RECORDS MANAGEMENT ADVICE

September 2009

# Electronic Records Management:
# Blogs, Wikis, Facebook, Twitter & Managing Public Records

**The purpose of this advice is to provide guidance to state and local government agencies regarding the retention of public records of posts to social networking websites such as blogs, wikis, Facebook, Twitter, etc.**

Agencies need to consider the following five (5) factors when managing the retention of their public records created or received through social networking sites:

**1. Are the posts public records?**

If the posts are made or received in connection with the transaction of the agency's public business (such as providing advice or receiving comments about the agency, its programs, core business, etc.), then they are public records for the purposes of records retention and need to be retained for their minimum retention periods.

**2. Are the posts primary or secondary copies?**

If the posts are simply copies of records that the agency is already retaining for the minimum retention period (such as links to publications), then the posts may be considered secondary copies and retained accordingly. Otherwise, the posts are the agency's primary record.

**3. How long do the posts need to be retained?**

Agencies should use the same records series for posts that they would use if the same advice was distributed as a letter or an email to everyone within the agency's jurisdiction. Agencies need to retain their primary record of posts which are public records for at least the minimum retention period listed for those records in the approved records retention schedules.

**4. How will the posts be retained by the agency?**

Agencies need to consider how they will retain a record in their custody and control of their posts to social networking websites. When retention of the posts themselves is outside the agency's control, the agency needs to consider what other records they will retain, such as email confirmations of each post or comment. Agencies need to consider these issues in any service contracts with vendors of social networking websites and in their configuration settings for their social networking website accounts.

**5. For which types of records is this technology appropriate?**

Agencies need to determine the business activities for which social networking technology is appropriate if the agency is unable to manage the creation, receipt and retention of public records documenting the public business they transact using social networking websites.

**Additional advice regarding the management of public records is available from Washington State Archives:**

**www.secstate.wa.gov/archives**
**recordsmanagement@secstate.wa.gov**