

GOVERNANCE SERVICES

SCANNING RECORDS

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Scanning, if undertaken properly, and for the right reasons, can make information more accessible, and reduce the amount of physical space taken by paper records. But it can also have serious cost and legal implications. The following guidance highlights the advantages and disadvantages of scanning and provides a checklist for any School or Service area considering scanning as a solution to problems with some of their paper records.
- 1.2 Once you've worked through this checklist, and are sure that scanning is suitable for your situation, it is important to use a scanning service which has the appropriate policies and procedures in place to ensure that any scanning carried out can be relied upon as a true copy of the original. For advice on identifying and selecting scanning/imaging companies please contact the Governance Assistant (see: <http://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/secretary/Pages/uso.aspx> for contact details).

2. The advantages of scanning

- 2.1 Scanning can provide significant benefits if done properly and for the right reasons. It can:
 - increase the security of information;
 - make it easier and quicker to access information;
 - reduce the amount of office space taken up storing records; and
 - make it easier to transmit paper records by electronic means, whilst still allowing you to print a hard copy.
- 2.2 Scanning can also be used as a means of duplicating and dispersing a School's or Service area's vital records, for further information please see the Governance Officer, Records Manager for advice on vital records.
- 2.3 However, scanning is not a substitute for developing good records management and effective record keeping practices. A fundamental problem with records will not be resolved by scanning – it will just be turned into a digital problem with additional issues to address. Scanning is just one part of a larger information management exercise that should be addressed by Schools and Service areas.

3. The disadvantages of scanning

- It is costly, if the records are rarely referred to then off site storage can be a cheaper option.
- It is unsuitable for a series of records which you are still adding to;
- It may make records less reliable as a source of evidence (a scan is a copy and not the original document). It is a good idea to consider who you may need to present the scanned documents to and whether they would accept scanned copies as evidence of a transaction before commencing on a scanning project;
- It makes it harder to preserve records for a long period of time (electronic document preservation is not a guarantee and requires additional time and expenditure for checking media and migrating records); and
- It can be expensive to make scanned records accessible (indexing increases accessibility to your records but is one of the most costly aspects of scanning work).

4. Scanning Checklist

4.1 To establish whether the advantages of using scanning for your set of records outweighs the disadvantages work through the checklist below:

(a) Is the records series closed, or will records continue to be added to it?

Yes

Scanning may be an option, continue to question b.

No

Scanning is unsuitable for these records.

(b) How long do the records need to be kept? (if you're unsure check the University's record retention schedule)

2-5 years

Scanning is unlikely to be cost effective, consider storing the records off site.

6-7 years

Scanning may be an appropriate option, continue to question c.

Over 7 years

Scanning could be an option BUT you will need to seriously consider digital preservation issues and factor in additional costs, continue to question c.

(c) Are the records duplicated elsewhere in hardcopy or electronically?

Yes

It is unlikely that scanning will be a cost effective solution as the records are already accessible elsewhere.

No

Scanning may be an option, continue to question d.

(d) How often are the records looked at?

Rarely

Scanning is unlikely to be cost effective, consider storing the records off site.

Sometimes – frequently

Scanning may be an option, continue to question e.

(e) Will these records need much indexing to make them retrievable?

Yes

Scanning may be an option, but the cost of extensive indexing should be factored in, continue to question f.

No, they are already in a sequential order

Scanning may be an option, continue to question f.

(f) Will the records need to be produced as evidence of the University's activities to sponsors/external auditors who will not accept electronic copies?

Yes

Scanning is not an option.

No

Scanning may be an option.

5. Further information

- 5.1 If you have read through the checklist and are sure that scanning is the most appropriate solution please contact the Senior Governance Officer (Records Manager), see: <http://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/secretary/Pages/uso.aspx> for contact details, who will be able to advise on companies who provide scanning services and also what procedures need to be in place prior to sending records offsite for scanning.