

Improving the institutional framework of state management of electronic archives in Ho Chi Minh City

Dr. Dang Thi Thu Phuong

Campus of the Academy of Public Administration and Governance in Ho Chi Minh City

Abstract: *This article analyzes the current situation and proposes solutions to enhance the legal document system for state management of electronic archives in Ho Chi Minh City in the context of digital transformation. Although several important directives have been issued by the City, the existing documents remain fragmented and outdated, and fail to comprehensively cover essential electronic archival operations, such as file creation, submission, preservation, disposal, and data security. In particular, an apparent disparity exists in the level of implementation between the municipal level and grassroots units. Therefore, strengthening the legal framework is a crucial condition for enhancing records management efficiency and advancing toward a smart urban government.*

Keywords: *Electronic archives; state management; institutional improvement; Ho Chi Minh City.*

1. Introduction

In the process of national digital transformation, development of a system of directives and guidelines on electronic archives plays a pivotal role in establishing a synchronous legal corridor, ensuring transparency and effectiveness in state management. In Ho Chi Minh City, this task has been carried out through several legal documents, such as Decision No. 3760/QĐ-UBND of the Ho Chi Minh City People's Committee on electronic document management; Plan No. 4292/KH-UBND for implementing the Prime Minister's Decision No. 458/QĐ-TTg dated April 3, 2020 approving the

Project of electronic archives for the period 2020 - 2025; and, breakthrough projects on document digitization and capacity building for cadres and civil servants. However, the system of documents still reveals shortcomings in practice, in terms of timeliness, comprehensiveness, and responsiveness to actual management needs. This article focuses on analyzing the current situation of legal document promulgation related to electronic archives in Ho Chi Minh City, while also proposing solutions to improve the regulatory framework, thereby contributing to enhancing the effectiveness of electronic governance of the urban administration.

Received:

July 28, 2025

Revised:

August 18, 2025

Accepted:

September 23, 2025

<https://doi.org>

10.59394/JSM.86

2. Fundamental issues on state management of electronic archives

2.1. The concept of state management of electronic archives

The 2011 Law on Archives (Article 13) refers only to the professional management of electronic archival documents. The Government's Decree No. 01/2013/ND-CP, dated January 3, 2013 detailing the implementation of several articles of the Law on Archives, specifies the aspects of electronic archival documents, including: determining their value; documents created during the operations of agencies and organizations; documents created from digitization; input data standards; collection, preservation, use, security, and destruction of electronic records; along with prohibited acts and corresponding management responsibilities (Government, 2013). Although the Decree does not provide a separate definition of "state management of electronic archives," these provisions reflect the comprehensive management of professional practices concerning this specific type of record.

The 2024 Law on Archives has expanded the scope of state management of archives under Article 57, including the formulation, promulgation, and implementation of strategies, plans, and policies; legal regulations; standards and technical regulations; communication, statistics, inspection, training, and international cooperation. At the same time, the Law also addresses archival practices for electronic records in Article 31, affirming that these types of records must comply with the general principles and procedures of archival practice (National Assembly, 2024). However, the current law has not yet explicitly defined or distinguished state management of electronic archives as an independent domain (Hanoi University of Home Affairs, 2013).

Within the scope of this article, the concept of "state management of electronic archives" is therefore approached from general theories of

state management and the specific characteristics of electronic archival records. It can be understood specifically as follows:

State management of electronic archives refers to the activities of competent state authorities in regulating the entire process related to electronic archival records through formulation and promulgation of legal documents and professional guidelines; organizational apparatus and human resources; investment in technical infrastructure and equipment; training of civil servants and public employees; as well as inspection, examination, and supervision of the implementation of legal provisions on electronic archives. This activity is aimed to ensure the value, safety, integrity, accessibility, and effective use of electronic archival records, thereby enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of state management in the context of digital transformation.

The introduction of this concept aims not only to fill the theoretical gap in the current legal framework but also to serve as a foundation for analyzing the current situation and proposing solutions to improve the quality of state management of electronic archives in the context of e-government and accelerated digital transformation.

2.2. Contents of state management of electronic archives

Given the crucial role of electronic archival documents in digital transformation, competent state agencies need to develop and promulgate a system of directives and guidelines to establish a unified legal framework for the management and professional practices of electronic archives. This system of documents should focus on such key areas as improvement of legislation on electronic archives; organizational apparatus and human resources; regulations on research and application of science and technology; management of civil servants and public employees; inspection, supervision, and

handling of violations; settlement of complaints and denunciations; and international cooperation in the field of electronic archives.

From a theoretical perspective, the quality of drafting and promulgating documents is assessed through their outputs, namely the quality of both the promulgation process and the documents themselves. The evaluation criteria include: reflecting fully the will and interests of the people and social norms; compatibility with socio-economic development conditions; ensuring constitutionality, legality, and unity; comprehensiveness and synchronization of the system; application of proper legislative techniques and appropriate form of documents; completeness of the promulgation process; efficiency and cost-effectiveness in problem-solving; feasibility with clearly defined implementation conditions; transparency, clarity, and ease of application; predictability and stability; as well as reasonable sanctions proportionate to the level of violation (VIBonline, 2025).

Based on these criteria, this article evaluates the drafting and promulgation of directives and guidelines on electronic archives within administrative agencies in Ho Chi Minh City, focusing on such aspects as the completeness and timeliness of the document system; the extent of practical relevance; legality and clarity of language for ease of application; the capacity to meet state management requirements for electronic archives; and, the effectiveness of implementation in practice.

3. Current situation of state management of electronic archives in Ho Chi Minh City

3.1. Achieved results

Ho Chi Minh City has achieved remarkable results in implementing the regulations and guidelines by the Government, the Ministry of Home Affairs and the State Records and Archives Department on records and archives in general and electronic archives in particular. According to Report No. 21/BC-UBND dated

January 19, 2024, by the City People's Committee, which served the survey for drafting the revised Law on Archives, regarding the work of document issuance, the Committee promptly issued Decision No. 3760/QĐ-UBND dated November 4, 2021, promulgating the regulation on the management and use of the electronic document management system in Ho Chi Minh City, and Decision No. 3079/QĐ-UBND dated September 12, 2022, on the issuance of electronic identifiers for agencies and units across the City. These documents serve as important orientations and legal foundations for implementing electronic archival activities at the local level.

Regarding the electronic document management system, the city has deployed interconnection with more than 1,140 units, including all of its departments and sectors; the People's Committee of Thu Duc City; and all of its districts, wards, communes, and townships. All issued documents have been digitally signed and operated entirely in the online environment. As of August 31, 2023, the city had sent and received more than 15 million records through its Local Government Service Platform (HCM LGSP), clearly demonstrating the effectiveness of applying information technology to records and archives management (Ho Chi Minh City Department of Home Affairs, 2024).

In terms of data governance, the City People's Committee issued Decision No. 328/QĐ-UBND on February 6, 2023, approving its Data Governance Strategy to 2025, with orientation to 2030. This strategy focuses on three key groups of data, including: (1) citizen-related data (administrative, civil status, healthcare, education, and social welfare); (2) financial-business data (including aggregated data and statistics on budget revenues and expenditures, public investment, enterprises, and individual business households); and (3) land-urban data (land, geographic maps, construction, transportation, planning, and

architecture). At the same time, the Department of Information and Communications has coordinated with relevant agencies such as the World Bank (WB), the Department of Construction, the Department of Natural Resources and Environment, the City Police, and the People’s Committee of Thu Duc city to pilot the digitization of construction permit records, demonstrating a systematic and in-depth realization of the data governance strategy.

In terms of electronic administrative procedures, Ho Chi Minh City has implemented an integrated settlement information system, which unifies its Public Service Portal and the one-stop electronic system, and is applied uniformly across the entire city. This system is integrated with the National Public Service Portal, the national identification system and the population database, as well as specialized information systems of ministries and sectors. The People’s Committee has issued decisions approving the list of administrative procedures and groups of administrative procedures that meet the requirements for providing online public services in the period 2023 - 2024, with a total of 740 online public services. Digitalized data from administrative procedures is stored in the data warehouse of the administrative procedure settlement information system and in the personal data warehouse, thereby laying a solid

foundation for improving service efficiency for citizens and businesses.

Regarding digitalization and management of digitized documents, the city is deploying a common digitalization platform and organizing training sessions to guide its agencies and units using this platform during the first quarter of 2024. In addition to integrating data from the administrative procedure system, the city also disaggregates data by sector and field to implement the Data Governance Strategy, thereby supporting the restructuring of administrative processes, improving user experience, and convenience for citizens and enterprises.

Finally, in terms of exploring the shared data warehouse, the city has developed and operated its Data Portal at <https://data.hochiminhcity.gov.vn>, which enables data sharing with departments, agencies, districts, and municipalities. The data includes information on electronic documents, enterprises, individual business households, secured transactions, registration of housing and land use rights, healthcare facilities, education, foreign investment, public investment, and market prices of essential goods. Through this, Ho Chi Minh City has established an initial synchronous data management and sharing platform, effectively supporting state management activities and decision-making based on open data.

Table 1. Statistics of paper records and electronic records in Ho Chi Minh City in 2023

Submitting Unit	Code	Paper records	Electronic records	Total
Level I agencies and organizations	02	269,477	78,619	348,096
Level II agencies and organizations	03	1,945,791	11,073	1,956,864
Commune-level units	05	337,028	57,155	394,183

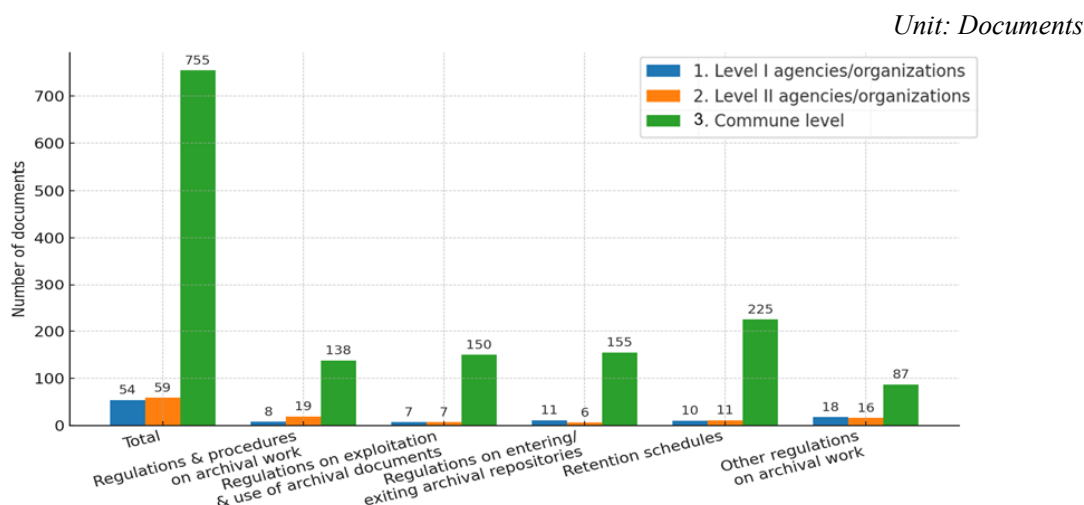
Source: Compiled by author (2025).

Table 1 illustrates the volume and proportion of electronic records within the total number of records created in 2023. Specifically, Level I agencies and organizations recorded a total of 348,096 records, of which 78,619 were electronic, accounting for approximately 22.6%. Level II agencies and organizations had the largest volume, with 1,956,864 records, but only 11,073 were electronic (0.57%), indicating that the adoption of electronic archiving at this level remains very limited. At the commune level, there were 394,183 records in total, of which 57,155 were electronic, representing about 14.5%. These figures reveal a clear disparity in digitalization capacity across administrative levels. While level I entities have achieved a considerable degree of electronic archiving, level II and commune-level organizations remain heavily dependent on paper-based records. This highlights the lack of synchronization in technological infrastructure, human resources, and technical guidance, and serves as an important empirical basis for proposing solutions for institutional improvements, aiming at ensuring the effective and uniform implementation of electronic archives throughout the city.

Although Ho Chi Minh City has generally made significant progress in its digital transformation process, further investment and stronger promotion are required at both level II and the commune level to optimize the effectiveness of electronic records management across its entire administrative system. This is particularly important to guarantee consistency and efficiency in the implementation of electronic archiving at the grassroots level.

Regarding the development of directives and guidelines related to electronic archives, the competent authorities of Ho Chi Minh City have, in recent years, issued numerous directives and professional guidelines to ensure unity and synchronization in the management of electronic archival documents. The promulgation of these documents not only contributes to the preservation and promotion of the value of electronic archival records but also plays an important role in enhancing the effectiveness of state management by local authorities in the context of digital transformation. Detailed statistics on the number of documents issued will be presented in the subsequent sections.

Figure 1. Number of directives and professional guidelines on archival practices/agency archiving



Source: Compiled by author (2025).

It can be observed in *Figure 1* that in terms of the number of issued documents, the city authorities have demonstrated attention and clear direction toward archival work in general. According to Report No. 21/BC-UBND dated January 19, 2024, by the Ho Chi Minh City People's Committee serving the survey for drafting the revised Law on Archives, the City has issued a total of 21 directives and professional guidelines on archival work, including several important documents of foundational and strategic orientation significance (Ho Chi Minh City People's Committee, 2024).

Notable examples by the Ho Chi Minh City People's Committee include its Decision No. 5131/QD-UBND dated October 4, 2012, approving the Implementation plan for the enforcement of the Law on Archives; Decision No. 4611/QD-UBND dated September 15, 2014, approving the Plan for digitizing records and documents at the Specialized Archival Repository of the Sub-Department of Records and Archives for the period 2014 - 2015; Decision No. 38/2014/QD-UBND dated November 7, 2014, issuing regulations on the compilation, arrangement, digitization, and transfer of documents into agency archives across the city; Directive No. 16/2013/CT-UBND dated September 9, 2013, on addressing backlog documents; Decision No. 02/2014/QD-UBND dated January 13, 2014, approving the Project on enhancing the capacity of cadres, civil servants, and public employees engaged in record and archival work for the period 2014 - 2020; and Directive No. 11/CT-UBND dated September 11, 2017, on strengthening the management of archival documents at agencies and organizations within the City.

In addition, the City has also approved several breakthrough projects and plans such as the Plan for development of the record and archival sector of the city to 2025; the Project on arrangement of backlogged archival documents for the period 1975 - 2015; the Plan to strengthen record and archival work at People's

Committees of wards, communes, and townships; the Project on the collection of records and documents from agencies and organizations into the City's historical archival center for the period 2018 - 2022; and the Plan on digitizing documents at the specialized archival repository for the period 2014 - 2015.

Following these policies, the City continued to issue key regulatory documents such as Decision No. 3760/QD-UBND dated November 4, 2021, on the Regulation for the management and use of the Electronic Document Management System; Decision No. 3079/QD-UBND dated September 12, 2022, on electronic identifiers for agencies and units; and Decision No. 414/QD-UBND dated February 13, 2023, issuing the List and Codes of Fonts for agencies under the deposit source of the City's Historical Archives Center.

Overall, the system of directives and guidelines on archival work in general, and electronic archiving in particular issued in Ho Chi Minh City not only meets the requirements of digital transformation but also demonstrates the proactive governance role of the local authorities in ensuring that archival activities are grounded in a coherent, modern, and practical legal framework.

3.2. Limitations and challenges

The practical implementation of electronic archives in Ho Chi Minh City in recent years has shown that the system of legal documents still faces considerable limitations in terms of consistency and timeliness of updates although the City has promulgated such important documents as Decision No. 3760/QD-UBND dated November 4, 2021, on the Regulation for the management of electronic documents. These issues underscore the urgent need to review and improve the legal document framework, particularly as the revised 2024 Law on Archives will take effect on July 1, 2025. This presents a favorable opportunity for Ho Chi Minh City to concretize policies tailored to the characteristics of a significant urban center.

One of the most prominent shortcomings lies in the lack of consistency and delays in the system of guiding documents. Although the City has issued numerous directives, including foundational ones such as Decision No. 3760/QĐ-UBND, the current system still fails to ensure close interconnection between regulations, thereby creating obstacles for coordinated implementation across different levels. The root cause stems from the fact that the drafting process of these documents has not kept pace with the rapid development of technology and the practical demands of robust digital transformation. Consequently, the delay in updating policies has led to many provisions becoming outdated immediately after promulgation, thereby reducing both the feasibility and effectiveness of implementation.

Added to these, the system of professional regulations governing electronic archives in Ho Chi Minh City lacks completeness and specificity. Legal documents have not yet clearly regulated various critical operational stages such as the procedures for creating electronic files, methods for collecting records generated during operations, regulations on the submission and disposal of electronic documents, long-term preservation, information security and safety, access and use of electronic documents, as well as detailed provisions regarding the legal value and certification of electronic copies. The absence of such regulations creates a significant legal gap, leaving state agencies uncertain about implementation, which can lead to either arbitrary application or neglect of fundamental archival principles.

Another noteworthy limitation is the substantial gap between the city level and the grassroots level in the application of electronic archives. Data from *Table 1* highlights this disparity: while the district level manages more than one million electronic files (1,087,483), the level II agencies hold only 11,073, and the commune level accounts for just 57,155 files. The causes include (1) limited investment in

infrastructure and specialized storage equipment at the commune-level and level II agencies; (2) insufficient and underqualified human resources, with the lack of systematic training of electronic archives; (3) reluctance among many officials to abandon traditional working methods, coupled with an incomplete understanding of the role of electronic archives; and (4) the continued reliance of grassroots administrative procedures on paper-based documents. These factors have resulted in uneven adoption of electronic archives, thereby diminishing overall effectiveness.

Ultimately, a lack of consistency remains between legal regulations and technical implementation. Although Ho Chi Minh City has invested in building platforms such as the Electronic document management system, the Local Government Service Platform (HCM LGSP), the Open data portal, and has issued the Data governance strategy to 2025, legal documents - such as Decision No. 3760/QĐ-UBND - still lack concrete technical standards and accompanying norms. The absence of clear regulations on standard formats, metadata, mechanisms for ensuring data integrity, criteria for long-term preservation, and security standards has posed significant obstacles to practical implementation.

4. Solutions for improving the institutional framework of state management of electronic archives in Ho Chi Minh City

Competent authorities have issued several documents related to the state management of electronic archives, thereby establishing a legal basis for this activity. However, the current regulations only partially address certain aspects such as electronic records or document digitization, while there is not yet a specialized, consistent, and comprehensive system of legal documents on electronic archives. This results in inconsistencies in implementation across administrative agencies in Ho Chi Minh City, posing challenges for deployment, inspection, supervision, and the overall enhancement of archival efficiency. Therefore, development and

refinement of a legal normative document system on electronic archives is an urgent requirement, contributing to the establishment of a clear legal corridor, the standardization of professional procedures, and the improvement of state management efficiency. On this basis, Ho Chi Minh City needs to focus on promulgating three main groups of documents as follows:

Firstly, promulgating regulations on electronic archives in Ho Chi Minh City. Based on the inheritance and concretization of central regulations such as the 2024 Law on Archives, the Decree No. 30/2020/ND-CP dated March 5, 2020 by the Government, circulars by the Ministry of Home Affairs, and the guiding documents of the State Records and Archives Department, Ho Chi Minh City needs to issue its own regulation suitable to the local management context. This regulation should encompass the entire life cycle of electronic records, from document creation and electronic file compilation to record submission and preservation, ensuring consistency and feasibility in implementation. In particular, the regulation must clarify the requirements for compatibility between electronic records and electronic archive management software, while also emphasizing the development of specialized software capable of receiving records from clerical subsystems to ensure synchronization and standardization of processes.

Secondly, promulgating regulations on creation of records and submission of electronic records to agency archives within the system. This regulation should concretize core archival operations including file-naming; processes for creating, receiving, and handling electronic documents; responsibilities of individuals and relevant units in file creation; rules on record codes; procedures for preservation, access, utilization, and disposal of electronic records; requirements on information security and cybersecurity; mechanisms for technical incident response;

inspection, supervision, and violation handling; along with reward and sanction measures. The content of this regulation must be closely aligned with the city's information technology infrastructure, ensuring its feasibility when applied to existing systems.

Thirdly, promulgating a system of documents guiding electronic archival operations. Based on higher-level legal provisions and practical implementation, Ho Chi Minh City should issue detailed guidelines to support the personnel directly engaged in archival tasks. These guidelines should cover development of record list and file-naming; updates of documents into the management software; procedures for compiling, submitting, preserving, accessing, and disposing electronic records; processes for collecting, transferring, and determining the legal value of electronic records and digital signatures; as well as rules on copying and certifying electronic records. Standardizing these professional guidelines will help minimize errors, enhance staff capacity, and ensure consistency in implementation across the entire city.

In terms of implementation, solutions to improve the institutional framework for state management of electronic archives in Ho Chi Minh City should be carried out in a synchronized manner through three main steps. *First*, the Department of Home Affairs should take the lead in drafting key documents, including a Regulation on Electronic Archives and a Regulation on the Compilation and Submission of Electronic Records. During this process, it must closely coordinate with the Department of Information and Communications and other relevant departments to ensure consistency, expertise in professional practices, technology, and law before submitting them to the HCMC People's Committee for approval. *Second*, the drafting process should include extensive consultations with departments, sectors, and commune-level People's Committees to ensure feasibility, practical relevance, and consensus in

implementation. These consultations must be conducted seriously rather than in a perfunctory manner. *Finally*, the draft documents should be revised based on collected feedback, with a focus on three core aspects: (1) Clearly defining the specific responsibilities of agency leaders, professional staff, and archival-clerical officials at each stage of electronic record handling process; (2) Establishing mechanisms for rewards and violation handling, with concrete performance evaluation criteria for both organizations and individuals, applied over an annual assessment cycle; and (3) Stipulating forms of rewards or sanctions for failure to fulfill assigned duties, with particular emphasis on the role and responsibility of officials directly responsible for compiling and submitting electronic records.

In terms of implementation conditions, three foundational factors must be ensured for the city to introduce the new regulatory document framework successfully. *First*, it is essential to achieve consensus in both perception and action across the entire administrative system, grounded in the guiding principles of the 2023 Law on Archives (effective from July 1, 2025), while simultaneously accelerating the completion of related legal documents. *Second*, sufficient budget allocation and appropriate investment in infrastructure are required to support field surveys, research, drafting of regulations, and deployment of technical systems supporting electronic archives. *Third*, stronger inter-agency coordination mechanisms must be established, with the Department of Home Affairs playing a leading role in close collaboration with relevant departments, agencies, and commune-level People's Committees. This will ensure the consistent implementation of central regulations while enabling proactive advice to the Ho Chi Minh City People's Committee in recommending to the Government and relevant ministries and sectors amendment and supplementation of legal regulations to better meet local practical needs.

5. Conclusion

Improving the legal framework for state management of electronic archives in Ho Chi Minh City is a pressing requirement in the context of a robust nationwide digital transformation. Although the City has achieved some initial, noteworthy results, practical implementation still reveals multiple shortcomings, particularly concerning the consistency, timeliness, and scope of regulation of current legal documents - especially at the grassroots level. If not addressed, these limitations will reduce the effectiveness of document digitization and public data governance. To thoroughly resolve the above issues, the City must focus on implementing the proposed groups of solutions. The synchronous implementation of these solutions, combined with improved enforcement capacity and secured technical and financial resources, will establish a solid legal foundation that will contribute to the effectiveness of e-governance, accelerating the development of a smart city, and promoting sustainable growth in Ho Chi Minh City in the coming years.

References:

1. Government. (2013). *Decree No. 01/2013/ND-CP dated January 3, 2013, provides in detail several articles of the 2011 Law on Archives.*
2. Hanoi University of Home Affairs. (2013). *Proceedings of the scientific conference "Electronic document management and e-archiving - Vietnam's practices and international experiences"*. Hanoi. Labor Publishing House.
3. Ho Chi Minh City Department of Home Affairs. (2024). *Report No. 1841/BC-SNV dated June 18, 2024, on statistics of record and archival work in 2023.*
4. Ho Chi Minh City People's Committee. (2024). *Report No. 21/BC-UBND dated January 19, 2024, serving the survey for drafting the revised Law on Archives.*
5. National Assembly. (2024). *The 2024 Law on Archives.*
6. VIBonline. (2025). *Drafts, policies, and laws.* Retrieved from <https://vibonline.com.vn>