quello della microfilmatura. L'adeguamento a tali criteri può permettere la distruzione dei documenti in data antecedente a quella prevista. Il presente testo disamina le varie problematiche, nonché i processi archivistici, organizzativi, tecnologici e legali che si stanno verificando nel tentativo di dar loro risoluzione in Israele, e di permettere la distruzione anticipata di documenti scannerizzati. Viene inoltre analizzato un programma pilota per lo "scarto anticipato dei documenti scannerizzati" portato avanti da svariati ministeri.

Velika večina dokumentacije, ki je nastala v vladi, pri državnih in lokalnih oblasteh, ima posebno obliko. Izraelska zakonodaja namreč ni dovoljevala uničevanja arhivskega in dokumentarnega gradiva. Ustvarjanje dokumentacije je imelo več načinov nastajanja glede na prostor, delovno silo in opremo. Ta je

2. "Even Pina" (Cornerstone) - *Electronic management of records (Hebrew)*, In preparation.

nastajala na podlagi moderne tehnologije na podlagi minimalnih stroškov, po drugi strani pa je istočasno hotela biti narejena po svetovnih principih. V pričujoči raziskavi razpravljam o različnih dilemah, ki so nastajale na področju arhivske znanosti, organizacije, tehnologije in zakonodaje, ko so jih poskušali razrešiti pri škartiranju gradiva tudi s pomočjo skeniranja.

SUMMARY

Most Israeli administrative records have retention schedules- after which they can be disposed of. The Israeli law basically does not allow destruction of records prior to their scheduled time. Creating paper records uses many resources such as space, manpower, equipment. Various attempts to harness modern technology to aid in minimizing expenses while at the same time making retrieval more efficient have been made in the past century. One of the early approaches had been the creation of microfilm copies of the records which have met the necessary standards of the source records. Meeting these criteria can enable destruction of the records prior to their scheduled destruction date after the Israel State Archives approval. Since the 1970's some of the paper records in Israel have been microfilmed and after having met the standards, disposal of the records had been allowed. The Israeli law has been updated accordingly- to permit this process to take place but it does not relate to scanning. The introduction of electronic scanning and its vast use since the late 1990's had opened a new opportunity for the creation of electronic records. This technology, along with other new computerized technologies had also enabled a whole new field of synergic records management systems to emerge. The use of these technologies had generated, on the other hand, various and new dilemmas to the records keeping field. Ministries are interested in scanning the paper records assuming they would be allowed to dispose of these paper records prior to their scheduled time even though the Archives law does not permit it yet. The current lecture discussed these dilem-

The "pilot" process

A ministry fulfilling these criteria and requesting to join the process will first enter a "pilot" period of approximately 3 years during which it will be accompanied and audited closely by the State Archives.

During the first three months after the initiation of the pilot, no destruction of originals will be carried out in order to ensure a backup in case of mishap.

The pilot may necessarily be limited to a number of units or subgroups of materials and not to all records of the ministry.

A ministry not fulfilling all the criteria will receive a paper of demands needed to be met in order to enter the process.

The ongoing working process

A successful pilot may allow the ministry to request continuation of the "scanning-disposing" process in an on-going manner. The State Archives will continue periodic auditing of the process ensuring that the necessary standards are met to safe keep the scanned material in a secure and reliable surrounding.

Periodic renewal of the permission to continue the "scanning-disposing" process will be issued by the State Archives only to those successfully passing the periodic auditing.
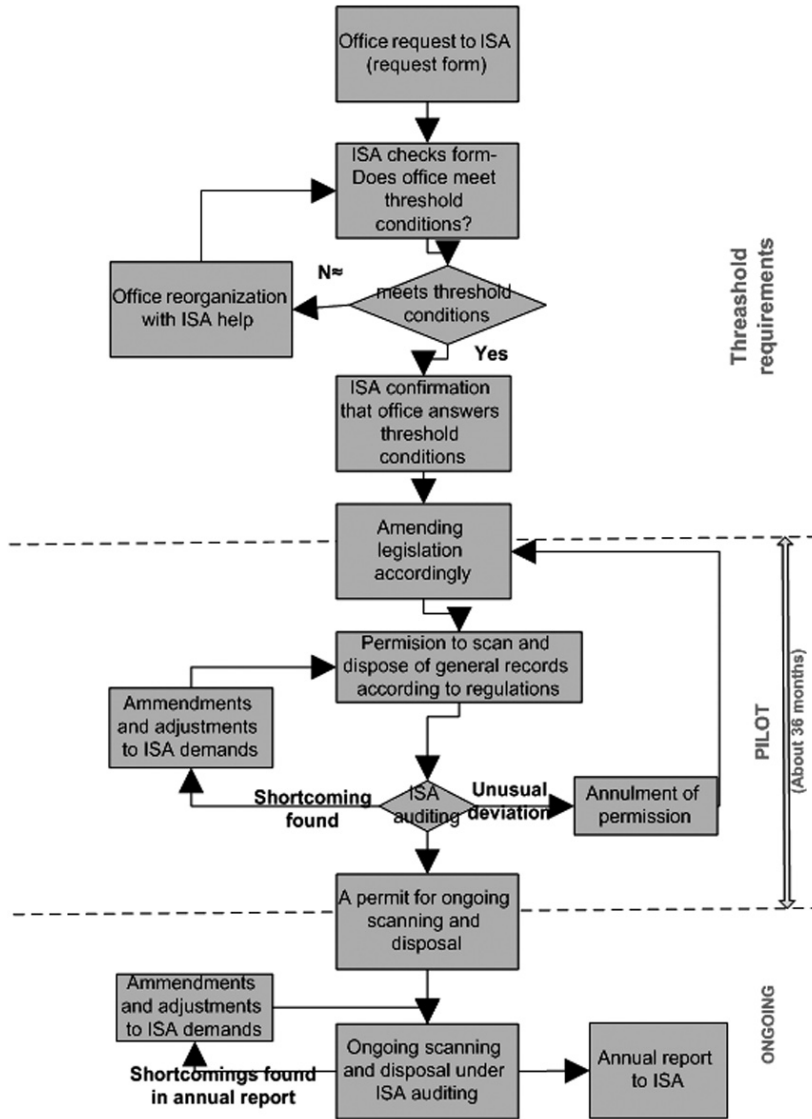
Once a year each participating ministry is requested to report to the State Archives status of the record management, the techniques and mechanisms used for scanning and disposal, by using a standard form for the annual report.

The basic issues dealt with in the annual report are:

1. Safekeeping and guarding of longevity of current electronic records and metadata confirming its reliability.
2. The intactness of the disposal process of the original copies and of the digital material after the completion of the safe keeping period.
3. Adhering to the above mentioned regulations.
4. The proper functioning of the professional staff.

Flow chart

ISA = Israel State Archives

Implementation

The "Pilot" stage is now implemented in two ministries; The Ministry of Justice at three courts and The Israel Security Agency.

Additional ministries have shown interest in entering the program and will enter the pilot stage gradually.