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Nataliya G. Surovtseva

Russian State University for the Humanities, Moscow, Russian Federation

Authenticity and Identity of Electronic Records

Abstract

One of the key features of an electronic record is its authenticity. Ensuring the authenticity of managerial electronic records at all stages of its life cycle from the moment of its creation to long-term storage allows us to remove obstacles in the development of electronic records management. The authenticity of electronic records has been the subject of research within the frameworks of an international project InterPARES. A record is considered authentic if its author, place, and time of creation are definitely established, as well as its provenance from the said author. To ensure this property of an electronic record, not only authentication and electronic signature at the moment of the record creation are required, but also creation of the

so-called “trusted environment” designed to ensure preservation of records metadata by means of controlled managerial procedures. The focus should be on the information system as a whole. This understanding of electronic record authenticity has been entrenched in international standards on information and documentation. In Russian practice, the concept of “authenticity” is used very rarely; when applied to management electronic records, it is used mainly in the sense of identicalness to some source record. Such understanding involves procedures for comparison with reference record, which should remain unchanged. At the same time, within electronic environment in which the functioning of electronic records takes place, it is practically impossible to ensure that file(s) remain unchanged. Given the record’s social nature, we must understand that immutability of an electronic record is a relative concept that concerns preservation of its social function. That is why we must allow only a relative recognition of the identity of electronic records, allowing for possibility of some changes within which the electronic record retains its social functions. The difference between the copies of electronic records within this difference allows us to talk about authentic records.

### Keywords

Electronic record, authentic record, identical record, terminology, long-term storage, archival storage.

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About author

Surovtseva Nataliya Gennadievna, PhD in History, associate professor, Russian State University for the Humanities, department of automated record management systems, assistant

professor, Moscow, Russian Federation, +7-916-020-21-65, nataliyasurovceva@yandex.ru

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