

**RECORDS MANAGEMENT STAFF PAPER NUMBER 10**

**RECORDS RETENTION  
PLAN**

**Selected Glossary  
Of Terms**

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## RECORDS MANAGEMENT

### Selected Glossary of Terms related to Records Retention Plans

#### Section I -- Records Management -- General

Analysis. A study process by which work is resolved into its elements. The objective is to determine what work is necessary to be accomplished and how it may best be done. Unless done to bring a new work plan into existence, analysis is remedial diagnosis - making recommendations for change and demonstrating the advantages of such change. An indication of how basic this concept is to information processing is to note its many specializations. Using the part two index, see cost analysis, forms analysis, management analysis, methods analysis, operation analysis, organizational analysis, procedural analysis, statistical analysis, and systems analysis.

Federal Records Act of 1950. The statute which prescribes the records management responsibilities of the Administrator of General Services and of the heads of Federal agencies. Enacted as Title V of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act (USC 391-402). See also Federal property management regulations.

Paperwork management. (1) The application of Cost reduction principles to all recordkeeping and recordmaking processes, particularly correspondence, forms, directives and reports. (2) As popularized by the Second Hoover Commission, a broadly based program based upon an analysis of the Federal Records Act of 1950.

Records. Defined in the Records Disposal Act of 1943 (44 U.S.C. 366-380), as including "all books, papers, maps, photographs, or other documentary materials, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received by any agency of the United States Government in pursuance of Federal law or in connection with the transaction of public business and preserved or appropriate for preservation by that agency or its legitimate successor as evidence of the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities of the Government or because of the informational value of the data contained therein.

Records administration. A concept developed in the late 1930's whereby organizations would control the disposal of records by scheduling, provide standards for filing equipment and supplies, control correspondence format and practices, and work closely with the archivists in designating the permanently valuable records.

Records Disposal Act of 1943. The statute of July 7, 1943 controlling disposal of Federal records (44 U.S.C. 366-380). Defines records and provides for their scheduling.

Records disposition. Any means of changing the custody or existence of records. It may involve (a) the preparation of disposal standards (schedules); (b) disposal by destruction or salvage or donation; (c) transfer to a records storage area or center; (d) transfer from one organization to another; (e) retirement to an archival institution. A major element in records management.

Records maintenance. A planned system or method applied to the classification, indexing, filing, protection, servicing, and preservation of records. A major element of records management.

Records management. A program designed to provide economy and efficiency in the creation, the organization, maintenance, and use, and the disposition of records, assurance that needless records will not be created or kept and that valuable records will be preserved. A concept, developed in World War II, to supersede that of records administration. See also records creation, records maintenance, and records disposition.

Records management officer. An individual designated by an organization to assume the statutory responsibility for effectively accomplishing in that organization the various phases of the records management program specified in the Federal Records Act of 1950 and the Records Disposal Act of 1943.

Survey. A major records management study of a paperwork problem, with a formal report of findings and recommendations.

## Section II -- Files Management

Active records. Records referred to more than once a month per file cabinet drawer regardless of age.

Arrangement. (1) The order in which documents are filed. (2) A logical plan for organizing records, such as alphabetically by name, or by subject, or numerically.

Breakdown. (1) The division or subdivision of subject categories into successively more specific classes. (2) The separation of records by type, character, or date.

Category. (1) A natural class or division of things. (2) A logical grouping of associated documents.

Centralized files. The maintenance at a key point of an organized body of records serving all or most of the organizational elements. The opposite of decentralized files.

Classifying. The process, normally connected with subject files, of determining the file designation and necessary index references to papers to be filed. Same as indexing.

Closed file. Essentially a collection of related papers on which action is completed and to which very few papers are likely to be added.

Continuity filing. The consolidation, in date sequence, within general subject files, of all related papers and documents in a specific transaction. Previous correspondence is brought forward and attached to the current material and an appropriate reference form is placed in the subject file in the position occupied by the material brought forward.

Convenience file. Nonrecord publications or copies of papers kept in or near the user's desk for immediate reference purposes. See also non-record.

Cross reference. A finding aid, normally interfiled with the documents of an organized file to help in locating the main document requested, when such documents can be requested by more than one subject, name or number.

Current file area. The office space being used by active files. The opposite of a records center or holding area. See also active records.

Current records. "Current" relates to degree of activity, not recency of date.

Cut-off. A break in a file to start a new file, usually at the end of a calendar or fiscal year. The purpose of the break is to separate active records from less active, and so lead to earlier transfer of the less active records to inexpensive storage.

Decentralized files. Files which are physically located, maintained, and serviced in proximity to the point of creation or use. Normally this approach uses no central file and the separate files for the various organizational segments are autonomous. Decentralized files may be required to conform to various centralized controls: classification, audit, and listing of subject contents.

File. To place documents in a cabinet, folder, or other container, in designated location.

File copy. The official or record document so marked or recognized complete with enclosures or related papers. The file copy of outgoing correspondence, for example, may be on yellow tissue.

File designation. The symbol, subject, name, number, or date controlling the placement of a document in a filing system.

File group. A Collection of papers which have similar characteristics and which should be kept apart from other groups of records on a file location. See also records series.

File station. Any location in the organization at which documents are maintained for current use.

Files management. A basic element of records management, being that planned program for the economical and efficient placement, maintenance, and use of records, including organization of records by case and subject content through classification systems to facilitate the rapid, accurate, and complete retrieval of information.

Filing. The act of putting documents into their place in accordance with an established system.

Office of record. An office designated to maintain the official records for specified operations.

Official file copy. Same as file copy.

Policy records. Generally, records relating to the organization, plans, methods, techniques, rules, procedures, and decisions adopted by an agency to carryout its designated responsibilities and functions.

Project file. A file of document relating to a specific organization, person, place, or thing. A type of case file. May contain papers relating to an assigned task or problem, with findings, conclusions, and recommendations for action and/or solution maintained in a prescribed sequence.

Record copy. Same as file copy.

Recordkeepers. Persons, including those on a part-time basis, as secretaries, responsible for maintaining any organized body of records.

Record series. Ordinarily, records arranged under a single filing system, or kept together as a unit because they relate to a particular subject or activity or because they have a particular form. Each has an "agency of origin" and belongs to one record group; each begins at one point and ends at another, whether date coverage or physical dimension is meant; and each is made up of components having fixed positions in the sequence. See also file group.

Record set. Official record copies of published materials, as distinguished from stock of extra copies.

Screening. To review and physically search through files periodically and remove papers eligible for disposal.

Security classification. The graded classification (Top Secret, Secret, or Confidential as set forth in Executive Order 10501) of record material to insure its restricted handling in accordance with prescribed regulations.

Vital records. Records necessary to the essential functions of the Federal Government for the duration of an emergency if this country is attacked, and records essential to the preservation of legal rights of individual citizens. Often maintained in duplicate copies, one set being an alternate or emergency file.

Working papers. A collection of supporting records, papers or correspondence related to a particular project or phase of operations, the custody of which is essential to the operation of the organization or agency for a limited period of time.

### Section III -- Records Disposition (Retention or Disposal)

Administer. To control under an approved system.

Administrative value. The usefulness of records to the agency of origin for carrying on its day-to-day activities. See evidential value.

Appraisal. The evaluation of records to determine their proper disposition. A series of records is appraised by studying its relationship to other records in the agency and in other organizations, its informational content, and its current and future values.

Collection. Manuscripts, printed documents, and memorabilia arbitrarily gathered together from various sources and maintained and administered as an entity.

Comprehensive records schedule. An authorized instruction for the disposition of recurring records, specifying also those to be retained permanently. Indicates period of cut-off, how long the records are to be kept in offices and when transferred to a records center. May give method of filing. See also records control schedule.

Disposal. A form of records disposition that involves outright destruction of records. See records disposition.

Disposal authority. The legal authorization for the disposal of records obtained through the National Archives and Records Service from the Congress (Congressional Joint Committee on the Disposition of Executive Papers), initiated by the agencies on Standard Form 115.

Disposition program. The ensemble of practices designed to achieve efficient and economical disposition of records. It involves developing standards, procedures, and techniques for managing the longevity of records. Includes controls over office filing equipment, scheduling records for disposition and administering their storage, documenting agency benefits accruing from the program, and undertaking surveys and audits of disposal operations.

Disposition standard. The time period for the cut-off, transfer, and destruction of a file.

Evidential value. The usefulness of records as the primary evidence of an agency's authority, functions, organization, operations, and basic decisions and procedures.

Fiscal value. The usefulness of records for information about the financial transactions and obligations of agencies and organizations. See administrative value.

General records schedule. Standards issued to heads of agencies by the General Services Administration authorizing the retention, or destruction, often specific periods, of records common to several or all agencies. Permissive rather than mandatory.

Historical value. The usefulness of records for historical research concerning the agency of origin or for information about persons, places, events, or things. See research value.

Informational value. The usefulness of records as primary source for information about persons, places, events, conditions, things. See research value.

Inventory. A descriptive listing by series of the records of an agency or part of an agency, usually including information on volume, dates, arrangement and location of records covered by each entry.

Legal value. The usefulness of records that contain evidence of legally enforceable rights or obligations of the Government or private persons. See evidential value.

Nonrecord. Material excluded from the definition of record in the Records Disposal Act of 1943, such as extra copies of documents preserved for convenience of reference and stocks of processed documents.

Periodic transfer. The removal of the records at stated intervals from the current files to equipment and locations suitable for storing inactive and semi-active records.

Records control schedule. A document listing the files of an organization, showing which records are to be destroyed and those to be retained. Promulgates the disposal authority to all who can use it. See also comprehensive records schedule.

Records Disposal Act. The Statute of July 7, 1943, as amended (44 U.S.C. 366-376, 378), which, together with the regulations of the General Services Administration, prescribes the procedures for disposal of Federal records.

Records disposition. Management planning and analysis required to determine when records are no longer needed for current business. The determinations include: destruction, transfer to a records center, reproduction on microfilm and subsequent destruction, and transfer to an archival establishment for permanent preservation. These determinations get recorded in schedules.

Records retirement. The removal of records from current file space to a holding area, records center, or archival depository. One type of disposition.

Retention standard. The time period for particular records (normally, a series) to be kept.

Records values. The determination of usefulness of records for administrative legal, fiscal, and research needs. See also evidential value and informational value.

Research value. The usefulness of records for research by the Government, business and other private organizations and scholars in the humanities, social and physical sciences, administration and other disciplines. See historical value.

Retention period. Same as retention standard.

Retention plan. A document designating the classes of records of an agency or bureau that deserve permanent preservation, and containing the list of the office of record, locations, and titles of particular series or series segments in which each class is filed.

Scheduled records. Covered by an authorized disposal authority.

Scheduling. Preparing a written description of records, either in existence or expected to be accumulated, showing disposition actions to be taken at stated intervals. See also retention schedule.

Series. Documents, volumes, or folders that are arranged under a single filing system, or are kept together as a unit because they relate to a particular subject, result from the same activity, or have a particular form.



Temporary record. A generic term for that type of document which loses its value within a limited period of time, and which should be segregated during filing from records having longer retention. Since the documents are records they must be scheduled. See also transitory file.

Transfer. The movement of records from one custodian to another. Usually, moving records from the active files to inactive files, from agency office space to a records center or an archival establishment.

Transitory file. Papers which have no value for records purposes and are destroyed normally within 90 days.

Unscheduled records. Series for which no decision on disposition has been made.