



BSI Standards Publication

# Electronic archiving — Selection of digital storage media for long term preservation

**National foreword**

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## **Electronic archiving — Selection of digital storage media for long term preservation**

*Archivage électronique — Sélection d'un support de stockage  
numérique pour une préservation à long terme*





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# Contents

Page

<b>Foreword</b> .....	<b>v</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>vi</b>
<b>1 Scope</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>2 Normative references</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>3 Terms and definitions</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>4 Methodology</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>5 Choice of storage system/media</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>6 Hard disk drive</b> .....	<b>3</b>
6.1 General.....	3
6.2 Reasons for failure.....	3
6.3 Quality indicators.....	4
6.4 Technical arrangements.....	7
6.5 Control tools.....	8
<b>7 Magnetic tape</b> .....	<b>9</b>
7.1 General.....	9
7.2 Reasons for failure.....	9
7.3 Quality indicators.....	10
7.4 Technical arrangements.....	10
7.5 Control tools.....	11
<b>8 Solid state drive (SDD), flash memory</b> .....	<b>11</b>
8.1 General.....	11
8.2 Reasons for failure.....	12
8.3 Quality indicators.....	12
8.4 Technical arrangements.....	12
8.5 Control tools.....	13
<b>9 Optical discs (recordable and rewritable)</b> .....	<b>14</b>
9.1 General.....	14
9.2 Reasons for failure.....	14
9.3 Quality indicators.....	14
9.4 Technical arrangements.....	15
9.5 Control tools.....	16
<b>10 General requirements for long-term preservation</b> .....	<b>17</b>
10.1 General.....	17
10.2 Media traceability.....	17
10.3 Optimal storage identification.....	17
10.4 Duplication of storage.....	17
10.5 Media stocktaking.....	17
10.6 Periodic inspection.....	18
<b>11 Selection of media</b> .....	<b>18</b>
11.1 General.....	18
11.2 Volume of information.....	18
11.3 Size of individual items.....	18
11.4 Retention period of the information.....	19
11.5 Capacity of the media.....	19
11.6 Technology already in use within the organization.....	19
11.7 Retrieval and accessibility requirements.....	19
11.8 Exposure to threats to media.....	20
11.9 Costs.....	20
11.10 Records management, regulatory, and discovery.....	20
11.11 Technology refresh cycle/software migration.....	20

11.12 Industry acceptance and maturity .....	20
<b>Annex A</b> (informative) <b>RAID</b> .....	<b>21</b>
<b>Annex B</b> (informative) <b>SMART</b> .....	<b>23</b>
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	<b>24</b>

## Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see [www.iso.org/directives](http://www.iso.org/directives)).

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights. Details of any patent rights identified during the development of the document will be in the Introduction and/or on the ISO list of patent declarations received (see [www.iso.org/patents](http://www.iso.org/patents)).

Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

For an explanation on the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the WTO principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) see the following URL: Foreword - Supplementary information

The committee responsible for this document is ISO/TC 171, *Document management applications*, Subcommittee SC 1, *Quality*.

## Introduction

A significant proportion of digital information generated by different human activities will need to be stored for a long period of time and in some cases for as long as it is possible. Where 'long-term' is used in this Technical Report, a storage period of not less than the anticipated life of the storage media is assumed.

The media currently used to store digital information for the long-term have not been analysed and manufactured for this purpose but mainly developed to maximize transfer rates, density recording, and access time. All these parameters have to be taken in perspective when long-term preservation is the requirement, not just simple backup purposes.

In general, current information management systems might not be conducive to the satisfactory achievement of long-term preservation. For long-term preservation, there needs to be the development of special resources and complex procedures with often increased costs when compared with 'normal' information management systems (duplication of files, refreshing storage, equipment redundancy, monitoring systems, heavy maintenance, frequent and risky migration, high energy consumption, etc.).

Even when a system is designed for long-term preservation, the day-to-day requirements for access and management of the stored digital information needs to be taken into consideration.

When designing systems for long-term preservation, it is necessary to have specific pathways with the objective of providing qualified storage media on criteria such as reliability and stability; this would ensure that the sustainability of digital information leads to optimize the solution for both long-term preservation and access to digital information.

The context of the requirement for long-term digital preservation needs to establish conditions and recommendations for media that is specially manufactured with a guaranteed potential of stability and reliability.

The main criteria involved in the long-term preservation of digital information can be summarized as follows:

- a) intrinsic stability of storage media;
- b) stability of physical and/or chemical modifications of media produced by record processing;
- c) quality and reliability of recording process;
- d) preservation of access path to information and metadata;
- e) preservation of access tools (i.e. any special software needed to use digital items that have not been migrated to a long-term or standardized format);
- f) quality of information;
  - compliance with format specification;
  - data integrity.

Only the first three criteria from the list above are considered as part of this Technical Report.

It is noted that the objective is not to make rules or specifications for use on information management systems as several International Standards, such as ISO 14641-1, ISO 15489-1, and ISO/TR 15489-2, fill this role.

# Electronic archiving — Selection of digital storage media for long term preservation

## 1 Scope

This Technical Report gives guidelines on a selection of the most appropriate storage media for use in long-term electronic storage solutions. It includes a discussion on magnetic, optical, and electronic storage.

## 2 Normative references

The following documents, in whole or in part, are normatively referenced in this document and are indispensable for its application. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO 12651-1, *Electronic document management — Vocabulary — Part 1: Electronic document imaging*

## 3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the terms and definitions given in ISO 12651-1 and the following apply.

### 3.1 refreshment

data migration where the media is replaced with equivalent media such that all storage hardware and software functionality is unchanged

Note 1 to entry: Refreshment cycles are based on the predicted life span of the medium.

[SOURCE: ISO 13008:2012]

### 3.2 migration

process of moving digital information, including their existing characteristics, from one hardware or software configuration to another without changing the format

Note 1 to entry: Migration can also include converting to a more current computing environment, involving changes to hardware/software configurations.

[SOURCE: adapted from ISO 13008]

### 3.3 storage medium

device on which digital information can be recorded

Note 1 to entry: Device can designate a support, a combined support and media player, or a set recorder.

## 4 Methodology

The characteristics required for storage media should be clearly established regarding the following criteria:

— reliability;