



Understanding Records

Records are in every organization. From purchasing receipts to tax documents to communications, they need to be identified and managed properly. The method of records management that a company uses should be tailored to fit the needs of the organization. There are, however, some basic concepts in most records management systems.

What is Records Management?

Records management systems will create uniformity and understanding. Regardless of how the records management system is organized, the management will affect the way that data is collected, stored and accessed.

Aspects of Records Management

- Establish a company filing system that is uniform
- Determine the storage of physical, confidential records
- Develop programs for consistent management of records
- Create archives and resource libraries

Over the course of this instruction, you will develop a better understanding of these aspects and how they connect in records management.

Defining Records

All records are documents, but not all documents are records. A document can be a contract, email, business negotiation, etc. If it relates to the legal obligations, evidence, or business transactions, the document becomes part of the legal record.



When identifying a record, it is necessary to consider the purpose of the document.

- Is it personal, or business?
- Does it relate to a transaction?
- Does it reflect any company action or activity?
- Does it have legal implications?

Once a document has been identified as a record, it must be carefully maintained for future use.

Archives vs. Records

Records can become part of archives. Archives are records that are no longer current but are preserved past average records. Records are kept for varying lengths of time, depending on what they are. Once documents pass the necessary time for storage, they are disposed, or they are placed in archives. Archives typically have a historical, political, or legal reasons. They have value for the long-term. For example, documents that provide legal protections might be archived along with the founding documents of an organization. When choosing to dispose of documents in records or keeping them, remember that only a few of the documents will be archived. Archives may be stored on site, although some institutions will keep them offsite. Larger organizations with multiple locations are more likely to use offsite archives.

Life Cycle

There are differing definitions for document life cycles, which have become even more complicated with the introduction of electronic records. In this text, there is a blend of the classic cycle and the life history.



The Life of Records:

1. Documents are created or received. Records are identified.
2. Identified documents are captured for record-keeping. The captured files follow the necessary business practices and are current.
3. Record management occurs. The records are stored, used, or maintained. The records may be current or not current. Records that are no longer considered current may become current again in events such as audits.
4. Records are assessed and action taken. The records are identified as in use, necessary to maintain, necessary to dispose of, or necessary to archive.