



Documentation of Records Management Practices aka *File Plan Creation*

DEFINITIONS

What is a Records Inventory?

A detailed listing that could include the types, locations, dates, volumes, equipment, classification systems, and usage of data of an organization's records.

What is a Record Series?

A collection or related records filed together as a unit.

What is File Integrity?

Is the ability to retrieve and use a document without the chance of it being lost or misfiled.

What is a Vital Record?

Records identified as essential for the continuation or survival of the University if a disaster strikes. Such records are necessary to re-create the University's legal and financial status and to determine the rights and obligations of employee, customers, students and faculty. Usually about 3% of records are considered vital.

***The 8 Generally Accepted Recordkeeping Principles® aka "the Principles"**

1. **Accountability**
2. **Transparency**
3. **Integrity**
4. **Protection**
5. **Compliance**
6. **Availability**
7. **Retention**
8. **Disposition**

Best Practices for Management of University Records

SUMMARY: Documentation of how University Departments/Units records are created and managed throughout the records lifecycle is important to maintain consistency in how records are managed. This documentation also provides a "road-map" for staff use and employee training. Often this "road-map" is referred to as a "*File Plan*" and is the first step in being compliant with "*the Principles*" or **8 Generally Accepted Recordkeeping Principles®**.

WHAT IS A FILE PLAN?

A well thought out file plan is one of the essential components in management of university records.

A File Plans assists with:

- Documenting your department/units records activities effectively
- Identifying records consistently
- Retrieving records consistently in a timely fashion
- Disposing of records no longer needed
- Meets compliance with state/fed regulation and university policies

WHAT DOES A FILE PLAN CONSIST OF?

- **Document Type:** What document or files does the department manage? Conduct a records inventory of the information types and their descriptions.
- **Record Organization** – How are records grouped and named? Create a file structure or hierarchy to classify and organize department records. Filing format for labels.
- **Compliance** – Are your records in compliance with regulatory, federal, state and University Policies in the management of information?
- **Record Custodian:** What Role has been identified to be the Custodian responsible for the management of records?
- **Security Classification:** Does your department manage sensitive information? (FERPA, FISMA, PHI and PII). Is the security classification documented for the records being managed?
- **Access Permissions**– Document the roles that have access permissions applied to the Repository.
- **Record Storage** – Document where records are being stored for both electronic and paper.
- **Record Management Process** –To ensure integrity of information a repeatable process should be employed. Document department workflow processes.
- **Record Retention** – Link the general records schedules the department utilizes. Also include any department schedule which are used.
- **Disposition** – When to purge and how to purge the information.

HOW TO CREATE A FILE PLAN:

The creation of a file plan requires that a **records inventory** of all the work and storage spaces, including electronic storage places. The final product will be a complete listing of all types of documents types maintain by the university department/unit. When creating the file plan, keep in mind that someone else may need to use in the future. Therefore, avoid using jargon, information titles, abbreviations or proper names of current office holder to describe the records. Remember this is a roadmap to the management of the department records and used by others.

Job Aid

Other Tips for completing a University Departmental / Unit File Plan:

- When inventorying your dept records give each file series a title for a brief reference. *Examples include Property Control Records or Bills of Lading, etc.*
- Each file series description should contain enough information to show the purpose, use and subject content of the records.
- File Arrangement or File Organization: Indicate how the records are organized or arranged, and the filing system used. *Ex: Indicate if records are filed by Subject Classification System, Alphabetic arrangement, Geographical arrangement or the Electronic format used.*
- **File Cutoff date.** This is the date when records are closed and no longer needed for business. (Based on event of fiscal year, calendar years, end of project/event driven from the appropriate University Records Retention Schedule.) Cut Off Dates list the earliest dates of the files in each series or when the series was created if known. If the series is still being created at the time of the inventory indicated by the designation "TO DATE" or "TO PRESENT" (ex: if the fiscal calendar is used FROM 07/01/2003 – TO 06/30/2004 or if the series is still being created 07/01/2003 – To Present.) EVENT DATE: Indicate how often the series is cut off. (Fiscal or Calendar year, End of the project etc.)
- Avoid emphasizing form numbers, especially when describing case/project files. These numbers change over time.
- Avoid terms such as "miscellaneous" or "various" which add nothing to the description.
- File Format or Medium: Indicate whether the record is paper, electronic, microfile, audio, digital image or some combination. The format that the record is stored in such as paper, Word-(doc), Excel- (.xlsx), pdf, tiff, jpeg, WAV etc
- File Location: Where are records stored? Onsite and where; Shared Network Drive, Collaboration Space such as Box.net, Google or Sharepoint, Websites, Social Media. Offsite – State Records Center, Indicate if records are duplicates or Office of Record.
- Indicate any access restrictions to, and use of the series, such as relation to student privacy, medical privacy sensitive or personally identifiable information.
- Link back to the UW-Madison Records Management page for Official University Records Retention Schedule and other resources where ever possible. <http://www.library.wisc.edu/archives/records-management/>
- Use any workflow process maps to assist and identify where records are created and utilize Organization Charts to identify titles and record owners.

Sources:

NARA http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/audit/records_management/hdi/What_is_a_file_plan.pdf

About ARMA International and the Generally Accepted Recordkeeping Principles® ARMA International (www.arma.org) is a not-for-profit professional association and the authority on information governance. Formed in 1955, ARMA International is the oldest and largest association for the information management profession with a current international membership of more than 10,000. It provides education, publications, and information on the efficient maintenance, retrieval, and preservation of vital information created in public and private organizations in all sectors of the economy. It also publishes Information Management magazine, and the Generally Accepted Recordkeeping Principles®. More information about the Principles can be found at www.arma.org/principles.