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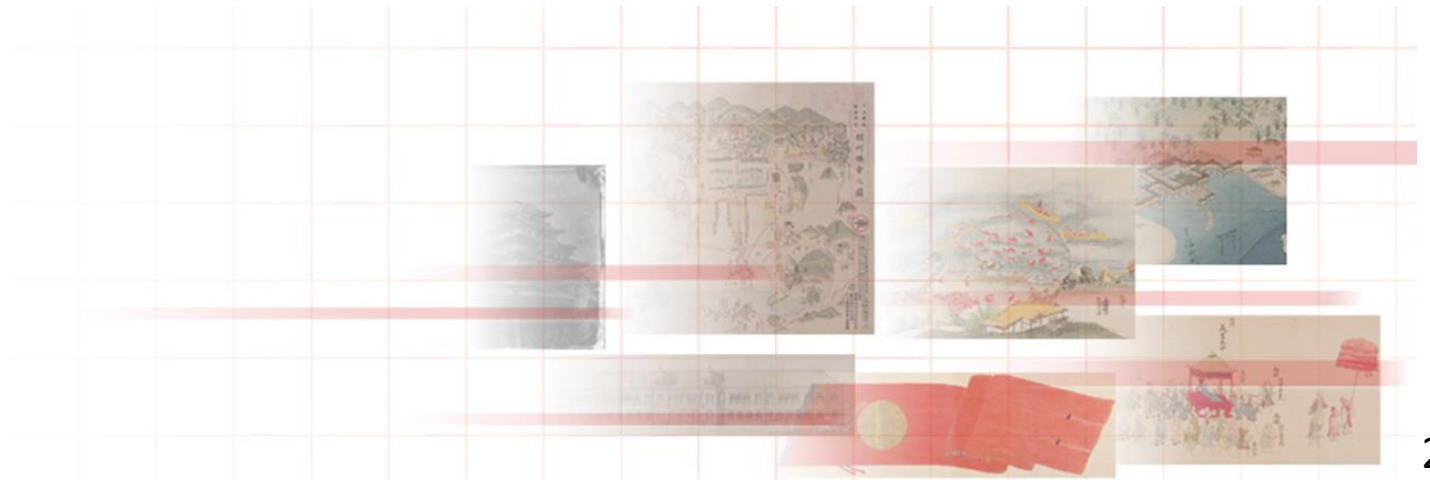
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**Towards Full-fledged
Electronic Records
Management in the
Japanese Government:
Endeavors by the
National Archives of
Japan
Tetsuo Yokaichiya**

Towards Full-fledged Electronic Records Management in the Japanese Government: Endeavors by the National Archives of Japan

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National Archives of Japan
Tetsuo Yokaichiya



1. Introduction:

Overview of mechanisms for Public Records and Archives Management in Japan

“Public Records and Archives Management Act” (Act No. 66 of 2009):
the basic principle of appropriately managing public records and archives,
that are records of national activities and historical facts, ensuring proper and efficient public
administration, and fulfilling the responsibility of accountability to current and future citizens

Administrative organs manage records, and National Archives preserves historical archives under the act.

Key points:

- This act is for administration; It does not govern directly the legislative and the judicial branch, and local governments should make efforts to make management system by their self by referring to this act.
- Cabinet office oversees the administrative records and archives management system, but each administrative organs performs practical records management using its own system.
- The National Archives of Japan is the agency under cabinet office that preserves historical archives and provide for public use, and gives technical advice on records and archives management.

Under these circumstances, with the rapid digitalization of the national government and society, the NAI's role in providing professional and technical advice has become even more important.

2. NAJ Digitalization Initiative

(1) Two Digital Archives in the National Archives of Japan

Since the early 2000s, NAJ has embarked on two full-fledged digital archive projects in anticipation of the advent of the digital age.

- i) the digital archive of the Japan Center for Asian Historical Records (JACAR), which has been in operation since 2001.
- ii) the National Archives of Japan, Digital Archive (NAJDA), which has been in operation since 2005.

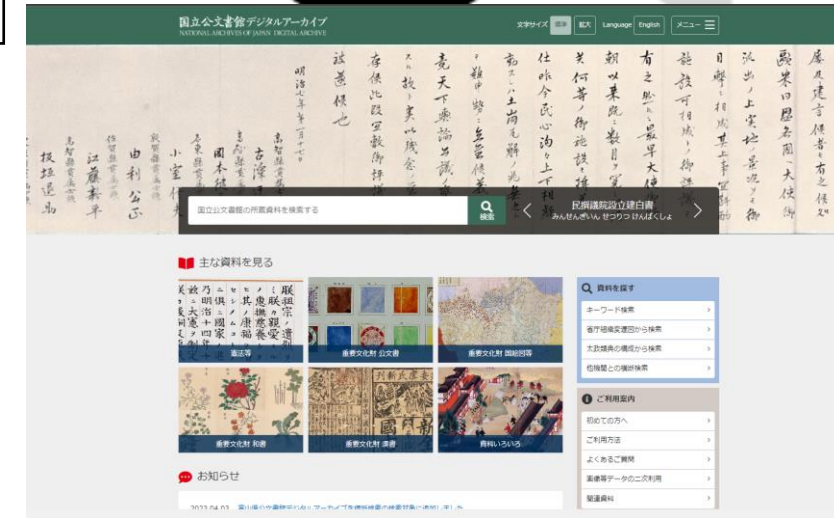
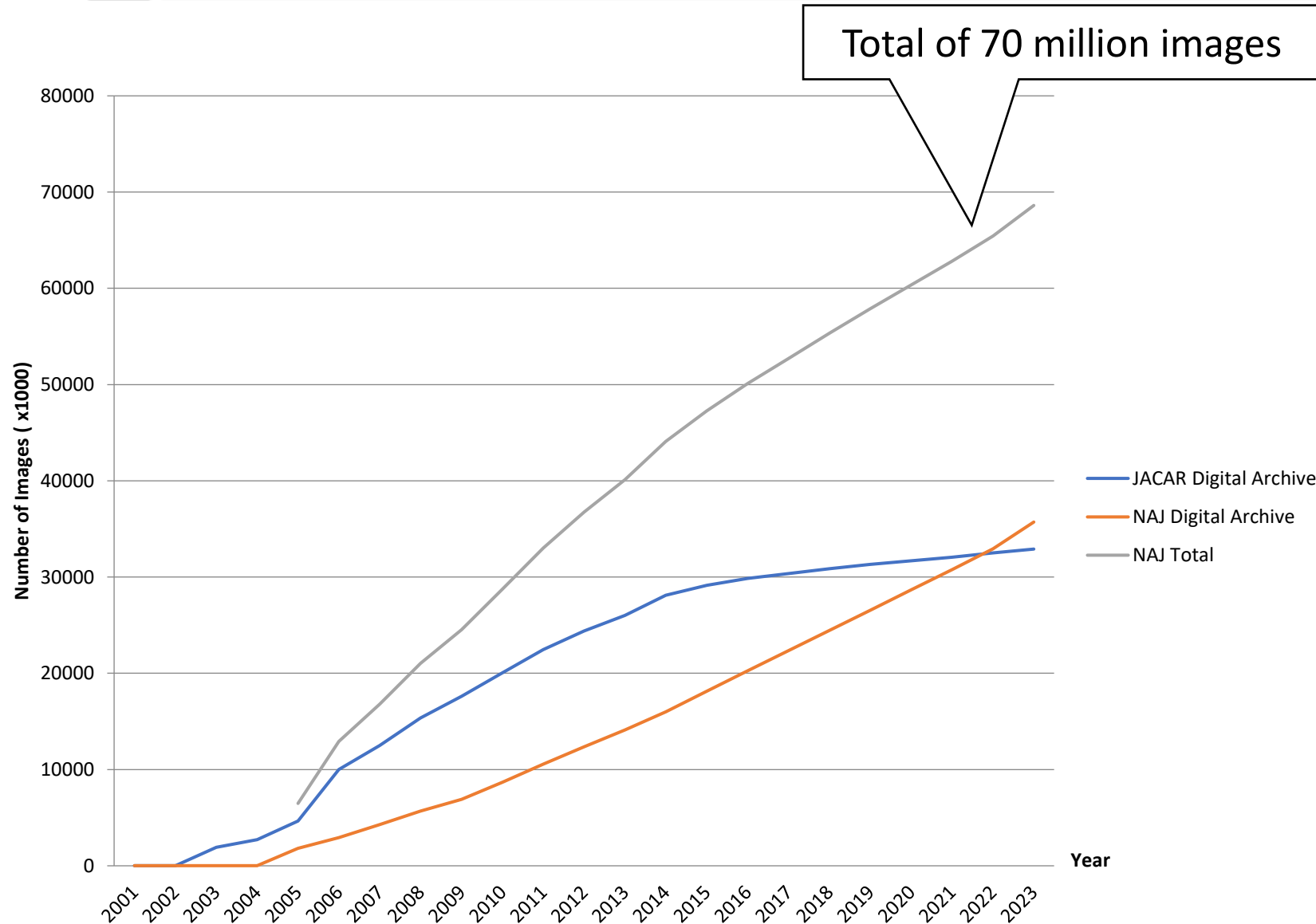
Together, these two digital archives provide 70 million images of digital data.

i) JACAR is the selected archives to provide catalogue information and digitized images of “Asian historical records” (important public records related to the relationship between Japan and neighboring Asian countries, held by NAJ, Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the library of National Institute for Defense Studies), from the early Meiji period to the end of World War II (additionally they provide post-World War II materials covering the 70 years since the end of World War II, recently).

ii) NAJDA is the digital archive project to provide all of our holdings on the internet. We prepare a catalog and digitized images. At present, approximately 25% of the holdings, equivalent to 410,000 volumes of digitized images, are available for use.

In this Digital Archives, there are the basic documents of Japan, such as the Constitution of Japan, archives concerning the establishment of laws, and important cultural properties. NAJ are now digitizing “Cabinet Library,” which is a collection of valuable records collected by the Edo shogunate and the Meiji government.

NAJ Two Digital Archives and Digitization (October 2023)



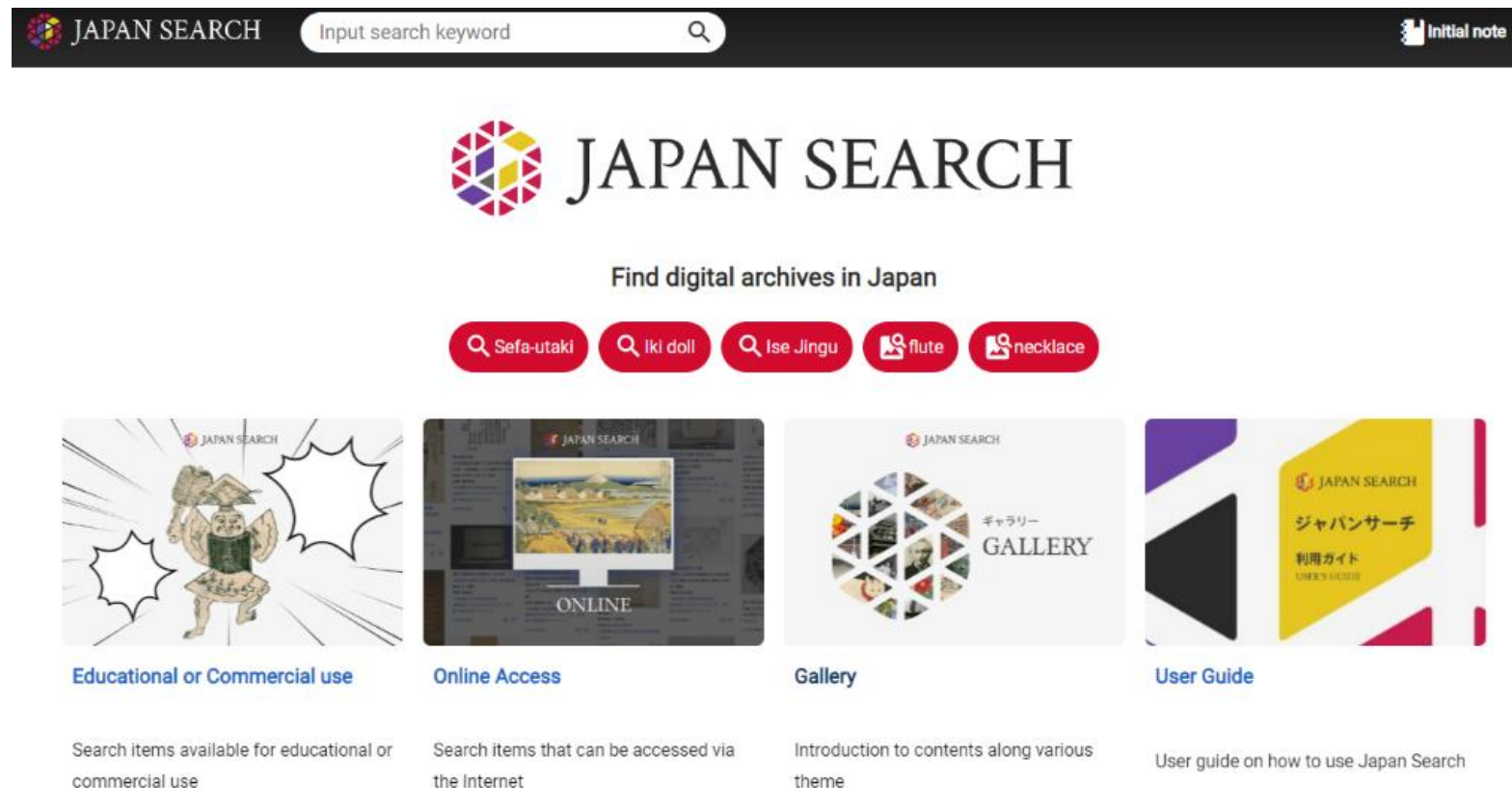
<https://www.digital.archives.go.jp/>



<https://www.jacar.go.jp/>

“Japan Search,” Portal for Digital Archives in Japan

NAJ is promoting collaboration via searches across the databases of local government archives and participating in "Japan Search," a national digital archive portal for museums, libraries, and archives (“MLA”) across all of Japan.



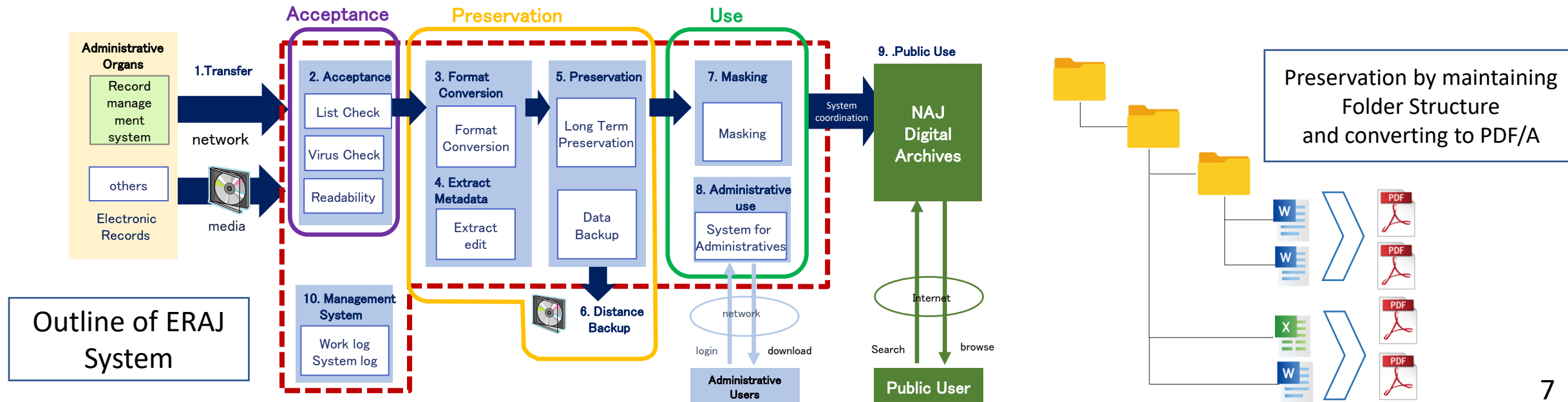
2. NAJ Digitalization Initiative

(2) Electronic Records

Japan has started to focus on the acceptance and preservation of electronically created records, known as "born-digital" records.

NAJ has developed and operated a system for the long-term preservation of electronic records and archives called the "Electronic Records Archives of Japan" ("ERAJ") in 2011.

10 years ago, the software used by administrative organs was diverse and standardization of office software was not advanced. NAJ designed the system on the basis that electronic records to be transferred were to be preserved after conversion to PDF/A and other formats suitable for long-term preservation.

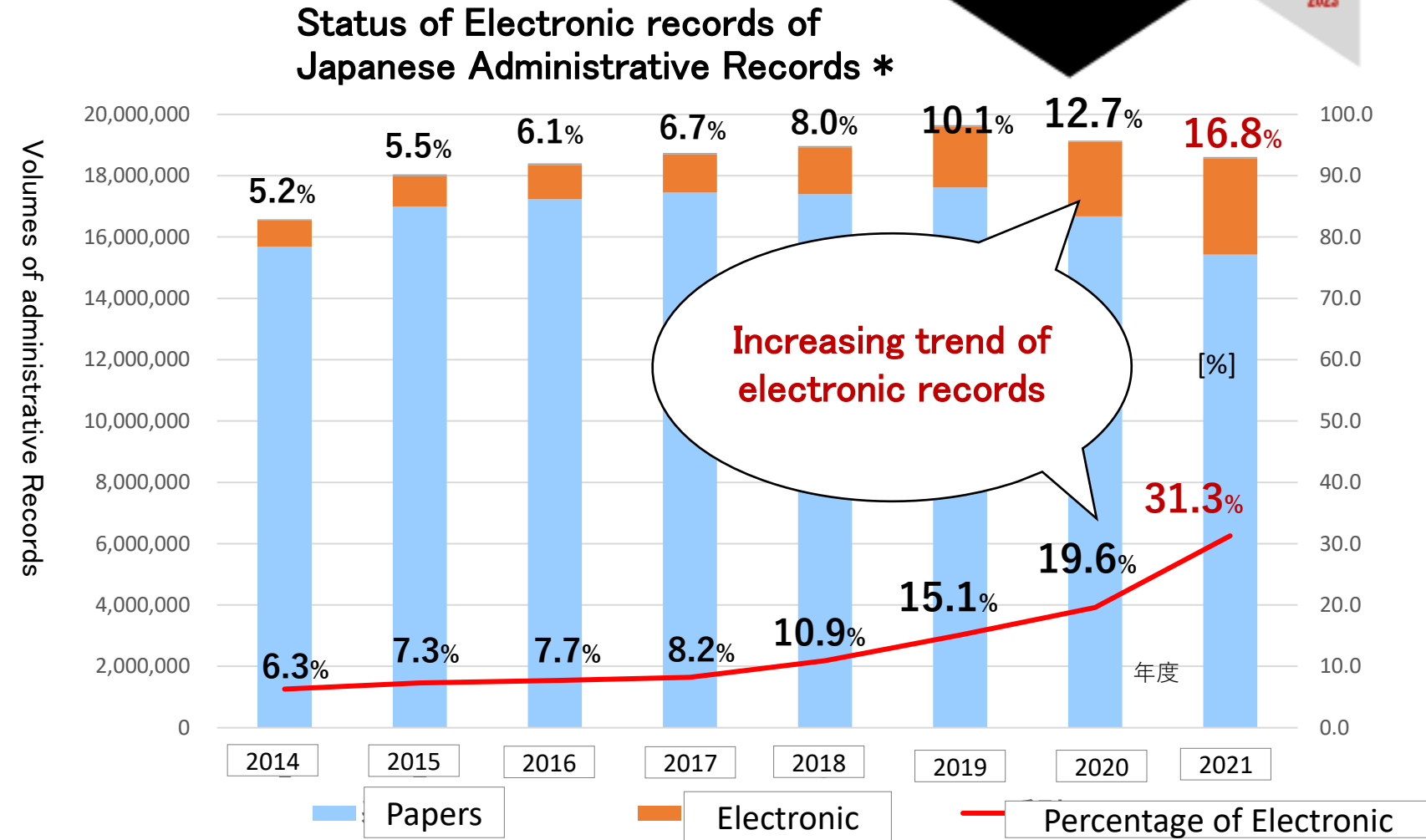


3. Initiatives Related to the Electronic Management of National Administrative Records

(1) Current status

Japanese administrative organs are trying to digitalize their records management systems by installation of electronic approval systems (workflow system) and file management systems, but many paper-based records are still being created.

Recent survey show that the percentage of electronic records of total records is 16.8%, and 30% of newly created records are “born-digital.”



*Author create from the following resource, Record Management division of Cabinet Office,
 “The Report on the current status of administrative records management in 2021, November 2022”
https://www8.cao.go.jp/chosei/koubun/houkoku/2021/2021_houkoku.html. Accessed on September 19, 2023 8

(2) Targeting 2026, a full-fledged electronic management system

The Japanese government has decided to improve its administrative records management system and released “The Basic Policy on the Electronic Management of Administrative Records” (decided by the Prime Minister on March 25, 2019), setting a target of 2026 for achieving a full-fledged electronic management system.

Summary *

This policy states that administrative records created in the future will be managed electronically. The government will consider establishing a system for electronically controlling the entire process from creation to storage, disposal and transfer.

The government will firstly start with management of structural shared folders and make rules to manage files. Secondly, the government should consider work flow and requirements with the aim of automating records management processes such as automatically creating metadata when they are created (full-fledged electronic management).

In addition, other matters to be fulfilled in electronic management include converting to a long-term preservation format and considering measures to ensure stable long-term use at the National Archives.

* Summarized by the author, from “Basic Policy for Electronic Management of Administrative Records,” March 25, 2019.

(3) Rapid moves toward digitalization and the Report of the Digital Working Group of the Public Records and Archives Management Commission

In Japan, the Digital Agency was established, the "Priority Policy Program for Realizing Digital Society" was presented, and measures to digitalize national administration and services were promoted extensively, including the digitalization of public records management.

In 2021, the Digital Working Group was established in the Records and Archives Management Commission, and examined the electronic management of administrative records and presented basic concept of system integration as "Efficient records management utilizing digital technology (systemized Automated, stress-free operations)" and confirmed in "rule of Database systems and Public Records and Archives Management Act, (data are records as classed under the Act)."

From 2022 to 2023, the cabinet office reviewed the management rules entirely on the premise that public records management would be digitalized. In 2022, the records management guidelines were revised:

- the management of records should be based on electronic records
- rules were organized as "data management in information systems" rather than record management in physical storage.
- And also, they reviewed the flow of record management operation and system specifications with the aim of achieving unified administrative record management by 2026.

Furthermore, in 2023, for development of unified records management system for administrative organs, the retention period tables, which set the standards for transfer and destruction were reorganized.

The proposed revisions to the guidelines also include management rules both for preservation folders and metadata, as well as the use of “standard formats” for the creation and preservation of electronic records. NAJ is now makes efforts to survey and make recommendations on “standard formats” for the cabinet office.

In addition, to promote the transfer of records to NAJ, the retention period basically was changed from 30 to 20 years.

Summary *

1. Efficient records management utilizing digital technology

Direction of system development: Automated, stress-free operations

- Utilize digital technology to automate procedures and operations. Progress is managed automatically by a system. Utilize AI and RPA, to check retention schedules of records
- Review the hierarchical categorization of the three-level, assign category information with metadata
- For reliable Information Management, Information security, system redundancy and backups, saving read-only, and automatic conversion to the long-term preservation formats
- Integrated development of systems (LAN, record management systems, etc.) by the Digital Agency
- Consistent development of the system throughout the government as a whole, considering the entire system from government agencies to NAJ as an integral system

2. Database systems and Public Records and Archives Management Act

- In the digital age, a lot of work will utilize data instead of document format, and these data are classed as administrative records.
- When designing systems, we should determine the methods of control under the rules of the Public Records and Archives Management Act.

*Summarized by the author, from The Digital Working Group in the Public Records and Archives Management Commission, "Records and Archives Management in Digital Era," July 2021.

Accessed on Sep.20th, 2023. Website of Cabinet Office, <https://www8.cao.go.jp/koubuniinkai/digitalwg/digitalwg.html>

4. New Initiatives of the National Archives of Japan

(1) Further Promotion of Digital Archives and Utilizing Digital Technology

i) Promotion of Data Utilization through the Utilization of Digital Technology

The “National Archives of Japan Digital Archive” of NAJ has accumulated a considerable number of digitized image resources on the Internet.

However, it is not easy to read Japanese characters, and in addition to hiragana, katakana, and kanji characters, there are records in cursive script, as well as variations in vocabulary and notation, which make it difficult even for Japanese people.

At present, new digital technologies, such as making these data machine-readable and searching with image matching functions, will not only eliminate existing barriers to use and dramatically improve convenience, but will also enable us to transform the service into one that can be used by people with disabilities since these new services are now realistic in term of cost.

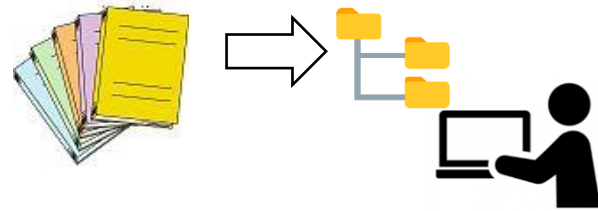
ii) Expansion of Cross-Searches of Archives, etc., Across Japan

In Japan, digital archiving has been promoted in various fields, and today, a wide variety of digital content is available on the Internet, and also can be searched by “Japan Search.”

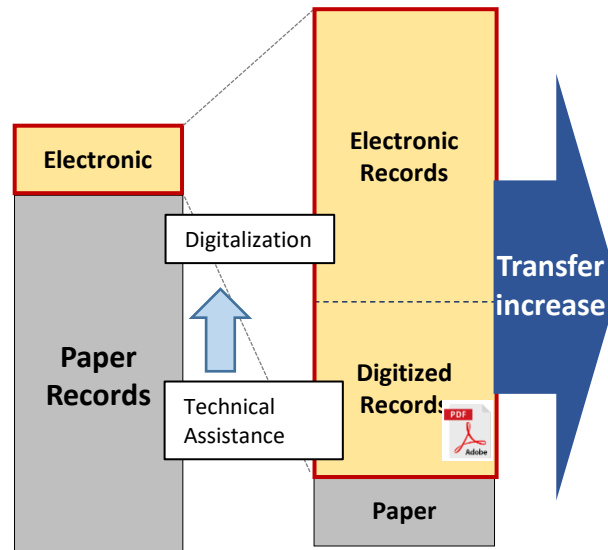
NAJ is continuing to promote links with the databases of local archive across Japan. Because a wide variety of digital information, including electronic public records, will be provided in archives, it is necessary to examine the ideal approach to information cooperation suited to the digital age and work toward the realization of such cooperation.

Image of The “Universal Digital Archive” In the Digital Era

1. Digitalization by Administrative organizations



Increase electronic Records

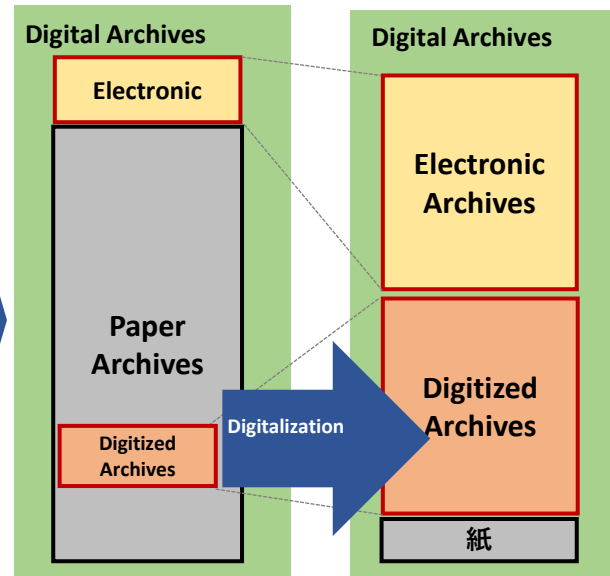


Across the entire government shift to full-fledged digital management by the time of the opening of the new National Archives, "The Basic Policy on the Electronic Management of Administrative Records"

2. Digitalization by National Archives of Japan



Increase Electronic and digitized Archives



All material to Digital Archives
Realize information linkage of historical materials

3. "Universal Digital Archives" in the Digital Era

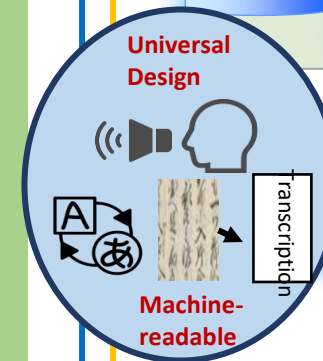
Online Research Room



All online service from request to provide

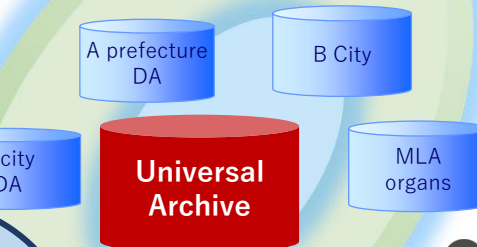
Findable, Connectable

Users can find the information they want



Universal Design

Machine-readable



Digital Archive Network

Usable

Usable by people and machine

Multilanguage, Text-to-speech, free use

New National Archives of Japan in 2026

(2) Technological Standardization for Electronic Public Records and support for People for Electronic Records Management

i) Introduction of Standard Technologies

To ensure the long-term and stable preservation and use of electronic records, it is most fundamental are to set forth clear rules related to the creation and preservation of records and to use technology that is stable over the long term and that can pass information on to the next generation.

The standardization of technologies will be vitally important as the digitalization of operations is promoted by the national government and society.

Japan is currently reviewing the electronic management systems of national administrative records, and NAI is researching and considering the long-term preservation of electronic public records. Our consideration of these issues up to 2023 has been based on "standard formats" that pose little risk to long-term preservation, and we are now surveying verification tests to establish rules for conversion to long-term preservation formats.

ii) Provision and Dissemination of Technical Information

At NAI, we have been providing support for the digital archiving of local government archives by supply information on system standard specifications.

In the context of digitalization of the government and society, local governments also need to support technical assistance.

NAI is considering providing information such as basic knowledge concerning the creation and preservation of Electronic Records and Archives to aim to ensure the long-term preservation of electronic public records.

It is important to encourage national and local governments staff involved in the creation and preservation of electronic public records, to first acquire basic knowledge and then apply it to their respective operations. We intend to actively focus on our initiatives from this perspective in the future.

5. A New National Archives of Japan for the Digital Age

In Japan, the construction of a new NAJ building is underway, starting in 2023 and taking approximately five years., that will build on "the front area of the National Diet Building, where the three powers of the country are concentrated, and accessible for many citizens." The facility will be constructed under the concept of "symbolizing the importance of public records, a shared intellectual resource of citizens that underpins democracy" and "a place to convey the shape of the country and the memory of the nation."*

At NAJ, we have been considering the operations and services expected from the opening of the new facility, and we have been working to construct appropriate operational systems and workflows, and develop appropriate systems. The new National Archives of Japan will open in the "Digital Age," when records are created, managed, preserved, and used as electronic data. In terms of services, various services related to the preservation and use of historical public records and archives, which were previously conducted physically, will be conducted electronically. Accordingly, we must adopt workflows and services that seamlessly integrate the physical world with the electronic world, as the archives model in the Digital Age.



Open 2026
Location: the front area of
National Diet
Facility: 3 floors above ground,
4 floors below ground **
Total Area: 42,460m² **
**The facility is built together
with the Parliamentary
Museum.

* The author summarized from "The basic plan to build the new facility of the National Archives," decided by the cabinet office Minister of special missions, March 30, 2018. See the website of the cabinet office.

<https://www8.cao.go.jp/chosei/koubun/shinkan/shinkan.html>

6. Conclusion

With present-day digital technologies, it will not be difficult to realize various concepts for services for the new National Archives of Japan. But initiatives to provide technical support and assistance on Electronic Records are becoming more important, requiring more active commitment and needing more knowledge and skill in advanced technology. And also, in Japan we are working toward a unified record management system for administrative organizations, however, there are also a variety of operational work systems already in operation, that will be a challenge in the future.

The speed and impact of recent changes in digital technologies and services is significant, and can materially change the current operational environment, and our studies cannot always keep up with the emergence of new technologies and services.

However, even as we face these major changes in our operational environment in the Digital Age, there is actually not much difference between our approach to preserving paper records over time and our approach to preserving electronic records.

Because the number of records to keep will naturally be limited after many years of judgment concerning whether to preserve records within an extent acceptable to society or to destroy them.

When we have concerns about the treatment of electronic records, we should continue to respond in accordance with the common sense of the time.

In this way, Archives in the digital age will provide a variety of services based on the needs of the new age, while responding to issues in the most common-sense way, even given the background of advanced knowledge and technology.



إثراء مجتمعات المعرفة

ENRICHING KNOWLEDGE SOCIETIES

