



Intro to Municipal Records Management

IIMC Online Professional Development Program

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Megan
Gregor

About Me

- Ultimate **Records Nerd!**
- Bachelors in English from **Willamette University**
- Masters in Library and Information Science from **University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign**
- Was a **Clerk** from 2012-2022
- Received **CMC** in 2015
- Worked for 3 different **WA cities**
- Worked in **private sector** from 2022-2023 (for a Laserfiche vendor)
- Started **LLC** in 2023
- Have the honor of being an **IIMC educator**
- Currently have clients in OR, WA, AK, and NV!
- Live in **Maple Valley, WA** with husband, 2 kids, 2 dogs, & 1 snake!



Terms and Acronyms

- **Digital Records Management = Electronic Records Management** (they are the same!)
- **ECM** = Electronic Content Management
- **NARA** = National Archives and Records Administration
- **Redundancy** = Back-up's
- **Repository** = a place where things are stored
- **Native Format** = Original format of the electronic record
- **DoD** = Department of Defense
- **Lossless Format** = a type of compression that reduces the size of a file without sacrificing its quality
- **Metadata** = Information about the record
- **Taxonomy** = Classification of something
- **MFA** = Multi Factor Authentication
- **OCR** = Optical Character Recognition
- **Index** = Create Metadata (when referring to 'indexing records')

Housekeeping

- I am **not** a lawyer! My advice is based on experience, education, and research.
- This presentation is geared toward all clerks, please be sure to check your state and local laws prior to making any decisions!
- I apologize ahead of time if I get the laws in your area wrong
- I use stories to explain scenarios (this is not a sales pitch! Just real life!)
- I will likely talk about ECM's a lot, Laserfiche is my favorite, but by no means the only option! If you want to chat about it more, feel free to shoot me an email!



Core Concepts in Records Management





Why Are Records Important?

Cost Savings

Transparency
Operational Efficiency

Legal Compliance

Risk Management **Accountability**

Historical Preservation

Disaster Recovery

Audit Support

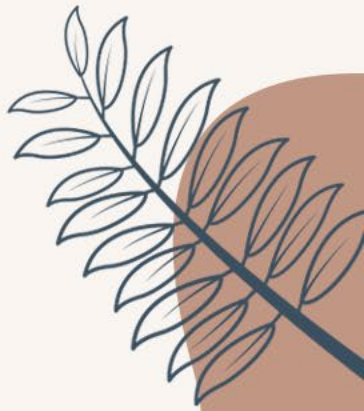


Our Role as Records Managers

- Inform and educate (and gather proof of training!)
- Establish clear policies and procedures for compliance
- Provide tools to support successful implementation
- Be a resource for questions (aka. Records Expert)
- Ensure staff have what they need to stay compliant
- Oversee the final disposition of records in accordance with policy



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Recommendation



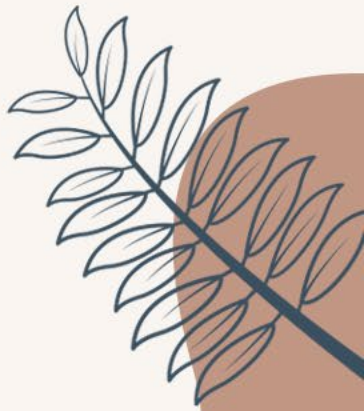


What We Cannot Control

- The types of records that people create
- When/How/Why individuals access certain records
- Whether others recognize the importance of retention and disposition
- The secret places people keep their records
- The random records people destroy!

Which is why....

**Policies, training, and tools
are absolutely ESSENTIAL!!!**





What is a Record?





Records Explained by ARMA*

*Association of Records Managers and Administrators



Any recorded information, regardless of medium, made or received and retained by an organization in pursuance of legal obligations, value to the government, or in the transaction of business.

Permanent Record

Record determined to have sufficient value to warrant its permanent preservation.

Temporary Record

Any records that have been determined to have **insufficient** value to warrant its preservation (i.e. records that have time-limited value).

Transitory Record

Records of (very) short-term interest (180 days or less) and have little or no documentary or evidential value.

What Does It Really Mean?

A record is anything.....

1. Created or received by the agency
2. Connected to the conduct of public business
3. Captured in any format – paper, digital, audio, visual, etc.





What is Records Management?





Records Management Defined

Defined as:

“The field of management responsible for the systematic control of the creation, maintenance, use, and disposition of records.”

-NARA (National Archives and Records Administration)



Records Management – Deconstructed...

The practice of ensuring that your organization:

- Captures and preserves reliable evidence of business activities and transactions

Evidence = the Record



Records Management – Deconstructed...

The practice of ensuring that your organization:

- Preserves the integrity of records documenting business activities and transactions

Integrity Preserved → Reliable Storage



Records Management – Deconstructed...

The practice of ensuring that your organization:

- Supports fast, reliable retrieval of documents when they're needed

Access = HOW It's Retrieved



Records Management – Deconstructed...

The practice of ensuring that your organization:

- Retains, preserves, and disposes records according to their value as defined in the retention schedule

Retention Is Determined by Value



The Records Lifecycle

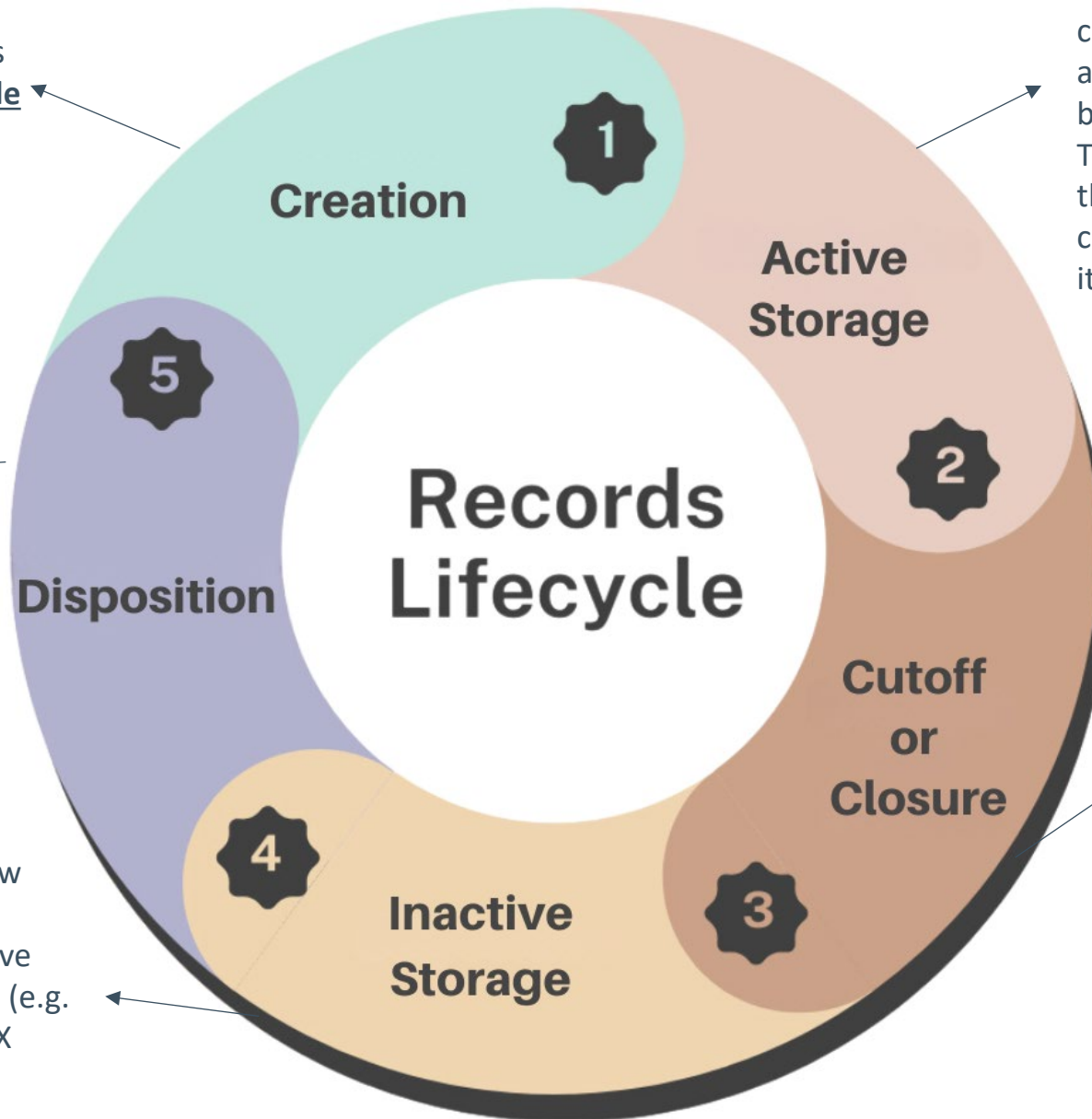
The record begins and is considered a **working file** – so it is in process of being created.

The record is still **active** and can be modified or added to at any time (i.e. Contracts before they have expired). This is the period BEFORE the record is considered closed and ready to 'live out its retention'

The record is done living out its retention and is ready for disposition – **destroy** or **preserve**

A specific **date or event** comes to pass. Afterward, the record is no longer active.


The record is now being **stored** somewhere to live out its retention (e.g. Being kept for XX amount of time)





Physical Records Management





“Before anything else,
preparation is the key to
success,”

-Alexander Graham Bell

The Struggle is Real

How it started...



How its going...



Storage Standards

- Ensure storage areas are pest-free with adequate structural support (metal shelving, no boxes on the floor, etc.)
- Avoid proximity to piping or drains
- Store records in filing cabinets or water-resistant boxes
- Maintain proper temperature and humidity
- Limit access to authorized personnel only
- Consider an “essential records protection plan”



Filing Systems and Organization




- Organize by high-level work functions (Depts)
- Use secondary and tertiary levels for activities and record types
- Label files, drawers, and boxes clearly (also list retention!)
- Utilize numeric systems for cabinets/shelves
- Maintain consistency
- The fewer locations, the better
- Avoid rubber bands for the long-term





Inventory and Retrieval

- Create an inventory, establish a process for updating it
 - The more detailed the better – you want to avoid having to go search through boxes
 - This is where your numbering system will come in handy!
 - List disposition dates and record owners
- Create a check-out system
- Conduct yearly audits to ensure accuracy
- Get creative (Excel isn't the only option for tracking!)

 Basement Storage Megan's Desk Records Room Cabinet 1 Cabinet 2 Cabinet 3 Drawer A Drawer B Drawer C Drawer D 2020 Benefits 2021 Benefits 2022 Benefits 2023 Benefits 2024 Benefits 2025 Benefits Benefits Administration HR Drop Files Policies and Procedures



An Argument for Eliminating Paper

- Running out of physical space
- Digitized records are more safe/secure
- Your organization is not able to properly maintain permanent records in accordance with archival standards
- Broader access for staff
- Multi-access options for staff
- Improved transparency (a 'self-service' system for the public)
- Increased efficiency
- Decreases cost (in paper, in ink, in storage, in time)

NARA's Move Away From Paper*

*National Archives and Records Administration



2012

2019

2022

2024

Obama
Directive

Trump
Directive

Biden
Extension

Implementation

Eliminate paper "to
the fullest extent
possible"

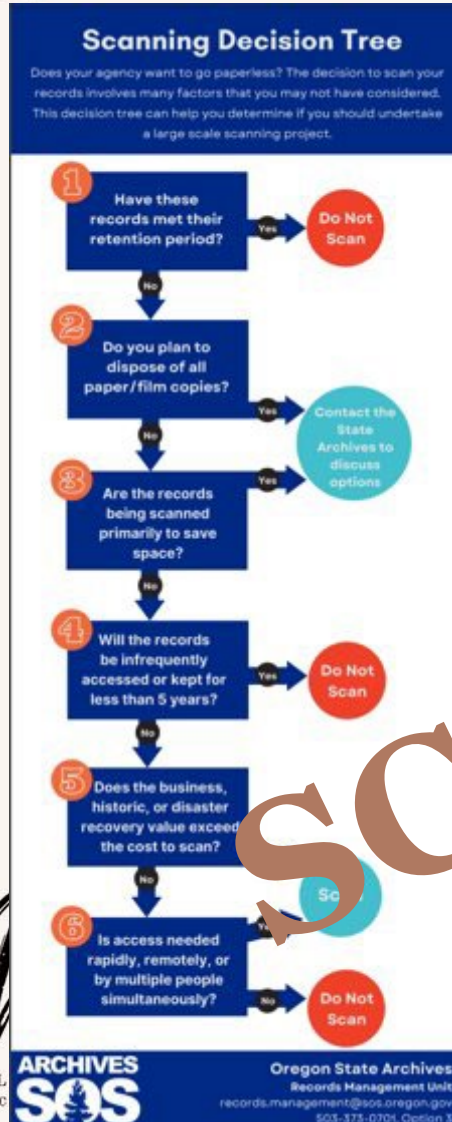
Set a deadline of
Dec 31, 2022 to no
longer accept paper

Lack of resources
during COVID
required a timeline
extension

After June 30, 2024
NARA no longer
accepts transfers of
permanent or temp
records in analog
format



But These Records are Permanent?!



QUICK GUIDE TO THE BEST RECORDS FORMAT

Agencies may use the following matrix to quickly assess a potential appropriate media choice for records.

Access Considerations	Paper	Microfilm	Electronic
Users need rapid access to information	Good	Poor	Excellent
Multiple users need simultaneous access	Poor	Poor	Excellent
Data must be secure from misfiling, loss, alteration, and theft	Fair	Good	Excellent
Records storage space is limited	Poor	Excellent	Excellent

Retention and Preservation Considerations	Paper	Microfilm	Electronic
Information to be kept up to 10 years	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent
Information to be kept more than 15 years	Excellent	Excellent	Good
Information accessible within 10 years	Excellent	Excellent	Good
Information accessible after 10 years	Excellent	Excellent	
Information is essential to the continuity of operations and can easily be duplicated for disaster recovery	Poor	Excellent	Excellent

WASHINGTON
Secretary of State
Washington State Archives

Requirements for the Destruction of
Paper Records after Imaging ("Plan to Scan")
Version 2.0 (May 2024)

Minimum Requirements for "Plan to Scan" CHECKLIST

ARE RECORDS ELIGIBLE?

☐ SCAN AND DISPOSE – The records are **NON-ARCHIVAL**.

☐ SCAN AND TRANSFER – The records are **ARCHIVAL**.

ARE THE SCANS A COMPLETE AND ACCURATE COPY?

☐ Quality control procedures established to ensure capture of complete and accurate copies.

☐ Records scanned to the appropriate file format and DPI (see page 3).

☐ Short-term record (retention period of 6 years or less)

☐ Long-term record (retention period of more than 6 years or Archival record)

☐ Records verified to be complete and fully legible.


ARE SCANS ACCESSIBLE AND PROTECTED?

☐ Appropriate steps taken to protect images from deletion, alteration, or damage/loss.

☐ Appropriate planning and strategies implemented for migration and conversion of records.

PLEASE NOTE: State government agency staff need to consult with the agency's Records Officer on all matters related to the retention, transfer, and/or destruction of public records (RCW 40.14.040).

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**Remember: we only want
to keep *one* copy of a
record if it is possible!**

The image features a central white rectangular area containing the text "10 Min Break" in a bold, brown, serif font. This central area is flanked by dark blue horizontal bands at the top and bottom. These bands are decorated with stylized, light brown line-art leaves and small white circles, creating a modern, organic aesthetic.

10 Min Break



Digital Records Management





Digitizing Your Records....

Just because you CAN,
doesn't mean you

SHOULD

Content Value

- **Rarity or Uniqueness:** Documents that are rare, unique, or historically significant may warrant digitization to increase accessibility.
- **Relevance:** Assess how the document aligns with organizational priorities or supports high-value activities; if relevant the case for digitization is stronger.
- **Legal Requirements:** Determine if there is a need to preserve the document long-term for compliance or legal purpose

Usage and Demand

- **Frequency of Access:** Documents accessed frequently or requiring collaboration are strong candidates for digitization.
- **Audience Interest:** If there is high demand for access to the content, digitization can improve availability.

Preservation and Risk

- **Fragility:** Fragile or deteriorating documents that have long-term retention may benefit from digitization to reduce handling while preserving their content.



Potential Damage: Evaluate whether digitization might harm the original document and weigh this against the benefits of creating a digital copy.

Costs and Resources

- **Budget Constraints:** Digitization requires resources for scanning, metadata creation, and long-term management. Ensure the benefits justify the costs.
- **Storage Space:** If physical storage is limited, digitization can reduce space needs while maintaining access to information, but this should only be considered if the records need to be readily available.

What's the big deal?

What's so different about DIGITAL?

MAKE
— OR —
BREAK

Digital records can be more complicated to manage than print records because:

- We now create more digital records than ever before
- They are often created without even knowing it
- If done correctly, access can be more widely controlled/limited
- In some ways it provides more restrictions or rules which can provide either more or less control
- They can be MUCH more complicated to organize (our brains operate differently when looking at analog items)
- They aren't always visible and can be ignored - therefore can easily get “out of control”
- Their integrity is easier to compromise



Healthy Habits for Successfully Managing your Digital Records



Healthy Habit #1: Limit Locations

Digital records management should not be a mirror of physical records management – it allows you to limit the number of storage locations for records – which, in turn, limits the amount of time spent on finding records (and ensuring they are being properly managed).



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Exception: Sometimes I like to store records in different locations depending on their stage in the records lifecycle.



Healthy Habit #2: Ensure Record Integrity

Once a record is closed/cutoff it should no longer be edited. Therefore, you will want to save your records in a **lossless** format (such as tiff, pdf-a, or png) that does not allow modifications.

Additionally, utilizing a software that allows for auditing and/or “document locking” adds an extra layer of reliability.

Healthy Habit #3: Save Files in Preferred Format (vs. Native Format)

When it comes to electronic records, it was previously advised to keep them their **native format**, however this is no longer the preference.

Once inactive, to maintain record integrity and to better preserve electronic records over time, it may be necessary to migrate records to formats better suited for retention and preservation (but remember you may need to retain necessary metadata!).






Healthy Habit #4: Apply Retention

Because an essential element of proper records management is applying proper records retention, being able to do so to your digital records has become a must for government entities in the digital landscape.

Some attempt to achieve this by storing their records according to their retention, however I have found that this is not ideal because doing this makes no logical sense to the user of the record, only the records manager.



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Rules Regulating Electronic Records Management

DoD 5015.02

Design Criteria Standard for Electronic Records Management Software Applications by the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) – was developed in collaboration with the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) to improve RM after the Gulf War and was first published in 1997, its *not* required for local govt, only federal.

KEY ASPECTS OF COMPLIANCE

Any software used to manage records must be able to:

- Identify and classify records.
- Provide secure storage and easy retrieval.
- Apply retention and Support proper disposal.
- Maintain audit trails.
- Implement robust access controls.
- Support FOIA and Privacy Act requirements
- Interoperate with other systems.

<https://dodcio.defense.gov/Portals/0/Documents/Library/DoDRecordsStrategy.pdf>

ISO 15489

International Organization for Standardization - Internationally Recognized Standard for Records Management Related Activities designed to ensure records are properly managed throughout their lifecycle, from creation to disposal, to maintain their authenticity, reliability, and usability.

REQUIREMENTS & GUIDELINES

- Records and Metadata
- Policies and Responsibilities
- Records Control
- Processes

IMPLEMENTATION METHODOLOGY

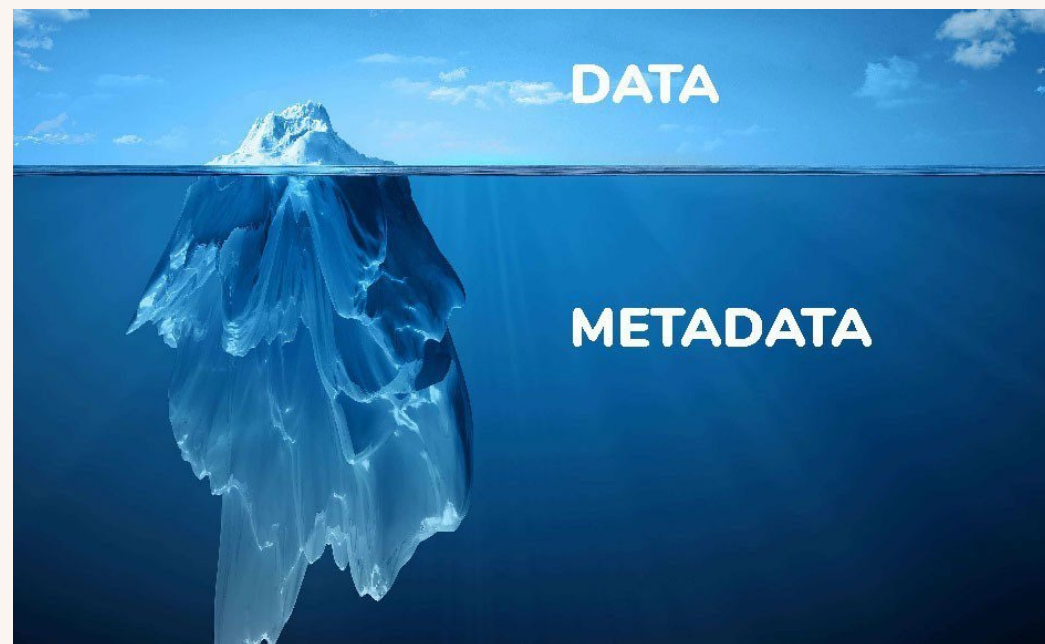
- Evaluation
- Analyze business activities / assess existing systems
- Identify requirements

<https://info.aiim.org/aiim-blog/newaiimo/2009/07/01/eight-steps-of-the-isotr-1548922001-records-management-program-implementation-methodology>

DID YOU KNOW: Because "international Organization for Standardization" would have different acronyms in different languages (IOS in English, OIN in French for Organisation internationale de normalisation), its founders opted for the short form "ISO". The story goes that ISO is derived from the Greek word "isos", meaning equal.

Healthy Habit #5: Ability to Browse *and* Search

Because folder structures are typically created for function and ease of access for the record creator, being able to search for a record (based on **metadata**) ensures the discoverability of the record in the future, regardless of the record owner.





Browsing

Browsing enables a user to **navigate through electronic files as if they were a library**, allowing them to peruse their area of interest until they find something interesting. It's best used when the type of record is known but it's not clear whether or not the actual record exists. (e.g. "City Ordinances")

Remember: This is why it's important to have a simplified and easy to understand folder structure for files utilized by non-subject matter experts.



Good Folder Structures create effective browsing!

Searching

Searching is best utilized when **you know what you are looking for and have a specific search term** you can enter to find the record you are looking for. (e.g. "Noise Ordinance")

Remember: searching for records is **NOT** like searching google! Google's searches utilize a variety of complex algorithms that essentially allows it to ultimately know what you want. With ECM's **you** need to know what you are looking for.

Strong Metadata and Naming create effective searching!



Healthy Habit #6: Redundancy and Destruction

Checking the **redundancy** refers to the practice of duplicating data – or more accurately, data backups. You want to ensure your digital records are being backed up regularly and are easily accessible. (Work with your IT dept on this!)

On the flip-side – you also want to ensure that you have the ability to permanently delete records once they have met their retention.



Healthy Habit #7: Security and Access



- Work with your IT Department
- Consider the safety of your electronic files
- Err on the side of greater access (= better self-service)
- Access vs. Permissions
 - Who can access what? (i.e. what can they see?)
 - What permissions do different users have? (i.e. what can they do with the record?)
- Data security / encryption / MFA, etc.
- Establish where a record kept during each phase of its lifecycle



Where Should You Store Your Digital Files

File Explorer (aka. Network Drives, local drives, shared drives)

- Not easy to search
- Hard to apply permissions
- If you (the records manager) can't see them, then you can't ensure correct response to PRRs
- If you move or rename a file, all shortcuts are broken.

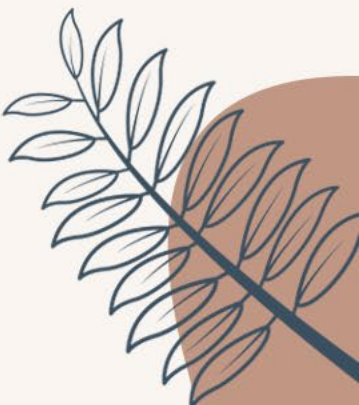
VS

Enterprise Content Management System (ECM)

- Robust searching capabilities
- Typically, very dynamic permissions/access can be applied
- Many allow for retention to be applied
- Allow for easy offsite access
- Automation helps create consistency and improves efficiency



Do NOT store digital files solely on external hard drives, USB drives, or CD's – these are easily lost and there is a limit to their lifetime! (But a good option for back-up storage)



Tips and Tricks For Organizing Your Electronic Records



Organizing

IS WHAT YOU DO BEFORE
YOU DO SOMETHING, SO
THAT WHEN YOU DO IT,
IT IS NOT ALL MIXED UP.

A.A. MILNE

5 Steps to Digital Declutter

1. **Sort Unneeded Records:**

Move any records you no longer need into a “To Delete” subfolder. You can handle deletion later, but when you do, be sure to follow the retention schedule for proper destruction. (For [transitory records](#), deletion does not require logging.)

2. **Remove Empty Folders:**

Delete any folders that no longer contain files or subfolders.

3. **Eliminate Single-Subfolder Chains:**

If a folder contains only one subfolder, move that subfolder up one level and remove the original empty folder to streamline your structure.

4. **Group Single Files:**

Avoid folders with just one file. Instead, create broader “bucket” folders to group similar files together for easier access and organization.

5. **Order Subfolders with Numbering:**

Use a numbering system (e.g., “01 – Project XYZ”) to arrange subfolders in your preferred order and make navigation easier.



Folder Structure Do's and Don'ts

Create a Logical Structure:

- DO Start with **broad categories** (like departments)
- DO Group records by **function** (like “Contracts” or “Legislation”)
- DO Create subfolders based on **more specific criteria** (like dates, type, etc.)
- DON'T create multiple folders with **overlapping categories** (it can lead to confusion, inability to locate items, and duplication) (e.g. Templates vs. Forms)
- DON'T **ignore future use** - consider, “could someone who has never done this job before find what they need?”
- Consider utilizing **stage-based organization** (“Drafts” “Closed” “Final”, etc.) for subfolders especially if you cannot apply retention



Folder Structure Do's and Don'ts

Simplify and Avoid Complexity; Be Purposeful with Your Organization

- DON'T utilize **special characters** like \$*&#% or “AAA” to force folders to the top of lists (numbering your folders is OK though!)
- DO utilize **shortcuts, quick access, or colors** for folders important to you (click and drag important folders under the quick access area of your file explorer or ECM – this won't move them but will make it easy for you to find what you need!)
- DON'T utilize “**Misc**” folders unless absolutely necessary, and
- (if possible) DON'T create a folder for **only one document** – think about broader ‘like’ categories (Exception: consistency, future use)
- DO **resist the urge to overcomplicate** the structure with too many subfolders, but
- DON'T be afraid to use subfolders effectively (it's **Better to Click then scroll**, but within reason)



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Naming Conventions & Taxonomy

- Keep names **short and relevant**
- Utilize **taxonomy** (or a classification system) for 'like' files/folders
- Best to **avoid special characters and spaces** (use – or _ when possible) in file names, but I prefer to use spaces in folder names!
- **Content of a file name** to consider: Date of creation, project name, short description, version (e.g. 2024-02-10_DowntownProject_AsBuilts-v2)
- When using **dates** the format should be YYYYMMDD (**PERSONAL PREFERENCE: put dashes between so it is clear that the number is a date – don't use periods!)
- **Acronyms** should be avoided, or spelled out in a parent folder
- Use information that is important for **disposition** if you do not have metadata (i.e. if the retention starts when the contract expires, but not when it starts, use the expiration date not the start date)
- Be consistent and **write out standards** for all to follow! (Also remember, no one will EVER agree, so don't try to get consensus on how to name things, but DO listen to what they have to say if they don't like it!)
- Make sure the taxonomy is **easy to understand** – if you need a cheat sheet to remember it, it is too complicated!

Megan's
Recommendation

Naming Conventions & Taxonomy

Strong Naming Conventions and Taxonomy Allow Records to be:

- Easily Browsable
- Sorted and Stored in a preferred order

If you are using Windows Explorer:

- Names should be short and descriptive, so you do not have to open the file to know what is in it.
- Using Acronyms is okay
- Shorten words whenever possible (but in a way that makes sense!)

If you are using an ECM:

- Utilize Metadata + Taxonomy – information can and should be placed in the **metadata** to describe the info/records contained in the folders/files.
- Avoid acronyms, especially if the record will be accessible by the public

Metadata is GOLD!

Metadata is “data about data” which means – in the context of records management: *the information about any given record or folder* that is usually assigned ‘in the background.’

Good Metadata Allows Records to Be:

- Sorted in various ways
- Found easily
- Retained properly
- Automated (if your ECM can do that)

Metadata Best Practices:

- Should include information essential for disposition.
- Only use information needed for finding or sorting the record (or to ensuring proper disposition).
- Always allow for a “notes” section in the metadata, to ensure proper search results (but be purposeful with them and provide parameters).
- Remember: there IS such a thing as too much metadata!



Don't Panic! Records are FUN!!!!

And managing them is *actually* more intuitive than you think...!

- Don't fall into one of the two common records traps!
- Contact your Archives with Questions (*if applicable*)!
- Connect with your fellow Clerks
- Get involved: ARMA, NARA, State Clerk's Group, etc.



The image features a central white rectangular area containing the text "Questions??" in a large, brown, serif font. This central area is flanked by dark blue horizontal bands at the top and bottom. These bands are decorated with stylized, light-colored line art of leaves and small white circles. The overall design is minimalist and modern.

Questions??

Contact Us

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thank
you