![Archives & Records Management, University of Wisconsin-Madison]

Records Management for University Employees

Why is Records Management Important?

We all have a stake in ensuring that university records are appropriately managed to facilitate the transaction of business, ensure public accountability, and preserve the history of the university. The benefits of effectively managing records include more efficient information retrieval, reduced operating costs, and reduced redundancy. Good records management also ensures that administrative, legal, audit, research and historical interests are served.

Poor records management practices may lead to inefficient work units, significant legal liabilities, and increased costs.

Your Responsibilities for Records Management

As a university employee, you create and receive records that document the activities of the university. The public records and information you manage as part of your job responsibilities belong to the University and the State of Wisconsin.

You are responsible for:
- Identifying and appropriately managing public records created and received as part of your job duties at the university
- Filing and organizing paper and electronic documents so they are readily accessible
- Retaining public records for the appropriate length of time
- Disposing of public records in accordance with an approved Retention Disposition Authorization (RDA) – also known as a record schedule
- Maintaining confidential and sensitive information appropriately
- Disposing of information that is not a public record
- Knowing where to go for help when you have questions about managing records

Wisconsin Laws & UW Policies on Records Management

University records should be managed by employees in accordance with established State laws and University policies. The laws and policies that guide records management practices at UW-Madison and UW-Extension include:

- Wisconsin State Statutes
  - §19.32 – defines "records" for purposes of the records access and disclosure provisions of §§ 19.31-19.39 (known as the public records law or the open records law)
  - §16.61(2)(b) – defines "public records" for the purposes of records retention and disposition
- Wisconsin Administrative Rule 12 – electronic records management standards and requirements
- Board of Regents Policy 3-2 – Every employee is responsible and accountable for managing public records in compliance with state and federal legal requirements.

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What is a Public Record?

Public records are determined by content and can exist in *any* format (paper, electronic, photographs, maps, recordings, social media posts, etc.). Public records are:

- Created during the course of university business
- Received for action
- Mandated by statute or regulations

Public records:

- Document university activities and actions
- Support financial obligations or legal claims
- Communicate organizational requirements

Examples include correspondence, agreements, studies, reports, requests, calendars, meeting minutes, project records, contracts, grants, case files, guidance documents, policies, procedures

What is a Non-Public Record under Wis. Stat. § 16.61(2)(b)?

- **Reference materials and stock forms**
  Examples: Vendor catalogs, phone books, instruction manuals, technical journals, blank forms
- **Convenience copies**
  Examples: Duplicate copies of correspondence or reports.
- **Drafts and working papers**
  Examples: Draft documents without substantive comments, rough notes, calculations
- **General announcements and unsolicited email or mail (internal or external)**
  Examples: Reminders received by all staff, spam
- **Auto-generated response or confirmations**
  Examples: Automated calendar requests and confirmations, meeting notices, password change notices

If you are not sure if you have a record, please contact the Records Management Program.

How Long Do I Keep Records?

Records are kept based on the appropriate Records Disposition Authorization (RDA), also known as a records schedule. RDAs:

- Group and describe related public records
- Mandate how long public records are kept (retention)
- Mandate what happens to public records at the end of the retention period (disposition)

Record schedules used by UW-Madison and UW-Extension can be found at:
www.library.wisc.edu/archives/records-management/retention-disposition/

How Do I Manage Records?

- Learn your unit's records management policies and procedures
- Know what records schedules apply to your unit's records
- Dispose of or transfer records to UW Archives according to approved records schedules
  - DO NOT destroy records before the RDA's retention period has been reached
  - DO NOT destroy records if there is a pending audit or litigation, an open records request
  - DO NOT destroy records that do not have an approved records schedule

Where Can I Get Help or Additional Training?

You can ask questions and get additional help by contacting the Records Management Program at recmgmt@library.wisc.edu or 608-262-3284. We also have additional training on records management topics on our website at www.library.wisc.edu/archives/records-management.