Information
Governance Initiative

# IG In Action

## Preserving history and ensuring citizen access to digital government records using the cloud

“Most records today are born digital. We need to retain many of these records for very long periods or even permanently. To meet this challenge we invested in expanding and enhancing our digital preservation capabilities, which was a new and significant undertaking. However, I’m confident that our approach will ensure that these essential government records remain accessible long into the future.”

Jelain Chubb, Texas State Archivist

The Texas State Library and Archives Commission (TSLAC) is taking action to ensure that critical digital records are properly governed and preserved in fulfillment of its mission to “safeguard government and historically significant records and to provide information services to support research, education, and individual achievement.”[[1]](#endnote-1)

TSLAC, with over 160 employees, was established in 1909 to support a state government that today has an annual budget of over $200B and employs more than 200,000 people[[2]](#endnote-2) (in a state that, if it were a country, would have the world’s 12th largest economy[[3]](#endnote-3)). TSLAC faces a massive ongoing deluge of digital information that must be governed and preserved in accordance with is legal obligations and agency mission.

One recent challenge for TSLAC was taking ownership of over 7 terabytes of digital records created by an outgoing administration. On top of this, TSLAC had already collected 26 terabytes of digital records that required governance and long-term preservation. The record types in this collection were myriad and included, for example, policy documents, press releases, and correspondence in number of different file types (including, digitized audio, still images, and video). In addition to preserving this information, TSLAC’s mandate includes ensuring that both government users and the public at large have ready and secure access to this information (as required by law). TSLAC also faces budgetary constraints and the pressure to “to do more with less,” just like many other organizations in both the public and private sectors.

To address its governance, access, and cost requirements, TSLAC developed a set of clear system requirements that it used to evaluate and select the tools and systems it needed. Critical evaluative criteria for TSLAC included:

* **Cloud delivery**. TSALC had concluded that cloud delivery was the best fit for the organization given the potential for lower acquisition, operational costs, and maintenance costs.
* **Support for standards**. Support for relevant standards such as the Open Archive Information System (OAIS) reference model (ISO 14721).
* **Migration**. Automated migration of records into new file types for long-term preservation to fulfill their mandate to ensure access for the entire life of the record (and in some cases, forever).
* **Integration**. Ability to function alongside and integrate with existing content and records management systems.
* **Sector-specific expertise**. TSLAC concluded that it was important to select a provider expertise with demonstrable understanding of unique governmental requirements.
* **Secure and reliable cloud infrastructure**. In particular, TSLAC was drawn to the AWS GovCloud, which was designed to support governmental use cases and requirements including, for example, encryption of records both in transit and at rest.

To meet these requirements, TSLAC selected and deployed Preservica’s Cloud Edition. Preservica’s service now also powers the recently launched [Texas Digital Archive](https://www.tsl.texas.gov/texasdigitalarchive), which provides unrestricted public access to the electronic records collections of the TSLAC.

1. State of Texas Legislative Budget Board, “Fiscal Size-Up 2014-2014 Biennium,” February 2014. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. State of Texas Legislative Budget Board, “Fiscal Size-Up 2014-2014 Biennium,” February 2014. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. If Texas were a country, its economic output of $1.65 trillion would make it the world’s 12th largest economy. Mark J. Perry, “If New York is Spain and California is Brazil, What is Texas?” Newsweek, June 22, 2015. Online at: http://www.newsweek.com/if-new-york-spain-and-california-brazil-what-texas-344702 [↑](#endnote-ref-3)