



GUIDELINES FOR RECORDS STORAGE FACILITIES

A. Physical Control of Records in a Repository

Main Things to Remember about Managing Records in a Records Storage Facility

- **Establish how long the records need to be kept before the transfer takes place.**
- **Ensure that transferred records come with the necessary metadata or information and that the transfer is properly documented.**
- **Make sure you know what records you have and where they are in case you need them again.**
- **Adequate internal controls must be implemented for all records centre/archives operations.**
- **When you destroy or transfer records, make sure that you have documentation with details of the records, what you have done to them and on what authority.**

1. Introduction

Once you have identified your inactive records storage and it is up and running, there are a number of internal controls, procedures and practices that need to be put in place to manage the facility on a longer-term basis. This includes knowing when to transfer records, getting control over records coming into the storage area, operating a retrieval service and controlling their destruction or processing as archives.

2. Transferring Records to an inactive Records Storage Facility

Records should be transferred to record centre when you no longer need them to support current business and/or they are taking up space that you need for more current records.

Transfer needs to be controlled for accountability purposes and so that the records can be efficiently located and returned to the office if required. Controlled transfer also facilitates identification of records due for further disposal.

The process which is outlined in the box below begins in the record creating office and is completed by the records storage facility.



Steps in Procedures to Transfer Records to Inactive Storage

Tasks carried out in Offices:

- Identify files that need to be transferred out of current office storage
- Sort files into record series based on the office file plan
- Make sure that there are no files that could already be destroyed, or that are not UN records, and that there are no extraneous file fittings
- Check files to ensure that they have no signs of insect infestation or mould
- Fill out transfer details on approved forms.
- Place files in boxes and fill out file series and individual file folder details

Tasks carried out in Records Storage Facility

- Give the transfer an accession number
- Place boxes on shelves
- Log the transfer, accession and location details into your storage spreadsheet/database

3. Role of record retention schedules

ARMS records disposition programme authorises missions and business units to dispose of records that have no continuing legal, administrative, fiscal or historic value so that only those active records needed for current business are maintained in office space. Record retention schedules provide offices with the authority and timetable to destroy records or transfer them to inactive storage areas.

4. Accessioning Records

An accession is a group of records transferred from the same business unit at the same time. It is good practice to give each accession (even if it only consists of one box) a unique accession number. A good system to adopt is based on the calendar year, for example the first accession of 2018 would be given the accession number 2018-0001, the second 2018-0002 and so on.

5. Record and Box Numbers

Each file and each box should be given a unique number which enables you to identify and track them. It is best to keep these number systems as simple as possible. The file number will relate it to the file plan whilst the box number will give the file an address and allow it to be stored and retrieved.

You can give each new box a running number, based on the accession number. Thus, if there were three boxes in accession 2018-1, they would have the following numbers:

2018/0001-01



2018/0001-02

2018/0001-03

6. Space Numbers in the Records Storage Facility

Giving boxes numbers means they can be used as addresses for files and giving files numbers means they can be used as addresses for records. When storing boxes, their location also needs to have an address and it needs to be as simple and systematic as the others.

You will probably have aisles, bays and shelves in your storage facility, all of which can be numbered to produce a unique identifier. All boxes should indicate which aisle, bay and shelve they occupy.

As long as you are consistent, you can begin numbering from either the left or the right, or from top or bottom. The example above starts from the top left. You could also use a combination of letters and numbers (remember to be consistent). Using letters has the disadvantage of the limitation in those available unless after reaching Z you begin again at AA. Again, be consistent and document your numbering system.

It does not really matter which system you use. The important thing is documenting it and making sure you are consistent in implementing it.

7. Location Register

Once the records have been documented on the transfer forms and are physically moved to inactive storage, you will need to put the boxes on shelves. You should carefully document the shelf location of each box in order to physically locate the records when you need to retrieve them again. You will need to enter the data into a spreadsheet or database so when you search for specific files, you will know which box they are in and where that box is shelved.

8. Operating a Retrieval Service

Although the records in inactive storage should not be frequently required back in the office, it must be possible to identify and retrieve semi-active or inactive records which are needed to support current business or audit requirements. To do this you need to operate a retrieval service which means:

- Staff can request records when they need them;
- You can identify and locate the records requested ;
- You can check them out of the system before giving them back to the Staff;
- You can update the system when checked out records have been returned.

You can use your electronic recordkeeping system or a spreadsheet or database to search for the record which has been requested. The system should allow you to search for any of the following:

- Names (of record creator, user, transferring officer)
- Dates (of transfer, records, disposal action)



- Business unit
- System for arranging the files
- Accession and box numbers
- File number(s) and/or title(s)/description
- Record series description
- Record series reference
- Location
- Any access restrictions

When you have located the record or records, you should put a place marker on the shelf or in the box, or in a recordkeeping system, to check out the records. This serves as a physical reminder that records have been removed – it also helps when you return records to boxes/shelves. You should enter the details of the loan into the database or spreadsheet entry for that record or box of records. It is also good to keep a loan register so you can monitor use of semi-active and inactive records.

When the record(s) are returned, you can update the database and the loans register. You should also monitor loans and send reminders to colleagues who have records checked out.

9. Managing Record Disposition from Inactive Records Storage

The final aspect of managing inactive storage is making sure to identify records which will eventually require to be disposed or processed into archives. This is dictated by the retention schedule. You will however need to set up a routine and some procedures to make sure that you meet destruction deadlines and that you have a processing plan to process your records into archives.

The best way to do this is to search or sort your database to provide a list of records due for destruction and a list of records accessions due for processing. Alternatively, you could search the retention action field for the current year to get a list of records due for disposition. Depending on the volume of records you store, you should do this on an annual or six-monthly basis.



B. Environmental Control of Records Centre/ Archives Facilities

The repository must be of robust construction of brick, stone or concrete, with adequate protection for all roofs, walls, floors, ceilings and openings against unauthorised entry, fire, flood and damp. The building should also offer effective protection against dust, pollutants and pests.

Environmental control for an archives repository should strive to comply with **ISO 11799:2015** *Information and documentation — Document storage requirements for archive and library materials*

1. Temperature and humidity

Incorrect temperature and humidity can cause significant damage to documents. In order to preserve archives, it is of primary importance to provide a cool and dry storage area.

Damp conditions will lead to paper absorbing moisture and as a result will expand. The temperature of repositories should be between 13°C to 20°C. Relative humidity level should be between 35% to 60%. In order to maintain these set points heating, ventilating, air conditioning systems are required.

High humidity (above 65%) encourages mould, mildew and pest activity. Mould is a form of biological damage which will consume paper. Paper will become weakened by mould and then crumble; it can also discolour paper. Mould can be harmful to humans, so staff and users need to be protected if they handle affected collections. It is important that all storage areas be ventilated. There should also be air circulation between the records boxes and between the shelves.

2. Light

- All light (ultraviolet (UV), visible and infrared) damages archival materials by fading, yellowing and structurally weakening them. Sunlight and fluorescent lights are the two main UV light sources.
- Keep all archival materials covered or boxed when not in use. This is one of the simplest and most inexpensive solutions to the problem of light.
- Use blinds to eliminate sunlight
- Turn lights off in the archives storage area when not in use

3. Inspection of the material and monitoring of environmental conditions

In order to measure the levels of humidity and temperature, appropriate equipment is needed. ARMS uses a continuous monitoring system with data loggers (viewLinc)

<https://www.vaisala.com/en/products/software/viewlinc>

The system provides a dashboard and accurate data loggers to measure temperature, humidity, differential pressure, CO2 and other parameters. Equipment will not retain its accuracy and will need to



be recalibrated. Calibration can be carried out in situ, by staff or the supplier under contract, or by returning it to the manufacturer.

4. Fire protection

- Smoke detectors, preferably capable of detecting a fire in its incipient phase, with automatic fire alarms linked to the fire station or security office should be fitted throughout the repository.
- The repository should be outfitted with a dry sprinkler system.
- An adequate number of suitable non-aqueous portable fire extinguishers must be provided.
- Smoking must be strictly prohibited throughout the repository.

5. Disaster recovery plan

An up-to-date plan should be accessible to archival staff. Ideally it should be updated yearly as well as the phone tree to contact staff during the weekend or official holidays in case of leak or other incident.

C. Physical Security of the Repository

The repository should be secured against unauthorized entry and should be fully covered by any intruder alarm system.

- Access to keys must be strictly controlled by archival staff
- If located on the ground floor, windows should be protected by shutters, bars or mesh.
- Ensure contractors working in or around the archive store are aware of the importance of the contents and adjust their working practices accordingly. Ideally, contractors should be supervised at all times.
- All records which are open to inspection by the public should be clearly described, in publicly available finding aids.
- Access should be controlled by the archives/records centre staff and a production book maintained in which access to particular papers is recorded.
- Researchers must never be allowed unsupervised access to papers. Any documents consulted by researchers should be carefully checked both before issue and on their return. It is highly desirable that researchers be required to produce written evidence of identity before being given access to unique archival documents.
- Readers should not take coats and bags to their study places.
- When in use the study area should be constantly supervised by sufficient staff to provide an effective level of invigilation of the whole area, under the direction of an archivist.



Annex 1:

Checklist: Data Required to Manage Records in Inactive Storage

Accession data must include the following:

- Official responsible for records
- Title
- Unit
- Section
- Office/Division
- Department
- Name and details of who prepared transfer (if different from responsible official)
- Creating office (if the records were created by a different business unit)
- Accession number
- Accession date
- Retention Schedule Number
- Details of records (description of each record series, including system of arrangement, with detailed list attached if available)
- Quantity (linear feet or number of boxes)
- Covering dates
- Security level
- Current disposition
- Date scheduled for disposal
- Current location



Annex 2

Inactive Record Loans Form

Date: _____

File details and references: _____

Loaned out to: _____

Business unit: _____

Signature of requesting staff: _____

Date due back: _____

Location: _____

Date returned: _____

Signature of records officer: _____