RECORDS MANAGEMENT IN THE UNITED NATIONS

A Shared Responsibility

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CAS TRAINING - 2009
Agenda

- Why Records Management? Records vs. documents
- Roles and Responsibilities
- Records Life Cycle
- Records Disposition
- Information Sensitivity
Why Records Management?

• UN policy requirement
• Ensure security, reliability and authenticity of information for long term viability
• Operational efficiency & internal accountability
• Historical reasons
Efficient and Transparent Business Processes

• Good records management practice supports the goal of getting the right information to the right people at the right time.
• Knowing which documents and information should be retained, why they are retained, and how long to retain them reduces clutter and streamlines workflow.
• Well organized and managed information is quickly and easily retrieved when required.
• Awareness of the requirement to retain records to support actions and decisions enhances transparency in governance.
Responsibilities of Staff and Offices

- **UN Staff is responsible for** creating and maintaining records in accordance with established policies and procedures.
- **UN Staff are permitted to destroy records** in keeping with retention policies.
- **The records are the property of the Organization**.
- **Offices are responsible for**:
  - Developing and implementing retention schedules
  - Preparing records for transfer
  - Providing adequate records storage for records in office
ARMS Roles and Responsibilities

Records Management & Advisory Services:
• Manage transfer and disposal of inactive records
• Provide records retrieval service
• Provide advice on recordkeeping for both paper and electronic records located in Offices

Archives Management Services:
• Identify & preserve records of long term value
• Manage and provide access to the Archives of the United Nations.
Resources Available to Manage Records

• **Policies**

• **Tools to manage records on a daily basis**
  – Retention Schedules
  – File classification/ Taxonomies
  – Records management toolkits

• **Training**: e-learning and on-demand records management workshop
Think about this: Which of these is NOT a record?
What is a record?

Any data or information, regardless of form or medium created, received and maintained by the United Nations as evidence of a transaction

- A record is the property of the Organization
- A record is subject to the Organization’s retention rules
- A record can be in paper or electronic form, e.g. emails
- A record is always a document, but a document is not necessarily a record
What is a document?

Recorded information or object which can be treated as a unit. A document is not necessarily a record.
# Documents v. Records

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Documents</th>
<th>Records</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>File classification</strong></td>
<td>Not required</td>
<td>Required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Retention rules</strong></td>
<td>Not required; documents may be destroyed/deleted when no longer needed</td>
<td>Required; may only be destroyed/deleted/archived based on an approved UN retention schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Storage area</strong></td>
<td>User work stations (electronic and paper), shared drives, flash drives, email inboxes</td>
<td>May be physically distributed but arranged under a single filing scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Security classification</strong></td>
<td>Required for sensitive documents</td>
<td>Required for all business records (including non-sensitive records)</td>
</tr>
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Transitory information

Some examples of transitory information, which can be in any medium (voice mail, fax, e-mail, etc.) are routine messages, internal meeting notices, routing slips, and similar routine information used for communication but not for the documentation of a specific UN transaction.
Who is responsible for identifying and filing records?

• When the record is created internally, the **originator** must ensure that the official business record is retained and filed.

• When the record is received from an external source, and where that information does not exist elsewhere in the Organization, the **recipient** of the information must ensure that the official business record is retained and filed.
Stages in a Record’s Life

**CREATION:** Records are made or received by the UN.

**MAINTENANCE AND USE:**
(Active Records) Any action involving the storage, retrieval, and handling of records kept in offices by, or for, the UN.

**DISPOSITION:**
(Inactive Records) Action taken regarding records no longer needed for current business. These actions include transfer to mission records storage facilities or transfer to ARMS, and disposal of temporary records.

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Retention Schedules

A comprehensive instruction covering the disposition of records to assure that they are retained for as long as necessary based on their administrative, fiscal, legal and historic value.
Records have administrative value

• General correspondence, chronological files
• Office service request files
• Staff administration files
• Equipment inventories
• Policies, procedures, organizational charts, directives
Records have legal value

- Legal decisions & opinions
- Fiscal documents representing agreements, such as leases, titles, contracts
- Records of action in particular cases, such as claims and legal documents
Records have fiscal value

- Budgets
- Ledgers
- Allotments
- Payrolls and vouchers
Retention Schedules in CAS

- TTS: Review would be beneficial
- UNPA: currently under review
- SSS: no guidance at present
Records have historical value

- Minutes of Senior Management Meetings
- Important political processes in the Missions
- Records of UN Secretaries-General and top UN officials such as SRSGs
A records retention schedule:

- Lists different series of records generated in the course of the office’s activities

- Identifies the Office of Record (i.e. Custodian) of different records

- Provides guidance on when to close files, if applicable

- Provides guidance on when to transfer a record series to the UN Records Centre or Archives

- Provides guidance on when to destroy a class of records, if applicable
Advantages of a retention schedule

- Consistent, timely and accountable disposition of records
- Broad application across U.N.
- Identify records of long term value
- Authorize prompt and legal destruction
- When applied, results in a more efficient use of space
Managing Sensitive Information in the UN

- Key Policy document is ST/SGB/2007/6
- Records should be classified/marked as either:
  - Unclassified
  - Confidential
  - Strictly Confidential
- Access: Records more than 20 years old and not classified as “Strictly Confidential” are accessible to all
### Quiz: Information Sensitivity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>True</th>
<th>False</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section Chiefs are responsible for identifying and marking confidential records in the UN</td>
<td></td>
<td>✭</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To send a confidential document to another office, I must send it in a sealed envelop and affix the confidential marking</td>
<td>✭</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can store my confidential records in electronic format on a shared drive provided the folder is password-protected</td>
<td>✭</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The confidential records which I transferred on behalf of my office to ARMS can be accessed to anyone in the Organisation</td>
<td>✭</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To dispose of a large volume of confidential records I must call ARMS</td>
<td></td>
<td>✭</td>
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ARMS Website

Welcome to the UN Archives and Records Management Website

The website brings together in a single location information about the UN records and archives collections and services together with tools to support records and archives management and to train staff.

UN ARMS News & Developments

- NEW! ARMS has issued new guidance on records digitisation (scanning) to assist staff members to plan and implement records digitisation projects that are compliant with ARMS record keeping requirements, and will ensure records are preserved and kept accessible for as long as they are required.

Search Archives Database:
Consult the UN archives collections online

Photo Gallery:
Explore a sample of 50 photographs from the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (UNRRA)

Recordkeeping Toolkit for Peacekeeping Operations:
Discover a rich source of practical information about recordkeeping at UN Peacekeeping and other field missions.

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