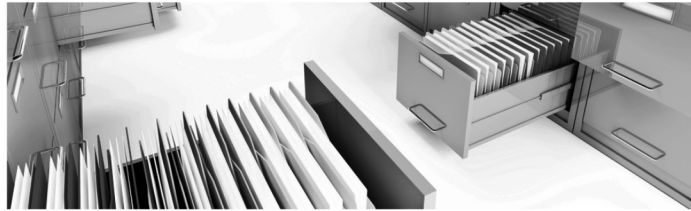Department of Information Science

Introducing Archives and Records Management

Only study guide for
ARM1501

University of South Africa, Pretoria

CONTENTS

Introducing archives and records management

Individuals, companies, government departments and other public or private organisations all create records (a record being recorded information in any format, tangible documents or digital information, such as correspondence, birth certificates, medical x-rays, office documents, databases and e-mail). For example, a person creates a record when he or she writes a letter to a friend. A record is created in a company when a staff member sends an e-mail to another staff member. A government department creates a record when an annual report is compiled.

Archives and records management are the practice of maintaining these records from the time they are created up to their eventual disposal (*disposal* being either the destruction of those records that are no longer needed, or the transfer of those records which have long-term value to an archives for preservation). Archives and records management therefore include the controlled creation, classification, storage, use and destruction, or in some cases permanent or archival preservation of these records.

Records management versus archives

Both archives and records management are concerned with the whole lifespan of records, from their creation, their management, to their disposal. However, although these processes are intricately interconnected, they are often studied separately. This is largely due to **records management** being mainly concerned with the maintenance of current records of an organisation or institution, while **archives** is more concerned with non-current records of an organisation or institution, preserved because of their enduring or continuing value.

In other words, records management focuses on records created and received by an organisation, while these records are still being used by that same organisation. Archives management, on the other hand, is concerned with the very same records, but its focus is on those records that warrant long-term or permanent preservation.

ACTIVITY

Briefly explain the overlap and the distinction between archives and records management.

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The difference between libraries and archives and records management

It is important to also distinguish between other information management professions on one hand and archives and records management on the other. Many of you may be familiar with libraries. Well, how do they differ from the archives and records management field?

Although they all deal with the management of information, there are differences in the type of the information they manage and where this information originates. Libraries manage mostly

published books and journals originating from book publishers and electronic media published in the online environment. Archives and records managers care for records or documents that have been received and created by an organisation during its daily activities. These records are therefore unique to that specific organisation.

The users or clients of organisational records and archives and the users or clients of libraries also indicate the differences between library materials and records and archival materials. Usually library users are part of a broader community, while users of organisational records are the people working for the organisation creating the records. More about this in study unit 6.

Defining records management

Robles and Langemo (1999:25) define records management as:

> The professional management of information in the physical form of records from the time records are received or created through their processing, distribution, and placement in a storage and retrieval system until either eventual elimination or identification for permanent archival retention.

Similarly, the ISO 15489: 2001 standard defines records management as the "field of management responsible for the efficient and systematic control of the creation, receipt, maintenance, use and disposition of records, including the processes for capturing and maintaining evidence of and information about business activities and transactions in the form of records" (International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) 2001). ISO goes on to define **records** as information in any medium created, received and maintained as evidence by an organisation or person, in pursuance of legal obligations or in the transaction of business.

Therefore, records management is a term used to refer to the way records are cared for, so that they can be used continuously by users such as managers and employees of an organisation, records professionals, legal authorities and any other interested parties.

All organisations and governments, big and small, create and receive records and information. The reasons for caring for these organisational records are diverse: one is that records serve as evidence of the decisions made by an organisation, and another that they serve legal and financial functions, for example contracts and proof of financial payments made. These records relate to the activities of these organisations, and include general correspondence, routine accounting documents, personnel material and records relating to special projects, programmes, etc. All these records require a system of dealing with them and it is in this respect that records management has a vital role to play. The aim of records management is to ensure that records are created, used, stored and retired in an orderly and controlled manner (Agere, Lemieux & Mazikana 1999:15).

The functions of a records manager

Briefly, the functions of a records manager include the following responsibilities:

- developing and implementing classification and filing systems for maintaining organisational records
- appraising records; simply put, this is deciding which records need to be destroyed and which need to be transferred to an archive
- disposing records, whereby the actions regarding the time periods for the preservation or destruction of records are stipulated

ACTIVITY

Define records management and briefly list the functions of a records manager.

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Defining archives

According to Pearce-Moses (2005:15), archives are "those records that were created or received by a person, family, or organisation, public or private, in the conduct of their affairs and **preserved because of the enduring value** contained in the information they hold, or as evidence of the functions and responsibilities of their creator". For a record to qualify as an archive it must have lasting administrative and/or historical and reference value.

Archives may include records of an individual, such as letters, photographs, e-mails, or financial records, created or collected by the individual – regardless of media or format. The archives of an organisation are administrative files, business records and memos, etc. We will discuss this in more detail in study unit 6.

A person who works in archives is called an archivist. Archival science or archival studies is the study of organising, preserving and providing access to information and materials in archives.

(Archivists tend to prefer the term "archives" to refer to both the singular and plural, since "archive", as a noun or a verb, has meanings related to computer science.)

The functions of an archivist

The functions of archivists are focused on those organisational records that have been transferred to an archive for long-term preservation, and include

- acquiring archival records from their originating organisational department
- arranging (or organising) the archival records
- describing the records (similar to cataloguing in the library environment); finding aids are created to provide easy access and retrieval to archives for clients
- conserving these records for their long-term preservation

ACTIVITY

Define the term "archives" and briefly list the functions of an archivist.

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In summary, archivists and records managers are responsible for collecting, organising, preserving and making accessible records that originate from public and private organisations. These records come in many formats beyond traditional written and printed documents; archivists and

records managers often manage photographs, maps, video and tape collections, computer disks and other electronic records.

By ensuring that records are organised, preserved and made available in a systematic way, archivists and records managers help secure society's cultural heritage, protect legal rights and privileges, and contribute to the effective management of a wide range of institutions.

Study guide for this module

In this study guide you will be introduced to the fields of archives management and records management and the central concepts and principles related to these fields. In the other modules for the Higher Certificate in Archives and Records Management (HCARM) qualification, you will continue your studies in more detail.

NOTE: Always consult the two glossaries of archives and records management terms provided at the end of this study guide. These glossaries will give you the meanings of the many terms and concepts that are used in this study guide.

You should also always have a general English dictionary at hand for other words you might not understand while reading this study guide.

STUDY UNIT 1
RECORDS MANAGEMENT: AN OVERVIEW

Records management is concerned with the creation, maintenance, use and disposal of records of an organisation throughout their entire life cycle, and in making the information these records contain available in support of the business of that organisation
(International Records Management Trust 1999a:19).

1.1 Introduction

Individuals and organisations generate, maintain and manage information. In the offices of every kind of organisation, whether in the public or private sectors, most people spend most of their time handling information in one way or another (Cook 1999:26). This information plays a very important role in government organisations and private businesses today. Information is used as an organisational resource to help make decisions and improve productivity and efficiency, and is often perceived as a competitive advantage to a company if managed correctly. Public and private enterprises need information to function properly – if that information is not accessible or if it is mismanaged, an organisation might even cease to exist.

The field that is concerned with the proper care of this information is referred to as records management.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

In this study unit we introduce you to the basic and central concepts of records and records management.

After studying this unit, you should be able to

- define central concepts of records and records management
- explain the importance of records
- identify the key characteristics of records
- indicate that you know, in general terms, what is involved in the process of records management
- explain, in general terms, how the discipline of records management developed
- distinguish between archives and records management

1.2 Defining a record

*In the records management field, **a record** is considered "a document regardless of form or medium created/received, maintained and used by an organisation (public or private) or an individual"* (International Records Management Trust 1999a:20).

Records are created and received by individuals, government offices, organisations or institutions. They are created or received by individuals or organisations for the purpose of their work as products of immediate interest and they support the activities of their creators. Records are therefore the products – and serve as evidence – of the activities carried out by an individual or an organisation. A record gives the information it contains meaning and context through its

relationship to the activity. As time progresses, the record serves as the evidence of the activity or decision made.

It is also important to highlight here what information is, and the difference between information and a record. Information can be defined as any knowledge that human beings perceive through one or more of their senses (ie receiving information through one of our senses, such as through our sight, our hearing, our sense of touch, etc). Information remains intangible until it is represented or recorded.

A record is thus a tangible or concrete representation of information, in other words, it is information that is recorded or documented in whatever format, such as on paper or as an electronic record. The field of records management is mainly concerned with managing or caring for this documented/recorded information.

Examples of records created/received by individuals or organisations

<u>Example 1</u>: The minutes of a meeting held at the Department of Education on 31 January 2009.

The record is the minutes. These minutes of the meeting will provide evidence of the discussions and decisions made by the participants of the meeting for future consultation.

<u>Example 2</u>: In December 2008, Mr Ngobeni received a letter through the post from his son asking for money to help him pay for a second-hand car he had just bought.

The record is the letter. The letter is evidence that Mr Ngobeni has a son who has just bought a car. It also provides evidence that his son wants financial assistance from his father to help him pay off the car.

<u>Example 3</u>: An e-mail created by Mr Mitchley of the Human Resources Department of Africa University, and sent to Ms Zuma, an employee of the university, approving the special study leave requested by Ms Zuma.

The record is the electronic e-mail. The e-mail will serve as evidence of the special leave granted to Ms Zuma.

ACTIVITY

Think of five examples of records that you have created or received as an individual in your private capacity, or as a student, or as an employee of an organisation. List these, and briefly describe these records, and the evidence of an event or an activity they may have represented.

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1.3   Importance of records

Records are critical to the operation of any organisation.

No government body or private business or organisation (or even an individual) could survive without making records of its activities. No office could operate successfully if it had to rely on

memory alone to keep track of every transaction and decision. Without records, all organised administration would quickly come to a halt. Records and, more specifically, the information they contain are one of the vital resources that an organisation needs to conduct its operations effectively. No organisation could continue without funding, personnel and material supplies. Similarly, it could not operate if it did not keep accurate and accessible records (International Records Management Trust 1999a:22).

ACTIVITY

Before reading further, write down at least five different reasons why records are important, in your opinion.

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In the context of an organisation's business activities, records are important because they help to

- ■ provide a corporate memory of the organisation
- ■ formulate policy
- ■ make appropriate decisions
- ■ achieve greater efficiency, productivity and consistency
- ■ meet legal, statutory and regulatory requirements
- ■ protect the organisation's interests and those of its staff and clients
- ■ reduce the risks associated with missing evidence of decisions and actions
- ■ document activities and achievements of an organisation

In the public environment, records are equally important as they are fundamental to the concept of democracy. Recorded information underpins the protection of human rights, the rule of law and fair and equal treatment of citizens. Citizens should expect their government to maintain reliable and accurate documentary evidence of its decisions and actions (International Records Management Trust 1999a:24).

> For example, records are the basis for determining whether revenue collected on behalf of citizens is spent in a way that benefits them on health, education and other services.
>
> Records also protect citizens' rights, such as their rights to ownership of land, documented through land registration records; or their rights to pensions, documented through employee or personnel records.

1.4   Records as evidence

Without records to provide documentary evidence of its activities, no government or organisation can be held accountable. Accountability is established when evidence can be provided about what an organisation knew, when it should have known it, what action it took and the outcome of its activities. Records document compliance with laws, rules and procedures.

Reliable records can serve as evidence to identify abuses of position, misuse of resources and non-compliance with financial regulations. They provide verifiable evidence of fraud that may take place in the public or private sector, and can assist investigators to identify the root of corruption. On the other hand, records can serve as evidence that an organisation is well managed and successful, and how it has achieved its success.

> *Records help preserve a nation's history.*

Records also help to preserve a nation's collective memory. Those records that have permanent value are kept as archives (discussed in study units 6 and 7) and provide essential evidence in the chain of history. They give people their sense of identity; they serve as a country's documentary memory (International Records Management Trust 1999a:31).

1.5   Characteristics of a record

Records created or received by an organisation should accurately reflect what was communicated and decided or what action was taken by that organisation. A record should have content and structure (format) and should clearly reflect the organisational context in which it was created (ISO 2001:7). Records created or received by an organisation should have the following characteristics:

- Authenticity: Records must be protected against unauthorised addition, deletion, concealment and use.
- Reliability: A person should be able to trust the content of a record as a full and accurate representation of the facts contained in it.
- Integrity: This refers to a record being complete and unaltered.
- Usability: Records are usable if they can be located, retrieved, presented and interpreted. A record should be identifiable in the context of the broader organisation's functions and sequence of activities.

Records are unique: It is also important to note here that a record is most often unique to the organisation that created it. Unlike published materials that are printed in many copies (for example, the same copy of a published book may be available in many libraries), a record generated by an organisation is created in one copy only, as a result of an activity or event. It is therefore unique to that context.

The unique character of records makes their proper care of utmost importance, as a lost record may be difficult, if not impossible, to replace and may have negative consequences to the organisation. For example, a lost contract may have negative legal and financial implications.

1.6   Records management

It goes without saying that, if records are required to support the activities of the organisations which created them, these records should be managed or administered properly. This is where **records management** comes in.

1.6.1   Defining records management

> *Records management aims to supply the right information/records to the right person, at the right time and at the least possible cost.*

Controlling records throughout their life cycle (see study unit 2) is the basis for records management. Records management may be defined as that area of administration which is concerned with the efficient and economical management of recorded information, created or received in an organisation from the time of creation to its ultimate disposal

OR

the planning, controlling, directing, organising, training, promoting and other managerial activities involved in the creation, maintenance, use and disposal of records

OR

the systematic control placed over the life cycle of recorded information – from the creation to ultimate disposition or permanent storage of a record (Mnjama 2000:11)

OR

that part of management which makes it possible for records to be created, maintained, used and discarded or preserved in an efficient and accountable way (Harris 1997:13).

In summary, we may say that records management relates to the way a record is cared for once it has been created.

It is important to note here that records management is very similar to information management, and the two terms are often used interchangeably. Records management, however, focuses on the management of organisational document-based information, regardless of medium, whereas information management is broader and includes database information (raw facts and figures) and commercially available published information (as found in libraries).

1.6.2   What is involved in records management?

Records management begins as soon as a record is created or received by an individual or organisation, and is only completed when the record is destroyed or transferred to an archival storage place. The goals of records management are to ensure that unnecessary records are not created, that necessary records are maintained and used effectively, and that records that have served their purpose are disposed of or preserved properly. Cook (1999:47) formulates it this way:

The aim of records management is to achieve the best retrieval and exploitation of the information held in an organisation, and to improve the efficiency of the record-making and record-keeping processes. The main aim of records management is also accountability. No government or public authority can convincingly demonstrate its accountability to its electorate without establishing good records management procedures; no private firm can convincingly demonstrate its accountability to its auditors, shareholders and the public without establishing good records management procedures.

To achieve these goals records managers have to be constantly aware of and survey the records held by the organisation they work for. They also need to schedule the records for disposal (see study unit 5) so that they will remain in active storage space only as long as is absolutely necessary (Paul 1991:35).

Records management plays many roles within an organisation and in an organisation's relationship with the outside world. According to Cook (1999:45–46), it is concerned with the following:

- managing the records continuum, from the design of a record-keeping system to the end of the record's existence or its permanent preservation
- providing a service to meet the needs and to protect the interests of the organisation and its clients
- capturing complete, accurate, reliable and usable documentation of organisational activity to meet legal, evidential and accountability requirements
- managing records as assets and information resources, rather than as liabilities

- promoting efficiency and economy, both in managing records and in organisational activity as a whole, through sound record-keeping practices

In other words, according to Maher (1992:283–284), records management deals with

- record creation
- information access and retrieval systems, to ensure that information needed for administrative operations is readily available for use
- record protection, focused on identifying and protecting those records that are vital to the ongoing operations and continued existence of the parent institution
- record disposal, involving the ultimate fate of records, normally including options such as destruction or office retention, transfer to record centres, preservation in an alternative format such as microfilm, and archival transfer and preservation

To summarise, Ford (1990:25) puts it more simply by explaining that records management entails

- the controlled creation and receiving of records by an organisation
- the efficient management of records, which includes aspects such as the arrangement of files and adequate storage
- the proper disposition of records, which may include the destruction or permanent preservation of valuable records

In the following units we will cover these various aspects involved in records management.

ACTIVITY

In your own words, explain what records management involves.

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1.6.3   Development of records management as a discipline

At some point in history people started keeping records. The end of the 19th century brought a radical change as a result of the invention and use of various mechanical apparatuses such as the typewriter and various copying devices. In South Africa political changes and the expanding administrative activities that followed as a reaction to the Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902) brought about a true "paper explosion" (National Archives 1998:3). Changes needed to be made in the way that records were kept and managed as a result.

By the end of the 20th century, the growth in state administration, commerce and industry, the growing sophistication of administrative practices, the increasing complexity of organisations, together with an enormous increase in the number of records produced, especially as a result of information technology, made it even more important to keep and manage the records produced properly. It is within this context that records management developed as a set of techniques and as a discipline (Cook 1999:45).

Cook (1999:46) also points out that the interest in records management as a discipline has one from different points of origin. In some cases the initiative has come from archivists who were

mainly concerned with controlling material passing out of current record systems into archival care. In this tradition, records management deal mainly with retiring records from currency and appraising them (see study unit 5), that is deciding which records should be destroyed and which need to be preserved in archives. In other cases, the initiative has come from business efficiency or the business management environment, whose main concern has been to reduce administrative costs. In still other cases, the records management system may have originated in central secretariat departments, whose main concern was to regulate the flow of information and records within the offices of organisations.

In the 21st century, it is also important to note the development of electronic records management. Traditionally, records were created and stored on paper. Record media changed with the advent of the computer. Many records created and received by an organisation are now in electronic format, including e-mails, Word documents, spreadsheets, etc. It is therefore crucial nowadays for the records manager to have knowledge of issues pertaining to information technology and electronic records management in order to safeguard these records.

1.6.4 Records management and archives

Most records are kept by an organisation for only a short time, to provide evidence or information for the creating organisation. Other records have a longer value, as evidence of – or information about – the actions or functions of an organisation over time. Those records worth preserving for their enduring value are called archives.

> *Records management is seen as a separate discipline, but archives management and archivists are so involved, or should be involved, in the process of records management, that it also forms an integral part of archival studies. The study of archives will be dealt with in study units 6 and 7 of this guide.*

The relationship between records management and archives, and in particular the role that the archivist can and should play in records management, is very important. Because this is such an important aspect, and is relevant to the study units that follow, it is necessary to say something about this relationship right at the beginning of this study guide.

There is an overlap between the interests of records managers and archivists. It is important for archivists to understand records management and to become involved in the "management" of records that will eventually fall under their control. It is equally important for records managers to understand how archival documents are affected by management processes before they are transferred to the archives. Many archival records have passed through years of "management" before being transferred to an archive.

Schellenberg, a leading archival theorist, refers to this symbiotic relationship between archives and record management when he observes that "all of the archivist's problems in arranging, describing, appraising, and servicing public records arise out of the way in which such records are handled in government offices" (Paul 1991:34) – in other words during the records management stage (the different stages of a record will be explained in the next study unit). Naturally this is true of the management of all records and not just those in government offices. The important archival practices of appraisal, arrangement and description (see study units 5, 6 and 7) have to a large extent developed in response to the conditions in which records were created and maintained. The basic archival administrative principles of provenance and original order (explained in study units 6 and 7) reflect this very important link between archival methods and records management practices in the offices where the records were created or received.

Despite the existence of the obvious and fundamental relationships between the management of current records, their disposal and archival practices, interest in records management as a

technique for administering records from their creation to their final disposal developed only as recently as World War II. Paul (1991:35) indicates that initially this was mainly in response to the proliferation of war-related departments in the United States, and a resulting need to administer their vast quantities of records in an efficient manner.

The National Archives of the United States consequently established a records administration programme in 1941. This first records management programme would be used to improve records administration throughout the record life cycle, enhance the archivist's comprehension of provenance and filing methods, help prevent uninformed destruction of records, and assist with the preservation of adequate documentation of organisational activities, policies and programmes.

Within this context archivists began to perceive that records management could improve the quality and reduce the quantity of records, and ultimately facilitate access to information for reference and research.

ACTIVITY

What is your understanding of the relationship between records management and archives?

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1.7   Conclusion

In this study unit you were introduced to the central concepts of records and records management. You were also made aware that owing to an increase in the volume and complexity of records, the need for expertise in their management resulted in the development of records management into a separate field.

In the following unit you will continue your study of the field of records management, and focus on some of its core principles.

STUDY QUESTIONS

(1)   The term "record" has a specific meaning within the context of managing records in organisations. Define *records* within the records management context.

(2)   Explain the importance of records for organisations.

(3)   How do records serve as evidence?

(4)   Study the different definitions of records management in this study unit and then formulate your own definition.

(5)   Briefly explain what records management involves.

(6)   Explain how records management developed as a discipline on its own, yet is inextricably part of the world of archivists.

STUDY UNIT 2
BASIC PRINCIPLES OF RECORDS MANAGEMENT

2.1 Introduction

In the previous study unit you were introduced to the central concepts of records and records management.

In this study unit we will look at some of the basic or core principles of records management, such as the life cycle of the record, the meaning of the record continuum and the principle of *respect des fonds*. Once these principles have been understood, we can continue with a more detailed explanation of records management in the following study units.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After studying this unit, you should be able to

- discuss the life cycle of the record and apply it to the work that archivists and records managers do
- explain what is meant by the concept "record continuum"
- explain the importance of the principles of *respect des fonds*, provenance and original order in records management

2.2 The life cycle of records

Each record has a life which is characterised by creation, usage, storage and eventual retirement of that record through destruction, or preservation as an archival record (Agere, Lemieux & Mazikana 1999:16).

The most important principle relating to records management is that of the life cycle of a record. Records managers need to be concerned with the whole lifespan of records within public or private organisations, from their creation to their ultimate disposition (disposition meaning whether records should be permanently preserved by being sent to an archives, or if they should be destroyed).

2.2.1 What is the life cycle of a record?

> *Life cycle concept: a concept that draws an analogy between the life of a biological organism, which is born, lives and dies, and that of a record, which is created, is used for so long as it has continuing value and is then disposed of by destruction or by transfer to an archival institution* (International Records Management Trust 1999a:15).

The life cycle concept of the record is a comparison that records managers make between the life of a biological organism and a record. An organism is born, lives and dies and in the same way, a record is created, used for as long as it has continuing value (ie when the record is used regularly by the organisation), and then is disposed of by destruction or by transfer to an archival institution for long-term preservation.

The effective management of records throughout their life cycle is a key issue for organisations. Without it, vast quantities of inactive records take up expensive office space, and it is virtually impossible to retrieve important administrative, financial and legal information. Furthermore, without a management programme that controls records through the earlier phases of their life cycle, those records of archival value cannot readily be identified and safeguarded so that they can take their place in due course as part of the nation's historical and cultural heritage (International Records Management Trust 1999).

2.2.2   The phases of the life cycle of records

In the simplest version of the life cycle concept, three "biological" ages are seen as the equivalents of the three phases of the life of a record.

In the **current phase** records are regularly used in the conduct of current business of an organisation, and are maintained in their place of origin (ie in the office that created or received the records).

> ***Current records***: *records regularly used for the conduct of the current business of an organisation or individual. Also known as active records. Current records will normally be maintained in or near their place of origin or in a registry or records office for quick and easy access. For example a secretary working in a department will keep current records of the department in her office, for easy access and retrieval* (International Records Management Trust, 1999e:17).

In the **semi-current phase**, records are still used, but only infrequently, in the conduct of current business (where they are often kept in a separate records centre).

> ***Semi-current records:*** *records required only infrequently in the conduct of current business of an organisation. Also known as semi-active records. Semi-current records will normally be maintained in a records centre or other offsite intermediate storage pending their ultimate disposal* (International Records Management Trust, 1999e:17).

In the non-current phase, records are no longer used for the conduct of current business and are therefore destroyed, unless they have a continuing value for other purposes which merits their preservation as archives in an archival institution.

> ***Non-current records:*** *records no longer needed for the conduct of current business. Also known as inactive records, or archives* (International Records Management Trust, 1999e:17).

A practical example of the life cycle of a record: *Mr Cohen works as a building contractor for Melville Building Ltd. He has produced a quote for building a swimming pool at Mr Ngoepe's house. While Mr Cohen is still busy building the pool, the quote, which in this case is the record, will be kept with the contractor's active or current records, as he might have to consult the quote on a regular basis.*

After completion of the work on the pool, the quote can be transferred to the contractor's semi-active records, and after a longer period of time, once there is no longer a need to ever consult the quote again, it can be destroyed.

If, however, the record was one that has more of a permanent value, one that may be needed for consultation as evidence in the long term, it would be transferred to an archive for preservation. For example, a record that is issued by the SA Building Association to Melville Building Ltd, recognising them as an accredited building contractor in South Africa, would not be destroyed, but would rather be preserved as a permanent archival record of that organisation.

2.3 The continuum concept

According to this life cycle model, there are distinct stages in the life of a record which reflect the relative roles of records managers and archivists. In the records management phase, records are created or received, classified into a logical system, maintained or used functionally (ie they are active) and are disposed of by being destroyed or transferred to an archival repository. In the archival phase, records are acquired by means of appraisal, arranged and described in finding aids, preserved and made available for use for reference and research.

What we have just said refers to the life cycle of the record, which eventually ends in an archive. Within the records management phase itself, it is accepted that records have three basic phases: creation, use and maintenance. A comprehensive records management system will, however, be concerned with everything that happens to the records of an organisation throughout the entire life cycle, that is, from their birth through their active and productive life as a means of accomplishing the organisation's functions, to their death or destruction when all useful purposes have been served, or to their "reincarnation" as archives if they have values warranting permanent preservation (Rhoads as quoted by Wamukoya 1995:18).

The life cycle of records is often represented as a circle. However, this is deceptive if we consider the actual process involved: records do not return to their point of creation and some records continue into the archival stage. The life cycle model also tends to separate the roles of the records manager and the archivist in time. This does not reflect reality and could have negative consequences.

In practice, the responsibilities of the records manager and archivist are not separated in time, but are intertwined and mutually dependent.

The archivist may, for example, provide guidance on the compilation of filing and classification systems; the records manager may supply information on the functions and structure of the office that are necessary to carry out archival appraisal; and using the classification system as the basis of that appraisal, the archivist may transform it into a retention schedule with disposal instructions that facilitate efficiency through planned and systematic disposal.

The interdependent nature of the relationship between the records manager and the archivist therefore supports the idea that we replace the life cycle concept with a model that reflects **a continuum** rather than a cycle: creation or receipt, classification, scheduling and application of schedules, and maintenance and use. The stages in the continuum are interrelated rather than sequential and involve both records managers and archivists.

> ***Continuum concept:*** *a consistent and coherent process of records management throughout the life cycle of records, from the development of record-keeping systems through the creation and preservation of records, to their retention and use as archives* (International Records Management Trust 1999e:19).

This preferred model, **the records continuum model**, is therefore one that reflects records management in a linear form rather than circular form. It considers the overlapping stages and ongoing life of a record from the time of creation to its final disposal and continuing use. Moreover, it is also important to note that not all records go through each stage of the cycle. For example, a memo may be created and distributed, or a notation may be made by the user and the memo discarded, bypassing the storage and maintenance stages (Mnjama 2000:6).

The life cycle principle recognises that records are created, used, maintained and then disposed of, either by destruction as obsolete or by preservation as archives for their ongoing value. However, the continuum concept builds on this by suggesting that certain stages or actions continue or recur throughout the life cycle of a record. In this version of the records life cycle, five stages are seen as being part of the three phases in the life of a record. At each stage of the cycle there are issues to be addressed which impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of records management.

Mnjama (2000:6–9) identifies the following stages:

Creation stage: Records are created or received in the organisation in support of current business. They originate internally from dictation, handwritten drafts or word or data processors and externally from mail, computer printouts, telecommunication systems, telegrams, e-mail messages, amongst others. They may come from the post office, be delivered personally, arrive by courier, be sent by electronic means such as e-mail, etc. When a letter is written, an invoice prepared or an engineering drawing made, a record is created. Records are created at all levels of the organisation from clerical staff to executive officers.

During the creation phase, records may be controlled by forms management (establishment of standards for forms creation, design, analysis and revision), correspondence management (establishment of uniform systems for formatting, preparing and processing correspondence) and copy management (determining how many copies are needed, what they will be used for, how they are distributed, how they will be made in the most economical manner and avoiding unnecessary copies).

Despite being one of the most important phases, if not **the** most, the creation phase tends to be underrated. Most records management costs are incurred during the creation stage, a very good reason for approaching it seriously. A conscious decision needs to be taken every time a record is created because once it is created it will have a life of its own and will need to be managed. The life cycle should therefore begin with a phase similar to birth control and family planning, so as to avoid unwanted records.

Distribution stage: If the process stopped at the creation stage, information would not be available to the people who require the data to perform their jobs. The distribution phase therefore follows the creation phase. During this phase the information is distributed to the appropriate people. Records are distributed internally and externally. E-mail, interoffice filing systems, postal services, special courier or direct access to computer databases may be used to distribute them.

Storage, maintenance and use stage: Maintenance refers to filing, retrieving and transferring information (see study units 3 and 4). A file is a collection of related records treated as a unit; filing is the action of arranging documents or other records into predetermined sequences. The perception that records management is just filing persists among those officers who are unfamiliar with records management functions. Filing is just one aspect of records management. Retrieval refers to finding and removing a file that has been requested or the information contained within the file. Records have many users and provide the information required for decisionmaking, for documentation, for responding to enquiries, for reference or for supporting legal requirements. This is the phase of the life cycle in which the records are put to the use for which they were intended.

During the use/maintenance phase of the life cycle, filing system design is critical to controlling records. Questions about the use and control of records should be asked and answered before a single filing cabinet or folder is purchased. Some of the questions to be asked include: Will the filing system be kept at a centralised or decentralised venue? Will the filing arrangement be numerical or alphabetical, or a combination of both?

Disposition stage: When records are no longer referred to frequently, they become inactive and are removed from active prime office space and destroyed immediately if they have no further value. If they are still of some value they are transferred to inactive storage facilities such as a store, a records centre or archives. The decision to store or dispose of records (referred to as appraisal) is based on a plan predetermined by the organisation concerned for destroying or keeping records; this plan is called the records retention schedule (discussed in study unit 5). Where there are no retention schedules, decisions on the future of records should be based on their administrative, legal, financial, historical and informational values.

The disposal phase of the life cycle is very important for proper and economical maintenance of office records. Many records may be legally destroyed at the end of their active lives. Others become semi-active and should be sent to a records storage area or reformatted for more convenient storage. Microfilming and digital imaging are the most common form of reformatting. Records with continuing long-term value are sent to the archives for permanent storage.

The archival preservation stage: Records of permanent value are preserved in archives for ongoing historical, reference or research value. Such records have to be accessioned, arranged, described and made available to potential users (see study units 6 and 7).

Records management seeks to manage records to the best advantage throughout these stages and, in order to do so, seeks to establish control over them at the start of the continuum, which runs from the time they are created to their final disposal. This means that the scope of records management should cover the initial design of the recording systems to the disposal of physical media at the end.

If we ask the question, "How long should any record remain a current record, likely to be needed for daily business?", the answer is not straightforward. **Time** *from creation of the information in the record can never be the sole criterion. Common sense would suggest that different business functions need to keep a record close to hand, that is current, for different periods. In some cases it could be as little as a few days, in others it could be several years.*

For example, the length of time a student record at a university remains active will depend on

- *the length of the course*
- *whether the student progresses to another course at the same university*
- *whether it is a course leading to a recognised profession qualification, ie areas such as medicine, nursing, architecture, engineering and law may require that some elements of the student file be retained for at least the working life of the individual*

ACTIVITY

Explain in your own words the **life cycle of a record** and the **continuum concept.**

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2.4   Core principles of *"respect des fonds",* provenance and original order

An early principle of records (and archives) management is the concept of *respect des fonds*. This is originally a French concept. Simply put, it means "respect for the creator of the records". What this means is that when managing records, the context in which the records were created needs to be respected, such as noting the office or department that created the record, considering the original activity by the creator that brought about the creation of the record, and paying attention to the order in which the record was kept by the creator.

The principle of *respect des fonds* consists of two related concepts: *provenance* and *original order*. Provenance refers to the office of origin of the records; original order refers to the order in which the documents were created or stored by that office of origin.

> **Respect des fonds**: *respect for the creator of the records or archives, involving the maintenance of provenance and original order.*
>
> **Provenance:** *the organisation or individual that created or received, maintained and used the records while they were still current.*
>
> **Original order**: *the order in which documents were created arranged and maintained by the office of origin*
>
> (International Records Management Trust 1999e:15)

But why are these three principles so important or considered core to records management? They are important as they allow us to understand the very way in which records should be organised, so as to give them context and meaning, and to facilitate their retrieval.

Cook (1999:67) makes this importance more clear, by explaining that the principle of provenance emphasises the conceptual rather than the physical characteristics of records. As we have seen in the previous study unit, it is the "evidential" nature of records within organisations, rather than their physical format, that distinguishes them from other kinds of information. Provenance also provides the basis for retrieving information from records. Knowing who created or used a record, and where, when and why a record was created, provides the key to how it should be organised and retrieved (rather than the format, subject matter or content of the records – which would be the case for library materials, for example).

The above principles require that records managers observe the following guidelines:

■ The records of separate departments or organisations must be managed separately, even if the organisations in question were involved in similar activities. This means that the records of two departments or organisations, such as the human resources department and the department of finance, should not be combined. This is in line with the principles of *respect des fonds* and of provenance.

■ Records must be maintained according to their "original order", that is according to the filing, classification and retrieval methods established by the department or organisation that created them. Organisations or departments within organisations should create, maintain and store records according to logical and well-structured records management procedures. The original order of records should not be changed, as that order reflects the way in which records were created and used, and therefore gives them context and meaning. This means that organisational records should not be reorganised by subject, date or medium of material; they should be kept in the original order that they were created or received by the organisation (International Records Management Trust 1999e:17).

In summary, the above principles imply that records from one source must be kept intact or separate from records from other sources. For example, in a university, records of the College of Arts must be kept separate from records of the College of Business. Another example, in a municipal government, records of municipal taxes must not be interfiled with the records of municipal grants (Ford 1990:76).

ACTIVITY

In your own words, explain the concept of "*respect des fonds*". Why do you think it is the appropriate way in which to manage records?

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Conclusion

In this study unit we introduced the principle of the life cycle and continuum models of records management. Records do follow a life cycle, but their care should rather be seen as part of a continuum, with records (and archives) managers involved at all stages – from cradle to grave, as the common phrase has it (Cook 1999:31). We also looked at other core records management principles, such as *respect des fonds*, provenance and original order, and the importance of these principles.

In the following study unit we will examine the importance of having an integrated approach towards the management of records within an organisation. This entails developing a comprehensive records management programme for an organisation.

STUDY QUESTIONS

    (1)   Explain the concepts of *respect des fonds*, provenance and original order.
    (2)   What is the life cycle concept?
    (3)   Briefly explain the records continuum model.
    (4)   Define current, semi-current and non-current records.

STUDY UNIT 3
DEVELOPING A RECORDS MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

3.1   Introduction

The way to make sure that records are useful is to manage those records so that they are given the proper attention and care from their creation to their ultimate disposition. This is the reason that an integrated approach to records management within an organisation is essential. A means for organisations to achieve this is by developing a records management programme. This programme recognises that records follow a life cycle and acknowledges the importance of caring for those records through a continuum of care.

In this study unit we give an overview of the issues that are involved in the records management programme. Some of the important elements that make up part of an integrated records management programme, such as the record survey and disposal and retention schedules, are discussed in greater detail in the following units.

> *By caring for records throughout their life cycle, a records management programme ensures the preservation of valuable records and makes them available for use.*

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After studying this unit, you should be able to

- ■ describe the purposes and goals of a records management programme
- ■ discuss the most important issues involved in the establishment of such a programme
- ■ identify the advantages to an organisation of having a records management programme and the disadvantages of not having one
- ■ outline the elements of a records management programme

What is a programme? A programme can be defined as a definite plan of intended events, actions, processes or proceedings.

Therefore, a records management programme can be seen as a plan that stipulates the actions or processes involved in the management of records of an organisation.

3.2 The primary purposes and goals of a records management programme

The aim of records management is to achieve adequate and proper documentation of an organisation's structure, functions, policies, decisions, procedures and essential transactions. Records managers or archivists will not be able to supply the necessary information (records) when needed if they have not managed such records effectively in the first place. It is therefore important that a comprehensive and integrated records management programme be designed to ensure that records containing adequate and proper documentation of the structure, functions, policies, decisions, procedures and essential transactions of the organisation are created and preserved, as well as conscientiously disposed of.

The primary **purposes** of a records management programme are to

■ preserve records in an accessible, intelligent and usable form for as long as they have continuing use and value
■ make information from records available in the right format, to the right people, at the right time (International Records Management Trust 1999b:58)

The **goals** of a records management programme include

■ the creation and maintenance of reliable records in an accessible and usable form for as long as they are required to support the business and accountability requirements of the organisation
■ efficiency in the management of records through eliminating duplication of effort, creating and maintaining only those records that are needed, and systematising retention and disposal
■ improved access to records
■ enhancing sound decisionmaking within the organisation
■ the secure destruction of obsolete records
■ the identification of archives of enduring historical and cultural value
■ the transfer of such archives to an archival institution
■ the arrangement and description of archival records in accordance with records management and archival principles so as to preserve their contextual information and to facilitate access to their content to users
■ the preservation of those archives (International Records Management Trust 1999b:59)

To achieve these goals it is necessary to

■ implement comprehensive records management policies within the organisation so as to regulate the life cycle management of records and archives, irrespective of medium or format
■ designate one or more responsible people to oversee the records management process and assign other staff members clear responsibilities for their respective actions at each of its stages
■ develop procedures, systems and structures to ensure the maintenance of the integrated records management programme
■ prepare long-term strategic plans to determine priorities within the programme
■ provide adequate resources, including staff, buildings or office space, equipment and funding, to ensure the implementation of those strategic plans and the sustainability of the programme
■ monitor and evaluate the programme to assess its efficiency and effectiveness ("value for money"), and to make any necessary adjustments (International Records Management Trust 1999b:60)

ACTIVITY

In your own words, explain the primary purposes and the goals of a records management programme.

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3.3 Establishment of a records management programme

If a records management programme does not yet exist within an organisation, and there are no institutional procedures for records management, the records manager/archivist should try to gain the support of management of the organisation to establish such a programme. This may be achieved by emphasising the basic goals, and the need for and benefits of records management to the organisation.

The initial step in establishing the records management programme is to draw up a **proposal** that outlines the need for and content of such a programme to the management of the organisation. Maher (1992:288) lists the following aspects that should be included in the proposal:

- a history of the organisation's handling of records, including an account of problems caused by the lack of a systematic approach to records management, the potential cost savings and historical evidence of how records management could increase the organisation's efficiency and ability to accomplish its goals
- an outline of the kind of programme needed to address these problems, including a list of the elements of records management, such as records surveys or inventories, filing and classification systems and disposition schedules
- specifications of what resources will be needed, including administrative and policy support, personnel, space, equipment, services and supplies, a storage facility and technology
- a timeframe for phasing in the records management programme, that is, what should be done first and what can wait

ACTIVITY

Imagine you are working at a company called *Makwanazi and Viljoen Attorneys*. Write a short proposal explaining the need for a records management programme to the top management of the company.

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After obtaining general support for the proposal, the records manager should prepare and secure approval for a **formal records management policy** for the programme (a records management policy being a formal document approved by the organisation, which stipulates the course or general plan of action of the organisation regarding records management matters). Securing approval will vary from organisation to organisation, but both patience and lengthy negotiations may be necessary. At the very least, the records management policy document should be reviewed and approved by the middle and top management, among other staff within the organisation (Maher 1992:288).

It is important to note here that in smaller and non-government organisations with limited staff and many existing demands, it would be unwise to try to establish a full-scale records management programme. Attention should rather be focused on the area most critical to both custodians of current records and archival researchers – that is, establishing a records disposal or scheduling programme. This is a minimalist approach to ensure that the records manager has a role in decisions regarding the ongoing disposal or transfer of records (Maher 1992:289).

3.4 Evidence of the absence of a records management programme

If an organisation has no plan for seeing that all records flow smoothly through the records life cycle, it will be faced with one or more of the following **problems**:

■ untidiness in the records area
■ bulky files
■ misfiling and loss of files
■ lack of file indexes
■ lack of control of file movement
■ lack of procedures for file closure
■ lack of retention and disposal schedules
■ poor file tracking systems
■ poor file classification or no classification system or use of several classification systems in the same registry
■ inadequate storage area for semi-current records
■ poor supervision of records registry staff
■ ignorance about the value of information, for instance lack of security procedures for handling sensitive or classified information
■ delayed finding of papers when speed is essential
■ large areas occupied by semi-current and non-current records
■ unmanageable piles of papers within the office
■ time wasted by clerical staff searching for information
■ loss of important operating information
■ extravagant use of high-cost office space and equipment
■ possible loss of key information when defending the organisation (Mnjama 2000:13)

3.5 Evidence of the existence of a records management programme

On the other hand, according to Mnjama (2000:13), the existence of a records management programme in an organisation may be seen or demonstrated by the existence of all or some of the following advantages:

■ clear and unambiguous file titles
■ clear file lists and indexes
■ no obsolete records held in the departments or registries
■ secure storage for confidential and classified records
■ well-established system for controlling records
■ secure storage for semi-current and non-current records
■ readily accessible records for users
■ absence of mini-registries in action officers' offices
■ training programme for records cadre
■ presence of retrieval tools such as file indexes, registers, etc
■ an efficient file tracking system

Write down at least three benefits you think might come from implementing a records management programme in an organisation. Be as specific as possible.

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Can you also think of any drawbacks of not having a records management programme in an organisation? Write down as many as you can think of.

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3.6   Introduction to elements of a records management programme

The elements of a records management programme may be seen as a sequence of actions or processes. These may be summarised as follows: conducting a thorough survey of all records maintained by the organisation, conducting a functional analysis of the organisation, compiling classification and filing systems, compiling and implementing a disposal schedule, and making appraisal decisions of records for transfer to archives.

These elements are briefly outlined as follows:

Conducting a records survey is an essential initial element of a records management programme. The technique of systems analysis is applied to gather basic information on the quantity, physical form and type, location, physical condition, storage facilities, uses and similar information on the records of an organisation. This survey is essential as it helps determine, _inter alia_, the filings systems that will be used, the retention and disposal schedules that need to be developed and the appraisal decisions that will be made.

When developing filing systems (see study unit 4), records managers consider the functions performed by the organisation and its various departments and individuals. This process is often referred to as the functional analysis of the organisation. It includes the separation of substantive from facilitative records, the degree of detail needed for subject headings and the level of indexing.

Substantive or programme records are those records created or received and maintained by an organisation as it performs the substantive functions for which it is responsible, ie those functions that represent the essence of a particular organisation. In contrast, facilitative or housekeeping records relate to budget, fiscal, personnel, supply or similar administrative matters common to all offices and agencies. They facilitate the achievement of a functional goal and generally lose their value as soon as their primary purpose has been accomplished. Examples of facilitative records

include requests for equipment and supplies, work schedules and general announcements. By creating separate series for substantive and facilitative records, records managers can develop a disposal schedule that complements the filing system, thus making disposal easier.

In the compilation of classification and filing systems, the following needs to be dealt with (Cook 1999:30):

■ the classification schemes and the vocabulary control that goes with them
■ management of the filing systems, including the use of technical means for recording, storage and retrieval of information (involving, for example, microforms and/or automation)
■ filing equipment and supplies

Setting up schedules to control the disposal and retention of records is essential. When records become inactive and are ready for disposal, records managers oversee their removal from expensive office space to less costly space. Records centres, whether in-house or off-site, are established to store records more economically and efficiently than would be the case if they remained in the office.

Finally, closely linked to disposal is the appraisal element of the records management programme. Appraisal is a key part of the process that ensures that the destruction of records or their transfer for archival preservation takes place at the right time.

In the case of smaller and non-government organisations, some of the aspects mentioned above will probably be beyond the basic interests and resources of their records management programmes. For example, as mentioned earlier, an organisation might focus its records management efforts on records disposal activities (Maher 1992:286). In such a case, the best approach is a records disposal and scheduling programme. However, the exact nature of the records management programme and the scope of the records manager's role in it will depend on local conditions of the organisation, often beyond the record manager's control.

The records manager/archivist should therefore be flexible about undertaking records management tasks since he or she may have little control over certain circumstances.

Each of the above elements will be discussed separately in the next study units.

ACTIVITY

Briefly outline the elements of an integrated records management programme.

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3.7   Conclusion

This study unit contained an overview of the records management programme and a brief discussion of the various programme elements. Because the successful implementation of such a programme is of the utmost importance to records managers/archivists, the study units that follow will present a more detailed discussion of these elements of the records management programme.

STUDY QUESTIONS

(1) Explain the concept of a records management programme.
(2) Discuss the goals of a records management programme.
(3) Discuss the aspects that are important when the establishment of a records management programme is considered.
(4) List the advantages to an organisation of having a records management programme and the disadvantages of not having one.
(5) What are the elements of a records management programme?

STUDY UNIT 4
ELEMENTS OF THE RECORDS MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME: RECORDS SYSTEMS ANALYSIS AND CLASSIFICATION FILING SYSTEMS

4.1   Introduction

In the previous study unit we were introduced to what a records management programme is, and we briefly touched on the various elements which make up part of such a programme. Because the successful implementation of such a programme is of the utmost importance to records managers/archivists, the following study units will present a more detailed discussion on the elements of the records management programme.

In this study unit we will focus on one of the most important elements or tasks in developing a records management programme: analysing the existing records system of an organisation. This is often referred to as **business systems analysis,** and includes the records survey or information audit. We will also discuss another important element of a records management programme: developing and implementing **classification and filing systems** for maintaining organisational records.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After studying this unit, you should be able to

- explain the importance of business systems analysis for records management
- discuss how a records survey should be carried out in an organisation that is implementing a records management programme
- describe the relevance of developing and implementing classification and filing systems for organisational records

4.2   Analysing the records system of an organisation

The first phase in developing a records management programme is learning how the records of an organisation are created and used. This task is ideally completed through what is called **business systems analysis**, also known as business process analysis.

> *Business systems analysis: the process of systematically and objectively gathering information about business systems of an organisation, and subjecting that information to formal analysis. This includes identifying broad organisational goals and supporting business areas and processes. When applied to the records management environment, business systems analysis identifies the organisation's information management systems, and more specifically the organisation's records systems* (International Records Management Trust 1999a:6).

Business systems analysis involves examining a system within an organisation, reviewing how tasks or functions within that system are executed, and considering whether they may be done more efficiently. In our case the systems we, as records professionals, are interested in analysing are the records systems of an organisation.

4.2.1   Business systems analysis and records management

When applied to records management, business systems analysis is not just conducted in order to improve day-to-day office systems, such as filing or classifying records. Business systems analysis should be closely linked to all aspects of records management, ie all records systems. Therefore, when analysing records systems, all the processes of how information or records are created, filed, retrieved and disposed of should be included.

The records manager in an organisation can offer significant input to business systems analysis. He or she can comment on the effect that any changes in systems and processes within an organisation might have on record-keeping, thereby ensuring that records in the organisation are managed efficiently.

Business systems analysis also determines what information is worthy of capture in the record-keeping system to support business operations and ensure accountability. It also establishes the form in which the information needs to be recorded within an organisation (International Records Management Trust 1999e:67).

Specifically, business systems analysis helps the records manager to

- see where information flows occur in the organisation, and consequently the flow or movement of records in organisations between individuals and departments
- see where the information/records support business processes
- match information requirements to the information that exists
- eliminate duplication
- determine the appropriate format of records
- determine the relationship between categories of records
- determine the logical arrangement of records into series
- design classification and filing schemes for records
- determine the ideal locations for records storage
- identify vital records
- identify records of permanent value
- develop records retention and disposal schedules

(International Records Management Trust 1999e:68)

ACTIVITY

Explain why you think it is important to conduct a systems analysis when introducing a records management programme in an organisation.

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4.2.2　Conducting a records survey

> ***Records survey*** *is the application of the techniques of business systems analysis to the gathering of basic information regarding the quantity, physical form and type, location, physical condition, storage facilities, rate of accumulation, uses and similar information about the records of an organisation* (International Records Management Trust 1999a:7).

An important component of a business systems analysis is the **records survey**, also known as a records inventory or an information audit. The survey serves to locate and identify the existing records of an organisation and relates them to the organisation's present functions and information needs. The records survey will also identify non-current records within the existing system of an organisation in anticipation of their appraisal and disposal.

The objectives of a records survey include

■ establishing the origin of records and their original purpose and arrangement within an organisation
■ identifying those records ready for disposal
■ identifying those records that still need to be retained within the organisation (International Records Management Trust 1999e:71)

The records manager of the organisation will conduct a records survey to provide a picture of the information structure and broad requirements of the organisation. This comprehensive and systematic gathering of information about the records created, received and held by the organisation should be conducted by questionnaires and interviews with staff members at all levels.

The records survey will enable the records manager to

■ find out what records exist and gather relevant information about them
■ understand how the records are used by the organisation
■ identify and resolve record-keeping problems
■ develop file systems
■ develop disposal schedules
■ stimulate interest in and raise the profile of records work for the organisation

Conducting interviews for the records survey

Interviews with staff members from the organisation will enable the records manager to obtain a better understanding of the organisation's records and will supplement the information gathered in the course of the records survey. This will include obtaining information on the types of records created and received by individual staff members and departments within the organisation, and the existing filing systems used by these staff members.

Interviews should be carefully structured, preferably with a prepared list of standard questions to be asked so that information gathered is as relevant, complete and comprehensive as possible.

ACTIVITY

You have recently been appointed as the records manager of Tourism South Africa. You have been made aware that there is no formal records management programme in the organisation. As one of the first steps in establishing a records management programme, you decide to conduct a records survey and to interview staff members to determine what records there are in the organisation and how these are organised.

Give examples of questions that should be included in your interview designed to gather information on the organisation's records:

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4.2.3   Data analysis of organisational structures

During the process of the records survey, it is also important that the records manager gain a comprehensive understanding of the structures of the organisation. Often the best way to achieve this is through the means of **flow charts.** Flow charts are used to diagrammatically illustrate how the organisation is structured and how it generates, receives and uses its recorded information.

The records manager should list the functions and activities carried out by each division and branch of the organisation and develop flow charts that represent these. This process is often referred to as a **functional analysis** within the records management environment. This analysis should be done to illustrate

■   the interrelationship between the divisions and departments within the organisation
■   the internal and external relationships of the branches and offices within a division, and the flow of information into and out of them
■   the processing of information and the generation of records (International Records Management Trust 1999e:72)

The records manager should then put together the information needs of the organisation that have been identified by the flow charts and the organisation of records work as determined by the survey. This will help the records manager to

■   devise a records management system that matches records creation and handling procedures to information needs of the organisation
■   determine the control points needed to record the creation, receipt and movement of records within an organisation
■   prepare new record forms and control documentation if required
■   establish a controlled vocabulary or list of key words for the use of managing records in the organisation, based on its functions, activities and areas of business
■   implement filing and classification systems
■   prepare draft disposal schedules
■   assess training needs of records staff and users in operating the new system (International Records Management Trust 1999e:72)

ACTIVITY

Draw a basic flow chart of an organisation of your choice. In your flow chart include the various departments that make up the organisation and the functions attached to those departments, and indicate the flow of information and records between these departments.

4.3 Developing and implementing classification and filing systems

Another important element in supporting a records management programme is the establishment of organisational records classification and filing systems. These should be based on the records survey, and should reflect or mirror the functional structure and activities of the organisation. As discussed above, it is these functions and activities that give rise to the documents and records in an organisation which need to be filed.

> *Classification: the process of identifying and arranging records in categories according to logically structured conventions, methods and procedural rules*

Once the records created by a department or an organisation have been identified (by means of the records survey), the next step is to place them into logical groupings. This is known as **classification**.

To classify records of an organisation correctly, records managers need to develop **classification systems**. The classification system is a plan used for identifying and coding records by topic to provide an orderly and accurate way of filing and finding them. Records classification systems provide a way of having control over all the records of an office, what records exist and where they are kept.

Classification of records within an organisation is based on a basic principle of records management referred to as **levels of arrangement**. According to this principle, records of an organisation should be organised according to levels. These levels place records into categories according to a

hierarchy, allowing records to be managed as groups rather than individual items. The following levels apply when discussing the classification of records:

■ **Group**: the primary division in the arrangement of records. This ensures that records originating from the same organisation, department or individual are kept together. It is also known as records group or *fonds*. For example, a group of records could be all those records created and received by Unisa, or all those records created by a department, such as the department of finance.

■ **Series**: files and other records of an organisation relating to the same function or activity or having a common form or some other relationship arising from their creation, receipt or use. Simply put, it is a group of records related by subject, function, activity or form. It is also known as a file series, records series or class. For example, within an organisation such as Unisa, there might be a department that deals with a specific activity, such as *graduations*. All records relating to this function/activity, *graduations*, are grouped together.

■ **File**: an organised physical assembly (usually within a folder) of documents grouped together because they relate to the same subject, activity or transaction within the organisation. For example, within the series *graduations*, a file or folder may be created for all *graduation certificate requests for a particular course*, such as a folder for all requests for printing of certificates for the course Certificate in Archival Studies.

■ **Item**: the basic physical unit, also known as a piece. For example, an individual memorandum requesting the printing of a certificate for a particular student, such as a memo requesting the printing of Mrs J Wong's certificate for the course Certificate in Archival Studies that she completed. The actual memo would be the item. Another example might be a correspondence kept within a file.

It is important to note that according to the above levels, **within a series**, records are arranged according to **a filing system** (International Records Management Trust 1999b:97).

File system: a predetermined logical scheme for the physical and arrangement, storage and retrieval of files.

A filing system is a system used to number or index records for storage and retrieval purposes.

The most frequently used filing systems are as follows:

■ **Chronological**: where files within a series are organised according to date order, for example all files of 2009 are kept together.

■ **Geographical**: where information is arranged and accessed according to place or region, for example vehicle registration records for Gauteng are arranged together.

■ **Alphanumerical**: where letters are assigned to main division and numbers to subdivisions, for example the subject Staffing (S) could have the subdivisions, S1 for Permanent Staff, and S2 for Temporary Staff.

■ **Numerical**: a system in which numbers are assigned to a series of records, and the records are arranged accordingly, for example:

    1   Personnel
    1/1   Leave
    1/1/1   Sick leave
    1/1/2   Vacation leave

Another example:

    100   Finance
    101   Accounting Instructions
    101/1   Handling of Cash in Transit
    101/2   Accounting for Donor Funded Projects

Give your own example of a numerical filing system.

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4.3.1   Types of files

When creating a file series, it is helpful to distinguish between the different categories of files. Most organisations create a wide range of files, but some common broad categories may be identified:

■   Policy files relate to the formulation of policy and procedures by the organisation.
■   Operational or subject files deal with the implementation of the organisation's policies and procedures.
■   Administrative or housekeeping files deal with subjects such as buildings, equipment and supplies, finance and personnel files, as well as with the internal administration.
■   Case files contain similar information on a wide range of, for example, individuals or organisations, usually reflecting the particular functions and activities of a department within an organisation. Each individual file within the series concerns a separate person, institution or place, but is otherwise similar in form and content to other files in that series.

4.3.2   Requirements of a filing system

The following are important suggestions when creating a filing system for the records of an organisation (International Records Management Trust 1999b:96). A filing system should

■   support business and organisational requirements
■   suit the organisation it serves and support decisionmaking
■   be easy to understand, use and maintain
■   be based on logic and common sense
■   be precise
■   allow the quick identification and retrieval of files and records
■   be complete and comprehensive
■   cover all files that need to be included
■   be backed up by a procedures manual
■   be easily automated

ACTIVITY

Based on the above requirements, examine the filing practices in the organisation you work for. Ask yourself:

■   Is the filing system (and are the filing practices) precise?
■   Is the filing system based on logical/common sense structures?

- ■ Does the filing system allow for easy access or retrieval, ie can you find the documents you need quickly and easily?

If you do not work for an organisation, think about your own personal filing practices. How do you file your own documents at home, such as your birth and marriage certificates, your children's school reports, the proof of purchase of your appliances (TV, etc), copies of your qualifications? Do you find these documents quickly and easily when you need them?

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4.3.3   File plans

Another important component of a filing system is to keep a file plan. File plans (also called file lists) record the individual files within each series. They are a detailed list of the individual files within a file classification system. File plans provide a complete list of all the files in the system. They also show where each file fits in the classification scheme.

In South Africa, the National Archivist from the National Archives of South Africa has to approve all file plans for governmental bodies.

In summary, classification and filing systems organise and give structure to the records of an organisation. Records are organised into categories, based on the functions and activities the records represent, so that decisions about their organisation, storage and transfer and disposal may be made. Classification and filing systems organise records and information so that they are easily retrieved.

ACTIVITY

Give examples of the titles of files that might be created as part of a records management classification scheme at the organisation you work for.

(If you are unemployed, give examples of the titles of files that might be created as part of a records management classification scheme at a university, such as Unisa.)

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4.4   Conclusion

In this study unit we examined one of the most important elements or tasks of a records management programme, namely analysing the existing records system of an organisation. This is often referred to as **business systems analysis,** and includes the records survey. We also discussed another very important element of a records management programme, namely developing and implementing **classification and filing systems** for controlling organisational records.

In the following unit you will continue your study of the different elements of a records management programme, focusing on the records disposal and retention schedules.

STUDY QUESTIONS

(1)   How can **business systems analysis** help the records manager?

(2)   What is a **records survey**?

(3)   Why should a records survey be conducted when implementing a records management programme?

(4)   How can interviews help with the records survey?

(5)   During the process of the records survey, it is also important that the records manager gain a comprehensive understanding of the structures of the organisation. What is often the best way to achieve this?

(6)   Explain the concept of **classification** of records within an organisation.

(7)   Explain what is meant by **series** when discussing the classification of records.

(8)   Define what a **file system** is.

(9)   List some of the important requirements when creating a filing system for the records of an organisation.

STUDY UNIT 5

ELEMENTS OF THE RECORDS MANAGE-MENT PROGRAMME: APPRAISING AND DISPOSING OF RECORDS

5.1   Introduction

In the previous study unit we examined one of the most important processes in records management: analysing the existing records system of an organisation. This is often referred to as business systems analysis, and includes the records survey. We also discussed another important element of a records management programme: developing and implementing classification and filing systems for controlling organisational records.

In this unit you will continue your study of the different elements of a records management programme, focusing on the **records disposal and retention schedules.** We will explain the process of **appraisal**, which is intrinsically linked to records disposal.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After studying this unit, you should be able to

- ■   explain what a records retention and disposal schedule is
- ■   discuss the disposal process
- ■   explain the process of appraisal of records in establishing retention schedules
- ■   discuss the establishment of retention schedules
- ■   compile a simple records retention and disposal schedule

5.2   Defining retention, disposal and appraisal of organisational records

The next step in the process of managing current records in organisations is to develop a records retention and disposal schedule.

> *Retention and disposal schedule: a list that shows appraisal decisions and prescribes disposal actions, such as the period of retention, for the records of an organisation. **Appraisal** is the process of determining the value of records for further use, for whatever purpose, and the length of time for which that value will continue.*
>
> ***Disposal** is the process of determining the final fate of records; this may include the destruction of records or their transfer to an archives for preservation* (International Records Management Trust 1999a:20).

Once records have been classified (see previous study unit), their care should become a matter of routine. Procedures should be developed for managing the records in the organisation. This

includes retaining records at the organisation that still need to be used there, or destroying those that have no use, or sending records of long-term value to an archival repository.

A records retention schedule is the key to ensuring that valueless records do not accumulate in registries and offices, and that records of long-term value are identified and properly preserved. In the absence of retention schedules, many record-keeping problems can occur. When organisations have no direction as to how long records should be retained, files are closed only when they become too bulky and not by means of any systematic criteria. The build up of records ultimately creates space problems for these organisations. A planned programme of records retention, on the other hand, leading to timely and appropriate retention and disposal of records prevents these problems from occurring (Agere et al 1999:45).

Records retention schedules are the end product of the appraisal of records. Appraisal, which is sometimes called evaluation or selection, is the process of determining the value of records for further use, for whatever purpose, and the length of time that value will continue (Agere et al 1999:46).

5.3   Appraising and disposing of records

As systems are established for the management of current records, the records manager must next consider how to determine which records should be retained for their ongoing value and which records may be destroyed as obsolete. This is the task of **appraisal.**

Appraisal for retention or disposal is a key part of a systematic process that ensures that the destruction of records or their transfer for archival preservation takes place at the right time. Appraisal requires the systematic implementation of decisions based on an assessment of the continuing value of records for administrative, operational or other uses.

Appraisal involves analysing records to determine which categories are to be retained and for how long, and which will be transferred to archival storage and which will be destroyed. Disposal is an outcome of appraisal: records are disposed of or they are retained in the office of origin until their administrative or legal values have become less, or have changed.

The appraisal and disposal of records cannot be done in an ad hoc way. These processes should be undertaken as part of the formalised records management programme. They should also be conducted with the awareness of the functions that the records were intended to serve in the organisation, and of their context in relation to other records.

Appraisal and disposal are distinct but linked activities. Appraisal that is not eventually followed by disposal is pointless, and disposal without prior appraisal may have negative consequences for the organisation, and may also be considered unlawful. For example, legally binding contracts that need to be kept for a specific length of time might be destroyed before their legal value has ended.

ACTIVITY

Define the terms "records retention and disposal" and "appraisal".

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To achieve successful appraisal and disposal, records managers must

- maintain the principle of *respect des fonds*, which preserves the administrative context of the records and their organic relationship with each other
- ensure that records are controlled systematically throughout their life cycle
- use functional analysis to chart the flow of records and information through administration and to determine the nature and value of records

(International Records Management Trust 1999b:101)

The purpose of any records management programme is to make sure that records are available for use at any stage of the life cycle. Thus, in the process of appraisal, consideration must be given to the records' value for a variety of continuing and potential uses, both internal to the organisation and external to the wider public and society.

Two general types of value are recognised in appraisal: primary and secondary. Primary value is the continuing use of records (or archives), by virtue of their contents, for the transaction of the business that gave rise to their creation. On the other hand, secondary value is the enduring value that records (or archives) possess, by virtue of their contents, for purposes other than the transaction of the business for which they were created. The value of records can further be divided into categories such as operational, financial, legal, evidential, informational and intrinsic value.

> **NOTE:** Appraisal is also one of the main functions of the archival institution. Although we deal with the topic of appraisal here, you need to understand that the archival institution and its staff have an essential role in the appraisal process. Therefore, the appraisal process within the archival context is also discussed in the unit on archives management (study units 6 and 7).

5.3.1   The disposal and appraisal process

Records managers and archivists are partners in the disposal and appraisal process. The archival role in disposal is a formal one consisting of appraising records to determine their informational, historical and evidential value.

In South Africa, government archivists have jurisdiction over all records in government offices and are responsible for the retention and disposal programme.

> The disposal of government or public records in South Africa is governed by the National Archives of South Africa Act of 1996, and by the National Archives of South Africa.

In the USA, government archivists have statutory authority to review all US government agency records proposed for destruction or transfer to the National Archives. Likewise in Great Britain, the Public Record Office staff determine research value as well as value for overall documentation.

Retention and disposal instructions fall into five basic categories. A *permanent* instruction should indicate the date of transfer to the archives. *Undetermined* may be used to allow more time for an appraisal decision, but should specify when the appraisal review should occur. *Review* indicates that individual file units need further appraisal and that the entire series cannot be appraised as a whole. *Temporary* signifies that the material has been appraised as non-archival and should include the notation "retain for x numbers of years, then destroy". *Destroy* is used to authorise destruction, but should specify the date. Above all, disposal instructions should specify when disposal takes place, such as "from the date of the latest entry", "from the date the file is closed", or "x number of years following the settlement of a case or claim".

5.3.2 Appraisal during records management

The main professional activity of records managers (and archivists) is the evaluation of record series to determine their most appropriate retention period. This is an activity built into records management programmes, for planned retention.

Within the context of records management, the main concerns of the records manager are to see that those records are retained which are specified by law, or which are judged to be of clear administrative value to the organisation, and to see that all other records are disposed of. Archivists have a broader viewpoint and should also consider what potential research or long-term value may be identified in the records. Archivists are trained to perceive this value and, because they are participants in relevant research activities, should have acquired experience that will reinforce their ability to recognise this value (Cook 1999:64).

It is a fundamental rule of records management that no record series should be permitted to continue in existence without an appraisal status, and above all that no record should enter the storage system without a specific dated, disposal instruction. Similarly, it is a fundamental rule of archives management (see study units 6 and 7) that no document or series from an organisation should be admitted to the archives without having undergone an appraisal.

As far as appraisal criteria are concerned, there is a broad correspondence between research values and administrative values of records. It is unlikely that records which are not seen as being useful for business reference will turn out to contain data of long-term archival value. Equally, material of long-term value will tend to be contained in records that are felt to be of continuing reference use.

For organisations outside government, the appraisal approach that has most often been followed since the 1950s stipulates that records should be examined with a view to determining whether, or to what degree, they possess either evidential or informational values. These two terms have passed into general currency in the records/archival community. Evidential values are those that deal with the origin, foundation, status and operation of the organisation that produced the records. Documents that contain information on persons or subjects not essential to the organisation itself (eg case files contain information on the cases dealt with) are said to have informational value.

In the 1980s some new approaches were suggested, which led to a re-examination of the ways in which archivists and records managers should approach appraisal procedures. These new approaches are more proactive and demand a greater involvement in the daily work of the record-producing organisation. Archivists or records managers working within this system start by analysing the essential aims and functions of their organisation. Having established what these are, they can then draw up a plan under which each of the functions may be documented. It may therefore be necessary to look for records, as well as other sources, that cover the functions of the organisation. This new practice or approach to appraisal has come to be termed "macro-appraisal".

Another development in the approaches to appraisal is the growth of electronic records. These require archivists and records managers to re-examine how they need to appraise records. These records pose a great challenge. The management of electronic records, and their appraisal, will be discussed in the module Electronic Records Management (ARM1505).

5.4 Developing and implementing a retention and disposal schedule

As mentioned above, a retention schedule is a list of records for which predetermined destruction dates have been established. The aim of the records survey or audit (explained in study unit 4) is to establish those categories of records that have a known disposal date. Therefore, when developing a retention schedule, the information that resulted from the records survey may be

used to provide an alphabetical list of records series arranged under the departments of origin. Each of these may be allocated a proposed retention category:

- permanent or indefinite retention
- destruction at the end of a given period
- review after a given period, whereupon a decision will be made

The retention schedule also helps determine

1. the disposal of those records which have completed their retention period
2. the storage of records which have to be kept temporarily after they are no longer needed for current business
3. the preservation of records which are of long-term or historic value

In practice the schedule will have dates varying from a few months to permanent retention of records.

Proposals made in this way for retention periods may then be circulated to all relevant staff in the organisation; wide circulation and discussion are in fact recommended. Comments by originating departments of the organisation will normally be accepted and incorporated into the schedule. Appraisal decisions should also always take into account specific costing implications.

The retention schedule may also lay down the date on which items are withdrawn from current systems and transferred to local or intermediate storage, as well as to the records centre and final disposal. After the relevant staff have been consulted, the retention schedule is finalised and promulgated as an item of official policy. Since schedules can and should be revised regularly, policy can always be modified in the light of experience (Cook 1999:63).

Retention schedules are formal directives. They should have the visible support of senior management and be widely distributed for use by the various departments within an organisation. In automated records management systems the retention schedule can be held online and made accessible to staff (if necessary with restrictions to certain user departments).

ACTIVITY

Explain what is involved in the development and implementation of a records retention schedule.

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5.5   Advantages of retention and disposal schedules

ACTIVITY

Before continuing, indicate what you think are the benefits of having a records retention and disposal schedule.

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A comprehensive records control schedule provides the vehicle for implementing a records disposal programme and is the document that outlines the fate of an organisation's information resources or records. More specifically, it describes all the records of an institution, specifies those with archival value and authorises, on a continuing basis, the disposal of recurring records series. In addition, the schedule provides instructions for the disposal of materials produced by a department and specifies retention periods for each series of records. The authority granted by a schedule provides for the continuing removal of unneeded records. This, of course, is a great help to records managers and archivists who are thus spared repetitive appraisal.

General records schedules are useful for identifying and scheduling series of records, often called housekeeping records, common to all organisations. Such records include personnel, payroll, procurement, budget, travel, printing and other types of administrative records maintained by most offices. Records managers and archivists promote the use of these schedules to eliminate future records accumulations and to authorise the disposal of non-permanent records.

Besides records disposal, records managers and archivists find other advantages in compiling and implementing a comprehensive records schedule. Primary among them is to use the schedule, and the survey process which generates it, to focus attention on records management and to improve administrative efficiency. A comprehensive schedule also aids in providing better reference services. Records managers utilise a schedule to designate information resources of value to the organisation, while archivists use it to locate and identify material outside their immediate custody (Paul 1991:44). Retention schedules also aid in getting rid of those records that are considered unnecessary, thereby freeing up valuable office space.

Finally, schedules are useful as educational tools. Within the organisation, they may be used to publicise a records management programme and to inform staff of the value of particular records, thereby promoting preservation. Schedules may also be used to delegate tasks to record-keeping assistants responsible for implementing the disposal instructions. Most importantly for archivists, the schedule approval process may communicate historical value to records managers and office staff. The schedule forms a basis of understanding between the organisation and the archives staff.

Also, because it is an official document, the schedule demonstrates that policies and laws affecting records disposal have been observed. It is therefore the single most important mechanism for routing valuable records to the archives and for diverting valueless materials.

In summary, once records have been classified and scheduled and appraisal guidelines have been established, the records may be disposed of. Current records will become semi-current, archival or obsolete. Disposal involves sending records from the office to a records centre, destroying them under secure conditions if they are obsolete, or transferring them to an archival repository if they have continuing value.

5.6   Example of a retention schedule

The following is a basic example of a records retention and disposal schedule (the example is a series of records relating to the assessment of students at a university):

UNIVERSITY X

<u>**Record series**</u>

2 – Assessment of students

Reference number	Description	Retention period
2.1	Records documenting the development of the methods of assessing students for the course: Archival Management	Life of the course
2.2	Students' submitted/ completed assignments	Current academic year + 1 year
2.3	Records documenting marks awarded to students for completed assignments	Current academic year + 10 years

ACTIVITY

Compile a sample records retention and disposal schedule for a category of records relating to the organisation you work for. (If you are not employed, compile a schedule based on a fictitious organisation.)

5.7   Conclusion

In this study unit we discussed one of the most important activities of records managers (and archivists), namely planning for proper retention and disposal of records. Managing the records of any office, organisation or institution effectively depends on these activities. In this unit we also discussed appraisal. In simplest terms appraisal is deciding which records to keep and which to throw away, and it helps determine the value and thus the disposition of records.

In the next study unit, we examine the management of records which have been deemed to have long-term value, and have therefore been transferred to archives. The management of archives takes place in the last phase of the records life cycle. Therefore, the next study unit will provide you with an explanation of what archives are, and an overview of the actual activities involved in archives management.

STUDY QUESTIONS

(1)   Define the concept "records disposal".
(2)   Discuss the disposal process in records management.
(3)   Explain the process of appraisal of records in establishing retention and disposal schedules.
(4)   Discuss the establishment of retention schedules.
(5)   Discuss the advantages of retention schedules for archives and records managers.

STUDY UNIT 6
ARCHIVES AND ARCHIVAL STUDIES: AN OVERVIEW

6.1 Introduction

In the previous study unit you continued your study of the different elements of a records management programme, focusing on the records disposal and retention schedules. The process of appraisal, which is intrinsically linked to records disposal, was also explained. You will have realised that the result of appraisal is that records are either retained at their originating organisation if they are still being regularly used by that organisation, or they are destroyed if they no longer have any use, **or they are transferred to an archival institution if they have long-term values** other than just for the creating organisation, such as historical or evidential value.

In this unit and the next we will introduce you to the management of those records which have been transferred to an archives repository. In this unit we examine the concept of archives and the field of archival studies or archival science. We also look at types of archival materials and types of archival institutions, and legislation that impacts on the management of archives. In the next unit we will look at the processes involved in managing archival materials.

NOTE: Organisational records that have been appraised and transferred from an organisation or government department to an archival institution become archives.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After studying this unit, you should be able to

- define the concept of archives
- explain the relationship between records management and archives
- define archival studies as a discipline
- identify the various types of archival records or materials
- describe the different types of archives institutions
- explain the differences between archives and libraries
- identify and explain legislation that impacts on the management of archives

6.2 Records management versus archives

Before you begin your study of archives, it is important to understand the difference between what you have studied until now, that is records management, and what you are about to study, that is archives.

Both archives and records management are concerned with the whole lifespan of records, from their creation, their management, to their disposition. However, although these processes are intricately interconnected, they are often studied separately. This is largely due to **records management** being mainly concerned with the maintenance of current records of an organisation or institution, while **archives** is more concerned with non-current records of an organisation or institution, preserved because of their continuing value.

In other words, records management focuses on records created and received by an organisation, while these records are still being used by that same organisation, whereas archives management is concerned with the very same records, but its focus is on those records that warrant long-term or permanent preservation.

ACTIVITY

Briefly explain the overlap and the distinction between archives and records management.

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6.3   Defining archives

The concept of archives can refer to more than one thing.

Firstly, it can be used to describe the actual **materials or records** of historical or informational value that are preserved in an organisation for possible future use. As we said at the beginning of this study guide, Pearce-Moses (2005) defines archives as "those records that were created or received by a person, family, or organisation, public or private, in the conduct of their affairs and **preserved because of the enduring value** contained in the information they hold, or as evidence of the functions and responsibilities of their creator".

Archives are records which are no longer used for day-to-day administration and which are preserved for reference and research use. For a record to qualify as an archive it must have lasting administrative and/or historical and reference value.

Archives may include records of an individual, such as letters, papers, photographs, computer files, scrapbooks, e-mails, financial records or diaries created or collected by the individual – regardless of media or format. The archives of an organisation (such as a corporation or government) contain other types of records, such as administrative files, business records, memos, official correspondence and meeting minutes.

Generally, however, archives consist of records which have been selected for permanent or long-term preservation because of their enduring research value. Archival records are normally unpublished and almost always unique, unlike books or magazines, of which there may be many identical copies.

Secondly, archives can also refer to the **building** (or part of a building) in which the records are stored and made available to users. It may be a government department, for example the National Archives of South Africa, or the offices of a private company such as Barlow Rand or Sanlam. Sometimes the term "archival repository" or "archives office" is used to distinguish archival buildings from archival material.

> ***Archival repository***: *a building or part of a building in which archives are preserved and made available for consultation* (International Records Management Trust 1999c:2).

Lastly, the term "archives" can refer to the **institution or social agency** created and maintained by society to collect, organise, preserve and make these records available. There is a need for this because these records can be used to explain actions undertaken by an organisation, business or the government. For example, why has the government decided to sell the country's forests? Why has company X stopped manufacturing shoes in Durban? How can you prove that you are the real owner of a house or a farm? As a social agency the archives must be able to supply the answers to these questions. Archives thus act as a social memory and a source of information on aspects that affect the daily lives of most, if not all, citizens of a country or members of a society.

> A person who works in archives is called an archivist. The study of organising, preserving and providing access to information and materials in archives is called archival science or archival studies.

6.4   Archival studies

The word "studies" is used to refer to a branch or a field of learning. The concept of studies implies that a systematic investigation of a subject is undertaken according to accepted scientific methods.

According to the discussion above, we can define archival studies as a scientific discipline which studies the creation, preservation and access of records of society's activities, decisions, etc. It includes the study of archival institutions, archival services and the profession of the archivist and related professions and occupations.

Archival studies were in the past, and are sometimes today, regarded as an independent field of study. The development of the post-industrial or information society forced archivists, librarians and other experts to rethink this approach. It has become clear to us that we are in the information business and not just in the archival, museums or library business. It is of the utmost importance that archives, museums and libraries realise this. If they do not make this shift in their thinking they may become relics of the past.

To accommodate these views it is now generally accepted that archival studies, librarianship and museology are subdisciplines of the discipline of information science or information management. Information science is the discipline which studies information as a phenomenon and its place and role in society (Unisa, 2000).

6.4.1   The difference between libraries and archives

Although librarianship, archives and related disciplines are subdisciplines of information science, it is still important to distinguish between these information management professions. Libraries and the archives and records management fields differ, and we will explain below.

They all fall within the information science umbrella, that is, they are all concerned with the management of information, which includes the acquisition, organisation, control, dissemination and the use of information. However, there are differences in the type of information they manage and where this information originates. Libraries manage mostly published books and journals originating from book publishers and electronic media published in the online environment. Archives and records managers, on the other hand, care for records or documents that have been received and created by an organisation during its daily activities. These records are therefore unique to that specific organisation.

The users of library materials and those of records and archival materials also indicate the difference. Usually library users are part of a broader community, while users of organisational records are the people working for the organisation creating the records (once organisational records become archives though, their users may include the broader public, interested in historical research, for example).

For instance, if we think of Unisa, paper-based and electronic documents are created and received every day by Unisa staff members, and these documents need to be cared for. Examples of such documents are letters, e-mails, minutes of meetings and reports. These records are needed and usually consulted by internal staff members of Unisa to support their daily activities and job tasks.

6.4.2 The study fields of archival studies

As mentioned in the above explanation, archival studies covers three study fields, namely archival materials, the building in which they are housed and the archives as a social agency. All these study fields are related and should be seen as a whole, although each of them will be briefly discussed separately here.

6.4.2.1 Archival materials (records)

Archival materials refer to all the documents, publications such as books or maps, photographs, tapes and manuscripts that are received, collected, stored, preserved and made available for use to the users of the archive. We prefer to use the term "record" instead of documents, archival material or archives.

A record is defined in the National Archives of South Africa Act 43 of 1996 as "recorded information regardless of form or medium" (Harris 1997:60). In the same Act "archives" are defined as "records in the custody of an archives repository" (Harris 1997:60).

6.4.2.2 Archives as a physical facility

Archives must be stored somewhere and this is usually in a separate facility such as a room or separate building. The design of the storage area must be such that records can be preserved for an undetermined period. The factors that can destroy records must be taken into consideration and measures must be taken to prevent this. The design of the building is very important in this regard.

6.4.2.3 Archives as social agencies

Why are archives established? What should their mission and aims be as social agencies? What is their history? How do archives fit into the information society? What are the educational requirements for archival staff? What is a profession? How can archivists act ethically towards users? All these aspects are important when defining the role of archives as social agencies.

The study fields of archival studies can be summarised as a study of archival records, their collection, preservation, arrangement and description and use. The profession of the archivist is also studied, as are the service orientation and ethical conduct of the archivist (Unisa, 2000).

6.4.3 Characteristics of archival studies

We can use the above explanation and discussion to deduce some characteristic features of the subject.

Archival studies is a social science: archives, archival studies, information, information science and information agencies (archives, libraries) are studied from the point of view of the social sciences. This is because people establish these information agencies, the need for information is predominantly a human characteristic, and the communication and preservation of information is mainly a human activity.

Archival studies falls under the larger or umbrella scientific discipline of information science. Together with librarianship and museology, they make up the information management disciplines. In many instances information science supplies the theory which can be applied to archives or libraries. Archival studies, however, is a distinct discipline – distinguishable from librarianship, for example. Nonetheless, they have much in common and can be used to supplement one another, which makes this a fruitful and enriching relationship.

Finally, archival studies borrows from other subjects or disciplines. It can be regarded as an interdisciplinary field. It is in the nature of the social sciences that there is considerable overlap between disciplines, blurred boundaries between them, and topics which may also be studied in another discipline. For example, the discipline of history and the discipline of management both play an important role in archival studies (Unisa, 2000).

ACTIVITY

Identify the study fields of archival studies, and explain the characteristics of archival studies.

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6.5   Types of archival records or materials

There are various types of records and many ways of classifying them. You will learn more about this later on in this course. Records can be grouped or classified according to various categories, for example user, physical form or audience. The classification of records used here is based on whether they are visual or auditory records. Some records are a combination of both. We refer to these records as audio-visual records. Visual, auditory and audio-visual records will be described briefly below.

6.5.1   Visual records

Visual records are records which require the sense of sight to communicate their message. They are the most numerous records, comprising paper-based documents, books, maps, paintings, slides, microforms and many others.

6.5.2   Auditory records

The sense of hearing is employed to utilise auditory (audio) records. Sound recordings such as gramophone records, tape cassettes and CDs are examples of auditory records.

6.5.3   Audio-visual records

Some records employ both sight and hearing in order to communicate their message; they are therefore called audio-visual records. Examples are slide-sound programmes, cinema films, video recordings and DVDs.

6.5.4   Electronic records

Another type of record is an electronic record. Electronic records are those records which are generated electronically and managed by means of computer technology, for example e-mail, SMS and right fax. These records are created, generated, sent, communicated, received, or stored by electronic means and require some form of computer technology to access and use. Unlike a physical record (such as paper-based records), an electronic record can only be accessed, manipulated, transmitted or processed by a computer. Electronic records are written on magnetic or optical medium, such as magnetic tapes, CD-ROMs, DVDs, hard disks, USBs (universal serial buses) and other digital storage devices, and are accessed using computer software and hardware (electronic records will be discussed in detail in the module Electronic Records Management – ARM1505).

6.6   Types of archival institutions

Archives are divided into two main groups, namely **public archives** and **non-public archives**:

- Public archives collect records created by **governments** and are sometimes referred to as state archives or official archives, an example being the National Archives.
- Non-public archives collect records created by **institutions** and **organisations** such as business enterprises, universities, churches, political parties, sports clubs, societies, museums, hospitals and professional associations, as well as **individuals** (sometimes referred to as private archives).

In some instances archives collect certain types of records only, for example **film and sound** archives, **manuscript** archives and **military** archives. All these types of records may also form part of either public or non-public archives.

Another division can be made on the principles of **in-house archives** and **collective archives**. In-house or natural archives are those that arise from and exist for the benefit of a particular parent body to which the archive is attached. Examples of these are government archives, bank archives and university archives in instances where the archives preserve only the records of their particular parent institutions.

Collective archives or artificial archives refer to institutions that exist for the purpose of collecting a variety of archives, for example the archives of organisations within a particular area or region, or archives related to specific subjects or activities. An example of the latter is the Institute for Contemporary History (INCH) at the University of the Free State that preserves the archives of various political and cultural organisations or associations. A foreign example is the Berg Collection, which is an archive attached to the New York Public Library. It specialises in sources which relate to authors and artists and includes original manuscripts of books, first editions, photographs, business and personal correspondence, diaries, receipts and notebooks.

A third type of archive is a **combination** of these two types. University archives often house not only the archives of the university, but also those originating from other organisations or institutions. The archives of the University of the Witwatersrand is a good example. In addition to the

university's own archives, it also preserves the archives of the Church of the Province of South Africa and the Trade Union Council of South Africa (Unisa, 2000).

6.7 Archival legislation

A comprehensive account of all the laws or legislation with a bearing on the management of records and archives is beyond the scope of this text. This section merely gives you an overview of the National Archives of South Africa Act (other Acts such as the Access to Information Act and the Copyright Act also have a major impact on the management of archives).

Most countries possess national archival legislation. In the vast majority of cases, such legislation mandates a governmental agency or department to provide a national public archives service. Most archives services reach beyond the domain of public records to address the preservation of a national archival heritage. An increasing number address the management of public records still in non-archival use by government agencies. In countries with a federal structure (eg Australia, Canada and the USA) or similar constitutional arrangement, it is common for provinces or states to pass their own archival laws. In some countries local authorities are responsible for their own archival legislation.

National Archives of South Africa Act 43 of 1996

For South African archivists and records managers, the early 1990s was an exciting and enriching time in our history. A fledgling democracy supplanted the apartheid regime. At the same time an outmoded archival discourse was replaced by a new approach to archival issues resulting from new social dynamics. This new approach was one directed by transformation, based on the assumption that archives require redefinition, more precisely reinvention, for a democratic South Africa.

Numerous participants, across the archival spectrum and beyond, have shaped the transformation of archives in South Africa. In the formative period between 1990 and 1994, the main contributors in terms of process were the State Archives Service, the African National Congress and the South African Society of Archivists. Thereafter, with the formal transfer of power to the ANC-led Government of National Unity, the initiative shifted to government and various structures appointed by it.

The central aim of the government's initiative at national level was to secure a new archival legislation through a participative process. In April 1995 this led to the convening of a consultative forum by the Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology. With representatives from a wide range of interest groups and 60 delegates, the forum brought together the diverse voices in South Africa's archival profession. Over seven months the forum worked on the new law, which resulted in the submission of a draft National Archives of South Africa Bill.

The Bill reached Parliament in February 1996 and, after lengthy debate which included public hearings and the receipt of written submissions from the public, it was passed into law in October as the National Archives of South Africa Act 43 of 1996. This Act will be referred to as the NASA. The NASA came into operation on 1 January 1997, and on 24 January 1997 the Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology published the NASA's subsidiary National Archives Regulations. The full text of the NASA is attached to the study guide for Managing Archives (ARM1503).

The new public archives system delineated for South Africa by the NASA is founded in the 1996 Constitution's devolution of state responsibility for archives from central government to the country's nine provinces. This required the establishment of a National Archives at central level and the creation of nine more or less autonomous provincial public archives services. The transitional provisions of the NASA converted the State Archives Service into the National Archives, which is required to deliver services to provinces until such time as they legislate their own archives legislation.

Other than the National Archives Act, what other legislation has an impact on the management of records and archives in South Africa?

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6.8   Conclusion

This study unit provided an introduction to what archives are, and different types of archives institutions. We also looked at the differences between archives and libraries.

In the next unit we will continue our study of archives, examining the actual management of these materials. This includes the processes involved, such as accessions, arrangement, description, the compilation of finding aids and the preservation of archival materials.

STUDY QUESTIONS

(1)   Define the term "archives".
(2)   What is the purpose of transferring records out of an organisation to an archival department?
(3)   Briefly explain the differences between libraries and archives.
(4)   Briefly discuss the study fields of archival studies.
(5)   Identify the various types of materials found in archival institutions.
(6)   Discuss the different types of archival institutions.

STUDY UNIT 7
ARCHIVES MANAGEMENT

7.1 Introduction

In the previous study unit we defined archives and archival studies. We also briefly examined their relationship with other information institutions, such as libraries.

In this unit we will briefly look at what is involved in the actual management of archives. This includes the acquisition, care, arrangement, description, preservation and retrieval of archival materials. The management of archives is examined in detail in the module, Managing Archives (ARM1503).

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After studying this unit, you should be able to

- describe the procedures involved in acquiring and receiving archives
- explain the arrangement and description of archival materials according to archival principles
- explain how archives should ensure access to their materials
- discuss the basic principles and practices of the preservation of archival materials

7.2 Archives management

7.2.1 What is archives management?

Archives management is that area of management which is concerned with the maintenance and use of archives. It entails the acquisition, care, arrangement, description, preservation and retrieval of records once they have been transferred from an organisation that created the records to the archival repository. Once records are selected and transferred to the archival repository, they become archives in the formal sense.

7.2.2 What is involved in archives management?

The **steps** involved in managing archives include

- acquiring and receiving archives from private persons, organisations, government departments and other institutions
- arranging and describing archives according to archival principles and practices
- providing easy retrieval and access to archives
- preserving archives (International Records Management Trust 1999c:2)

These processes are discussed in the sections below.

Define what archives management is, and explain what it entails.

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7.3 Acquiring and receiving archives

An archival institution should have a plan for acquiring archives. It should be able to determine the quantity and nature of materials to be transferred from the government office or originating organisation each year so that it can allocate appropriate space and resources to their receipt and management. Archives must be transferred according to disposal schedules (refer to study units 5 and 6).

Preparing archival materials for transfer and accessioning involves a series of procedures, which are performed either by the archives staff or by the records manager at the organisation, as appropriate. These procedures may include

- appraising records according to the appropriate disposal schedule
- cleaning and tidying records to be transferred to archival care
- labelling items with dates and reference numbers
- boxing records
- listing records
- completing an accession form (International Records Management Trust 1999c:43)

> As mentioned in the previous study unit, **appraisal** is one of the main functions of an archival institution. Although the topic of appraisal is not dealt with in detail in this study unit, and rather in the previous units dealing with records management, it should be understood that the archival staff have an essential role in the appraisal process, and that they should perform this role with the records manager. Therefore, it is important that there be good coordination and cooperation between records management staff of the organisation and the archival department.

Archives must be acquired according to documented procedures, arranged and described following established principles and then made available for use.

7.3.1 Receiving archives: accessioning

> All transfers of records to the archival department must be recorded. Receiving archives is known as accessioning. An accession is the primary unit of records formally received by an archival department from a particular source on a particular occasion.

When new materials come to the archives, the first thing to be done is to record the facts of the transfer. This is done by completing an accession form. As soon as materials arrive at the archival department, the appropriate staff should follow the steps outlined below (International Records Management Trust 1999c:38):

■ Place the archives in a secure temporary storage area.
■ Check the records against the accompanying documentation to ensure that the paperwork really does refer to these materials and that all items have been included.
■ If there is no accession documentation with the archives, complete such documentation, giving sufficient information to identify the materials, and obtain a signature from a representative of the body sending the materials.
■ Check the archives for signs of insect infestation or mould to determine if they need treatment before they come into contact with other, unaffected, accessions.
■ Make an entry of the new accessions in the accessions form or register.
■ Conduct a preliminary listing of the archives to provide minimal control prior to arrangement and description.
■ Store the archives adequately.

> Note that an archival department may also have authority to acquire archives from sources other than their creating organisation. The plan for acquiring such materials should be drawn up as part of the overall archives and records management programme and a collection policy. The plan should specify what materials are covered, why, and it should include a time frame for surveying and appraising these materials.

7.3.2   Arrangement and description

After the archives have been properly received and accessioned, the arrangement and description of the archival materials can begin. Arrangement and description are closely linked but quite separate activities. Experience shows that they should continue to be separate: arrangement of the archival materials should come first, and should be completed; description of the materials can then be started.

> *Arrangement: the whole process of analysing the organisation's sets of archives, whereby their provenance and original order are understood and the archives are set into groups, series and items in an order that preserves and reflects that understanding. Simply put, arrangement is the process of organising and classifying archival materials according to archival principles. It is the process of sorting archival materials in a logical order, so that they can be easily retrieved.*
>
> *Description: the process of describing or recording the information contained in archival materials. The descriptive information should serve to identify, locate and explain the archival materials and the context and records systems that produced them. The product of description is **a finding aid**, which is a document listing or describing a collection of records or archives, and makes findings these records easier. Examples of finding aids are inventories and catalogues* (International Records Management Trust 1999c:61).

Arrangement and description are practices designed to prepare archival materials physically and intellectually for research use.

When arranging and describing archival materials, the archivist should follow the internationally accepted archival principle of *respect des fonds* (discussed in study unit 2), which encompasses respect for the provenance or source of origin and the original order of the archives. The archivist aims to provide information about the content and context of archives. Arrangement

and description achieve control over the holdings of the archives. There are two types of control (International Records Management Trust 1999c:61):

- *Administrative control* ensures that all archival materials are accounted for in the repository and can be found and used.
- *Intellectual control* identifies for users what materials are held, what subjects they deal with and how and where they can be found.

7.3.2.1 Arrangement of archives

Archives, as records of enduring or long-term value, are a distinctive form of information that comprises evidence of actual events and processes. In order to serve as evidence, archival documents must be reliable, complete and accurate. Thus, as a rule, the arrangement of archives must faithfully reproduce and document the order and processes that were used to create, organise and maintain the records during their primary use for the government department, business, organisation or individual that created them.

> *The arrangement of archives should reflect the way in which records were created and used in the organisation from which they originated.*

The arrangement of archives is governed by the key principle of *respect des fonds*. This principle requires that archives must be kept together according to the organisation responsible for their creation and in the original order established during their use as current records.

Materials received in the archival department may already be in good order. However, if there is no way to discern any order in the archives, or if the records were accumulated haphazardly, the archivist may need to impose an order on them to present the material in a way that reflects the spirit and intent of the creator of the records, and to facilitate the use of the records for research.

As soon as possible after receiving materials, the archival repository will place the materials into a chosen order, following the principles of archival arrangement. Before any arrangement is decided on it is essential that the responsible archivist investigate the archives and their originating organisation or departments thoroughly, including doing background reading, to ensure that they understand the materials and their legislative, administrative and historical background.

Once the origins of the archives have been reviewed, the materials are then sorted into groups, subgroups and series. These groups and series are intended to (and do usually) reflect the functions and systems used when the records were originally created and kept while in active use. The main levels of arrangement of groups and series were explained in study unit 2. In summary, the first level of arrangement according to groups means that records from one source must be kept intact or separate from records from other sources. Within a group archives should be further subdivided into subgroups. These should represent the organisational pattern of the originating organisation. On the next level, archives should be arranged into series, which means that records related by subject, function, activity and/or form are grouped together.

Arrangement comes before description. If the materials have been received in good order, the process should be straightforward. Where the materials have been received in disorder, sorting and arrangement may require some research to establish the original system and order (International Records Management Trust 1999c:76).

The process of archival arrangement will be discussed in detail in the module Managing Archives (ARM1503).

ACTIVITY

Explain the process of arrangement.

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7.3.2.2 Description of archives

Arrangement and description should go hand in hand. As archives are arranged, they are being prepared for description.

There are various types of descriptive tools that the archival repository may create. These descriptive tools are called **finding aids**. As mentioned earlier, a finding aid is a document which represents the archival materials of an archives in order to facilitate their use by researchers. The finding aid lists or _describes_ the body of records or archives.

One of the most valuable finding aids is the archival guide, also referred to as an inventory. It consists of a sequence of descriptions of all the series held at an archives. It does not give details of items within a series. The guide is the overall initial finding aid to the contents of the archives. It usually includes the following information: an index to the collection, a history of the organisation that created the records and series descriptions. The series description usually contains the title, the date, the volume or quantity of records, the arrangement statement which indicates how the records are arranged (chronological, numerical by subject, etc), and the narrative paragraph which gives information about the contents of the records, the creating body and the relationship with other records.

Another type of finding aid is the list. Once archives have been arranged into groups and series and put into order within them, they should be listed by individual item. Lists generally concentrate on describing the contents of the records. They describe only the files belonging to one series.

The guide/inventory and lists provide the basic finding aids of the archival repository. By using these, most researchers at an archives should be able to identify which records they need to consult.

Description requires strict control, or its usefulness will be considerably reduced by inconsistencies. Therefore, descriptions should be produced according to standards that ensure their consistency and accuracy. Archival description should conform to national and international standards.

An example of an important finding aid in the South African environment is the National Archives' National Register of Manuscripts (NAREM). NAREM is a guide which provides descriptions of non-public record collections and archives groups in over 40 institutions.

ACTIVITY

(1)   Define the concept of archival description.

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(2)   What are finding aids? Give examples of the types of finding aids used in an archives.

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The process of archival description and how to compile finding aids will be discussed in detail in the module Managing Archives (ARM1503).

7.4   Providing access to archives

So why do archivists arrange, describe and preserve records and archives in the first place? The basic reason is to make them available to those who need them.

> _Archival institutions must provide good reference services in order to ensure that all users can access archival materials._

Once archives have been arranged and described, they are ready to be used by researchers and other users. Therefore, the next step in managing archives is to ensure that archives are available for public use, either by members of the government or a corporation or by citizens or others wishing to do research. The service of making archives available to users is often referred to as a **reference service** in the archival field.

The reference area, often called the **reference room** of an archives, is the contact point for anyone who wishes to find out about the collections held at the archives. The standing and the reputation of the archival institution will, to a very great extent, depend on the service that researchers receive here. Reference staff at an archives should reply to enquiries from researchers accurately, promptly and politely and make researchers feel welcome.

While satisfying the needs of the researchers, reference staff should always remember that the safety of the documents remains their paramount duty, and that documents are especially vulnerable when they are in the search room and being handled by inexpert people. This is especially important for archival documents because these are often unique and irreplaceable. They must therefore be prepared to enforce search room rules even if this means refusing access to certain archives or correcting the behaviour of researchers.

Strict enforcement of the rules and protecting the archives by correct handling deters people from misusing documents. It is important therefore that the person in charge of the archives have a

strict, clear and consistent policy over the implementation of these rules (International Records Management Trust 1999c:107).

ACTIVITY

Explain why archivists arrange, describe and preserve records and archives in the first place.

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7.5   Preserving archival materials

The above point of providing access to users brings up an important issue in the archives environment, that of the physical preservation of archival materials. This is especially important for archives, as these records are often unique and irreplaceable, and therefore require the best conservation and preservation possible.

What is preservation? To an archivist preservation means preventing the deterioration or damage of archival materials. Some of the forces which damage documents in an archives are

■   heat
■   humidity
■   light
■   fire
■   water and floods
■   acid
■   rodents
■   insects
■   theft
■   handling of documents

The damage of archival materials may occur both "internally" at document level, or externally in the storage facility. Measures that could be taken to assist in preservation and to prevent damage at document level are

■   cleaning
■   removing extraneous materials, such as dust
■   de-acidification, and storing archival materials in acid-free containers

On the other hand, an adequate archival storage area also provides safety in many ways. For example, it can provide documents in the archives with

■   low-level lighting suitable for preservation
■   fire control
■   humidity control
■   temperature regulation
■   flood control

- insect and rodent control
- theft prevention

It is also important to note that restoration and the treatment of documents which become damaged can be rather expensive. Therefore, archivists should concentrate their efforts on preventive preservation measures, such as those mentioned above. These will help archival materials achieve a longer lifespan (Ford 1990:117).

The increase in new electronic media in archives also poses new challenges to preservation. Issues such as the migration of electronic information held in older storage media to new storage media needs to be done on a continuous basis to ensure proper long-term preservation, and also to ensure access to the information contained in the electronic records. Migration is often expensive and not always possible. However, these issues and other preservation and conservation matters will be discussed in detail in the module Preserving Archives (ARM1504).

ACTIVITY

List the forces that may damage documents in an archives.

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7.6 Conclusion

This study unit provided an overview of the actual activities involved in archives management. These activities include the receiving and accessioning of archives, arrangement and description, providing access to archives, and the preservation of archival materials.

In the module Managing Archives (ARM1503), you will continue your study of archives management, with a detailed discussion of the processes of accessions, arrangement, description, the compilation of finding aids and the preservation of archival materials.

STUDY QUESTIONS

(1) Identify the steps involved in managing archives.
(2) Explain the process of accessions of archival materials at an archives.
(3) Define the concept of arrangement of archives.
(4) What are the objectives of description?
(5) What are the basic finding aids used in an archives?
(6) Explain the importance of providing access to archives.
(7) What does preservation mean to an archivist?

CONCLUSION

In this study guide for *Introducing Archives and Records Management* you were introduced to the fields of archives and records management and the central concepts and principles related to these fields. This included

■ an overview of the fields of archives and records management
■ an introduction to records management
■ the basic principles of records management
■ the records management programme
■ the elements of the records management programme
■ an introduction to archives and archival studies
■ an introduction to managing archives

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GLOSSARIES

Two glossaries have been included here for your convenience. Please consult them when you come across any archives and records management terms you are not familiar with.

GLOSSARY (National Archives of South Africa)

The following is a list of definitions of terms relating to archives and records management, taken from the website of the National Archives of South Africa.

Act:	The National Archives and Records Service of South Africa Act (Act No 43 of 1996).
Appraisal:	The process of determining the value and thus the final disposal of records, and the decision regarding the preservation requirements of each record or series of records
Archival value:	Those values, administrative, fiscal, legal, evidential and/or informational, which justify the indefinite or permanent retention of records
Archives:	Records in the custody of an archives repository
Archives repository:	The building in which records with archival value are preserved permanently
Case files:	The most detailed (or specific) division in a file plan that creates a separate file for each person, place, institution or item, et cetera.
Correspondence system:	A set of paper-based and electronic communications and associated documents, sent, received, generated, processed and stored during the conduct of business.
Current records:	Records that form part of a records classification system still in use.
Custody:	The control of records based upon their physical possession
Disposal:	The action of either destroying/deleting a record or transferring it into archival custody
Disposal authority:	A written authority issued by the National Archivist specifying which records should be transferred into archival custody or specifying which records should be destroyed (in the case of paper based records)/deleted (in the case of electronic records), or otherwise disposed of.
Disposal authority number:	A unique number identifying each disposal authority issued to a specific office.

Disposal instruction:	The specific instruction regarding disposal allocated to each record, for example *D* for delete/destroy and *A* for transferring into archival custody.
Electronic document management system:	A system that provides the ability to capture, describe and categorise, store and retrieve, share and reuse electronic documents regardless of specific format.
Electronic records:	Information which is generated electronically and stored by means of computer technology
Electronic records management system:	A (normally out-of-the-box) electronic system that contains business rules to manage records to ensure that they are authentic and reliable.
Electronic records system:	This is the collective noun for all components of an electronic information system, namely: electronic media as well as all connected items such as source documents, output information, software applications, programmes and metadata (background and technical information i.r.o. the information stored electronically) and in hard copy. All these components are defined as records by the <u>Act</u>. They must therefore, be dealt with in accordance with the Act's provisions.
Ephemeral records:	See non-archival records.
File:	See folder.
File plan:	A pre-determined classification plan by which records are filed and/or electronically indexed to facilitate efficient retrieval and disposal of records.
	The National Archivist must approve all *file plan*s (for government departments) before governmental bodies implement them.
	Detailed design and implementation guidelines for *file plans* are contained in the National Archives and Records Service's publication <u>Directive R1: Background and compiling file plans</u>. Detailed information regarding the application and maintenance of paper-based *filing system*s is contained in the document <u>Directive R2: Application and maintenance of filing systems</u>.
File reference:	A unique identifier for a file. This can be a numerical, alpha-numerical or alphabetical identifier. It is used to link a record to its specific subject file and subject grouping.
Filing system:	The collective noun for a storage system (like files, boxes, shelves or electronic applications and storage systems) in which records are stored in a systematic manner according to a <u>file plan</u>.

Folder:	1. An organised arrangement of records on the same subject accumulated in chronological order within the same cover/container.
	2. The physical action of allocating file reference numbers to records and placing them inside the cover/container.
Functional subject file plan:	A pre-determined logical, systematic and hierarchical structure based on business functions that are then used to determine subject groups and subjects according to which records are filed and/or electronically indexed. Its purpose is to
	a. facilitate efficient retrieval and disposal of records; and
	b. to link the records back to the functions, activities and transactions that generated them.
General disposal authority:	Disposal authorities issued on "common" or "standard" records used by more than one office e.g. financial records, human resources case files et cetera.
Governmental body:	Any legislative, executive, judicial or administrative organ of state (incl a statutory body) at the national level of government and until provincial archival legislation takes effect also all provincial administrations and local authorities.
Head of a governmental body:	The chief executive officer of a governmental body or the person who is acting as such.
Integrated deocument and records management system:	A system that supports the medium to long term information needs of a governmental body. It provides functionality over and above that of an electronic document management system to preserve the security, authenticity and integrity of records to enable the permanent preservation of records. Its primary management functions are –
	■ to manage a functional subject file plan according to which records are filed;
	■ maintaining the relationships between records and files, and between file series and the file plan;
	■ identifying records that are due for disposal and managing the disposal process;
	■ associating the contextual and structural data within a document;
	■ constructing and managing audit trails;
	■ managing record version control;
	■ managing the integrity and reliability of records once they have been declared as such;
	■ managing records in all formats in an integrated manner.
Non-archival records:	Records with a short-lived interest or usefulness.
Public record:	A record created or received by a governmental body in pursuance of its activities, regardless of form or medium.
Record:	a. Recorded information regardless of form or medium.
	b. Evidence of a transaction, preserved for the evidential information it contains.

Recording:	Anything on which sounds or images or both are fixed or from which sounds or images or both are capable of being reproduced, regardless of form.
Record classification system:	A plan for the systematic identification and arrangement of business activities and/or records into categories according to logically structured conventions, methods and procedural rules represented in the classification system. The records classification systems prescribed by the National Archives and Records Service are <u>filing system</u> for correspondence systems and the <u>schedule for records other than correspondence systems</u>.
Record keeping	Making and maintaining complete, accurate and reliable evidence of official business in the form of recorded information.
Record keeping system:	A collection of policies procedures and systems, which capture information according to a records classification system, manage, store and provide access to records and their context over time.
Records other than correspondence systems:	Records that do not form part of a correspondence file, or a case file, for example registers, maps, plans, electronic records, audio-visual records, et cetera.
Record system:	A collection of policies procedures and systems, which capture information according to a records classification system, manage, store and provide access to records and their context over time.
Register of disposal authorities:	The register of disposal authorities records exactly what disposal authorities were issued on which records and how long they should be kept.
Registry:	A central location where a governmental body stores its active files.
Regulations:	<u>The National Archives and Records Service of South Africa Regulations, 2002</u>, Regulation R158 published in the *Government Gazette* No 24085 of 20 Nov. 2002.
Retention period:	a. The length of time that records should be retained in offices before they are either transferred into archival custody or destroyed/deleted. As far as **non-archival records** are concerned the head of the office decides on the retention periods in accordance with the administrative use of the records and the legal obligations the records need to fulfil. In the case of archival records the National Archives and Records Service of South Africa Act, 1996 as amended, determines that such records must normally be kept for twenty years after the end of the year in which they were created, before they are transferred into archival custody. b. In an electronic document management system, the length of time a record is kept online before it is moved to near-line or off-line storage in a hierarchical storage management system.

Schedule for records other than correspondence systems:	A control mechanism for records other than correspondence files (other records), which contains a description and the disposal instructions and retention periods of all other records. This is to be used for the management of all records other than correspondence systems. Records other than correspondence systems include archival material such as registers, index cards, photographs, computer printouts, minutes of the council, et cetera, which for practical considerations are not filed on the correspondence files of the <u>filing system</u>.
Scheduled:	Records that have been issued with a written disposal authority and are due for disposal on a specific date
System technical manual:	A manual containing information regarding the hardware, software and network elements that comprise the system and how they interact. Details of all changes to a system should also be documented as well as details of new releases that were implemented.
System procedures manual:	A manual containing all procedures relating to the operation and use of the electronic system, including input to, operation of and output from the system. A system procedures manual would contain detailed procedures regarding –

- Document capture
- Document scanning
- Data capture
- Indexing
- Authenticated output procedures
- File transmission
- Information retention
- Information destruction
- Backup and system recovery
- System maintenance
- Security and protection
- Use of contracted services
- Workflow
- Date and time stamps
- Version control
- Maintenance of documentation

A systems procedures manual should be updated when new releases force new procedures.

Terminated records:	Records which were created or received by a governmental body and which were managed by a <u>records classification system</u> which are no longer in use.
Transitory records:	Transitory records are those records created by officials but not required by the governmental bodies for which they work to control, support or document the delivery of services, or to carry out operations, to make decisions, or to give account of the activities of government. Such records are needed by officials for only a limited time to facilitate the completion of routine actions or to prepare a subsequent record required by a governmental body for the above-mentioned reasons.

Unscheduled:	Records that have not yet been issued with a written disposal authority and that can thus not be disposed of.
Vital/essential records:	1. Records that protect the enduring civil, legal, financial, property and other rights of the citizens of a country. 2. Records that are needed to continue operational responsibilities under disaster conditions. 3. Records that protect the legal and financial rights of organisations and government bodies.
GLOSSARY (Society of American Archivists)	The definitions of the archives and records management terms listed below have been adapted from *A Glossary For Archivists, Manuscript Curators and Records Managers* (Society of American Archivists, 1992). Definitions in this list have been taken either unchanged or substantially unchanged from the above source.
Access:	The availability of, or permission to use, records.
Accession:	1. The formal acceptance into physical and legal custody of an addition to the holdings of an archives or records centre. Records accessioned may still remain in the legal custody (ownership) of the creating and depositing office or organisation. 2. An addition of records to the holdings of an archives or records centre.
Accession number:	A unique number assigned sequentially to an accession for purposes of identification and control within an archives or records centre, e.g., 90:015.
Acid-free:	The chemical characteristic of having a pH of 7.0 or greater. Archives should use acid-free paper, file folders, and boxes for preservation of permanent records. *See also* **archives box**.
Active records:	Records that continue to be used by the creating administrative unit for the conduct of regular business and are maintained in active office files.
Administrative value:	The usefulness of records in conducting an organisation's business.
Appraisal:	The process of determining the value and thus the disposition of records based upon their current administrative, legal, and fiscal use; their evidential and informational (historical) value; their arrangement and condition; their intrinsic value; and their relationship to other records.
Archives:	1. The records created or received and accumulated by an institution or organisation in the course of routine business and retained due to their continuing or enduring value. 2. A building or area of a building used to house permanent records. 3. A government department, organisation, or program responsible for appraising, scheduling, accessioning, preserving, and providing reference service to archival materials.

Archives box:	A cardboard storage container made from acid-free materials intended to house archival materials.
Arrangement:	The intellectual and physical processes and results of organising documents in accordance with accepted archival principles, at as many as necessary of the following levels: collection, record group, subgroup, series, sub-series, file unit, and item. The processes usually include packing, labeling, and shelving and are primarily intended to achieve physical control over archival holdings.
Collection:	1. An artificial accumulation of documents brought together on the basis of some common characteristic (e.g. means of acquisition, creator, subject, language, medium, form, name of collector) without regard to the origin of the documents. 2. A grouping of records created by a private individual and organisation.
Confidential information:	Information of a private nature that is protected by law from public disclosure.
Container list:	A listing of materials by container, meant to facilitate retrieval. A container list normally includes the title of the series or file, the portion of the file contained in each container, and the inclusive dates of the materials contained therein. A container list may also include shelf locations for each container. *See also* folder list.
Copy:	Duplicate of the contents of an original document or record created at the same time as the original (carbon copy) or subsequent to the origination of the original (photocopy).
Copyright:	The guaranteed legal right of the creator or originator (and heirs or assignees) of a written work or creative work to publish or duplicate the work or conditionally allow others to publish or duplicate it.
Correspondence:	Any form of written communication sent or received in the course of affairs, including letters, postcards, memoranda, notes, electronic mail, facsimiles, telegrams, or cables.
Creator:	The person, administrative unit, or organization that originates, receives, or assembles records in the course of normal business. *See also* office of origin.
Database:	Integrated data files organised and stored electronically in a uniform file structure that allows data elements to be manipulated, correlated, or extracted to satisfy diverse analytical and reporting needs. A database file is managed independently of the software necessary to perform the manipulations.

Description:	1. The process of analysing, organising, and recording information that serves to identify, manage, locate, and explain the holdings of the Archives and the contexts and records systems from which those holdings were selected 2. The written representations or products of the above process. 3. In records management, a written account of the physical characteristics, informational content, and functional purpose of a record series or system.
Destruction date:	The date which marks the end of the legally required retention period for non-permanent records and the time when records should be destroyed unless the records are involved with or relevant to audit, litigation, or continuing administrative action.
Disaster plan:	The documented policies and procedures intended to either prevent damage, minimise damage, or recover from damage to record materials.
Disposition:	The actions taken regarding records which are no longer needed to support on-going administrative activities in accordance with the Records Retention and Disposition Schedule. Directions may include destroy, transfer to the Archives, or retain permanently in unit.
Document:	*See* record.
Electronic mail (e-mail):	Any communication that requires an electronic device for storage and/or transmission. E-mail often refers to a package of services designed to automate office communications.
Electronic records:	Records created by means of a computing device and subsequently stored on an electronic storage media and only retrievable through electronic means.
Ephemera:	Documents created specifically for a transitory purpose. Advertisements, calling cards, notices, and tickets are examples of ephemera. (SAA)
Essential records:	*See* vital records.
Exempt from public disclosure:	Records that are not open to public examination because they contain information which, if disclosed, might damage individual privacy or compromise public activities.
File integrity:	The principle that completeness, original file order, and unbroken custody of the records in a filing system must be maintained for a record series to maintain legal and intellectual integrity.
File maintenance:	The application of records management principles and techniques to filing practices in order to maintain records properly, retrieve them with efficiency, ensure their integrity, and make their regular disposition more practical.

Files:	A term used to describe some or all records and non-record materials of an office or department.
Filing system:	A set of policies, procedures, and methods used for organising and identifying files or records to increase their speed of retrieval, use, and disposition.
Finding aid:	The descriptive tool, published or unpublished, manual or electronic, produced by the Archives to establish physical and/or intellectual control over records and/or archival materials. Basic finding aids include local, regional, or national descriptive databases; guides, inventories; shelf and container lists; and indices.
Holdings:	The collection of records kept at an archives or records centre.
Inactive records:	Records no longer required by their creating unit or other units to carry on current business and therefore ready for final disposition in accordance with the Records Retention and Disposition Schedule.
Internet:	Global, decentralised communications network connecting millions of computers, providing exchange of data, news and opinions.
Inventory:	1. A basic archival finding aid whose unit of entry is usually the series. An inventory generally includes a brief administrative history of the organisation(s) whose records are being described as well as descriptions of the records. Series descriptions give as a minimum such data as title, inclusive dates, quantity, arrangement, relationships to other series, and scope and content notes. Inventories may also contain appendices that provide such supplementary information as container lists, folder lists, a glossary of abbreviations and special terms, lists of file units on special subjects, indices, and classification plans/schemes. 2. In records management, a detailed listing of the contents, function, volume, scope, and complexity of an organisation's records, usually compiled for the purpose of creating a records schedule.
Lateral file:	Filing equipment that stores file folders in a side-to-side orientation rather than in a front-to-back manner like a vertical file. Some lateral filing units have a mechanism which permits the file containing section to be pulled out of the cabinet for top-tab filing, others that do not have this mechanism require side-tab filing, much like shelf-file units. *See also* <u>vertical file</u> and <u>shelf file</u>.
Legal value:	The usefulness of records in documenting legally enforceable rights or obligations, both those of the state and those of person's directly affected by an organisation's actions.
Life cycle concept of record:	The concept that records pass through several life-like phases: creation (birth), maintenance and use (life), and disposition (retirement and death).

Local area network (LAN):	Two or more personal computers or workstations, usually in a common office area, physically linked together by a common file server.
Manuscripts:	Individual documents or groups of records having historical value or significance that are not "official records" of university departments or offices. These include personal papers (written or typewritten), individual documents of special importance, and collections of documents.
Memorabilia:	Individual items of historical value such as programs, posters, brochures, clippings, buttons, pennants, and stickers.
Microfiche:	Miniaturised photographic document images arranged in horizontal rows and vertical columns that form a grid pattern on a card-size transparent film sheet.
Microfilm:	A fine grain, high resolution photographic film used specifically for the capture of document images. Microfilm is manufactured primarily in either 16 mm or 35 mm widths and in 100- or 215-foot long rolls. While all camera microfilm has a silver halide photosensitive emulsion layer and this type of film is also used for the production of working duplicates, several highly economical duplication films exist such as diazo film (organic dyes) and vesicular film (bubbles).
Misfile:	1. To place a record under the wrong file designation or in a wrong file sequence or position. 2. A record filed under an incorrect file designation or in improper sequence or position.
Nonpermanent records:	Records which have either limited value or are valuable for short periods of time and will ultimately be destroyed.
Office of origin:	The administrative unit or department within which records are created or received and accumulated in the course of its principal activity. *See also* creator.
Office of record:	The administrative unit or department, which may or may not be the office of origin, that maintains the record copy of a document for the institution.
Oral history:	The audio recording or transcript which results from planned oral interviews with individuals. These created and preserved interviews are intended for use by researchers and historians.
Personal papers:	Records of a nonofficial or private nature that relate to an individual's affairs or to the collecting activity of an individual. Papers or collections from individuals are subject to the person's disposition and access instructions.
Photocopy:	A copy produced on or by means of sensitised materials by the action of light or other radiant energy with or without intermediate negative.

Preservation:	The totality of processes and operations involved in the stabilisation and protection of documents against damage or deterioration and in the treatment of damaged or deteriorated documents. Preservation may also include the transfer of information to another medium, such as microfilm.
Primary value:	The value of records that results from their informational content. Records possessing primary value are necessary for the continuation of the affairs of their originating administrative unit. *See also* secondary value**.**
Processing:	The activities performed by archivists when materials are transferred to the legal custody of an archives. Among the individual tasks of processing are: accessioning, arranging, describing, and properly storing archival materials. *See also* **accession, arrangement, description, preservation and weeding**.
Public records:	Public records are created or received and accumulated by government departments or other public institutions in the course of their business activities. Public records may or not be open to public inspection. A public record is not necessarily synonymous with an open record.
Publications:	Documents created and reproduced for distribution and dissemination (e.g. directories, newsletters, and catalogues.)
Pulping:	The destruction of paper records by dissolving them in a liquid reagent. The product of pulping, a raw paper fiber slurry, is recycled into new paper based products.
Record:	A document, regardless of physical form or characteristics, created or received and accumulated by an organisation or administrative unit in the conduct of official business.
Record copy:	The single official copy of a document maintained on file by an administrative unit. A record copy is sometimes termed the file copy. The record copy is usually, but not always, the original. A record copy may be held by the creating office or another office of record.
Record group:	A body of related records that are organisationally grouped together due to their common unit of origin. As examples, the UNISA University Archives groups all records of the Registrars Office into one Record Group, and all records of the University Library into another Record Group.
Record series:	File units or documents arranged in accordance with a filing system or maintained as a unit because they result from the same accumulation or filing process, the same function, or the same activity; have a particular form; or because of some other relationship arising out of their creation, receipt, or use.
Records centre:	A storage space or facility for the high-density and low-cost storage and maintenance of semi-active or inactive records pending their scheduled final disposition.

Records management: A field of management responsible for the systematic control of the creation, maintenance, use, reproduction and disposition of records.

Records retention schedule: A control document which describes the records of an institution or administrative unit at the record series level, establishes a timetable for the record series life cycle, prescribes an ultimate disposition for the record series, and serves as the legal authorisation for the disposition of public records.

Reference service: The assistance provided by the archives staff in helping researchers use the holdings of an archives.

Restricted access: A limitation on the use of a body of documents or of single items containing information of a specific kind or in a particular form. The restriction may limit the use for a time to particular persons or classes of persons or may exclude all potential users. Restrictions may be imposed by law, by Archives or manuscript repositories having custody of the materials, or by officials of controlling agencies or donors and are enforced by the archives or manuscript repository.

Retention period: The maximum and the minimum length of time that a record must be kept by law. The retention period is given in a records retention schedule. The retention period may be given as permanent, until obsolete, or a certain number of years or months.

Retired records: Inactive records that have been removed from active office files to less expensive and slightly less accessible storage space.

Retrieval: The activity of finding and making available records or record information to the creating administrative units or other researchers. Retrieval is a part of the reference service provided by the staff of an archives.

Scheduling: The process of inventorying, analysing, and developing a records retention and disposition schedule which contains series descriptions, retention periods, and disposition instructions. *See also* <u>inventory</u>.

Secondary value: The value of documents to serve as evidence or sources of information for persons and organisations other than their creator. *See also* <u>primary value</u>.

Security copy: A duplicate of records made in order to preserve their informational content in the event that the original records are destroyed, lost, or rendered illegible. Security copies are sometimes made on the same media: electronic records may be duplicated on magnetic tape or disks; or on different media: paper records may be duplicated on microfilm. Security copies are preferably stored in a location other than that of the original.

Semi-active records:	Records that are infrequently needed by their creating unit for the prosecution of official on-going business.
Series:	*See* <u>record series</u>.
Shredding:	A means of destroying paper records by mechanical cutting into a multitude of narrow strips.
Temporary records:	*See* <u>non permanent records</u>.
Transcript:	1. A copy or reproduction, in so far as the resources of script and/or typography allow, of an original document. 2. In legal proceedings, an exact copy of a text. 3. A verbatim written, typed, or printed version of the spoken word, e.g. proceedings in a court of law or an oral history interview.
Transfer:	The change of physical and/or legal custody of records from the creating administrative unit or department to the archives.
Vertical file:	Filing units composed of drawers stacked vertically. These units store records from front to back rather than from side to side. *See also* <u>lateral file</u>.
Vital record:	A record containing information essential to re-establish or continue an organisation in the event of a disaster. Vital records comprise the records necessary to recreate the organisation's legal and financial status and to determine the rights and obligations of employees, customers, stockholders, and citizens.
Weeding:	The selection and removal (destruction) of individual documents, records, or files from a record series due to their failure to possess continuing primary or secondary value.