

A CALL TO

*It is the **value** of your records and data that should dictate the type of storage and protection you need for them.* Off-Site storage is generally an efficient and economical way to manage inactive records of all types and media. This ARMS Bulletin outlines some of the basic considerations in selecting a storage vendor.

CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
<i>The Role of Off Site Records Storage.....</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Prerequisites.....</i>	<i>2</i>
Off Site Storage.....	2
<i>General Questions to Ask Before You Send Your Records and Data Away.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Options for Off Site Storage.....</i>	<i>3</i>
Evaluating Vendors: Selection Criteria.....	3
<i>General Questions/Issues.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Additional Questions/Preferable Criteria.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Specialized Media Considerations.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Sample Cost Evaluation.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>A Checklist.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Contract/Agreement Checklist.....</i>	<i>6</i>
Conclusion.....	6
Resources Cited.....	6

OFF-SITE RECORDS STORAGE: CONSIDERATIONS AND SELECTION CRITERIA



INTRODUCTION

Records management is risk management. This is certainly true of off site records and data storage. Storing your records in an off site storage facility can expose your records to various hazards if care has not been given to matching records requirements with the capabilities of the storage facility or vendor.

Your office's or department's records represent a significant investment in time and resources. They support, document, or otherwise provide evidence of your office's activities and official transactions. They are key to protecting the University's liability in a variety of functional areas and to providing an audit trail. In acquiring and

using the services of an off site storage facility, care needs to be taken that adequate levels of protection are available to meet your records keeping needs. This ARMS Bulletin discusses the role of off site storage, presents a brief description of storage options, and provides some selection criteria.

Often there is an 'out of sight, out of mind' scenario that plays out with regard to the storage of records and data. Having moved the boxes out of the office and out of direct daily view and/or having removed data from your hard drive or central server gives the positive impression that the problem has been solved and no further action is needed. This Bulletin acknowledges the fact that just because the records and/or data may have changed physical locations, they still need managing! The records still belong to you as the originator or creator and as such your office or department bears responsibility for them.



The Role of Off-Site Records Storage

Off site storage is generally an efficient and economical way to manage inactive records of all types and media. Storing records offsite is done to meet a variety of needs:

- more space in the active office area
- implement records retention schedules
- meet vital records and disaster recovery needs
- meet security needs.

Before contacting a vendor, your department should determine what the objectives of using off site storage are and the role that vendor will play in the management of your department's records and data. What types of protection does your department NEED? What types of protection

would be nice to have? How available do your department's records NEED to be? What is acceptable?



Prerequisites

The information provided in this Bulletin presumes that a department or office has appropriately scheduled their records for disposition. The scheduling of State agency records is a statutory requirement. A records schedule, or RDA (Records Retention Disposition Authorization), identifies and describes records maintained by an office and establishes an approved retention and disposition for those records. The Archives and Records Management Service (ARMS) is responsible for assisting campus offices in the development and approval of records schedules. For information about the records scheduling process, see <http://archives.library.wisc.edu> and click on "records management." ARMS also offers classes on records retention scheduling. Information about these classes is available from the website.



OFF-SITE STORAGE

Off site records storage should meet the following purposes:

- Economic storage. Storing records in less costly space allows prime office space to be used for immediate and productive purposes.
- Accessibility / accountability. Records should be kept well organized and identified to facilitate access and retrieval.
- Security. Records storage facilities must have monitored access as well as adequate police and fire protection to meet the risk levels of the records being stored. Confidentiality is a major concern with a number of types of records created and maintained by the University, and off site records facilities must be able to meet needs in this area.



General Questions to Ask Before you Send Your Records and Data Away

- What types of records and data are you storing off site and what value do they have to your department or office?

*It is the **value** of your records and data that should dictate the type of storage and protection you need for them.* It is useful to analyze the records in terms of risk. The following three levels may be useful in conducting such an analysis:

Level 1 – Records that are informational in nature and provide additional information on particular topics or issues but which are not needed for the daily conduct of business.

Level 2 – Records that are not needed on a daily basis but which provide valuable supplemental or support material. Included in this level might be original input documents or questionnaires to a database, preliminary calculations supporting a summary report, and source documentation to an audit trail.

Level 3 – Records critical for day-to-day operations. These records support your immediate business needs. They support your core processes and would be needed in order for you to resume operation in the event of disaster. Level 3 records may also include records that would meet the definition of vital records. Vital records are those records containing information required to re-establish or continue an organization in the event of a disaster; records containing unique and irreplaceable information necessary to recreate an organization's legal and financial position and preserve the right of the organization and its employees, customers, shareholders and other constituent groups.

The highest level of protection and security afforded by a storage vendor is needed for level 3 and somewhat lower levels of protection for levels 1 and 2. There could be extenuating circumstances, however, that would make records and data in levels 1 and 2 as critical as those in level 3. It is important that a department identifies and appraises its records in advance of contracting for off site storage. If a records schedule has been completed, this appraisal and analysis should have already been done as part of it.

- What do you expect of an off site storage provider?

- ✓ Is your department seeking dead storage only, (meaning no activity is anticipated on the records)?
- ✓ Does your department need 24 X 7 access to the records?
- ✓ Does your department expect the vendor to carry out the disposal of the records as well?
- ✓ Does your office require routine reports as to the nature and quantity of records stored off site?
- ✓ Do the business needs of your department require witnessed destruction or disposal when the approved retention time has been completed?



Options for Off Site Storage

Neither University rules nor State Statutes require the use of the State Records Center for inactive records storage. What is important is that the vendor that you choose provides the highest level of protection as determined by the value of your records. Record value is a determination made during the records scheduling process; see <http://archives.library.wisc.edu> for more information on records scheduling.

State Records Center. The State Records Center (SRC) is available to all campus departments. The SRC is operated by the Department of Administration. It is located at 4622 University Avenue (the former Department of Revenue building). The SRC provides pickup and delivery service. Campus units must have an approved RDA (Records Retention Disposition Authorization) in order to access the SRC. There are costs associated with using the SRC. See <http://www.doa.state.wi.us/> for information about current services and charges.

Generally, the charges for using the State Records Center currently are paid for by a line item in the University Archives and Records Management Service budget. There are some departments that are billed directly for SRC services because they are program revenue or have acquired resources specifically for off site storage.

Commercial Vendors. Several commercial vendors in the Madison area also offer inactive records storage. Some of them are operated as records centers; others offer records storage in conjunction with standard warehouse storage.

These vendors also offer a variety of fee-based services. It is incumbent upon the records creator to understand the value of their records and information, determine the types of protection needed, and determine the level of service required to meet their operational needs.



EVALUATING VENDORS: SELECTION CRITERIA

The purpose of this section is to acquire information about your department's specific needs for off site storage as well evaluate potential vendors based on your department's needs. These questions and criteria are not exhaustive, but they are based on current thinking in the industry and the latest records management standards. Answering these questions and applying the evaluation criteria should provide a framework for making informed decisions about off site storage.



General Questions / Issues

1. What does your department hope to gain by this course of action? Considerations include: space, direct costs, reallocation of space, access time and delivery.
2. Why is your department considering off site storage?
3. What are the minimum requirements that your department needs? Special delivery time frames? Do you need emergency retrieval service? Are you anticipating the vendor to retrieve a file folder or an entire box?
4. Does your operation require that all records be stored at the same site? Some storage vendors may have multiple locations, and your department's records may be stored in multiple locations.
5. Does your office expect the vendor to carry out the physical destruction of records? If so, do you have specific disposal requirements that must be met and/or verified?
6. Do your records have long term or historical value? If so, the vendor will need to be aware of preservation requirements and/or the requirement to transfer the records at the appropriate time to the UW Madison Archives.



Additional Questions / Preferable Criteria

- Years of operation. The vendor has been in the commercial records center business for a period of 5 years or more.
- Trained personnel. The vendor employs staffs that are trained in the field of records management and is familiar with current standards and guidelines in the field.
- Equipment and boxes. The vendor uses standard size cubic foot boxes and provides all necessary equipment to facilitate transfers and deliveries; i.e. carts, dollies, pallet movers, etc.

Preferably the boxes should be 200 lb. test corrugated cardboard and have the standard dimensions of approx. 12" X 10" X 15".

- Computerized tracking system. The vendor employs a computerized tracking system that is capable of tracking individual boxes, status (checked in/checked out), identification of office of origin, notes office or individual authorizing release or access. The system should also be able to produce timely and periodic reports, so that the University office can monitor transfers, charge outs/retrievals, and disposition.
- Liaison with the University Archives and Records Management Service (ARMS). Reports should be furnished to the UW ARMS if requested. If the records being stored by the vendor have archival value, the office of origin shall supply copies of inventory reports to ARMS and make sure that the ultimate transfer of the records to the University Archives is accomplished.
- Service. The vendor should offer a regular pickup and delivery schedule. If needed, the vendor should also offer emergency retrieval service. Other services that might be provided by a vendor include: folder level retrieval, interfiling, file destruction, refiling, fax, and others.
- Charges. The vendor should supply a written list of services and charges for those services. The vendor must / should provide a list of any

fees such as permanent withdrawal or permanent charge out fees, transportation fees, data processing fees including data entry, extended search fees, charges for boxes (if vendor supplies the boxes), and destruction fees. It is strongly recommended that services and fees be detailed in an agreement with the vendor. [Some vendors assess a permanent charge out fee when a box is going to be permanently removed from the facility or at the end of the contract.]

- Facilities. Vendor storage facilities should:
 - meet recognized standards for records storage facility design and construction. It is recommended that facilities meet ARMA Records Center Operations Standard, 2nd edition, 2002, and NFPA Standard 232 as revised in 2001.
 - place all boxes on shelving. No boxes should be stored directly on the floor or on pallets on the floor.
 - segregate records storage from other warehouse operations if the vendor engages in both types of activities.
 - provide an on-site client access room for on site research and use of records.
 - provide adequate pest control.
 - meet standards for smoke detection, sprinkler system etc. and be able to provide a copy of its most recent fire inspection report.
 - meet NFPA 232 for specialized vault storage.
 - demonstrate that the facility is routinely cleaned.
 - provide a disaster preparedness plan and its frequency of update.
- Personnel. Are personnel bonded? Trained? Specifically, have personnel been trained in an emergency or disaster plan?



Specialized Media Considerations

If your department anticipates storing specialized media off site, such as microfilm or digital storage media, consideration needs to be given to vault storage and monitoring of the media to ensure its readability.

1. Microfilm or digital media require specialized vault storage because of their limited tolerance to temperature and humidity controls.
2. Gas Fire-suppression systems may need to consider something other than water sprinklers.
3. Special consideration should be given to vault air-conditioning, doors, walls, and shelving, so that all components work together to limit or stop heat and smoke threats to the vault contents.
4. Quality control checks need to be done to ensure the viability of the media. Rotation for long-term protection of information is required for many types of electronic media.
5. Electronic records vaulting may be necessary. File servers and direct access storage devices must be protected within vault chamber or outside the local area network (LAN). Special coordination must be undertaken to make sure that access to the master archive is strictly controlled.



Sample Cost Evaluation

Storage:

No. of boxes X Monthly/annual cost per box:

_____ X _____ = _____

Any other storage costs not included in the per box charge:

_____ X _____ = _____

Service:

Transfers - Per box fee

_____ X _____ = _____

Trip or transportation fee

_____ X _____ = _____

Retrievals; pick-up and delivery - Per box fee

_____ X _____ = _____

During non-work hours (emergency) retrievals - Per box fee

_____ X _____ = _____

Re-files - Per box fee or per file fee

_____ X _____ = _____

Withdrawal or charge out - Per box fee

_____ X _____ = _____

Indexing charges: _____

Destruction services - Per box fee

_____ X _____ = _____

Reproduction or fax - Per item fee

_____ X _____ = _____

Total estimated cost: _____



A Checklist

- ✓ Who is responsible for the records in your office? Who will be responsible for monitoring the records once they have moved off site?
- ✓ Have you identified, appraised, and scheduled the records?
- ✓ What is your objective in securing off site records storage?
- ✓ Have you evaluated potential vendors in terms of facilities, costs, and types of service?
- ✓ What type of agreement should you have with the vendor? Has the agreement been reviewed? When was it reviewed / how recently / by whom? Have you included some type of performance measure in the agreement? Does the agreement specify the types of reports expected from the vendor and the frequency of them?
- ✓ If records destruction is provided, what types of notification and verification does the vendor provide? If the vendor sub-contracts for disposal, has the sub-contractor been identified to you and does that vendor provide the type of destruction service that is necessary or required for the type of storage media being used?

- ✓ If you are storing confidential records or data, what are the access/security policies and procedures provided by the vendor?
- ✓ For electronic media storage, does the vendor provide services for checking, rotating, reading, etc. the electronic media? If so, on what cycle and at what cost?
- ✓ Does the facility have staff trained in records management?
- ✓ Where is the facility located? How far away is the nearest fire department? What types of businesses are located next to or adjacent to the records storage facility?
- ✓ Who is the insurance provider and what is the limit of liability assigned to its holdings?



Contract or Agreement Checklist

- ✓ What is detailed on their invoices?
- ✓ Are independent invoices available (based on codes) if required?
- ✓ Does the agreement include automatic renewal clauses?
- ✓ Does the agreement reflect annual increases to storage and services charges?
- ✓ Is destruction performed on site and what are the charges for such destruction? (Are different levels available, i.e. recycling, pulverizing, shredding, etc.?)
- ✓ Are there separate charges for reports, destruction or contract termination fees?
- ✓ Is there a contract termination fee if all records are removed?
- ✓ Are there monthly storage fees charged for cartons removed from storage until they are returned?
- ✓ What figure is used to calculate the cubic footage?
- ✓ Are there performance metrics in the contract?

- ✓ Do metrics allow for contract termination in the event of non-performance?

All contracts are to be reviewed by UW Madison Purchasing Services.



CONCLUSION

This guidance document on records storage outlines some of the basic considerations in selecting a storage vendor. Its intent is to supply University departments and offices with enough information about off site records storage that they can ask the right questions before signing an agreement or contract for storage.

Part of the responsibility of the Campus Records Management Program is to provide consultation and advice to departments. Please contact ARMS for further information about off site storage or other aspects of records management. See <http://archives.library.wisc.edu> and click on "records management."

RESOURCES CITED

Records Center Operations, 2nd Edition. ARMA International Standards Task Force, 2002.

NFPA 232 Standard for the Protection of Records. National Fire Protection Association Standard. Revised 2002.

Archives and Records Management Services

ATTENTION:
AFTER JULY 2007, all offices of the University Archives will be located on the 4th floor of Steenbock Library.

Phone: (608) 262-5629

Fax: (608) 265-2754

recmgmt@library.wisc.edu

<http://archives.library.wisc.edu/>

©2007, Board of Regents, University of Wisconsin-Madison
ARMS is a periodical bulletin from the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Archives and Records Management Services.