Minnesota State Archives Preferred File Formats

This document outlines file formats preferred by the Minnesota State Archives for digital preservation. This list is not intended to be a comprehensive list of what is accepted, but to provide guidance where multiple formats are possible to transfer to the archives. At the end of this document, you can also find some best practices when preparing files for transfer to the state archives.

File Formats by Content Type

- Text
  - PDF/A
  - PDF
  - TXT
  - RTF
  - DOC or DOCX
- Spreadsheets
  - CSV
  - XLS or XLSX
- Raster/Bitmap Images
  - TIFF
  - JPEG
  - PDF/A
  - PNG
  - DNG, RAW, or other 'negative' formats
  - JPEG2000
- Vector Graphics
  - SVG
- Audio
  - BWF
  - WAV
  - Video
  - MP4
  - MOV
  - AVI
  - Motion JPEG 2000
- Web pages
  - WARC
  - HTML - for static/as-developed only
- Email
  - MBOX

○ MSG

- Presentations/Slideshows
  - PDF if possible
  - PPT or PPTX
- Database
  - CSV if possible, original format if not
- Containers
  - ZIP
- Other files
  - if they can be faithfully represented in PDF/A (secondarily, PDF), include the original format and PDF
  - sets of files, interdependent files, executable files, proprietary formats, other weird/complex files = provide in original format, zipped for download

Best Practices for Preparing Files for Transfer

Once you have negotiated the transfer of digital materials to the State Archives, the materials will then need to be prepared. The State Archives can offer guidance and assistance throughout this process, but these best practices are a useful place to start:

- Identify and remove as many duplicates as possible, whether they are identical digital copies or where both digital and paper copies exist
  - There are some free software tools available to help identify digital duplicates; talk to the State Archives staff for more information.
  - Your deep knowledge of your materials is going to be the best way to limit the overlap between the digital and paper records. If you know that you have digital *and* paper agenda packets, for example, let us know when you transfer the records.
- Clean up (weed) your files to include only what you want to transfer; don't include files that aren't eligible for transfer or that you don't want included, such as personal or financial information.
- Organize your files if they're not already, and create inventories if possible.
  - Chances are that your files are already organized in some way. If they're not, however, organizing your files into a few top-level groups can make your materials much more usable in the future.
  - File names are a great way to organize your materials. File names should be brief but descriptive, and should not contain any punctuation if possible.
  - State Archives staff can help guide you and provide specific tools to automate the inventorying process.
- File sizes should not be so big as to be difficult to use.

- ○ In order to access and use files, future users will have to download files to a computer or mobile device; ensuring files are not prohibitively large makes them more usable.
  - ○ The State Archives recommends breaking files into smaller chunks (e.g., instead of one large PDF of all press releases you can break them down by year, month, or individual press release).
- ● If possible, identify complex files at the time of transfer.
  - ○ Files that have dependencies (e.g., many hyperlinks to external web pages or complex file formats that rely on several files to render correctly) can pose unique preservation challenges. Identifying these files at the time of transfer can help ensure that these complex files are fully preserved.

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