



NARA M-19-21 Blog

THE TWO SIDES OF THE RECORDS DIGITIZATION EQUATION—COST AND VALUE

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#NARACompliance #M-19-21

In October 2020, I posted thoughts on *What is the RIGHT Price for Records Digitization?* The huge traffic on the post reflected conclusions that I reached after 20+ years in the document management space, and the short answer is, well, “It depends.”

Some of the things upon which it depends include:

- the age, condition and quality of the material to be digitized
- the volume of material to be processed
- the amount of document prep and re-prep needed
- the number of indices and where they can be found in the material
- the time frame to complete the project
- whether the project will be done on-site or off-site or a hybrid
- types of media other than paper (microfilm, microfiche, CDs, VHS, audio tapes, bound books, magazines, and/or blueprints)

A Few Thoughts On Cost, Value and More

COST: There will be differences from project to project and agency to agency, but my take is if your conversations with digitization partners are in the ballpark of 13-22 cents per page, you are probably in the right ballpark. But this only applies to off-site scanning. Scanning on-site at a customer’s location is an entirely different discussion. That’s ONE side of the equation of any M-19-21 records digitization—the COST side. But what about the other side—the VALUE an agency can harvest from a successful digitization project?

VALUE: What are the keys to maximizing VALUE? The short answer is that VALUE depends not only on the successful conversion of paper into digital objects—the *scanning* part of the equation—but also on how those now-digital objects are used to transform agency processes and how the information contained *within* all of those paper documents is extracted and utilized. And that means capture, and more specifically *intelligent capture*.

FIVE KEY Reasons Why Intelligent Capture is Critical to Maximizing VALUE

In a paper I wrote for AIIM, *Strategies to Conquer Information Chaos with Intelligent Capture*, I discuss five reasons why information capture—dusted off with a new moniker, *intelligent capture*—is not only key to maximizing the VALUE of digitization projects, it’s also a key enabling technology in the transformation from analog government to digital government.

1 Capture is shifting from something that is done as an afterthought and with an archive focus to something that must be done as soon as information enters the organization. The lessons learned as you approach back-file conversion to comply with M-19-21 mandates should be applied to day-forward information management. Information is coming into your agency at a pace that requires new and automated approaches to information management—according to AIIM, the volume will grow from X to 4X over the next two years!

2 Advances in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning are changing the capture game. Radical improvements in capture efficiency and accuracy are driving a reevaluation of legacy capture platforms. It used to be that the efficiency and effectiveness of capture was viewed exclusively through the lens of Optical Capture Recognition (OCR) accuracy. OCR is now considered merely table stakes in the journey to information automation; leading agencies are considering how AI can be used to automate the categorization of information and assignment of key metadata as the information enters the organization.

3 Concerns about information privacy and security are increasing.

The growing complexity of privacy and security concerns means that organizations must: a) govern information from its creation; and b) automate the governance process. Government agencies face a difficult set of often conflicting priorities—the need to “open up” processes to provide “Amazon-like” levels of service to constituents while simultaneously making sure that personally identifiable information (PII) is protected and secured. All of the battles over vote processing illustrate the tension.

4 Automated processing of information is critical to all the downstream processes that follow.

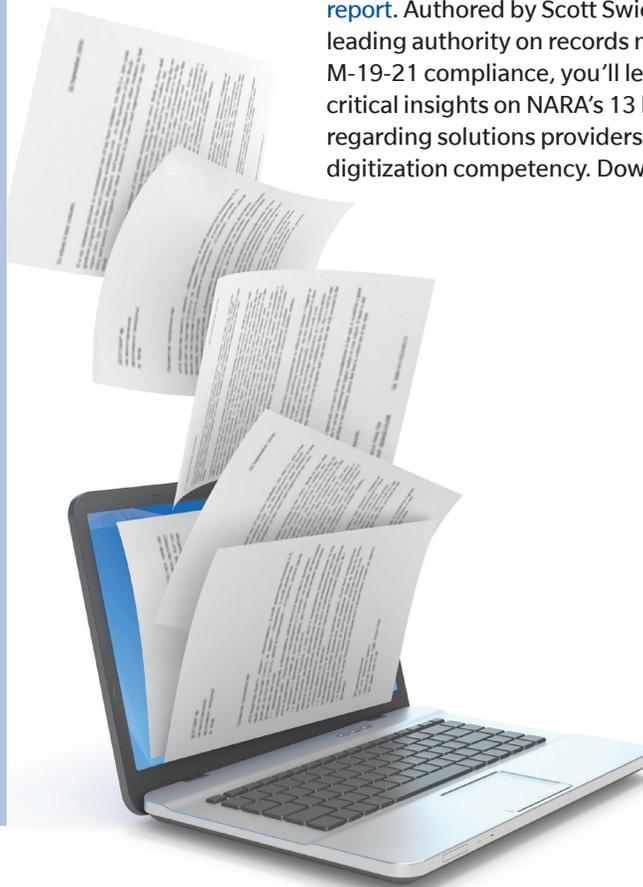
Intelligent capture is assuming a key role in triggering and automating downstream business processes. The M-19-21 end-game for agencies is not just checking off a compliance box—it is using M-19-21 compliance mandates as a lever to digitize and automate core government processes like FOIA compliance, constituent communications, and procurement.

5 Intelligent capture is key to fully optimizing emerging Robotic Process Automation (RPA) capabilities.

As agencies seek to embrace technologies like RPA to automate redundant and manual tasks – both to improve accuracy and save money – the success of these RPA initiatives will rest on their ability to “ingest and digest” unstructured and semi-structured information. Intelligent capture is key to this ability.

Action Items for Government Executives

- Check out the updated “10 Must Haves” to be NARA M-19-21 Compliant.
- Use [When to Outsource: A look at outsourcing, insourcing and taking a hybrid approach to document capture, conversion and management](#) to help evaluate your outsourcing options.
- Take the time to review the [Federal Records Management Council \(FRMC\) white paper on records digitization cost benefit analysis](#), organized by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), which poses 13 key questions that agencies should consider when evaluating potential solution providers and their digitization competency.
- Review QAI’s latest [M-19-21 Industry Insights report](#). Authored by Scott Swidersky, QAI’s leading authority on records management and M-19-21 compliance, you’ll learn first-hand critical insights on NARA’s 13 key questions regarding solutions providers and their digitization competency. Download [HERE](#).



For More Information on M-19-21

Be sure to check all of our NARA M-19-21 blog posts on [QAI’s NARA M-19-21 Readiness Center](#) website (<https://www.qualityassociatesinc.com/nara-compliance-readiness/>). To keep the discussion going, you also can subscribe to [QAI’s LinkedIn M-19-21 Readiness Center](#) (<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/12330726/>) or follow us on [Twitter](#) (https://twitter.com/QAI_USA). You also can email us at infoedge22@qualityassociatesinc.com or call 410.884.9100.

