An Introduction to Records Management for the City of New Orleans

New Orleans Public Library
Louisiana Division/ City Archives &
Special Collections
2019

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Introduction

This guide is meant to be an introduction to Records Management concepts for government agencies in the City of New Orleans. It is by no means exhaustive nor should it be considered the authority on Records Management procedures. It is meant to provide basic instruction on Records Management concepts and guidance to those agencies wishing to develop a Records Retention Schedule. Because the City of New Orleans does not currently have a Records Manager or Records Management Program in place, **it falls to the individual agency** to work with both the City Archives and State Archives regarding the management and disposal of their own records.

It is our hope that this volume will:
- Provide your agency with contact information for the City Archives and the State Archives, and encourage you to reach out to us regarding the management of your records.
- Provide an overview of Records Management core principles and the ways in which a Records Management Program can benefit your department.
- Address your agency's legal obligations regarding records retention and disposal processes.
- Provide a pathway for your agency to develop a Records Retention Schedule.
- Promote responsible record keeping habits and provide tools to manage physical and electronic records efficiently.

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Brittanny Silva, MLIS, CRM
2019

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Louisiana Division/ City Archives and Special Collections

New Orleans has always done things a little differently, and managing the city's records is no exception! We are the only city in the state of Louisiana that retains our own permanent records. Permanent records for the City of New Orleans are housed in the Louisiana Division/ City Archives and Special Collections, a department of the New Orleans Public Library. All other municipalities in Louisiana send their permanent records to the State Archives in Baton Rouge.

The City Archives finds itself in a unique position operating as a department of the New Orleans Public Library. The public library was declared the repository for the records of the City of New Orleans in 1946, and original materials were transferred to the current Main Library building around 1961. The Louisiana Division/ City Archives and Special Collections is located on the third floor of the Main Library. We utilize additional storage in the second basement (located two floors underneath the Main Library) for the City Archives and Special Collections materials.

Because the City of New Orleans does not have a Records Management program in place, we at the Louisiana Division/ City Archives do what we can to work with city agencies regarding preservation of their records. We are committed to working with city agencies to construct sound Records Management processes to ensure responsible practices. It is our goal to work with and support city agencies in developing a records retention schedule to ensure responsible retention, disposal, and preservation of the records of the City of New Orleans.

Louisiana Division/ City Archives and Special Collections

- visit www.archivies.nolalibrary.org
- phone: (504) 596-2610
- email: archivist@nolalibrary.org

The State Archives

The State Archives functions as the repository for the government records for all Louisiana municipalities excluding New Orleans. The City Archives works cooperatively with the State Archives to manage Orleans Parish records, but **it is the State Archives that has ultimate approval authority on retention schedules and disposal requests**. The State Archives has developed many useful records management procedures that can be accessed on their website. Additionally, many forms required through the records retention process are accessible through their website.

Louisiana State Archives Records Management Department

- visit https://www.sos.la.gov and select "Managing Records"
- phone: (225) 925-7552
- email: recmgt@sos.la.gov

Records Management

What is a Record?

A **record** is "any recorded information, regardless of medium or characteristics, made or received by an organization in pursuance of legal obligations or in the transaction of business" (*ARMA International)*.

Let's break down this definition:
- *Recorded information* means written down or recorded in some way—a conversation you have with a colleague is not considered a record, unless that conversation is being taped!
- *Regardless of medium or characteristics* emphasizes that there is no limitation on the format of a record. A record could be paper, electronic, audio, etc.
- *Made or received by an organization* tells us that records are both created and received. This means incoming and outgoing correspondence are both considered records.
- *In pursuance of legal obligations or in the transaction of business* implies that to be a record, it must have organizational value. Junk mail and spam emails are not records because they have no business value.

Throughout the course of a normal workday, you may take notes in a meeting, send out emails to colleagues, or draft a project proposal for your organization. You might also receive an invoice from a vendor, a memo from your boss, or a copy of the agenda for an upcoming meeting. In each of these instances, you have been working directly with records. An organization's records document the transactions of the organization itself. They serve as evidence of both the organization's day to day activities and of its history. Organizational records come in a multitude of formats including tapes, microform, drawings, paper documents, and electronic records.

Some more examples of records include:
- Ledger
- Calendar
- Meeting Minutes
- Employment Applications
- Audio/ Visual recordings of agency meetings
- Photographs
- Blueprints
- Maps

What is NOT considered a record?
- Library Books
- Museum Collections
- Unsolicited catalogs, publications, or brochures that your organization might receive
- Unsolicited emails, texts, or voicemails that contain **no administrative value**
- Blank Forms*

*You *do* want to retain a few copies of blank forms used in your department as a record of your agency's procedures; however it is not necessary to retain boxes of outdated blank forms that your organization no longer uses. These can be destroyed without a disposal request. If your agency still uses paper forms, consider creating a binder or file of current forms that can be updated, with an archive section for a few copies of the outdated forms. All other duplicates can be discarded.

What is Records Management?

"**Records Management** is a specialized discipline that is concerned with the systematic analysis and control of information created, received, maintained, or used by an organization pursuant to its mission, operations, and activities" (Saffady, 2016).

Records Management is a multi-faceted discipline that includes, but is not limited to:
- Risk Management
- Disaster Planning
- Legal Compliance
- Email Management
- Archives Management
- Document Control

Records Management lays the groundwork for the treatment of records in archival institutions. Records that are properly managed and transferred to the City Archives can be inventoried, processed and made publically available quickly. Records Management requires input from various departments, especially IT and Legal, in order to be successful. Additionally, it requires the support of upper management to implement and enforce policies. A Records Management program that is not followed is worthless.

Organizations are producing records at an unprecedented rate, and many lack the policies and protocols to manage their information efficiently. Does your department have a back room full of boxes of mystery documents? Did you inherit unmarked boxes of files when you moved into your office that you don't know what to do with? Are there staff members unsure of what

documents they can throw away at will, and what they should keep? Are you stumped each time you receive a public records request? A records management program will address these issues, giving organizations control over their own information.
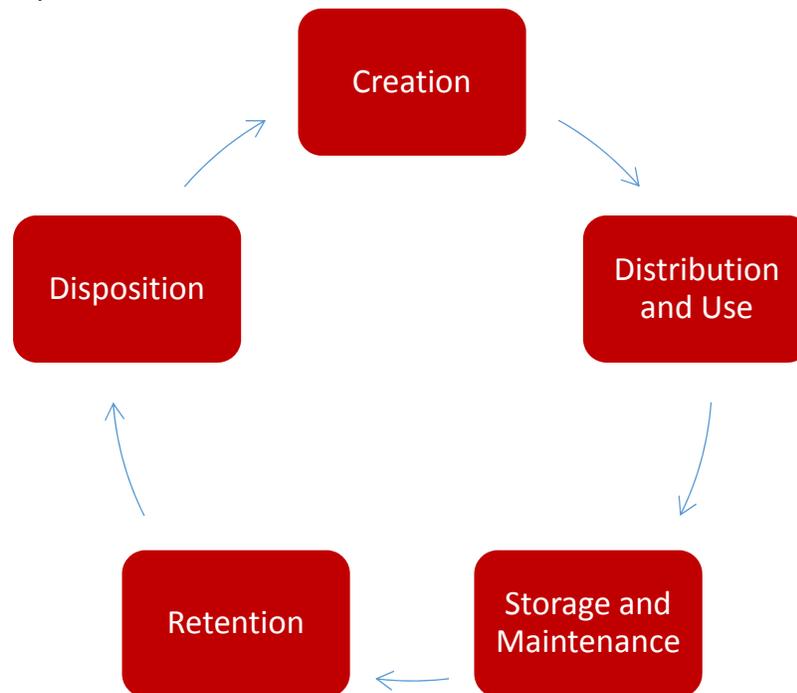
The Lifecycle of a Record

We have identified what is and what is not a record; now let's look at why records need to be "managed." As most records age, their value declines. Understanding the lifecycle of a record can help organizations decide what to do with records once they are no longer needed during the regular course of business.

When a record is being used and referenced throughout the normal course of business, it is considered "active." In this stage, a record is routinely being looked at, shared, referenced, or distributed. Once an organization no longer needs to access that record on a regular basis, it has become "inactive" and its business value has declined. For instance, an invoice for office supplies may be referenced throughout the year when making decisions about budgets, researching a possible vendor, or checking on delivery status. But 15 years down the line, this invoice for office supplies purchased for your department will not have the same value that it did initially. It won't say anything about your organization or its mission; it won't inform about the processes or policies of the department. At this point, the invoice has ceased to have any administrative value, so there is no point for your organization to keep it. Records Management provides organizations with the tools to determine what records need to be retained, and what can be discarded in the form of a Records Retention Schedule. Records are put on a schedule according to record type, and a cycle of retention and disposition is initiated that allows organizations to hold onto what they need and dispose of what they don't.

Figure 1 on the following page illustrates both the active and inactive phases of the record lifecycle. The active phase of the record begins at creation, follows the record through distribution and general use and ends with storage and maintenance (placement in a filing system). The inactive phase of the record begins at the time of retention and ends with the stage of disposition, both of which will be determined by the department's records retention schedule. *Retention* refers to the amount of time an organization is required to hold on to the record, whether legally or administratively. *Disposition* refers to the final state of the record— whether the record will be permanently retained in an archive or destroyed.

Figure 1: The Lifecycle of a Record

A Records Management program will give your organization policies to govern records throughout their entire lifecycle. Without formalized policies, employees are forced to make decisions regarding organizational records on their own, which has the potential to cause problems. Inevitably, records that should have been kept will be thrown away, and vice versa. People have different ideas of what they think is important, of what they think is trash, and of what they think is "organized." Records Management policies will ensure efficient identification, storage, and retrieval of records and will save staff from playing guessing games with organizational records.

Benefits of Records Management

There are many benefits to an organization adopting a Records Management program, including:

- **Increased Efficiency**: Find what you need when you need it. Declutter shared drives and back rooms full of mystery documents. Know what records you have and where they are located.
- **Cost Reduction**: Save money on storage space, whether physical or electronic—the less you have the less you will have to pay to store.

- **Compliance**: Know your legal obligations as a government agency in regards to managing your records; a records retention schedule is legally defensible and will benefit your organization if faced with legal action.
- **Transparency**: Written policies will enable employees to know exactly how to handle their records questions and answer Public Records Requests confidently.
- **Risk Management**: Holding onto records longer than you need to puts your organization at unnecessary risk, especially when records contain personal information—get rid of what you can when you can.
- **Disaster Preparedness**: In the event of a disaster, you will know what records are where, and what records are vital to your organization.

*Applying a "save everything" policy in the place of Records Management is costly, results in an unnecessary volume of records, makes desired information more difficult to locate and retrieve, and opens your organization up to unintended risks, especially if the documents being held contain personal information. **Records can be a valuable asset if managed properly or a liability if managed improperly.**

Legal Responsibility

I am not a lawyer and therefore cannot advise on the law. However, I can point to relevant legal documents that outline records retention requirements, and encourage you to read them closely. Records Management is a collaborative discipline, and it is encouraged that you consult with your legal department regarding your retention requirements.

Sections of **LA RS44, "Public Records Law"** have been included at the end of this booklet for your convenience (Appendix A). It is recommended that you read this law in its entirety to understand your legal obligations. You can view the full text of the law by visiting www.legis.la.goc. In it, you will find the following:
- Government agencies are legally required to have an approved records retention schedule.
- If you don't have an approved records retention schedule, you are required to keep everything for a minimum of three years.
- City Agencies must obtain approval from the State Archives **prior to the destruction of any records.**

LAC Title 4, Part XVII, "Records Management Policies and Practices," published by the State Archives, should also be consulted. This document will be very helpful along your road to Records Management and is available on the library's website www.archivist.nolalibrary.org and through the Secretary of State. Please read these documents carefully and contact the appropriate legal representative for clarification/ consultation. Again, the City Archives and the State Archives are happy to assist you in the drafting of your retention schedule, but we cannot advise or consult on legal language.

The Path to a Records Retention Schedule

What is a Records Retention Schedule?

A retention schedule is one of the basic tools of records management that allows organizations to dispose of unnecessary records throughout the regular course of business. A **Records Retention Schedule** is a list of all records within an organization, outlining how long each type of record needs to be kept, and what happens to that record once retention has been met. Similar records are grouped together into a **record series** and each series is listed on the retention schedule with corresponding timeframes. Retention timeframes are based on a combination of legally mandated retention periods, organizational value, and archival value. Approved Records Retention Schedules are good for five years and can be amended and subsequently renewed as needed.

Before you can draft a retention schedule for your department, there are a few preliminary steps to ensure your schedule covers the entirety of your department's record holdings.

Step 1: Designate a Records Officer

As required by the State Archives, your agency must appoint an individual to serve as the Designated Records Officer. He/ She will be the point person for managing your agency's records, and act as a liaison between your agency, the City Archives, and the State Archives. The Designated Records Officer may choose to form a committee to assist and support agency Records Management, as some processes can be time consuming. Designated Records Officer forms are available on the State Archives' website (www.sos.la.gov) and should be submitted annually.

Step 2: Records Appraisal

A Records Appraisal is an essential step in drafting your retention schedule. This is to assess and identify your current record holdings—you have to know what you have before you can determine what you can get rid of. A **records appraisal** is an inventory or general survey of your agency's records. It does NOT need to occur on the individual record level; while inventorying your records, a record series will emerge that allows you to group together related records. These record series will eventually be used on your retention schedule.

2.1 Preliminary Survey
Visit the areas where you agency stores records to get a general idea of the number of boxes and file cabinets you will be dealing with. Develop a realistic timeline to complete tasks.

2.2 Collect Forms

Decide on an inventory form to use for your project. You may choose to develop an Excel spreadsheet to keep track of your data, or use the Records Inventory form available through the State Archives. If you choose to develop your own inventory, make sure to include the following:

- Originating Agency
- Record Series (should be unique and identifiable)
- Date Range of Records
- Location
- Format of Records
- Does this Record have legal/ administrative/ historical/ archival value?
- Is there a legal hold* on these records?
- Is this record vital, important, or useful?
- Any other significant/ identifying information?
- If you are using an acronym, make sure it is defined!

*A *legal hold* suspends the destruction of specific records listed on a records retention schedule in order to prevent documents relevant to pending litigation from being destroyed. Legal holds are applied to records that are currently or likely subject to litigation. Contact your legal department for information about your agency's legal hold policy and active legal holds.

2.3 Develop a Plan

Before you record data in your records appraisal, develop a plan to gain control of your inventory. A records plan can be very useful when dealing with a room full of mystery boxes. Start by numbering each box before assessing the contents. When you begin your Records Appraisal, include these box numbers so that you can keep track of corresponding data—you never know when someone might decide to rearrange boxes, and you want to keep your data controlled during this process. We are happy to assist you in developing a records plan and give instruction regarding your records appraisal.

2.4 Inventory Records by Series

A **record series** is a group of similar or identical records that can be evaluated together because they are filed, used, and disposed of as a unit. Complete forms for each individual record series, using a separate form for record series in different locations. If you discover records that don't fit an existing record series, create a new one.

Step 3: Talk to your Co-workers

A records appraisal is a vital tool when developing a retention schedule, however you want to make sure that you are reaching all corners of your department concerning the records created, distributed, and stored. Talk to your coworkers about the records that they produce and receive throughout the day. Have coworkers make a list of these records for you to include in your inventory, and be sure to have them include electronic records.

Step 4: Research Retention Requirements

Now it's time to research state and federal retention guidelines. Different kinds of records are required to be held onto for different amounts of time. Talk with your Legal Department, IT Department, and reach out to the City and State Archives for assistance. Make sure to inquire about existing legal holds, and to research grant retention requirements. Often, records related to individual grants will have their own specified retention periods. You should also review the law that establishes your agency, paying keen attention to language regarding public records.

Determining Retention Periods

When determining retention periods, remember that legal requirements determine the minimum retention—records may be kept longer than the legal requirement if the need is justified. While starting out, use three years as a beginning retention period and adjust accordingly. Include legal citations if a statute or rule exists at the federal or state level for individual record series. Be sure to consult with the City Attorney's office about your legal requirements and the City Archives about record series that may be considered archival. See "Guidelines for Selection of Records to Transfer to the City Archives" (Appendix B) for more information. A good rule of thumb: "When in doubt, ask!"

Step 5: Drafting your Retention Schedule

Time to put all of your collected data to work! A Records Retention Schedule Template is available through the State Archives' website. The City Archives is happy to provide further instruction to any city agency drafting their retention schedule. Below is a brief overview of the main sections of the retention schedule:

Record Series

Retention schedules classify an organization's records by series. Record series titles should be unique, easily identifiable, and not too broad. Avoid including dates of the records themselves in a record series title. Because each agency's records are unique, their record series will reflect this. Examples of a record series in a library might include "Library Card Applications" and "Registered Researchers."

Retention Period

Next to the record series will be the retention period for the series, indicating how long the records will be held in the department ("in office") and how long (if at all) they will be sent to a storage facility ("in storage"). Some agencies will choose to utilize offsite storage for records with longer retentions because of space limitations, others will retain their records onsite until the records are ready to be destroyed or transferred to the City Archives.
  - o   Keep in mind that In Office Retention + In Storage = Total Retention

- o Make sure to define "active" in the "Remarks" column of the retention schedule.
- o Retention periods will be reflected using the timeframes outlined in the lower left had corner of the retention schedule (such as CY for calendar year or FY for fiscal year).

Disposition

The next block addresses the disposition stage of the record; each of these spaces will be filled with the appropriate abbreviation outlined at the bottom of the retention schedule.

- o In the **security** column, you will mark whether the record series contains confidential information by using a letter P, M, or C (P=Public Record, M=May Contain Confidential Information, C=Confidential Information).
- o In the **archival** column, you will indicate what will happen to the records once retention periods have been met. New Orleans agencies will **never** use the **A** (transfer to State Archives) code because all records for the city of New Orleans are transferred to the NOPL Louisiana Division for permanent retention. If your agency will retain permanent records in their own agency archives, use the code **R.** If the permanent records will be transferred to the City Archives, use the code **O** and indicate "transfer to New Orleans Public Library when retention is met" in the Remarks column. **As a general rule, if the code is not an R or an O, put an S.** This allows the City Archivist to review the documents prior to destruction and select relevant records for permanent retention. Sometimes records that would not normally be archival will prove to be historically significant in the context of a bigger situation (like records from the immediate aftermath of Katrina).
- o The **State Records Center** column will **always** have an **N** indicated here; the State Records Center is for temporary storage of records that will eventually be destroyed once their retention is met. The city of New Orleans does not have access to this facility.
- o The final column indicates whether the record series is **vital, important, or useful**. In the context of disaster planning, are these documents vital to the functioning of your department within the first 30 days? Examples of vital records include permits, employee payroll records, and tax records. Be aware that just because a record is considered vital, doesn't mean that it will have a permanent retention period. This designation is related to the importance of the record series during recovery in the face of a disaster.

Remarks

The Remarks column allows agencies to define active periods and include any other significant or important information relevant to the record series. Permanent records that will be transferred to the City Archives should include a note in the remarks column.

Agency Abbreviations

Agency abbreviations and acronyms are particularly tricky when dealing with records. What may be considered "common knowledge" in your department is not common knowledge to

those of us archiving your records. In the City Archives, it is our mission to make the records of the City of New Orleans easily accessible to the public as quickly as we can. We develop finding aids to assist in the navigation of records and often reorganize agency records so that they can be more readily accessible. If you must use acronyms, please make sure to define them. Common knowledge is subjective in terms of agency abbreviations and a retention schedule gives you the opportunity to clear up these ambiguities.

Signatures

The signature of the agency head (not the designated records officer) is required on the retention schedule that will be submitted to the State Archives for approval. Once approved, the State Archivist will sign off on it and return it to you for your records.

Transferring Records to the City Archives

Permanent records listed on your record retention schedule will be transferred to the City Archives for preservation. Please contact the City Archives to inquire about and schedule the transfer records. Review the Information for City Agencies on Transferring Records to the City Archives listed on our website (archvies.nolalibrary.org) and complete a Transmittal of Records to the City Archives form.

If you are unsure of what kind of records the City Archives considers of permanent value, review the "Guidelines for Selection of Records to Transfer to the City Archives" (Appendix B) which is also available on the Louisiana Division/ City Archives website. This list will be helpful in determining records for permanent retention when drafting your department's records retention schedule. If you are unsure about something, feel free to contact us with questions. Remember, the City Archives is only interested in "inactive" records. We are unable to accept any records that are still considered active.

Procedure for Transferring Records to the City Archives
1. Identify records that have met their in-house retention requirements and have been deemed archival, including records "up for Archival Review" noted on the retention schedule (archival code S).
2. Contact the City Archives to discuss transfer of permanent records and appraisal of records eligible for archival review. We may be able to determine our interest in records via email, but we are also happy to come out to inspect records up for archival review.
3. Once approved by the City Archivist, contact the City Archives to schedule a delivery time.
4. Fill out a Transmittal of Records to the City Archives form and send a copy via email to the City Archives for approval. Please include any inventories/ relevant record information you may have regarding the records in question.

Once records are received by the City Archives, they are inventoried, processed, boxed, and stored in a safe, climate controlled environment. Finding Aids are created and uploaded to our website for public view. Records can then be viewed by the public upon request.

Destruction of Records

Destruction is an important aspect of Records Management. Once records have met their retention requirements and no longer possess administrative, legal, or historical value, they should be destroyed. Destruction of eligible records should occur on a regular basis (such as once or twice a year) so that your agency is not holding onto records that they do not need. This will free up space, save money, and make records easier to find. Disposal methods include shredding, incinerating, and secure recycling.

Prior to the destruction of non-archival records, a disposal request must be submitted to and approved by the State Archives and the City Archives. Disposal forms can be found on the State Archives' website. Submit disposal requests to the City Archives for approval, and we will forward them to the State Archives to sign off on. Once approval is granted from both the City and the State Archives, your agency will be notified that the records can be destroyed. Most agencies will utilize the use of an outside vendor to ensure secure destruction of their records. Always obtain a **certificate of destruction** from the vendor to keep on file as proof that the records were destroyed.

Steps for Disposing of Records:
1. Contact the City Archivist to ask questions **before** disposing of any records.
2. City Archives will review your request.
3. Fill out a Disposal Request form.
4. Get approval from agency head.
5. Submit to City Archivist to sign.
6. We will forward to the State Archives to sign.
7. You will receive a signed copy from the State Archives to retain for your records.
8. Provide a copy of approved disposal request to the City Archives for our records.

Record Keeping

Labeling Your Records

There are a few simple steps that can be taken when boxing up your records that will make the process of transferring records for preservation and destruction much easier:

- Use your retention schedule as a guide for labeling record boxes by record series to enable easy identification.
- Box labels should include the agency name, record series, date range, disposition date, disposition action, and any other significant identifying information.
- All files stored together in a records box should have the same retention period. Don't store permanent records in the same box as records with a four year retention period, otherwise you will have to sort through record boxes multiple times.
- Once retention periods are met, boxes can be quickly sorted accordingly—records eligible for destruction will be grouped together (at which time a disposal request will be submitted) and records meant for permanent retention in the City Archives will be group together.

Using a consistent system of labeling and boxing records will make the job of disposing and transferring records much easier which reduces clutter, unnecessary storage, and the headache of reviewing records over and over again. Create a template for your record boxes that can be filled out as needed, or contact the City Archives and we will create a template for you. By labeling your records in this way, it will make following your retention schedule easier, and it makes our job at the City Archives easier as well. If we receive records that are clearly labeled, it makes the process of inventorying them and making them available for public view go much faster. Below is an example of sample box labels based on retention schedules. This template is available to download from our website:

Agency Name New Orleans Public Library		**Box** __2__ of __4__
Record Series Patron Registration Files		Date Range January – December 2010
Retention in Office ACT + 1 CY	Total Retention ACT + 1 CY	Disposition Destroy, January 2013

Electronic Records

Electronic records should be treated the same way that paper records are treated in the drafting of your retention schedule. Decisions regarding retention and disposition should be based on *content* not format of the records. Because many departments have such a large volume of electronic records, some agencies have chosen to begin the retention schedule process to address their paper records first, and then include electronic records in an addendum. A complete records retention schedule should address both your paper and electronic records.

Organizing your Electronic Records

Organizations produce electronic records at very high volumes, often making individual electronic records difficult to locate and retrieve. Below are some suggestions to keep in mind when organizing your electronic records:

- Envision your electronic filing structures like a file cabinet on your computer; take advantage of subfolders and develop a consistent way to organize and categorize your records.
- Develop naming conventions to implement agency wide to make identifying and retrieving electronic records easier. Standardization and consistency are key when developing file naming policies.
- Utilize a basic file naming structure (such as YYYY Title Draft). The University of Edinburg and Stanford University Libraries both offer additional guidance on developing file naming standards.
    - https://www.ed.ac.uk/records-management/guidance/records/practical-guidance/naming-conventions
    - https://library.stanford.edu/research/data-management-services/data-best-practices/best-practices-file-naming
- Keep in mind that there is turnover in your office, but some records will still need to be accessed by your successor and by the public. Establish practices that make records easily identifiable.
- Do NOT use personalized or vague file names, such as "Joe's Files" or "Miscellaneous." This makes accessing files difficult for yourself and other employees.
- Develop policies for staff using a shared drive that govern naming protocols as well as content.
- Limit the use of email attachments and instead use links to access documents when possible.

Electronic Records Management Best Practices

Adopted from Robert Smallwood's *Managing Electronic Records*

1. Keep file names short
2. State dates as year-month-day
3. Avoid using symbols
4. Use spaces to separate words rather than an underscore
5. Show the file status writing "draft" or "v" followed by the version number
6. Use file names that make sorting easy (keep in mind that files can be sorted alphabetically, chronologically, or numerically).
7. Divide top folders by function
8. Do not keep files at the top two folder levels
9. Do not have more than nine primary folders or five sublevels in each primary folder
10. Do not repeat folder names

The figures below illustrate good file organization (A) and bad file organization (B). Notice that in Figure A there is a clear file hierarchy, folder names are informative and concise, and there are no documents saved at the first two levels. All information resides in the appropriate folder making electronic documents easy to sort and retrieve. Problems with Figure B include duplicate information, a lack of naming conventions, documents saved at the folder level, and folder/ file names that are not informative.

B

A
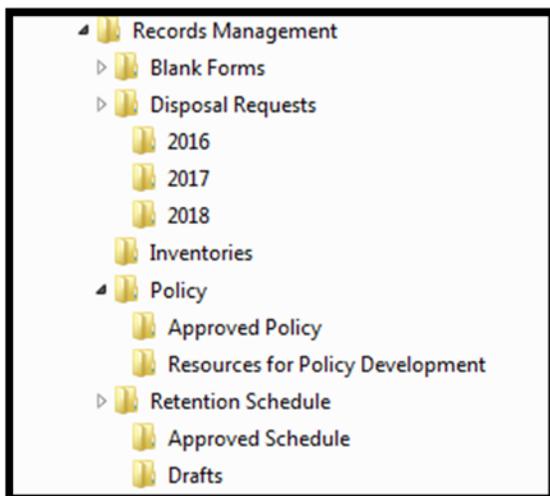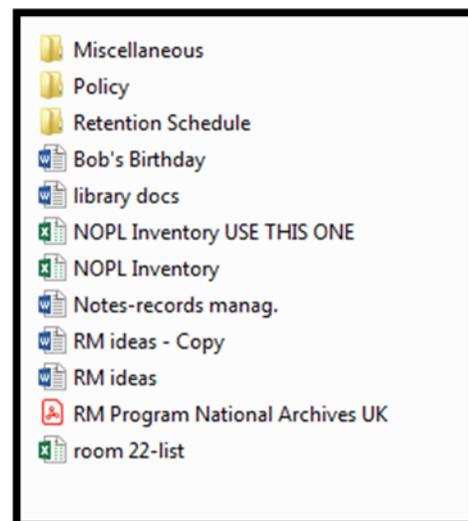
A Word about Email

Email has changed the way organizations conduct business and has contributed greatly to the growing number of electronic records that organizations possess. According to Blake Richardson (2012), CRM, "Email now serves as the main contributor to the explosive growth of electronic information." Managing email can be daunting for individuals and organizations simply due to the sheer volume. Talk to your IT department about your department's current email archiving system and processes when drafting your retention schedule.

Be advised that email is NOT an acceptable record series; email retention should be based on **content** not format. Not all email has the same value so not all email should be treated the same. For instance, an email inviting a coworker to lunch has less administrative value than an email from the director of your agency commenting on a policy draft. The lunch email does not require the same retention period as the policy email.

The State Archives has developed an Email Retention Policy that can be used as a guide when establishing retention guidelines for your organization. Additionally, questions about email retention can be directed to the Records Management Department of the State Archives. Another resource to consult regarding email retention practices are the federal guidelines for email management available through the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) website: www.archives.gov.

Additional Resources

The Records Management Department of the State Archives offers a wealth of resources on their website that aid in the development of a records retention schedule. Also available are the numerous forms and templates that you will need to access throughout the process of developing your retention schedule and submitting disposal requests. Additionally, the staff at the State Archives are happy to answer questions that you might have throughout the process.

The State Archives also offers Records Management training courses that are highly beneficial in clarifying and developing records management processes. A list of course offerings is available on their website which include:
- Records Management 1: Overview of Records Management Laws and Programs
- Records Management 2: Records Retention Schedule Development and Revisions
- Imaging Exception Application Process
- Records Storage 1: Storing Records in the State Records Center and Donating Records to the State Archives*

*City of New Orleans agencies do NOT have use of the State Archives Records Center for temporary storage.

The New Orleans Public Library has acquired several books on Records Management that are available to check out with a valid library card. We recommend the following titles:
- Managing Local Government Archives
- Records and Information Management: Fundamentals of Professional Practice
- Records and Information Management
- Records Management for Dummies
- How to Develop a Retention Schedule

We Are Here to Help!

There is a lot of information provided here, and the process for completing a records inventory and developing a retention schedule can seem daunting. But don't panic; addressing records management issues now will make maintenance of future records much easier. It frees up valuable storage/ office space and makes locating records much easier! It allows agencies to dispose of records responsibly, and it protects agencies from being in violation of their legal obligations. Feel free to contact us at the Louisiana Division with questions any time. We are down the street and can arrange meetings to discuss your particular agency's records situation.

Appendix A: Louisiana RS:44 "Public Records Law"

Below is an excerpt from the Public Records Law defining a record, public record, and records retention and disposition responsibilities for city agencies. It is recommended that you review the law in its entirety by visiting www.legis.la.gov.

TITLE 44
PUBLIC RECORDS AND RECORDERS
CHAPTER 1. PUBLIC RECORDS
PART I. SCOPE

§1. General definitions

A.(1) As used in this Chapter, the phrase "public body" means any branch, department, office, agency, board, commission, district, governing authority, political subdivision, or any committee, subcommittee, advisory board, or task force thereof, any other instrumentality of state, parish, or municipal government, including a public or quasi-public nonprofit corporation designated as an entity to perform a governmental or proprietary function, or an affiliate of a housing authority.

(2)(a) All books, records, writings, accounts, letters and letter books, maps, drawings, photographs, cards, tapes, recordings, memoranda, and papers, and all copies, duplicates, photographs, including microfilm, or other reproductions thereof, or any other documentary materials, regardless of physical form or characteristics, including information contained in electronic data processing equipment, having been used, being in use, or prepared, possessed, or retained for use in the conduct, transaction, or performance of any business, transaction, work, duty, or function which was conducted, transacted, or performed by or under the authority of the constitution or laws of this state, or by or under the authority of any ordinance, regulation, mandate, or order of any public body or concerning the receipt or payment of any money received or paid by or under the authority of the constitution or the laws of this state, are "public records", except as otherwise provided in this Chapter or the Constitution of Louisiana.

(b) Notwithstanding Subparagraph (a), any documentary material of a security feature of a public body's electronic data processing system, information technology system, telecommunications network, or electronic security system, including hardware or software security, password, or security procedure, process, configuration, software, and code is not a "public record".

(3) As used in this Chapter, the word "custodian" means the public official or head of any public body having custody or control of a public record, or a representative specifically authorized by him to respond to requests to inspect any such public records.

B. Electrical well surveys produced from wells drilled in search of oil and gas located in established units and which are filed with the assistant secretary of the office of conservation shall be placed in the open files of the office of conservation. Any party or firm shall have the right to examine or reproduce, or both, at their own expense, copies of said survey, by photography or other means not injurious to said records. All other electric logs and other

electronic surveys, other than seismic data, produced from wells drilled in search of oil and gas which are filed with the assistant secretary of the office of conservation shall remain confidential upon the request of the owner so filing for periods as follows:

For wells shallower than fifteen thousand feet a period of one year, plus one additional year when evidence is submitted to the assistant secretary of the office of conservation that the owner of the log has a leasehold interest in the general area in which the well was drilled and the log produced; for wells fifteen thousand feet deep or deeper, a period of two years, plus two additional years when evidence is submitted to the assistant secretary of the office of conservation that the owner of the log has such an interest in the general area in which the well was drilled and the log produced; and for wells drilled in the offshore area, subsequent to July 1, 1977, regardless of depth, a period of two years from the filing of the log with the office of conservation, plus two additional years where evidence is submitted to the assistant secretary of the office of conservation that the owner of the log has such an interest in the general area in which the well was drilled and the log produced and has immediate plans to develop the said general area, unless a shorter period of confidentiality is specifically provided in the existing lease.

At the expiration of time in which any log or electronic surveys, other than seismic data, shall be held as confidential by the assistant secretary of the office of conservation as provided for above, said log or logs shall be placed in the open files of the office of conservation and any party or firm shall have the right to examine or reproduce, or both, at their own expense, copies of said log or electronic survey, other than seismic data, by photography or other means not injurious to said records.

Amended by Acts 1973, No. 135, §1; Acts 1973, Ex.Sess., No. 4, §1; Acts 1978, No. 686, §1; Acts 1979, No. 691, §1; Acts 1980, No. 248, §1; Acts 2001, No. 707, §1, eff. June 25, 2001; Acts 2001, No. 882, §1; Acts 2011, No. 79, §2.

NOTE: See Acts 2011, No. 79, §3, re applicability of provisions concerning affiliates of housing authorities.

§33. Availability of records

A.(1) When a request is made for a public record to which the public is entitled, the official, clerks of court and the custodian of notarial records in and for the parish of Orleans excepted, who has responsibility for the record shall have the record segregated from other records under his custody so that the public can reasonably view the record.

(2) If, however, segregating the record would be unreasonably burdensome or expensive, or if the record requested is maintained in a fashion that makes it readily identifiable and renders further segregation unnecessary, the official shall so state in writing and shall state the location of the requested record.

B.(1) If the public record applied for is immediately available, because of its not being in active use at the time of the application, the public record shall be immediately presented to the authorized person applying for it. If the public record applied for is not immediately available, because of its being in active use at the time of the application, the custodian shall promptly certify this in writing to the applicant, and in his certificate shall fix a day and hour

within three days, exclusive of Saturdays, Sundays, and legal public holidays, for the exercise of the right granted by this Chapter.

(2) The fact that the public records are being audited shall in no case be construed as a reason or justification for a refusal to allow inspection of the records except when the public records are in active use by the auditor.

Amended by Acts 1978, No. 686, §1; Acts 1982, No. 567, §1.

§36. Preservation of records

A. All persons and public bodies having custody or control of any public record, other than conveyance, probate, mortgage, or other permanent records required by existing law to be kept for all time, shall exercise diligence and care in preserving the public record for the period or periods of time specified for such public records in formal records retention schedules developed and approved by the state archivist and director of the division of archives, records management, and history of the Department of State. However, in all instances in which a formal retention schedule has not been executed, such public records shall be preserved and maintained for a period of at least three years from the date on which the public record was made. However, where copies of an original record exist, the original alone shall be kept; when only duplicate copies of a record exist, only one copy of the duplicate copies shall be required to be kept. Where an appropriate form of the microphotographic process has been utilized to record, file, and otherwise preserve such public records with microforms produced in compliance with the provisions of R.S. 44:415, the microforms shall be deemed originals in themselves, as provided by R.S. 44:39(B), and disposition of original documents which have been microphotographically preserved and of duplicates and other copies thereof shall proceed as provided in R.S. 44:411.

B. All existing records or records hereafter accumulated by the Department of Revenue may be destroyed after five years from the thirty-first day of December of the year in which the tax to which the records pertain became due; provided that these records shall not be destroyed in any case where there is a contest relative to the payment of taxes or where a claim has been made for a refund or where litigation with reference thereto is pending.

C. All existing records or records hereafter accumulated by the various services of the state or its subdivisions which participate in federal programs or receive federal grants may be destroyed after three years from the date on which the records were made in those cases where this provision is not superseded by guidelines for the operative federal program or grant requiring longer retention periods for the records in question; provided that these records shall not be destroyed in any case where litigation with reference thereto is pending, or until the appropriate state or federal audits have been conducted.

D. All existing records or records hereafter accumulated by the Department of Public Safety and Corrections, corrections services, pertaining to any adult offender shall be retained and may not be destroyed until after six years from the date the full term sentence imposed upon such offender expires, or six years from the date of death of the offender, whichever occurs first.

E.(1) The public records of a prosecuting agency, pertaining to a criminal prosecution that results in a conviction, in a manner other than a plea, shall be retained for a period of three years from the date on which a court of appeal affirms the conviction, the Louisiana

Supreme Court denies writs, or the Louisiana Supreme Court makes its final ruling on the appeal, whichever occurs last.

(2) The provisions of this Subsection shall not apply to any records expunged as provided by law.

(3) Nothing in this Subsection shall be construed in any manner to affect or alter the provisions of R.S. 44:3 regarding the records of prosecuting agencies.

F. All existing records or records hereafter accumulated pursuant to R.S. 42:23 shall be preserved and maintained for a period of at least two years from the date on which the public record was made.

Amended by Acts 1950, No. 134, §1; Acts 1954, No. 473, §1; Acts 1978, No. 43, §1; Acts 1983, 1st Ex. Sess., No. 11, §1, eff. Jan. 19, 1983; Acts 1986, No. 1075, §1; Acts 1991, No. 310, §1; Acts 1997, No. 1269, §1, eff. July 15, 1997; Acts 2003, No. 322, §1; Acts 2010, No. 785, §1; Acts 2013, No. 363, §2, eff. June 17, 2013.

Appendix B: Guidelines for Selection of Records to Transfer to the City Archives

The purpose of the City Archives is to permanently retain any city records that have or will have historic value to city government itself or to researchers, scholars, political scientists, urban specialists, and members of the public. In an effort to identify some of the common types of records generated by city agencies that would be considered of permanent historic value, we have created the following list of record series. This list is by no means exhaustive. Please contact the City Archivist with any questions regarding specific records or groups of records. All city agencies should contact the City Archivist prior to transferring any records.

For additional information, please contact the City Archivist via email at archivist@nolalibrary.org or by phone at (504) 596-2610.

Records of Permanent Historic Value:

Correspondence (including e-mail)
- Policy and program development -- letters and memorandums pertaining to the formulation, planning, enactment, implementation, modification, or redefinition of the policies, programs, services, or projects of the New Orleans city government.

- Administrative -- letters and memorandums pertaining to and arising from the normal and routine administrative functioning of the policies, programs, services, or projects of the New Orleans city government.

General Subject Files
- Organization and planning files -- administrative directives, policy studies, reports of task forces and management review committees, and similar records documenting the formulation, planning, enactment, implementation, modification, or redefinition of the policies, programs, services, or projects of the New Orleans city government.

- Procedural files -- administrative announcements, statements, reports, and other records.

NOTE: In general, only the correspondence and subject files of the **director of each city department** are to be considered of permanent value and suitable for transfer to the Archives. Any desired exceptions to this rule should be discussed with the Archivist.

Audits
Annual, biennial or cumulative audits (internally or externally produced), including periodic audits of a program, fund, department or account, if not included in the cumulative audit.

Bond Records
Bond administrative records consisting of preliminary studies, proposals and prospectuses, authorizations and certifications for issuance or cancellation, and related policy correspondence.

Budgets
Annual budgets and special budgets, including budgets for capital improvement projects, grant-funded projects, or other projects prepared on a special or emergency basis and not included in an annual budget. *(Note: We do not want working papers created for the preparation of budgets, including budget requests, budget change documentation, etc.)*

Code Books
Any published codes (city code, building codes, fire code, etc.)

Construction Project Files
Records concerning the planning, design, construction, conversion, or modernization of local government-owned facilities, streets**,** structures, and systems, including feasibility, screening, and implementation studies; topographical and soil surveys and reports; architectural and engineering drawings, elevations, profiles, blueprints, and as-builts; inspection and investigative reports; laboratory test reports; environmental impact statements; construction contracts and bonds; correspondence; and similar documentation.

Easement and right-of-way files
Documentation relating to the granting of access and right-of-way by property owners for public works or for other municipal purposes, and releases from the city to citizens for previously granted easements and rights-of-way.

Financial Reports
Annual financial reports, long range fiscal planning reports, capital improvement reports.

General ledgers
Ledgers or similar records in which receipts, disbursements, and other municipal financial transactions are posted in summary form.

Grant proposals
Final proposals to the State and Federal governments for grant funds and any supporting documentation that serves to modify the proposal during the life of the grant.

Judgments rendered in litigation case files
Final judgments in court proceedings or quasi-judicial proceedings involving any city agency.
 License logs and permits
Logbooks, registers, or other summary records providing a listing of any category of permit or license issued by any city department.

Maps
City maps, current and outdated, showing roads, streets, zoning, parks, flood plains, subdivisions, and other geographical aspects of city government, produced by or for any city department.

Minutes and Permanent Agendas
Accounts of the proceedings and actions of any city board, commission, advisory committee, task force, or similar body which meets on a regular or ad hoc basis.

Minutes -- supporting documentation
Reports, studies, requests for action, and other documents presented to any city board, commission, advisory committee, task force, or similar body which meets on a regular or ad hoc basis.

Photographs
Photographs (prints, negatives, digital images, photograph scrapbooks, and slides that document the history and development of any city department or program.

Published Reports
Any published reports, studies, proposals printed by or for a department for distribution to the public; special reports or studies prepared by order or request of the City. (*Note:* See Section *94.40* of the City Code, which states: "At least two copies of all printed publications issued by or prepared for any department shall be filed with the city archives at the time of publication or distribution.")

Records transfer lists
Any inventories of records being transferred to the City Archives or lists of records transferred from any city agency to an outside storage facility.

Resolutions and motions
Originals of resolutions, motions, proclamations, or other directives passed by any city board, commission, advisory committee, task force, or similar body which meets on a regular or ad hoc basis.

Sound or video recordings
Sound and/or video recordings (cd/dvd) of meetings of any city board, commission, advisory committee, task force, or similar body which meets on a regular or ad hoc basis; or speeches, press conferences, or other public appearances by municipal officials.

Miscellaneous

Press releases	Brochures
Public opinion polls	Handbooks
Speeches	Pamphlets published by city agency
Newsletters	

References

ARMA International, www.arma.org

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Smallwood, R. (2013). *Managing Electronic Records: Methods, Best Practices, and Technologies*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.