

Choosing Media to Transport Data for Electronic Discovery

Factors to Consider in Comparing Common Options

When electronic documents are identified as potentially responsive to a legal document request, a company must decide how to capture the original data and transport the copies for use in the case. The amount of data to be transferred is an important consideration when selecting a data storage device. The ease of use for each option must also be evaluated. Finally, it is important to consider the costs associated with each media type.

Whichever media option you choose, a critical element of any data collection process is maintaining the integrity of the data (including the preservation of meta data) during transfer to any storage media. Before you start to collect any data, consult your IT staff to ensure proper techniques are used, or contact Applied Discovery® for assistance.

There are a variety of media options for transporting data to be processed by an electronic discovery service provider. The following chart shows some common choices and their relevant characteristics.

HARD DRIVES			
<input checked="" type="radio"/> Capacity	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Ease of Use	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Affordability	Ideal Use
With a wide variety of capacity options—some large as 1-terabyte—hard drives offer one of the highest capacity choices for storing and transporting electronic data.	Many people choose to work with hard drives because they are fast and convenient. Portable external devices are simple to connect to USB and FireWire ports, and internal drives can be easily inserted into most desktop PCs.	The cost of using a hard drive to transfer data is very low, primarily because of the large capacity. Additional cost savings are realized because hard drives require no additional software, little or no training time is needed, and data transfer is very efficient.	Portable external USB and Firewire hard drives are an ideal choice for projects of every size.
BACKUP TAPES			
<input type="radio"/> Capacity	<input type="radio"/> Ease of Use	<input type="radio"/> Affordability	Ideal Use
Depending on the type of backup system used, backup tapes currently have a capacity over to 320 GB. They are commonly used by corporations for the systematic backup of data for disaster recovery purposes.	There are many backup software packages available, each with an individual set of procedures for creating and restoring backup tapes. These procedures can be time consuming and technically complex.	While the tapes are inexpensive, the hardware and software required for backup tape systems are potentially high. Additionally, backups and the restoration process are time consuming and can be expensive.	While backup tapes are the most common choice for storage of data for disaster recovery, they are not optimal for data transfer. Backup tapes should be used only if the data to be transferred exists in no other media type (e.g., hard drive, network drive, CD, etc.).

Low	Medium	High
<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

CDs			
<input type="radio"/> Capacity	<input type="radio"/> Ease of Use	<input type="radio"/> Affordability	Ideal Use
At up to 700 MB per CD, this option is a well-suited for small amounts of data.	CD burners are now standard on most new computers. However, some training may be required to use the CD burning software and “write times” can be lengthy.	Because most new computers already have the hardware, and the price of a blank CD is well under a dollar, the overall cost of using CDs for small amounts of data is very reasonable.	Best suited when data to be harvested is small, with no single file larger than 640 MB. Portable external USB and Firewire CD burners are widely available. Write-once CD-R format provides some degree of alteration protection.
DVDs			
<input type="radio"/> Capacity	<input type="radio"/> Ease of Use	<input type="radio"/> Affordability	Ideal Use
With an average capacity of 4.7 GB, DVDs can hold six times more data than a CD. DVDs are a common choice for moderate amounts of data.	Like CDs, some training is required to use burning software and the process of transferring data to a DVD can be time consuming.	DVD burners and DVDs are relatively inexpensive, although they typically cost several times more than CDs for both hardware and media.	Even though the amount of time it takes to transfer data to a DVD can be lengthy, the capacity, convenience, and low cost of using a DVD make this a viable option for small to medium amounts of data.

For more information related to data gathering, please contact Applied Discovery to request the following Fact Sheets.

- “5 Steps for Gathering Electronic Data Effectively”
- “Chain of Custody Logging for Electronic Media”
- “Storing and Transporting Media Safely”

The Discovery Experts: Data Collection and Forensics Consultants

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