Scanning Guidelines for Digital Preservation

Preserving records in a digital format should adhere to best practices to ensure their longevity, accessibility, and usability. This document outlines the recommended standards for file formats, image resolution, color depth, size, and quality considerations to guide the scanning process. By following these guidelines, agencies can create high-quality digital copies of physical documents, ensuring compliance with retention schedules and safeguarding against data loss over time. In Kentucky, all records with a non-permanent retention can be used and maintained either in paper or digitally. Please use these guidelines to assist your transition from paper to digital files.

Please Note: You may scan permanent physical records (paper/microfilm) for access but you *cannot* destroy the physical originals of permanent records without an [Eye Readable Exemption](#).

File Format
- For images: .tiff
- For text documents: .pdf

These two types are considered enterprise standard formats. Other formats may not be accessible on certain systems or in the case of system migration. You must also consider that these records may need to be accessed years or even decades in the future. PDFs can be saved at an even higher quality: archival PDF which may be necessary for long-term records.

Image Resolution
- DPI means **dots per inch** and it describes the level of detail your scanner captures. The recommended standard is **300 dpi**.

Check that you can easily read your pages after scanning! If you cannot, try increasing the **dpi**.

Color Depth
- Color depth describes the number of colors that can be seen in an image. You will usually see colors described as **8-bit** (256 shades) and **24-bit** (approximately 16 million colors).
- For standard text documents, it is fine to use black and white, but higher bit grayscale may be used to capture signatures and OCR. For photos, maps, or other graphics, higher bit grayscale or color may be used.

Size vs. Quality
- Higher resolution and increased color depth with create a larger file after scanning.
- Records with long or permanent retentions should be scanned at a high quality to ensure their long-term accessibility and use.
- Records with shorter retentions (1-15 years) may be scanned in at a smaller size if digital storage space is a concern. If you intend to destroy the physical originals and maintain *only* the digital file for these non-permanent records, please make note:
  - Ensure the digital scan is high enough quality to ensure legibility and accuracy of the record. *Please perform quality control checks on all scans before destroying originals.*
  - It is very difficult and often impossible to recover information from a low-quality scan.

Outlined Scanning Process

1. Document Arrangement
   a. Determine document organization.
2. Document Preparation
   a. Clean up documents – remove staples and paperclips, unfold corners, remove duplicates.
3. Technical Considerations
   a. Determine scanner settings and file/folder structures.
4. Scanning
   a. Actual scanning process. Please see all guidance above on scanning specifications.
5. Quality Control
   a. Inspection of scanned files.
6. Destruction of Paper Files
   a. When scans are approved, destroy paper copies, and follow retention schedule for digital files.