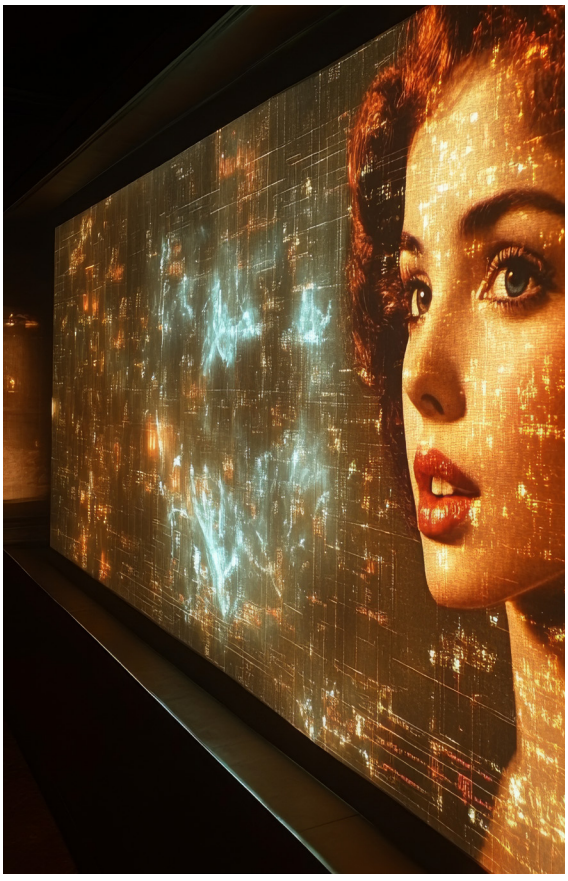
FAST LTA

Whitepaper

Creating an E-depot for Local Authorities and Municipalities

Municipalities generate and retain increasing amounts of digital information. From policy documents and permits to visual and audio material, everything must be stored securely and sustainably without compromising integrity or accessibility. An e-depot plays a crucial role in this process. This white paper explains what an e-depot is, why it matters, the current situation, the challenges involved in implementation and a potential solution for long-term archiving without the risk of data loss or unauthorised changes.

What is an E-depot and Why Is it Important?



An e-depot is a digital archive facility designed to store, manage and provide access to digital information sustainably.
It includes not only the technical infrastructure but also the organisation, policies, processes, procedures, financial management, personnel, data management and data security surrounding the archive.

Its purpose is to safeguard the integrity and authenticity of digital records so that they remain accessible and reliable over the long term.

Even if certain file formats are no longer supported in the future, a properly configured e-depot ensures that digital records remain accessible through file conversion, emulation or other sustainable preservation strategies.

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The importance of an e-depot for municipalities

Legal obligations: Under the Dutch Archives Act 1995, public authorities are required to organise, maintain and preserve their records in a proper and accessible state. This also applies to digital documents.

The new Archives Act 20xx was adopted on 18 February 2025 and is expected to replace the Archives Act 1995 in the near future.

The new Archives Act modernises the rules and improves the management of digital information. One of the changes is that the transfer period for archival records to a public archive service will be reduced from 20 to 10 years.

This means that important government information will be transferred to an official repository sooner, where it can be archived securely and made more accessible to the public.

Security and integrity: An e-depot protects digital information against loss, damage and unauthorised changes. This safeguards the reliability and authenticity of documents.

Accessibility: Storing digital archives centrally and in a structured way improves their findability and accessibility for both internal and external stakeholders.

An e-depot stores a wide range of documents, from building permits and digital files containing construction plans to recordings and video minutes of council meetings and other gatherings.

Municipal websites and web pages can also be archived in an e-depot, ensuring that previous versions remain available.

It can also accommodate visual and audio material, including photographs, videos and audio files that are important to the municipality.

Current Situation

The National Archives of the Netherlands has developed an e-depot for national government organisations operating across the country.

For decentralised public authorities, such as municipalities, regional archive services are responsible for managing digital archives. However, not all regional archives have their own e-depot facility for municipalities.

The Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science has also announced that regional historical centres will no longer be able to use the National Archives' e-depot from 1 January 2024.

This means that these centres and their affiliated municipalities must arrange their own solution for their digital archives.

Photo: National Archive

Challenges when implementing an e-depot

Municipalities seeking to create an e-depot face technical, organisational and financial challenges.

One of the main obstacles is **technical complexity**. An e-depot requires an advanced infrastructure capable of storing large volumes of digital information securely while keeping the data accessible. This requires specialist knowledge and robust facilities to preserve data sustainably and protect it against errors and failures.

Costs are another major barrier. Investing in hardware, software and security can require significant financial resources. In addition to purchasing the technology, municipalities must fund the implementation, maintenance and training of staff. This requires extra time and resources.

Standardisation presents another challenge. Municipalities use different file formats and metadata structures, which can complicate interoperability and future accessibility.

Compliance with established standards is crucial for keeping information sustainable and accessible.

Security and integrity also play a key role. Municipal archives contain confidential information that must be protected against cyberthreats, unauthorised access and human error. Without reliable storage and adequate security measures, municipalities risk archival records becoming unusable or unreliable. This could affect public accountability and the preservation of historical documentation.

Future-Proof Solutions for E-depots

When storing digital archives in an e-depot, it is crucial that the selected technology guarantees both sustainability and integrity. The right system must be capable of storing large volumes of data securely for long periods while also safeguarding the authenticity of the documents. This is especially important for public-sector archives, where the legal value and accessibility of documents are essential for accountability and transparency.

FAST LTA **Silent Cubes** have traditionally been used for archiving within e-depots because of their unique hardware-based WORM functionality.

WORM stands for Write Once, Read Many. This technology ensures that once data has been stored, it can no longer be changed or deleted. This is vital for safeguarding the integrity of documents with long or permanent retention periods.

E-depots only store documents with long retention periods or permanent preservation status. The **immutability** provided by Silent Cubes therefore makes them an ideal solution.

In addition to **WORM functionality**, the system provides advanced error correction through **Digital Audit** and **fourfold redundant storage**. This minimises the risk of data loss or corruption.

Four of the twelve hard drives in a Cube can fail without any data being lost. This ensures that important archival records remain protected, even in the event of hardware failures or other unforeseen problems.

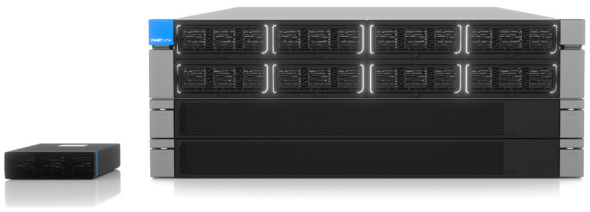
A Silent Cube also has a minimum **service life of 10 years**, providing municipalities with a durable long-term solution.

At the same time, many e-depot software solutions use **standard S3 storage** as their target platform.

This is because S3 is regarded as an open standard and is the preferred method for storing digital archives for many organisations.

FAST LTA therefore offers an S3-compatible solution with **Silent Bricks**. This gives municipalities the flexibility to choose their preferred e-depot software.

It allows digital archives to be stored securely and efficiently within a trusted infrastructure without compromising compliance or sustainability.



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In addition to S3 compatibility, Silent Bricks provide several benefits that are crucial for long-term archiving.

The modular architecture allows the system to scale easily as the e-depot grows.

The unique disk mix prevents too many identical drives from being installed in a single Brick. This drastically reduces the risk of simultaneous disk failure and significantly increases data integrity.

With a minimum service life of 10 years, Silent Bricks provide a robust and future-proof solution for e-depots.

SMB, CIFS and NFS are also open standards and are widely supported, although this is often taken for granted in the market.

By adding S3 support to Silent Bricks, FAST LTA provides a storage solution that meets the technical requirements of modern e-depot software while also delivering the security, sustainability and scalability required for long-term archiving. This makes Silent Bricks a future-proof choice for municipalities seeking to create a flexible and secure e-depot.

Conclusion

The loss of the National Archives as a central solution means that municipalities and regional archive services must arrange their own e-depots for the sustainable storage of public-sector information. This brings technical and organisational challenges, including safeguarding data integrity, security and compatibility with modern e-depot software. A future-proof e-depot requires a storage solution that guarantees both the authenticity and long-term accessibility of digital archives.

Silent Cubes provide maximum protection against data loss and unauthorised changes. This makes them ideal for documents with long or permanent retention periods. Silent Bricks provide an S3-compatible storage solution, giving municipalities the flexibility to choose their preferred e-depot software. By selecting a reliable and scalable archiving solution, such as Silent Cubes or Silent Bricks with S3 support, municipalities can ensure that their digital heritage is stored securely, compliantly and sustainably for the future.

Photo: Collectie Overijssel

Did you know:

FAST LTA systems have been used for many years in heritage archives operated by historical centres such as Collectie Overijssel, the Historical Centre Leeuwarden and the Noord-Hollands Archief?

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