

## PROCEDURE FOR CONDUCTING A RECORDS INVENTORY

Revision 1

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Approved by:

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## **PROCEDURE FOR CONDUCTING A RECORDS INVENTORY**

1. **GENERAL.** A records inventory is compiling a descriptive list of each record series or system, including the location of the records and any other pertinent data. A records inventory is not a list of each document or each folder.
2. **DEFINE THE RECORDS INVENTORY GOAL(S).** The goals of a records inventory should be to:
  - a. Gather information for scheduling purposes;
  - b. Prepare for conversion to other media or to identify the volume of classified and/or permanent records in your organization's custody; and
  - c. Identify any existing shortcomings, deficiencies, or problems with the recordkeeping.
3. **DEFINE THE SCOPE OF THE RECORDS INVENTORY.** The inventory scope may include records from your entire organization or a specific subset of your records. In planning your inventory scope, keep in mind that:
  - a. Records are commonly inventoried at the record series level.
  - b. Both record and nonrecord material should be addressed.
  - c. Management's concurrence with and support for the inventory is required.
  - d. Management and staff should be informed, as appropriate, regarding every stage of the inventory.
4. **PLAN THE INVENTORY.**
  - a. Decide what information is to be collected (i.e., the data elements to be included in the inventory). See paragraph 3, RECORDS INVENTORY ESSENTIAL INFORMATION.
  - b. Schedule the offices to be inventoried.
  - c. Decide who will conduct the inventory.
  - d. Train the inventory team as needed.
  - e. Notify the staff of the purpose and plan for the inventory.

- f. Learn where files are located, both physically and organizationally.
  - g. Initiate a series inventory form using the appropriate form the NARA's "Disposition of Federal Records: A Records Management Handbook" <http://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/publications/disposition-of-federal-records/index.html>. In this handbook, there are forms and instructions for the Series Inventory Form (used for all media except Audiovisual and Electronic Information Systems); Audiovisual Records Series Inventory; and Information System Description Form (which is used for Electronic Information Systems). Each of these forms is discussed below. You may design your own inventory forms, provided they contain, at a minimum, the information contained in the NARA forms.
5. CONDUCT THE INVENTORY.
- a. Interview staff to identify the records series created and maintained by each office or program.
  - b. Estimate the value of the records to be inventoried.
    - (1) Administrative, legal, and fiscal value to agency.
    - (2) Historical value to future researchers.
    - (3) Temporary and permanent status.
  - c. Inspect all files and record all information by series (See paragraphs 7-9).
  - d. Include records in all media.
  - e. Include all records created by contractors.
  - f. Complete the inventory form.
6. VERIFY AND ANALYZE THE RESULTS. Consolidate similar records into a single record series where the descriptions and necessary retention period are the same.
- a. Match and Apply Records Retention Schedule. Match the records series inventoried with the records schedules. If a series of records cannot be "matched" with an existing schedule, complete an SF 115, "Request for Records Disposition Authority," to obtain a new schedule and submit it to the Departmental Records Officer through the organization's PRO.

- b. Evaluate the Unscheduled Records. Evaluate the unscheduled records series by determining the use made of the records and then analyze the values inherent in the records. Values are determined by considering the usefulness of records in documenting fiscal, legal, administrative, emergency operating, and rights and interests uses. The result of the evaluation process is to recommend the records as either permanent (historical) or temporary (kept for some period of time); and whether the records are needed for emergency operating activities, or for legal and financial rights protection.
  - c. Identify Nonrecord Material. Appropriate “nonrecord series” or categories are created for nonrecord materials maintained in an office so that the responsible official can designate the retention period for which the nonrecord materials will be held in the office before they are destroyed. For nonrecord material, only the head of the office needs to approve the disposition with no additional authorization needed. An approval on the organization’s inventory will permit the recordkeeper to destroy the nonrecord material after keeping it for its approved retention period. No additional authorization will be needed.
  - d. Information Disclosure. A records series affected by either the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) or the Privacy Act should have that fact reflected in the descriptive information about the series so that compliance with these Acts will be facilitated.
    - (1) FOIA Applicability. The FOIA addresses records that have an affect on a member of the public. These are the types of records that may contain this type of material: Departmental Orders, opinions, statements of policy, interpretations, manuals, or instructions. See Title 5, United States Code, Section 552, “Public Information; Agency Rules, Opinions, Orders, Records, and Proceedings.”
    - (2) Privacy Act Applicability. The Privacy Act imposes requirements on the Department regarding the collection and dissemination of information about individuals when the information is retrievable by name or other personal identifier, such as a social security, license, badge, or other number or identifier assigned to particular individuals. See Title 5, United States Code, Section 552a, “Records Maintained on Individuals.” See also, “INFORMATION REQUIRED FOR SYSTEM OF RECORDS.”
7. SERIES INVENTORY FORM. A record series is a group of related documents that support a common activity and usually have a common name such as general correspondence, budget reports, purchase orders, and human resources files. For each record series, the following information is commonly collected:
- a. Date Prepared. The date the inventory was prepared.

- b. Office Responsible for Maintaining the Records. The name and symbol of the office that maintains the records. If this office received this series from another office, indicate the name and symbol of that office as well and designate it as the “creating office.”
- c. Person Conducting the Inventory. The name, office, and telephone number of the person who is conducting the inventory.
- d. Series Location. The precise location of the series (e.g., Room 8F-084, Building FORS). If the series is located in more than one office, conduct only one inventory and indicate multiple locations.
- e. Series Title. The title given to each series for reference purposes. Such titles can come from several sources:
  - (1) A Government agency may use a generally accepted title in its normal day-to-day procedures (e.g., employee locator file, project progress report).
  - (2) The person who conducts the inventory can supply a descriptive title (e.g., property control records, meeting transcripts file, loan analysis file).
  - (3) The title of a single form or type of document may be used if it applies to the entire series (e.g., bills of lading, notifications of personnel action, narrative quarterly reports).
- f. Inclusive Dates. The earliest and latest dates of the records in each series. This information supplements or is a part of the description and is needed to schedule records proposed for permanent retention. It is also needed to determine when to cut off (“break”) records and transfer them to FRCs or other Government agency storage facilities. In addition, it can provide a clue to the growth rate of a series.
  - (1) For case files or correspondence files, express the earliest date as the year only.
  - (2) For series that are created at the time of the inventory, indicate the latest date by the designation “to date” or “to present.”
- g. Series Description. A description of the information included in the records series. A clear description of the series is basic to the success of the inventory and the schedule. It is also necessary for NARA’s later appraisal of the records.

- h. Medium. The form of the records (e.g., paper, microform, electronic, audiovisual, or a combination).
- i. Arrangement. The arrangement or filing system used, e.g., subject classification systems and arrangements that are ordered alphabetically by subject, name, or claimant; geographically by state; numerically by contract number; or chronologically by date or report. If the series has no apparent arrangement, mark it “unarranged.” If there is an arrangement within the series, list it as well. NARA requires agencies to indicate the arrangement of records proposed for permanent retention, but not for those proposed for disposal.
- j. Volume. The amount of space occupied by the records is expressed in cubic feet rather than in linear feet or any other measurement. Volume is measured in cubic feet because this figure represents height, width, and depth, and thus realistically indicates the amount of space actually required to store the records. Also include the volume of older records, which may be wrapped in bundles or packages, and of oversized materials, which are too large to be stored in conventional filing equipment.

Estimate the volume of records in cubic feet using the conversion information below. Although volume information is important, the figure for each series need not be measured with extreme accuracy. Precise accuracy is not needed in gauging the volume of any series that is obviously large. Simply sample the file drawers to see if they are relatively full, and then multiply the number of full file drawers by the pertinent conversion ratio. For those records not stored in filing equipment, estimate the number of file drawers the records would occupy, and then apply the appropriate conversion ratio.

### **Cubic Footage Conversion Table**

- (1) One letter-size file drawer holds *1.5 cubic feet* of records.
- (2) One legal-size file drawer holds *2 cubic feet* of records.
- (3) Seven reels of standard digital computer tape (2,400 feet long, ½-inch wide) equal *1 cubic foot*.
- (4) One standard records center carton holds *1 cubic foot*.
- (5) Fifty 100-foot 35 mm microfilm reels equal *1 cubic foot*.
- (6) One hundred 100-foot 16 mm microfilm reels equal *1 cubic foot*.

(7) One letter-size National Archives box holds *0.35 cubic feet* of records.

(8) One legal-size National Archives box holds *0.43 cubic feet* of records.

### **Document Conversion Table**

(1) One cubic foot contains 2,000 sheets of paper.

(2) One compact disk contains about 2,000 sheets of paper.

(3) One gigabyte is equivalent to about a:

- Pick-up truck filled with paper
- Symphony in high-fidelity sound
- Movie at television quality

k. Annual Accumulation. The annual rate of records accumulation specific to each series. This figure is estimated based on information obtained from the file administrator of each series if the records are current and continuing. NARA requires agencies to furnish the rate of accumulation of those records that are proposed for permanent retention, but not those which are proposed for disposal. If the records are no longer accumulating, indicate “none.”

l. Cutoff. Indicates how often the records are “cut off” and when the last “cutoff” occurred. Cutoff is defined as breaking or ending files at regular intervals, usually at the close of a fiscal or calendar year, to permit their disposal or transfer in complete blocks and, for correspondence files, to permit the establishment of new files. Case files are generally cut off at the end of the year in which the case is closed. Cutoff is sometimes abbreviated as COFF and is also called file cutoff or file break.

If the records are not cut off, explain on the form how inactive records are separated from active records.

m. Reference Activity. A rating of the reference activity of a paper record series after the regular cutoff using one of the three following categories:

(1) Current or active (used more than once a month per file drawer).

(2) Semicurrent or semiactive (used less than once a month but more than once a year per file drawer).

- (3) Noncurrent or inactive (not used for current operations).
- n. Vital Records Status. The current status of records considered vital to the continued functioning or reconstitution of an organization during and after an emergency, as well as those records considered essential to protect the rights and interests of an organization and those individuals directly affected by its activities. Vital records may also be called “essential records” and include both emergency operating records and rights-and-interest records. Vital records considerations are part of an agency’s disaster prevention and recovery program.
- o. Duplication. Indicates duplication in form or content in one of the following ways:
  - (1) Carbon or other copies may exist within the same organizational unit or elsewhere in the agency. The copies may contain significant differences or notations.
  - (2) Similar dates or other information may be available elsewhere in the agency in either physically duplicated or summarized form.
- p. Arrangement. Indicates the filing arrangement of the records series; e.g., subject, alphabetical.
- q. Restrictions on Access and Use. Restrictions on access to and use of a particular series. Such restrictions may result from statutes, executive orders, or agency directives. The two most common types of restrictions are:
  - (1) Personal privacy. These files are restricted because they contain information about individuals whose privacy would be violated if the information were made know to others. Examples are tax returns, medical records, and some personnel investigative files.
  - (2) National security. These files bear classification markings such as “top secret,” “secret,” or “confidential” because their release or the release of some information contained within them to unauthorized persons might harm national security.
- r. Condition of Permanent Records. The physical condition of records being inventoried that are actually or potentially permanent, especially those stored offsite. As appropriate, identify threats to their preservation and security and take appropriate corrective action. Threats may include overhead water pipes, electrical equipment, excessive heat and/or humidity, vermin, and inadequate security.

- s. Disposition Authority. Legal approval obtained from NARA (and from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) for certain records proposed as temporary) that empowers an agency to transfer permanent records to NARA or to dispose of temporary records. If the series has an approved disposition authority, list the schedule and item number and the retention period. If the series has no such authority,
- (1) List the files as “unscheduled”;
  - (2) Make sure they are preserved; and
  - (3) Ask the program office to recommend a suitable retention period.

8. AUDIOVISUAL RECORDS SERIES INVENTORY FORM.

- a. Person Performing the Inventory. Identify the person by name, organization and phone number.
- b. Series Location and Creating Office.
- c. Series Description. In the description include the following
  - (1) Format (4x5, 16 mm, and ½-inch) and generation
  - (2) Subject matter covered in the series
  - (3) Purpose served by the series
  - (4) Finding aids such as data sheets, shot lists, continuities, review sheets, catalogs, indices, and caption lists. Location of aids.
  - (5) Related documentation.
- d. Dates. Indicate the date space of the series.
- e. Arrangement. What is the arrangement of the series (e.g., alphabetical by subject chronological, numerical)?
- f. Volume. Use these conversions to equal 1 cubic foot:
  - (1) Still Pictures
    - (a) Negatives 1,200 35 mm 6-exposure strips
      - 8,640 2x2-inch mounted slides
      - 2,184 4x5-inch file sheets
      - 5,960 21/4x31/4-inch file sheets
    - (b) Prints 2,350 8x10-inch glossies
      - 9,400 4x5-inch glossies

- (2) Motion Pictures
  - (a) Six 35mm reels (1,000 feet)
  - (b) Eleven 16mm reels (1,200 feet)
  - (c) Fifteen 16 mm reels (800 feet)
  - (d) Thirty-two 16 mm reels (400 feet)
  
- (3) Video Recordings
  - (a) Ten ¾-inch cassettes
  - (b) Two 2-inch reels
  - (c) Nine 1-inch reels
  - (d) Forty-two ½-inch reels
  
- (4) Sound Recordings
  - (a) Seventy-six 16-inch disc recordings
  - (b) One hundred and forty-four 12-inch disc recordings
  - (c) Forty-eight 7-inch audiotape reels
  - (d) Sixteen 10-inch audiotape reels

9. ELECTRONIC INFORMATION SYSTEM INVENTORY FORM. An Electronic Information System is defined as the organized collection, processing, transmission, and dissemination of information in accordance with defined procedures. An electronic system includes the inputs and outputs that are generated, as well as the information on electronic media. This system may contain budgetary, fiscal, social, economic, scientific-technical or program-related data and information.

NARA Form 14028 (available at <http://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/publications/disposition-of-federal-records/figure-3-3a.html>) lists the information needed to inventory electronic records. The example in Figure 8 following shows NARA Form 14028 with explanations for the information requested. The explanations are also available online at <http://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/publications/disposition-of-federal-records/figure-3-3b.html>.

<b>1. SYSTEM TITLE</b> [The commonly used name and acronym of the system (e.g., Budget System, Grain Monitoring System)]	<b>2. SYSTEM CONTROL NUMBER</b> [The number assigned for reference, control, or cataloging purposes (e.g., Information System Inventory Number, ADP Plan control number)]
<b>3. AGENCY PROGRAM SUPPORTED BY SYSTEM</b> [Agency programs or missions supported by the system]	<b>4. PROGRAM AUTHORITY</b> [Laws, directives, etc., authorizing the programs supported by the system]
<b>1. SYSTEM DESCRIPTION</b> [Includes the following sections: a. <i>Purpose/Function</i> : The reasons for and the requirements met by the system. b. <i>Sources of Data</i> : The primary sources or providers of data to the system (e.g., broadcast license holders, corporations doing business in the U.S.). Does this system receive information from other systems, either from within or outside your agency? c. <i>Information content</i> : The principal subject matter, data coverage, time span, geographic coverage, update cycle, whether the system saves superseded information, major characteristics of the system, and whether the system contains microdata or summary data. d. <i>Outputs</i> : The principal products of the system (e.g., reports, tables, charts, graphic displays, catalogs, correspondence) and an indication of the frequency of preparation. Is information from this system transferred to other systems?]	
<b>5A. PURPOSE/FUNCTION OF SYSTEM</b> [Self-explanatory]	
<b>5B. SOURCE(S) OF DATA</b> (Include inputs from other systems) [Self-explanatory]	
<b>5C. INFORMATION CONTENT</b> (Citations of previous NARA disposition jobs approving disposition of components (e.g., input forms, printouts, COM, output reports) of the system]	
<b>5D. SYSTEM OUTPUTS</b> (Include outputs from other systems) [Self-explanatory]	
<b>6. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PRINCIPAL PROGRAM OFFICE SUPPORTED BY THE SYSTEM</b> (Include room numbers)	
<b>2. AGENCY CONTACTS</b> (Names, addresses, and phone numbers of system and program personnel who can provide additional information about the system and the program it supports.)	
<b>3. PREVIOUS DISPOSITION JOBS</b> [Citations of previous NARA disposition jobs approving disposition of components (e.g., input forms, printouts, COM, output reports) of the system]	
<b>9A. PREPARER'S NAME</b>	<b>9B. OFFICE NAME AND ADDRESS</b>
<b>9C. PHONE NUMBER</b>	
<b>SIGNATURE</b>	<b>DATE</b>

Figure 8  
 NARA Form 14028, Information System Description