NARA 2014-XX: Appendix B, Recommended File and Folder Naming Conventions:

1. General.

Computer operating and file systems vary in the file and folder naming conventions that they support. The maximum length of a file name, the characters that may be used, and the total combined number of characters in the name of the file and the folders that contain it are determined by the underlying system which is being used. Variations in these conventions between the file system supported by Microsoft Windows, Macintosh OS, and Linux/Unix can result in errors when files and folders are moved between these systems. To support the sustainability of electronic records it is advisable to choose file and folder naming conventions that are supported across file systems.

In addition to the technical considerations described above, agencies should also consider the structure and meaning given to file and folder names. Consistently and meaningfully named folders, sub-folders and files facilitate the maintenance, identification and delivery of electronic records. Agencies should develop file and folder naming conventions that support the management of scheduled electronic records.

2. File Path.

If a file is transferred in a directory structure of folders and sub-folders, the number of characters in the names of any folders and sub-folders are combined to the number of characters in the file's name to make up a file path. File systems provide support for file names and paths of differing lengths. General requirements for file paths are:
- File paths should not exceed a total of 255 characters.

3. Folder naming.

Agencies should develop folder and subfolder naming conventions that relate the electronic records that they house to an item in a file plan. Folders are often named for the major functions or activities to which the records relate. Sub-folders are frequently named by year or month. Folder names should be easy to interpret and unique. A folder hierarchy should contain no more than eight levels. Specific requirements for folder and sub-folder names are:
- Folders should not contain a period (.).
- Folders should include only combinations of the characters a-z, the numbers 0-9, and underscores (_) and hyphens (-).

4. File naming.

Agencies should develop file-naming conventions that are descriptive, consistent and meaningful. If the file naming convention incorporates components such as project names and dates or versions, they should always retain the same position. For example, report_name_month_day_year. Specific requirements for file names include:

- File names should not include more than one period (.). Usually this period is generated by the application that creates a file and precedes the application defined 3 or 4 character extension.
- File names should not contain spaces.
- Folders should include only combinations of the characters a-z, the numbers 0-9, and underscores (_) and hyphens (-).
- File names should contribute to a file path that contains no more than 255 characters in total length.