Managing Records as the Basis for Effective Service Delivery and Public Accountability in Development:

An Introduction to Core Principles for Staff of the World Bank and Its Partners

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INTRODUCTION

The sections which follow examine the importance of good record keeping within the public sector and explore the need to manage information as a strategic resource. They outline the purpose of records and archives management; define the key terminology, theories, and principles underpinning records and archives care; and present a rationale for developing an integrated records management program. They review the legal and regulatory infrastructure for records and archives and conclude by outlining the key activities undertaken in records and archives management. A toolkit for assessing records management capacity can be found at: archives.worldbank.org.
RECOGNIZING RECORDS AS A STRATEGIC RESOURCE

Section 1 examines the importance of good record keeping for accountability. It also discusses the significance of records as evidence, particularly in relation to computerization and the creation of electronic records.

RECORD KEEPING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Record keeping is a fundamental activity of public administration. Without records there can be no rule of law and no accountability. Public servants must have information to carry out their work, and records represent a particular and crucial source of information. Records provide a reliable, legally verifiable source of evidence of decisions and actions. They document compliance or non-compliance with laws, rules, and procedures.

Governments can no longer justify taking action with little or no reference to past performance or future goals. Nor can they justify parallel or duplicate services when they can combine services and reduce costs. Client service, quality performance of tasks, and measurable outcomes are increasingly important responsibilities, and these aspirations all depend on accessible and usable records.

Yet, in many countries around the world, record keeping systems are unable to cope with the growing mass of unmanaged records. This is particularly true in countries with limited financial or administrative resources or where records and archives managers lack training or professional development opportunities. Administrators find it ever more difficult to retrieve the information they need to formulate, implement, and monitor policy and to manage key personnel and financial resources. This situation impedes the capacity to carry out economic and administrative reform programs aimed at achieving efficiency, accountability, and enhanced services to citizens. Moreover, the decline, and in some cases total collapse, of record keeping systems makes it virtually impossible to determine responsibility for actions and to hold individuals accountable.

The loss of control of records has consequences for all citizens, especially for the poorest who are least able to defend themselves. Relevant and accurate public records are essential to preserving the rule of law and demonstrating fair, equal, and consistent treatment of citizens. Without access to records, the public does not have the evidence
needed to hold officials accountable or to insist on the prosecution of corruption and fraud. Moreover, the public suffers when inadequate information systems affect the delivery of programs. All aspects of public service, including health, education, pensions, land, and judicial rights, depend upon well-kept and well-managed records.

Records are vital to virtually every aspect of the governance process. The effectiveness and efficiency of the public service across the range of government functions depends upon the availability of and access to information held in records. Badly managed records adversely affect the broad scope of public service reforms, and development projects are often difficult to implement and sustain effectively in the absence of well-managed records. The relationship between key governance objectives and the records required to support them is illustrated below.

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<th><strong>GOVERNANCE OBJECTIVE</strong></th>
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<td>social security records</td>
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<td>land registration records</td>
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<td>birth/death records</td>
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Record keeping is essential to virtually all development objectives as discussed below.

**Human Rights**

The ability of governments to protect the rights of its citizens and to improve citizen-government interaction is a critical issue. The rights and entitlements of citizens are based on records, and the ability of a government to continue to respect these rights and entitlements is based on the quality of the policies, standards, and practices employed for the care of those records. In an increasingly electronic environment, where information is held in a fragile format, this is much more difficult to achieve than is usually realized.

**Governance and Accountability**

Governments are being asked to be transparent, open, and engaged with their citizens. And citizens are becoming more concerned about their roles in the governance of the country. They want to be able to trust in their government, and they expect it to function in a manner that engenders this sense of trust. Records, and the evidence they contain, are the instruments by which governments can promote a climate of trust and demonstrate an overall commitment to good government.

Similarly, accountability is critical to a responsible government. The foundation for accountability is well-managed records. When managed in a way that ensures integrity and authenticity through time, records allow employees to account to their managers. They permit managers to account to the heads of government institutions and they help the heads to account to elected officials and others who represent the interests of society.
Anti-Corruption

The loss of control of financial records creates opportunities for fraud, leads to loss of revenue, and impedes fiscal planning. It makes it difficult, if not impossible, to preserve an audit trail of decisions, actions, and transactions. The consequences are particularly apparent in the procurement of goods and works. Well managed records provide a cost-effective deterrent to fraud and corruption. Records systems provide controls on access to records; track the movement of records through the organization; and provide reliable and authentic audit trails which demonstrate an unambiguous link between an authorization, an individual’s actions, and a date. They can serve as evidence to identify abuse, misuse, and non-compliance with financial instructions and other laws and regulations. Without well-managed records anti-corruption strategies are impaired.

Management of Human Resources

Improved human resource management is central to good policy management in government. Yet, in many countries paper-based personnel files are incomplete and difficult to access. Although public sector reform programs typically include a significant reduction in the size of the public service, governments are unable to find the basic information needed to accomplish this task, such as accurate staff numbers, details of their grades, and location or dates of appointment.

Moreover, as governments focus attention on improving the incentive structure of the civil service, the need for accurate and complete records becomes more critical. For example, performance-related human resource management – designed to reward the most competent staff and penalize poor performers – is dependent upon information about the present and past performance of individuals. This information is not accessible if the relevant records cannot be located.

Computerization will undoubtedly facilitate the retrieval of personnel information. At the same time, unless there is a very well developed capacity to manage electronic records as legally verifiable evidence of entitlements, contractual obligations, policies, or transactions for the period required, a mixed media, paper/electronic, human resource information system is essential.
Payroll Control

In many countries, government payrolls have been inflated with ‘ghost workers’: non-existent employees who draw a salary, taken by someone else. The personnel file should be the primary source of evidence that a person actually exists, that the grade is appropriate to the salary paid, and that any additional benefits are appropriate and have been authorized.

In the absence of complete personnel files, the ‘ghost workers’ problem cannot be addressed in a sustainable manner. Entries on the payroll database cannot be checked against an authoritative source to ensure that the person actually exists and that payments have been authorized. Head counts and questionnaires provide a temporary solution, but records are an essential aspect of the long term solution.

Financial Management

Good record keeping is essential to clear and accountable financial management. Without accurate records of actual expenditures, the process of preparing budgets can become almost meaningless. Poor record keeping affects the entire accounting function, with the result that reporting and auditing may become virtually impossible. Fraud becomes difficult to detect. Debt management also suffers because records of borrowing may be held by different government offices or may be incomplete. Virtually all approaches to improved financial management rely upon more efficient use of information, but these approaches cannot succeed if financial records are badly managed.

Private Sector Investment

Chronic weaknesses in government record keeping can adversely affect private sector investment. For example, overseas firms may hesitate to invest in a country if they feel its courts do not handle civil cases (especially commercial cases) efficiently. Likewise, large-scale infrastructure investments, such as the construction of gas pipelines, may be delayed or may incur significant additional costs if government land registries cannot provide complete and definitive statements of titles to property.

More generally, poor record keeping can contribute to a lowering of the general standard of service offered to businesses. For example, there may be delays in replies to written inquiries about the registration of businesses, the issue of licences, and other matters necessary for companies to pursue their business.
Decentralization of Administrative Functions

The decentralization of central government functions to local authorities is increasingly recognized as a key factor in improving governance at all levels. However, the information systems currently in place have been structured to support centralized government. As yet, little thought has been given to the complicated task of decentralizing centrally-held but disorganized government records, while taking into account the information needs of both the central and local governments.

Land Reform

People take better care of land and are more productive when they know they can prove their title or claim to the land and can buy, sell, or lease land with assurance that their rights to do so will be respected. All such rights, claims, titles, etc are managed through records. Consequently, good record keeping is essential for good transparent management that in turn leads to security, better land management, and better economic development.

THE COLLAPSE OF RECORD KEEPING SYSTEMS

In many countries, public sector record keeping systems are weak or have actually collapsed to the point where they barely function. This situation is particularly evident in countries that were once part of European-dominated colonial regimes. In these countries, structured record keeping systems were common, supporting the information needs of a small, centralized civil service, often with a well-trained and experienced records staff. In many of these countries the European model of registries, a central point for the registration and control of documents, was introduced, and it was not unusual to civil servants to begin their careers working in registries and then move upwards. They tended in this way to develop a good understanding of the importance of information management.

In the years following independence, this situation deteriorated progressively as part of a general decline in public administration. Informal practices supplant formal rules, and efficient public administration was of secondary importance to providing employment. While the civil service expanded steadily, bringing with it a corresponding increase in the flow of paper, more formal ways of working gradually collapsed, often replaced by ad hoc work methods. In many cases, the institution grew used to making decisions without
referring to records. There was little incentive to maintain effective record keeping systems or to allocate adequate resources for records storage and staff. In some cases, the failure to create and maintain records systems was motivated by the desire to conceal financial and other irregularities.

Eventually, the registries stopped acting as the point of entry for able recruits and became a dumping ground for staff without career prospects. The staff had limited training or experience with record keeping work, and record keeping was allowed to deteriorate. File classification and indexing systems originally designed to meet the record keeping requirements of the colonial period could not meet the needs of complex modern governments.

Paradoxically, in many countries, despite the low usage of records, there was an extreme reluctance to destroy records, even after they ceased to have any value to the institution. In the absence of rules and guidelines for what should be kept and for how long, staff were reluctant to authorize destruction. Over time, registries became severely congested with older records. Ultimately, many records systems collapsed under their own weight.

Even as record keeping has declined in many countries, there have been important advances in the field of records management in other countries, particularly in Europe, North America, and Australia. For the most part these advances have made little impact on the countries that require them most. Professional literature has been almost impossible to acquire owing to poor communications and the lack of foreign exchange. Even when learning materials could be acquired, the principles were extremely difficult to apply in the deteriorating conditions. As a result, modern records management practices have not been introduced.

Information users are well aware that there are severe problems in information retrieval, but they do not know what solutions are required. They do not appreciate the complexities of establishing and maintaining records systems; often they do not recognize the connection between the breakdown of record systems and the larger problem of public administration. As a result, record system reforms rarely feature in government priorities.

Donor support to governments has, in many cases, exacerbated the situation. Donors have seldom recognized the significance of records management in supporting public service reform objectives. Yet the expanding range of donor-supported government commitments depend on efficient record keeping systems and place increasing demands on the existing ones.

Some of the symptoms of a failure to manage records effectively are

- the loss of control over the creation and use of records
• the loss of control over access

• the fragmentation of official records

• the existence of different versions of the same information and the absence of a definitive or authentic record

• the loss of contextual information, such as the originator and the date of creation

• the ease with which electronic records can be manipulated or changed

• technology-related difficulties in retrieving records

• the misuse of records, such as unauthorised access to or alternation of records.

**WHY DO RECORDS CONTINUE TO BE NEGLECTED?**

Records management has remained a neglected area of public sector reform. Record keeping has deteriorated so gradually that it has gone largely unnoticed as a development issue. When development programs and regulatory systems are planned, it is essential that records systems should be strengthened. However, despite the evidence to the contrary, the availability of records is taken for granted. Records are so fundamental to the concept of a democratic society that governments and donor organizations have tended to assume that records will be available to underpin constitutional arrangements and provide an institutional memory.

The difficulties become apparent when the collapse of records systems directly affects development objectives. At this stage development planners tend to assume that the problem is so prevalent, ingrained, and thankless that little can be done to improve the situation. Then there is an assumption that computers will resolve record keeping problems.

These and other false assumptions about the nature and scope of the problem and its causes are in themselves obstacles to the effective implementation of sustainable solutions. Some of the main assumptions and the realities of records care are described below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSUMPTION</th>
<th>REALITY</th>
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<tr>
<td>Records will be available to support programs and policies.</td>
<td>Records do exist, but frequently they are disorganized, incomplete, and difficult to retrieve.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The management of records is not a professional function.</td>
<td>Given the size of government and the volume of paper and electronic information generated, it is essential to have specialists to manage structures and systems for controlling records as part of the wider regulatory framework.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping records is not a significant problem because people will automatically want to keep records that document their actions and decisions.</td>
<td>Public servants who are involved in corruption and fraud or who fear for the security of their jobs are unlikely to want to keep records. Furthermore, in many institutions there are no structures in place to keep records efficiently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public servants know what information they need.</td>
<td>Public servants are unlikely to be aware of all of the information that could and should be available to support their work and even if they are, it may be difficult to access.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People use records for decision making.</td>
<td>As record systems have broken down, public servants have ceased to depend upon them as a reliable basis for decision making.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computers do not create records, and even if they do, information technology staff are able to manage them.</td>
<td>Computers do create records, whether they are printed out or maintained in an electronic environment. Systems managers are generally not concerned with long term evidentiary and access requirements. These issues fall within the remit of records professionals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The problems created by chaotic paper systems can be solved by the application of technology.</td>
<td>If manual systems are chaotic, electronic systems will only compound the problem. Moreover, paper records will continue to exist even in a computerized environment, as data source and output documents, for some time to come.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Soon there will be no need for paper records because offices will be completely computerized.</td>
<td>The fully electronic office is not a reality even in industrialized countries. Until it can be demonstrated that there is a local infrastructure and capacity to protect electronic records in a static form over a suitably long period of time, governments must protect their evidentiary requirements through paper-based records as part of mixed media systems. Moreover, computers are the greatest cause of the proliferation of paper work in modern organizations.</td>
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**Assumptions and Realities about Records Care**

**ASSUMPTION** | **REALITY**
---|---
Paper-based and electronic systems will be integrated. | Computerized systems generally operate separately from existing manual systems. Unless an interface is created between manual and electronic systems, it is likely that both will lack integrity.

Electronic record systems are secure, given the existence of backup procedures, disaster plans, and trained personnel. | Regularized backup procedures are not always carried out, disaster plans (if they exist) tend to be inadequate, and storage facilities (particularly offsite locations) are often wholly inadequate.

**Electronic Governance and Electronic Records**

Advances in information and communication technologies provide the opportunity for governments throughout the world to improve the delivery of information and services to citizens and businesses, to streamline public sector functions, and to increase participation in government. In some instances this is just a matter of providing electronic access to existing information. In others, electronic services, such as land searches or submission of tax returns, are being delivered on-line. Electronic government has the potential to transcend constraints imposed by distance and increase the speed of service delivery, but it also poses a number of challenges for accountability, the rule of law and the maintenance of organizational memory.

There is a fundamental tension between information technology and the lawyer’s need for reliable evidence. IT makes it possible to process, manipulate, reformat, and change information easily; lawyers need evidence that does not change. In the United States successive administrations have faced high profile law cases over the failure of the White House to preserve and make available electronic mail messages (for example, the Iran-Contra scandal during the Reagan administration and the Monica Lewinsky law suit).

Governments face increasing public pressure to demonstrate that they are accountable to the courts and the legislature and to root out corruption or malpractice. As more citizen/state interactions occur in electronic form, it is vital to ensure that electronic
systems support evidentiary record keeping. Citizens will expect that their rights are as well protected and documented in an electronic environment as in a paper-based one.

This can only be achieved if the records generated through electronic government are carefully managed through systems providing constant intellectual and physical control. The aim must be to preserve the combination of content, context, and structure which give electronic meaning over time, to protect the fragile media from degradation, and to ensure efficient access.

Above all it is important to remember that while technology makes electronic government possible, the focus should remain on the provision of service and protection of rights. Thus, electronic government is not something that can be implemented and managed by a group of information technology professionals alone. Records managers have a key role to play alongside the planners and developers of electronic government programs.

The Nature of Electronic Media

The media upon which electronic records are stored is fragile compared to other media forms such as paper and microfilm. Digital audiotapes are only reliable as a storage medium for five years. The life of a computer diskette is only about ten years and even optical disks are considered to be usable for only about thirty years before degradation of the media begins to have an impact on the records.

The Fragility of Electronic Records

Electronic records stored in poor environmental conditions can be subject to loss and destruction. Even slight changes in humidity and temperature can disturb the magnetic properties of disks and tapes thus leading to the loss of some or all of the records. Power shortages, power surges, or situations where the power is shut off suddenly can lead to a sudden loss of electronically recorded information, especially if there are no emergency back-up facilities in place.

The Manipulability of Electronic Records and Security Issues

Electronic records can be easily manipulated and overwritten. Unless strict security provisions are in place, electronic records can be altered or deleted without the organization’s knowledge simply because the storage media and the computer environment do not appear to have changed.
Technological Dependence

Electronic records are entirely dependent upon technology, both for their creation and their storage. As a result, they must be managed over time in a computerized environment. Given the rapid obsolescence of computer hardware and software and the degradation of storage media, the mechanisms for the management of electronic records require a higher level of sophistication than is needed to manage paper records. For example, if digital audio-tapes are chosen as the storage medium, records will have to be transferred to fresh tapes after five years. Although optical disks are much more stable, the software used to access and retrieve the data stored on disks is liable to become obsolete because there are no software standards in this area.

The Importance of Context

Records are dependent upon the availability of the contextual information which confirms their relationship to administrative and operational activities. Unless the electronic system captures and preserves reliable information about who created the record; when, where, how and why; who used it, in relation to what function, process or activity, electronic records lose their value as reliable evidence.

Accountability for Electronic Records

The failure to assign accountability and responsibility for managing electronic records is one of the most serious threats to electronic records. In many organizations, accountability for the human resources and financial resources of an organization are assigned very carefully and there are major penalties for mismanaging these valuable resources. Records are also a valuable resource, but they do not receive the same degree of attention. Electronic records, in particular, will be lost if people within the organization are not charged with the task of protecting them.

The last point underlines the fact that the care of electronic records is more of a management issue than a technical issue. Records and archives managers need to build the tools and techniques necessary to ensure that electronic records are managed properly, and these tools are not just technical in nature but, more importantly, should address key management changes in the organization.
Requirements for Computerization

Clearly the benefits of computerization can only be achieved if there is an appropriate infrastructure to support it, and this includes adequate provisions to manage and protect the records generated. It is essential that everyone concerned should recognize that computers generate records and that keeping these records requires even greater discipline than keeping paper records. The basic requirements are

- appropriate provision in legislation both for the management of electronic records and for legal admissibility
- adequate management structures and assignment of responsibilities
- well-organized, accurate, and easily accessible source data
- appropriate systems design, including provision for capture of contextual data and realistic targets
- clearly defined backup and storage procedures
- appropriate system documentation
- appropriate environmental conditions and physical security
- sufficient budget allocations to cover all costs.

Introducing technological solutions without meeting the necessary preconditions will only increase the vulnerability of public records. This is particularly true in countries with limited resources, which face huge obstacles in affording and obtaining access to the new technologies. Installing an electronic system on top of a collapsed paper-based one will seriously compromise existing and future record keeping capabilities. In other words, automating a chaotic situation is likely to create yet more chaos.
SECTION 2

PRINCIPLES OF RECORDS AND ARCHIVES MANAGEMENT

Section 2 examines the nature of records and archives management required in the context of the public sector. It defines the key principles governing records care and discusses the importance of an integrated records management system.

WHAT ARE RECORDS?

There is sometimes a lack of clarity about what is meant by ‘records’ in relation to the more general term ‘information’. Records include all the documents that institutions create or receive in the course of administrative and executive transactions. The records themselves form a part of or provide evidence of such transactions. As evidence, they are subsequently maintained by or on behalf of those responsible for the transactions.

**Record:** A document regardless of form or medium created, received, maintained, and used by an organization (public or private) or an individual in pursuance of legal obligations or in the transaction of business, of which it forms a part or provides evidence.

While all records convey information, not all sources of information are necessarily records. For example, a published book or an externally provided database (on- or offline) will not be a record, although information selected from it and reused in a new context may itself become a record.

Records arise from actual happenings; they are a ‘snapshot’ of an action or event. They offer a picture of something that happened. To serve their purpose in providing reliable evidence, records in both paper and electronic form must be accurate, complete, and comprehensive.
WHO USES RECORDS?

Within governments records are created and used on a daily basis to document actions, confirm decisions, identify rights and responsibilities, and communicate information. Without records, governments and businesses simply could not operate.

Governments use records for such wide-ranging purposes as

- documenting the work of employees
- confirming pensions, leave, and health benefits
- confirming or reviewing policies and procedures
- confirming citizens’ rights, such as benefits, or land ownership
- providing information about past actions or decisions.

While most records do not need to be kept permanently, a small but significant portion have enduring value. It is this portion of a government’s records that are preserved within public archival institutions. Typical users in national and other archival institutions include

- government representatives requiring information about government activities
- professional or academic researchers from a wide range of disciplines
- journalists
- members of the public
- donor and lending institutions
- others wishing to have some contact with the primary sources of their national culture and tradition
- anyone with a problem that can be solved by referring to records.
PRINCIPLES OF RECORDS AND ARCHIVES CARE

Records must be well managed in order to ensure that they are protected for both administrative purposes and to serve as evidence of the organization’s work. Records management provides a professional approach to caring for records.

The care of records and archives is governed by three key concepts. First the records must be kept together according to the agency responsible for their creation or accumulation (their provenance), in the original order established at the time of their creation. This gives them their ‘evidential’ nature and distinguishes them from other kinds of information. It is the basis for retrieving information from records. Knowing who created or used a record, and where, when and why, is the key to retrieval rather than their format, subject matter or content. This is true for electronic records as well as the paper-based records.

Second, records follow a ‘life-cycle’, in that they are created, used for so long as they have continuing value and then disposed of by destruction or by transfer to an archival institution. They pass through three main phases. In the current phase, they are used regularly in the conduct of current business and maintained in their place of origin or in the file store of an associated records office or registry. In the semi-current phase, they are used infrequently in the conduct of current business and are maintained in a records center. In the non-current phase they are destroyed unless they have a continuing value which merits their preservation as archives in an archival institution. The effective management of records throughout this life-cycle is a key issue in civil service reform.

The third principle governing the care of records and archives is that their care should follow be managed through a coherent and consistent continuum of actions from the development of record-keeping systems, through the creation and preservation of records to their use as archives. The continuum concept suggests that four actions continue or recur throughout the life of a record: identification of records; intellectual control; provision of access; and physical control. It is the management of this continuum of actions that provides the basis for a strategic approach to records management. This strategic approach must be a key component of civil service reform. Otherwise, vast quantities of enactive paper-based records will clog up expensive office space making it virtually impossible to retrieve essential information, where electronic records will be lost.
DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC APPROACH FOR MANAGING RECORDS

Section 3 provides an introduction to the strategy required for an integrated records management program. It discusses the relationship between records, archives, and information management. It then examines the goals and objectives of an ‘ideal’ integrated records management program and outlines the key stages in developing such a program.

RECORDS, ARCHIVES, AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

As discussed in Section 1, factors such as changing communications technologies, government restructuring, and civil service reform have contributed to the redefinition of records and archives work. Records management, archives management, librarianship and data management used to be perceived as separate tasks. These activities still retain their unique qualities, but increasingly they are seen as part of a larger, integrated system of information management.

The Hierarchy of Information Management
The key activities discussed here are information management, records management, and archives management.

**What Is Information Management?**

All records convey information, but not all sources of information are records. The process of planning, controlling, and using the information resources of an organization in support of its business is known as ‘information management’.

*Information management:* The planning, control, and exploitation of the information resources of an organization in support of its business. Also known as information resources management.

It is often assumed that information management concerns only information and data created by computers. However, the most effective information management system manages all information, regardless of medium and format.

**What Is Records Management?**

Records management is the task of ensuring that recorded information, paper and electronic, is managed economically and efficiently. Records management controls the creation, maintenance, use, and disposal of records so that the right records are provided to the right person at the right time.

*Records management:* That area of general administrative management concerned with achieving economy and efficiency in the creation, maintenance, use, and disposal of the records of an organization throughout their entire life-cycle and in making the information they contain available in support of the business of that organization.

When a records management system works well, the information contained in records can be readily retrieved. The disposal of unneeded records and the retention of valuable information can be managed effectively, and space, facilities, and resources can be used efficiently and economically.
**What Is Archives Management?**

A national archival institution is an essential institution of a modern state. It has a key role to play in the overall management of records and information created by the government administration.

*Archives management:* The area of management concerned with the maintenance and use of archives.

The archival institution serves government by protecting public records and making them available for use; it serves the public by ensuring that citizens’ rights and responsibilities are documented clearly and accurately. It is thus a cornerstone of a democratic society. It is also one of the central cultural institutions in a nation, serving as a center for research and a guardian of the nation’s memory.

**INTEGRATED RECORDS AND ARCHIVES MANAGEMENT**

An integrated records management program is essential if records are to be available for use by governments and citizens. Such a program recognizes that records follow a life-cycle and acknowledges the importance of a continuum of professional care.

The primary purpose of an integrated records management program is

- to preserve records and archives in an accessible, intelligible, and usable form for as long as they have continuing utility or value
- to make information from records and archives available in the right format, to the right people, at the right time.

**Goals**

The goals of an integrated records and archives management program include

- creating and maintaining authoritative and reliable records in an accessible, intelligible, and usable form for as long as they are required to support the business and accountability requirements of the organization
ensuring efficiency and economy in the management of records by eliminating duplication of effort, creating and maintaining only those records that are needed, systematising retention and disposal, and so on

improving access to records and archives to enhance sound decision making and support effective program and service delivery, accountability, transparency, and citizens’ rights

securing destruction of obsolete records

identifying and preserving archives of enduring historical and cultural value.

Requirements

To achieve those goals it is necessary to

enact and implement comprehensive legislation to regulate the life-cycle management of records and archives, irrespective of medium and format, designating a single authority to oversee the process and assigning clear responsibility for actions at each stage

develop policies, procedures, systems, and structures to ensure the maintenance of the integrated records and archives management program

prepare long-term strategic plans to determine priorities within the program

provide adequate resources, including staff, buildings, equipment, and funding, to ensure the implementation of those strategic plans and the sustainability of the program

monitor and evaluate the program to assess its efficiency and effectiveness (‘value for money’) and to make any necessary structural readjustments.

Priorities

Consequently, the priorities for records and archives management are

establishing records and archives management systems that offer a continuum of care for paper and electronic records through the records’ life-cycle

facilitating the automation of records and archives management systems
- extending integrated records and archives management systems to regional and local administrations in the context of regionalisation and other decentralization initiatives

- safeguarding and providing access to the archival heritage of the nation, thereby safeguarding the national documentary memory.

**Benefits**

There are many benefits to the implementation of such a program. These may include

- eliminating duplication of services
- improving accessibility to and use of information and records
- reducing expenses for records management services
- preserving records of historical and research value through a planned records management process.
KEY STAGES IN THE DEVELOPING OF AN INTEGRATED RECORDS AND ARCHIVES MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

The six key stages in developing an IRM program are

1. restructuring existing systems
2. organizing and controlling records
3. providing physical protection for records
4. managing records in records centers
5. managing archives
6. supporting and sustaining the program.

The activities involved in each of these stages are described in the chart which follows.

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4 Managing Records in Records Centers

- developing and maintaining records center facilities
- transferring, storing, and retrieving records according to disposal schedules
- disposing of records as indicated by the schedules.

5 Managing Archives

- acquiring and receiving archives
- arranging and describing archives according to archival principles
- providing public access to the archives.

6 Supporting and Sustaining the Program

- promoting records services to the government and the public
- promoting education for records and archives personnel
- developing and expanding the records and archives professions.

These stages and activities take place within the context of a management continuum, as shown below.
Key Activities in the Development of an Integrated Records and Archives Management Program

- Review and revise legislation and policies
- Review and revise organizational policies and structures
- Determine resource requirements, including facilities and staffing
- Develop strategic and business plans to achieve an IRM program

- Analyse, maintain and, if necessary, restructure records systems
- Develop and implement classification systems and records schedules
- Appraise records for their continuing value, based on schedules
- Dispose of semi-current, archival or obsolete records

- Implement preservation measures
- Develop and test emergency plans and identify vital records
- Monitor all physical conditions regularly
- Re-evaluate preservation requirements as necessary

- Develop and maintain records center facilities
- Transfer, store, and retrieve records as per records schedules
- Dispose of archival or obsolete records
- Re-evaluate and revise systems and procedures as necessary

- Receive archival records as per records schedules
- Arrange and describe records according to archival principles and practices
- Ensure records are physically secure
- Provide public access to records

- Promote records services to the government and the public
- Promote training and education for records and archives personnel
- Develop and expand the records and archives professions
- Review and revise all structures, policies, systems, and procedures regularly

Return to ‘Restructuring Existing Systems’ as Required
DEVELOPING A LEGAL AND REGULATORY INFRASTRUCTURE FOR INTEGRATED RECORDS AND ARCHIVES MANAGEMENT

Section 4 examines the actions required to develop an integrated records and archives management program. The first step is to identify the goals and objectives for the program. Then it is necessary to restructure existing services to support the program.

This restructuring will include review and revision of records legislation and organizational policies, procedures, and systems. Once that is completed, the implications for resource management, including staffing, must be considered. Finally, strategic plans need to be developed.

REVIEWING AND REVISING RECORDS LEGISLATION

The first area to be reviewed and revised in the public sector is legislation. Comprehensive and up-to-date legislation is essential to ensure complete protection for all government and parastatal records and give the archival administration wide powers for securing and protecting records.

A comprehensive records law should provide for

- the establishment of a records and archives institution with jurisdiction over records generated in the government service and responsibility for those records throughout their life-cycle
- the establishment, within the records and archives institution, of the archival agency as a public institution, responsible not only for records generated in the government service but also for any other parastatal or private records of national or regional importance
• a public right of access to the holdings of the archival institution, including policies on the regular opening of government records under clear conditions and a workable procedure for appraisal and declassification

• protection for the rights of individuals and organizations that may have provided information held in records, under terms of confidentiality

• provision for public scrutiny of the program of the records and archives institution and its success in achieving its targets.

Within the records law itself, the following areas should be clearly delineated to ensure that the legislation is comprehensive and usable:

• definitions, responsibility, and authority

• the life-cycle concept of records and the continuum concept of records care

• care of local government records and non-governmental records

• identification of places of deposit and provisions for public access

• financial management and related legal provisions.

These elements are described in more detail below.

**Key Definitions**

Any records legislation must define precisely all relevant terminology, including ‘records’, ‘public records’, ‘archives’, and ‘National Archives’. The definitions should ensure that wide protection is offered to records

• in all media and formats

• created or received at all levels of government

• from all agencies of the executive, judiciary, and legislature

• from regional and other local government organizations, para-statal institutions, and private sources.

To ensure the law is interpreted correctly, it should include the definitions of technical terms in accordance with standard international terminology (such as the International Council on Archives’ *Dictionary of Archival Terminology*). The three phases of the
life-cycle of records - ‘current records’, ‘semi-current records’ and ‘archives’ - should also be defined, as should any other terms subject to misinterpretation, such as ‘retention schedule’ or ‘records center’.

**Responsibility for Records**

In many countries, the existing national archival institution is regarded primarily as a cultural institution and is responsible to the Minister of Culture or equivalent. However, the centrality and significance of public records care to sound administration throughout government and the security implications of that work, make it imperative that ultimate responsibility should rest with the highest possible authority. Moreover, the records cover and link all factors of government programs and activities.

Ideally, the records and archives institution should be made responsible specifically to the office of the official who plays the central governing role within the country, such as the president or prime minister. The office of the minister responsible for the civil service, which is often part of the president’s office, is an excellent choice. This will help to ensure that records issues, including security, are co-ordinated across government and that they are not overshadowed by other priorities in a ministry concerned with sectoral interests.

The law should provide for the appointment of a director of the records and archives institution in accordance with the general legislation and other rules regulating appointments to the civil service. The law should also establish his or her responsibility for implementing general records policies, for the day-to-day management of the records and archives institution and for other matters specified elsewhere in the legislation.

The director should also be responsible for safeguarding and providing access to all public records selected for preservation (‘archives’) other than those still held in offices or other places of deposit as identified in the legislation.

The law should allow for the establishment of a records class (or cadre) within the civil service. It should have its own scheme of service (to be agreed with the Public Service Commission or its equivalent) if this is appropriate to the country concerned. Responsibility for management of the scheme of service should be assigned to the director (in consultation with other appropriate bodies and officials). The administrative importance of records work makes it essential that the records class should incorporate not only the staff of the headquarters of the records and archives institution and of the archival agency but also registry staff throughout the government. This systematic classification will ensure the development of a uniform system of care for records throughout their life-cycle.
It is important to establish an advisory committee on records care. Its purpose is to advise the president or responsible minister on public records matters generally; establish a general policy for the management of public records; advise and support the director in his or her work; and play a role in the issue of retention schedules and the appointment of places of deposit.

**Life-cycle and Continuum Concepts**

The records legislation must acknowledge that records follow a life-cycle and that their care should follow a continuum (see Section 2). There should be continuous appraisal and appropriate disposal of all the records of an organization. The law should establish this framework, to effect improvements in registry and records work in public offices. It must set rules for the orderly and timely transfer of semi-current records of continuing value to a records center and of records of permanent value to an archival repository. This framework is crucial to the success of the whole records management reform initiative.

**Care of Local Government Records**

Where appropriate, the provisions of the law should also include the records of regions and districts (or their equivalents) by extending the responsibilities for public records to heads of local public offices and by establishing a structure of branch offices of the records and archives institution, including provision for local records centers and archival repositories.

In counties operating under a federal system of government, there may be parallel provincial or regional records and archives systems, independent of the national systems but relying on the national records and archives administration for professional leadership and guidance. National and regional acts and regulations should address these inter-relationships.

**Care of Non-governmental Records**

The law should identify the government’s responsibility for the acquisition and care of non-governmental records. This responsibility may be extensive, with the records and archival administration serving as the country’s key repository for private records of national significance. This responsibility may be less comprehensive if there are other institutions within the country better equipped to acquire and preserve private records. These institutions may include the country’s national library, university libraries, and special collections or other national or regional museum and archives repositories.
Identification of Places of Deposit

Where appropriate, the law should provide for the appointment of ‘places of deposit’. These are record repositories which are outside the control of the director of the records and archives institution, but which are nevertheless subject to certain conditions and to inspection by the director. Such appointments would be made primarily in the parastatal sector, to ensure the preservation of quasi-governmental records not directly under the management of the records and archives institution.

Public Access to and Admissibility of Records

Access regulations and controls (such as immediate access to records or the imposition of a rules limiting access for a certain time) need to be defined and described.

Whenever possible, a country should strive to reduce the period during which records are restricted, especially to make sure access rules are in accord with any freedom of information or privacy legislation. Extended closure of records should be limited to specified categories of records, such as those:

- relating to national security
- relating to the maintenance of public order or safeguarding revenues
- containing third-party information received in confidence
- relating to the private affairs of living individuals.

Public records to which members of the public had access before transfer to the archival institution or to a place of deposit should continue to be open to public inspection irrespective of their age.

At the same time, the admissibility of records as evidence in a court of law needs to be addressed in the records law or related legislation. In particular, provision needs to be made for the inviolability of government records and for the legal admissibility of records in non-traditional formats, including microform and electronic formats. This is often covered by legislation relating to rules of evidence; it is important that the archival facility confirm that adequate provision is made somewhere in the government’s legislation.
Financial Management

The legislation should establish the financial rules under which the records and archives institution will operate. The precise content and terminology will vary in accordance with the rules and conventions operating within each country. These rules include the fixing of fees for the provision of services, such as supplying photocopies.

Related Legal Provisions

The law should also address the following related concerns. If there are no equivalent provisions in existing copyright legislation, the law should address the copyright of records held in the archival institution. If the archival institution is also the country’s national library or legal deposit library, this function should be restated in the legislation. The law should also confirm the obligation to deposit published or unpublished material in the institution. Finally, if there is no legislation that protects the export of materials constituting the national cultural heritage, or if such legislation does not protect public records and other historical documents, appropriate provision should be made in the records law.

REVIEWING AND REVISING NATIONAL POLICIES

Once the legal and legislative issues relating to records care have been considered, it is next necessary to examine the policies affected by and affecting records management.

The nature of the policies developed will depend on the level and nature of use of the government’s records and the degree to which it recognizes information as a strategic asset. As well, policies will be affected by the nature of available information and communications technologies.

Policies should allow the records and archives institution to do the following.

- Develop a program for the co-ordination of information management and information technology programs, ensuring compatibility across government between data and records and the technologies used to create and manage them.

- Create mechanisms for the care of records in all media (including electronic records) and archival records.
• Determine centralized versus decentralized approaches to the physical management of information, records, and archives.

• Establish the organizational accountability of government agencies for the management of information, records, and archives.

• Define the roles of and relationships between action officers, information managers, records managers and archivists, and information technology managers.

• Establish priorities for the development and expansion of information systems and information technologies.

• Establish mechanisms for planning and budgeting for records and information management activities.

• Ensure appropriate staffing and training for personnel.

• Ensure appropriate resources for records and information management.

• Protect staff against physical dangers or health risks associated with their work.

For example, a nation’s records legislation may require that public records must be preserved in such a manner that they will be legally admissible as evidence in a court of law. A policy may be developed to ensure that all government departments recognize the role of the records and archives institution in the protection of records as evidence.

If a government department then wishes to microfilm records or replace them with electronic digitized images, for instance, it must do so in consultation with the records and archives institution, to ensure that the act of microfilming or digitizing records does not affect the legal admissibility of the records.

Policy documents should be formally approved by the highest authorities and publicized or made available as widely as necessary to ensure that all people involved with information or records management are aware of the issues and actions in question.

**ORGANIZATIONAL POLICIES AND STRUCTURES**

Once legislation is in place and policies have been developed, the organizational structures and more specific policies required to conform to those legislative and larger policy changes must be considered. Just as national issues will vary from country to
country, organizational issues will vary across government departments. Organizational policies should be established to do the following.

- Determine the placement of the records and archives institution.
- Organize systems for the effective and efficient delivery of information and records management services.
- Ensure appropriate linkages between the creation and management of information and the execution of the agency’s functions.
- Establish information management standards.
- Identify those information systems and information technologies that require improvement or restructuring.
- Establish standards for the use of information technologies, including computers and communications systems.
- Establish systems to ensure the security and physical protection of information and records.

The organizational policy provides specific policy information and is usually accompanied by procedural information, explaining the specific steps involved in executing the process in question. The three documents – the national policy, organizational policy, and procedural information – work together to guide the direction of the government with regard to records care.

These policies and structures will involve a partnership between the national records and archives institution and its branches and the record creating agencies.

Within each agency or department of a government, such as personnel, finance, transportation or education, there should be a records management unit. The head of this unit should have equivalent rank to the heads of other branches within the agency or department with clear lines of communication to the head of the relevant division and the head of the agency. Ultimate responsibility for the effectiveness of records work should then rest with the head of the agency.

When an agency operates an integrated information strategy, encompassing not only records but also internally and externally generated electronic data, library materials, and other information sources, the respective professional branches should constitute a sub-division of the central management division.
DETERMINING RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

Staffing

The quality of any records management program is directly related to the quality of the staff who operate it. Records work must be seen as a worthwhile career, not as the posting of last resort for those who are unqualified, incompetent, or idle. When planning a restructured records and archives institution, it is necessary to consider the number of staff needed, the tasks they will undertake, their particular qualifications, and the requirements for their promotion through the civil service.

The director of the records and archives institution is ultimately responsible for ensuring all staff are adequately trained for their work. He or she must see that staff receive clear instructions and guidelines in the form of directives, manuals, and handbooks.

Accommodation

Adequate accommodation is essential to the proper functioning of the records service. Three particular types of accommodation are required. These are

- records offices for the storage and use of current records
- records centers for the storage and retrieval of semi-current records
- archival repositories for the preservation and use of archival records.

Records offices (registries) must be located conveniently for the action officers they serve. They should be kept separate from other administrative units, such as the typing pool. They should be large enough to house the current files for which they are responsible and the records office staff who handle them. The accommodation must be secure and well maintained, and it must be of strong construction so that it can bear the weight of the records.

Records centers serve as intermediate storage facilities: they receive and administer all records, in whatever format, that are retired from current records systems; provide a reference service based upon the records; and dispose of records in accordance with disposal schedules and plans. They are a high-density, low-cost storage areas, which must be equipped with a system for retrieving and consulting the records held. They should be safe, secure, clean, efficient, and economical. Ideally, the climatic conditions (temperature and humidity) should be kept at controlled levels.
Archival repositories must provide a controlled physical environment for the archives held within them. Environmental conditions must always be within acceptable limits, created by the use of adequate insulation and building materials in the construction of the facility. Where it is not possible to have a purpose-built repository, continuous air conditioning should provide an artificial environment as far as possible.

**Equipment and Materials**

Sufficient and appropriate equipment and materials should be provided for the handling, storage, and preservation of records throughout their life-cycle. One of the benefits of an integrated records management program is that it encourages the efficient use of equipment and supplies, which reduces both costs and waste.

**Financial Resources**

It is imperative that provision be made in the annual estimates of capital and running costs for sufficient funds to enable the records and archives institution and its departmental units to perform their functions properly. Ideally, each records management unit in an agency should have its own budget or, at least, an adequate allowance within the department of which it forms a part. Similarly, the records and archives institution should be able to manage its own budget. Value for money should be achieved through a plan for expenditure on staff, accommodation, equipment, and materials that matches the requirements for the delivery of an efficient and economical records management program.

Within the archival facility, basic services should be provided free of charge to all users. The archival institution may need to maximize the generation of income from its programs and activities, but this should support and not interfere with its work towards the achievement of its stated mission.

**DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC PLAN**

Once the national and organizational policy requirements have been considered and the available resources assessed, it is necessary to restructure existing systems and plan for current and future activities on the basis of a strategic plan which identifies the goals and objectives of the organization, determines the best mechanisms for achieving those goals and puts into action the information gathered from a review of existing systems.
SUPPORTING AND SUSTAINING AN INTEGRATED RECORDS AND ARCHIVES MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Developing and Enhancing Professionalism

The success of any integrated records management program will depend upon the professional capacity and status of the staff responsible for records and archives management. Because the care of records calls for a continuous management process at any phase of the life-cycle of the records, the functions of registrar, records manager, records center manager, and archivist should be performed within an integrated structure, with no rigid boundaries that limit professional collaboration and development.

The head of any records and archives institution should ultimately be responsible for ensuring that records staff throughout the organization are adequately trained for the work they are expected to undertake. All staff appointed to posts involving records care, whether or not they already possess a professional, paraprofessional, or specialist qualification, must be trained in the specific policies and procedures of the institution. Training programs should be part of the overall management strategy, and they should contain elements to support professional or career development. The head must also ensure that staff receive adequate instruction in the tasks they are required to perform, as well as receiving appropriate standards, manuals, and guidelines to assist their work. Agency records managers will also be involved in the selection and training of their departmental staff.

The Service Ethic

Regardless of the scope of his or her responsibilities, the records manager or archivist is a public servant, responsible to the citizenry. Accountability, ethics, stewardship, and commitment are essential qualities.

Records managers and archivists belong to professional groups with an international identity and with internationally recognized professional guidelines. Many countries have adopted codes of ethics for archival and records management practice. The following key principles are central to these codes.

- Records professionals manage, appraise, select, acquire, preserve, and make available for use records and archives, ensuring their intellectual integrity and physical protection for the benefit of users both in the present and future.
• Records professionals perform their tasks without discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, or national or ethnic origin.

• Records professionals encourage and promote the greatest possible use of the records in their care, giving due attention to confidentiality, personal privacy, physical preservation, and legislative or policy requirements.

• Records professionals carry out their duties according to accepted records and archives principles and practices, to the highest standard of conduct.

• Records professionals contribute to the advancement of records and archives knowledge and skills by sharing their knowledge with other professionals and with the public in general, using their knowledge for the benefit of society as a whole.
Section 5

Key Activities in Records and Archives Management

Once the organization’s policies, structures and procedures have been reviewed and revised (as required), it becomes possible to introduce or enhance the actual activities involved in records and archives management. Section 5 examines the key activities involved with in work based on the fundamental premise that records follow a life-cycle and that their care should be part of a continuum.

Organizing and Controlling Records

The first step in managing records throughout their life-cycle is to organize and control records at the point of creation and use. The purpose of managing current records is to ensure efficiency and economy in office operations, to control the creation and use of information, and to protect valuable information against loss or damage.

Current records are normally maintained in their office of origin or in an associated records office or registry. They are primarily used by officers of the creating office, but other agencies (such as the Auditor General’s Department or its equivalent) may have right of access in certain circumstances. Except in countries where there is freedom of information legislation, current government records are not normally available for public research, although some, such as registers of companies, may be open by law to public inspection.

The steps involved in organizing and controlling current records include

- analyzing information requirements and structuring or restructuring records systems
- developing and implementing classification systems
- maintaining records systems
- developing and implementing records schedules
• appraising records and retaining those with continuing value while disposing of non-current records.

These steps examined below.

**Analysing and Structuring or Restructuring Records Systems**

The first task in developing a functioning records management program is determining how the government’s records are created and used. This task is ideally completed through ‘business systems analysis’ or ‘business process analysis’.

*Business systems analysis (BSA):* An analytical framework that involves analysing organizations as systems or the process of systematically and objectively gathering information about business systems and subjecting that information to formal analysis. This includes identifying broad organizational goals and supporting business areas and processes.

Business systems analysis involves examining a system, reviewing how tasks or functions within that system are executed, and considering whether they may be carried out more efficiently. In addition to providing a tool for improving day-to-day office systems, such as filing or classification, business systems analysis should be closely linked to records management. Records systems can be significantly affected by changes in systems and processes, and records managers should be asked to comment on the effect of systems re-engineering on record keeping, particularly in relation to legislative or policy requirements.

**Maintaining Records Systems**

Regardless of whether existing records programs are simply analyzed for information or business systems are re-engineered, a key activity in the management of current records is maintaining the systems. This involves the following steps:

• maintaining control over the documentation used to record the creation, use, and disposal of current records, such as registers and logs

• systematically managing the creation and handling of records, such as correspondence, mail, and forms

• managing the creation and use of files
ensuring the regular transfer of records from current to semi-current storage and the destruction of obsolete records.

**Developing and Implementing Classification Systems**

Once the records created by the organization have been identified and, if necessary, restructured, the next step is to place them into logical groupings by introducing a classification system.

Classification organizes records into categories, based on the functions and activities the records represent, so that decisions about their organization, storage, transfer, and disposal may be made on a category-wide basis, not file by file or item by item.

There are four main types of classification systems used for the arrangement of series of files within government. These are not mutually exclusive, and they may be used at different levels within the same system. The four types are

- function or activity, reflecting the work of the agency
- hierarchical, reflecting administrative structures
- keyword or theme, reflecting functions or activities within a hierarchy
- alphabetical.

**Developing and Implementing Disposal Schedules**

The next step in managing current records is to develop a disposal schedule, sometimes called a retention and disposition schedule or list.

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**Disposal schedule:** The control document recording appraisal decisions and prescribing disposal action. Also known as disposal list, disposition schedule, records schedule, retention schedule, retention and disposal (or disposition) schedule, or transfer schedule.

**Retention period:** The length of time, as provided for by legislation, regulation or administrative procedure or based upon an estimate of the frequency of continuing use, that records should be retained in an office or records center before they are transferred to an archival institution or otherwise disposed of.
**Disposal date:** The date on which actions specified in a disposal schedule should be initiated.

**Destruction:** The disposal of documents of no further value by incineration, maceration, pulping, shredding or another secure method.

Once records have been classified and scheduled, their care should become a matter of routine. Procedures should then be developed for managing the records in the office, transferring them out or destroying them on the disposal date and receiving records in the records center or archival repository.

**APPRAISING AND DISPOSING OF RECORDS**

Once systems are established for managing current records, the records manager and archivist must determine which records should be retained for their ongoing value and which may be destroyed as obsolete. Appraisal or retention decisions are taken on the basis of an assessment of the continuing value of the records for administrative, operational, or other uses.

Appraisal involves analyzing records at the macro level (that is, in their series rather than file by file or item by item) to determine which categories are to be retained for how long, which will be transferred to archival storage, and which will be destroyed. Disposal is the outcome of appraisal: records are disposed of (by transfer to records center or archival repository or by destruction) or they are retained in the office of origin until their administrative or legal value has diminished or altered.

To achieve successful appraisal and disposal, managers must

- preserve the administrative context of the records and their organic relationship with each other
- ensure that records are controlled in a systematic fashion throughout the life-cycle
- use functional analysis to chart the flow of records and information through administration and to determine the nature and value of records
- control records to ensure that duplicate or routine materials are managed separately from originals or more valuable documents, so that there is no need to strip or review individual files.
The purpose of any records or archives management program is to make sure records are available for use at any stage of the life-cycle. Thus, in the process of appraisal, consideration must be given to the records’ value for a variety of continuing and potential uses, both internal to the organization and external, to the wider public and society.

Once appraisal guidelines have been established, disposal can take place legitimately. Disposal involves sending records from the creating office to the records center or the archival repository or destroying them under secure conditions if they are obsolete.

Providing Physical Protection for Records

Preservation is a crucial element of an integrated records management program. If records are not well protected physically throughout their life-cycle, the media (paper, digital tapes, films etc) will not survive long enough to serve their administrative and cultural purposes by providing evidence of present and past activities.

The key steps in providing physical protection for records include

- implementing and maintaining preservation measures
- developing and testing emergency plans to protect records.

Preservation conditions will naturally vary depending on the stage of the record’s life-cycle and the used. The highest standards of presentation must be applied for the most fragile media and for the records which are presented as permanent archives.

Archival repositories should be maintained to the highest environmental and physical standards possible in order to protect valuable records. These requirements include

- controlled temperature and humidity
- controlled lighting
- adequate shelving for all records
- adequate storage containers
- secure access to storage areas to prevent loss or damage to records.
The best modern archives buildings are purpose-designed and built. They provide a physical environment for the documents held within them by using the principle of thermal inertia: that is, the environmental conditions within them are always within acceptable limits because of the insulation and building materials used.

**Developing and Testing an Emergency Plan**

An emergency plan ensures the protection of records in the event of a disaster or emergency, such as a flood, fire or earthquake. Both creating agencies and the archival institution should develop emergency plans to protect the records or archives in their care. Decentralized or regional offices should have their own plans. As part of emergency planning, the organization needs to identify vital records: those records essential to the operations of the organization.

**MANAGING RECORDS IN RECORDS CENTERS**

Semi-current records are usually cared for in separate records centers. The records center must be capable of holding all eligible records (including records in specialized media) and of providing a dependable retrieval service.

No records should be transferred to the records center unless appraisal has taken place and there is a disposal date attached to the records. The appropriate action may be to destroy them, review them or transfer them to the archival institution. These actions are indicated in the disposal schedule, which is the authoritative official record.

Once the records center receives records, it provides high-density, low-cost storage, retrieving records on the request of creating agencies, and providing access to those records. As a rule, records in records centers are not available to the general public.

It is the job of the records center staff to identify and dispose of records ready for destruction or transfer to the archival institution. No records should be destroyed without written and specific authority, based upon procedures laid down in the ruling legislation.

**MANAGING ARCHIVES**

Archives management is concerned with the care, custody, description, and retrieval of records once they have been transferred to the archival agency. Once records are selected and transferred to the archival repository, they become archives in the formal sense and are covered by specific legislative provisions, policies, or guidelines.
The archival institution should have a plan for determining the quantity and nature of materials to be transferred each year from the records center or from creating agencies so that it can allocate appropriate space and resources to their receipt and management. Archives must be transferred according to disposal schedules and must be labeled and listed.

Arrangement and description are two integrated practices designed to prepare archival materials physically and intellectually for research use.

**Arrangement:** The whole process of analysing the organization of sets of archives, whereby their provenance and original order are understood and the archives are set into groups, series, and items in an order that preserves and reflects that understanding.

**Description:** The process of capturing, analyzing, organizing, and recording information that serves to identify, manage, locate, and explain archives and the contexts and records systems that produced them.

The aim is to provide information about the content and context of archives in order to provide

- **administrative control,** which ensures that all series and items are accounted for in the repository and can be found and used.

- **intellectual control,** which identifies for users what materials are held, what subjects they deal with, and how they can be found.

**Providing Public Access to Archives**

The archival institution may be sustained by public funds so that archival materials shall be preserved and used either by members of the government or corporation or by citizens or others wishing to do research. The reference room of an archival institution is the contact point for anyone who wishes to find out about holdings, by correspondence, by telephone, or in person.
MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC SECTOR RECORDS STUDY PROGRAM

This introduction to core principles is drawn from a fully developed capacity building course for records and archives professionals developed by the International Records Management Trust. The Management of Public Sector Records Study Program comprises eighteen self-study modules on records and archives issues, organized to address core, advanced, and specialist topics. In addition to the modules, there are seven associated training manuals, a series of 34 case studies, a glossary of terms, a guide to additional sources of information on records and archives issues, and a resource tool for educators. The components of the program are listed below.

The Study Program was developed between 1994 and 1999 as a means of raising the standard of records and archives education internationally, thus improving the care of those information resources that comprise essential evidence of public accountability and that help society preserve its documentary heritage. The project was directed by Anne Thurston, the Executive Director of the Trust. The General Editor was Michael Roper, the former Keeper of the UK Public Record Office and Secretary General of the International Council on Archives. The Managing Editor was Laura Millar, a records and archives management consultant and a specialist in distance education and instructional design.

MODULES

The Management of Public Sector Records: Principles and Context
Organizing and Controlling Current Records
Building Records Appraisal Systems
Managing Records in Records Centers
Managing Archives
Preserving Records
Emergency Planning for Records and Archives Services
Developing Infrastructures for Records and Archives Services
Managing Resources for Records and Archives Services
Strategic Planning for Records and Archives Services
Analyzing Business Systems
Understanding Computers: An Overview for Records and Archives Staff
Automating Records Services
Managing Electronic Records
Managing Financial Records
MANUALS
Managing Current Records: A Procedures Manual
Managing Records Centers: A Procedures Manual
Managing Archives: A Procedures Manual
Planning for Emergencies: A Procedures Manual
A Model Records and Archives Law
A Model Scheme of Service for a Records and Archives Class

CASE STUDIES
The Management of Public Sector Records: Case Studies (3 volumes)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCE TOOLS
Introduction to the MPSR Study Program
Glossary of Terms
Additional Resources
Writing Case Studies: A Manual
Resources for Educators

FOR MORE INFORMATION
The products and training materials of the MPSR Study Program – the modules, case studies, manuals, videos and associated resources – are available from the International Records Management Trust. For more information on the MPSR Study Program, contact

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