

ARCHIVAL RECORDS



COLLECTION POLICY and TRANSFER MANUAL

Office of the Secretary of State
Sam Reed, Secretary of State

Division of Archives & Records Management

Olympia, Washington
2009

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To All State Records Keepers,

Each state agency is an important part of the state and its history. It is essential that the archival records of state agencies be preserved. The archival program is people dependent, therefore your understanding, cooperation and support in preserving the historical record is essential. Without your help the job will not be done, and much of the historical record will be lost, inadvertently destroyed or ultimately will disintegrate. We hope you will view preservation of the archives not just as a legal requirement but as an important cultural responsibility in which you can actively participate and support.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Washington State Archives is “To centralize the archives of the state of Washington, to make them available for reference and scholarship, and to ensure their proper preservation.” (RCW 40.14.020). To accomplish this mission, the State Archives is authorized to inspect and appraise all state government records for archival value. Additionally, the State Archives designates which records shall be transferred to the Archives, preserves those records as a public trust, and ensures that all citizens have free and ready access to those records under the provisions of the law.

Legal Authority

“All public records, not required in the current operation of the office where they are made or kept. . . shall be transferred to the state archives so that the valuable historical records of the state may be centralized, made more widely available, and insured preservation.” (RCW 40.14.030). Under the terms of the law, all state government agencies are obliged to submit their records to the State Archives for review and possible inclusion in the archival collections when the agency which created those records no longer needs them for day-to-day operations.

The State Archives serves as the archival repository for all state government agencies. However, state agencies share responsibility by providing for the preservation of historical public records until such time as they can be transferred to the Archives, and ensuring that such records are transferred to Archives in a timely manner.

Public Records Defined

“The term ‘public records’ shall include any paper, correspondence, completed form, bound record book, photograph, film, sound recording, map drawing, machine-readable material, or any other document, regardless of physical form or characteristics, and including such copies thereof, that have been made or received by any agency of the state of Washington in connection with the transaction of public business.” (RCW 40.14.010).

Essentially, all documentation produced by or received by any government agency, regardless of form and including electronic records, are “public records.” This includes the records of agency directors and members of boards and commissions.

Purpose of the Archives and Archival Collections

The purpose of the Archives is to document the history, organization and functions of Washington State government agencies and their impact on the lives of citizens. The archival collections consist of over 100,000 cubic feet (around 250 million documents) of records that document many aspects of the history of the state and activities of state government. The collections date from the establishment of Washington Territory in 1853 to the present. Included among them are the papers of each governor, legislative records, court records, records from all state agencies, and all of the “official records” of the state, including governors’ proclamations, executive orders, election results, and the laws as passed and signed.

“To centralize the archives of Washington.” Researchers from all over the world rely on the Archives for information about Washington, its government, and its citizens. To best serve them, it is essential that the information be centralized and not scattered in various locations statewide, which is why state agencies may not establish and operate their own individual “archives.”

Public records must always remain in government custody. They may not be donated to organizations such as libraries, museums or historical societies, and government employees under penalty of law may not take them home. Public records are the property of the State.

“To make them available for reference and scholarship.” The Archives employs professionally trained staff dedicated to helping researchers find and understand state government records. This guarantees the best possible service to the public.

“To ensure their proper preservation.” All records deteriorate, whether they are paper, electronic, optical images, photographs, or other media. The Archives operates a records conservation lab that employs techniques to preserve records, and all of the most important historical records in the custody of the Archives are stored in special temperature/humidity controlled vaults which extends the life of records many times over.

To provide continuity of care and continuing access. The State Archives is established by law to take care of the state’s historical records and is equipped and staffed to do so. Generally state agencies do not have the facilities, equipment or people with the time or professional archival training to do archival work, and a change in staffing or agency outlook can often result in the neglect or even destruction of records.

Appraisal and Collection Policy

The purpose of archival appraisal is to select those state government records that document the functions, programs, and activities of state government agencies. To achieve this, the Archives has the legal mandate to collect records from every level of government which will serve the purpose of documenting Washington's history. It is the policy of the State Archives to collect historically significant records from all branches and agencies of government, including the executive, judicial and legislative branches.

Evidentiary Records: The kinds of records that merit inclusion in the Archives are those which provide essential evidentiary information on state agency functions. The Archives seeks to acquire those records which are the primary records of how citizens are governed, managed, or otherwise relate to public institutions over time. Examples of records which are traditionally appraised as "archival" for their evidentiary value include: records designated by law as having permanent historical value; records which best reflect the mission, goals, programs, functions, and organization of state agencies and programs; and records that provide the most accurate, understandable, accessible and succinct sources of information. Additionally, the State Archives also collects records that have "intrinsic" value, based upon the physical form of the record, its uniqueness, or other factors arising out of its creation or use.

Informational Records: In addition to documenting the functions of state government, the Archives is also responsible for preserving records that have valuable information for a variety of researchers. For example; the legal community in establishing legislative intent; genealogists seeking to find out about their ancestors; citizens seeking records to document and safeguard their rights; historians seeking primary historical source materials of all kinds; and state agency officials researching the actions and activities of their agencies in the past.

Typical Archival Government Records:

- Executive level correspondence and subject files
- State agency annual/biennial reports
- Primary documentation of state government programs
- Meeting minutes
- Studies
- Research reports
- Public affairs office files

Non-Government Records: In addition to government records, the State Archives collects records derived from other sources which may augment government records collections or otherwise shed light on government policies or activities. These may include the papers of legislators, private papers of former government officials, private collections of documents and manuscript materials, working files, studies, and

publications featuring government activities.

The Archival Appraisal Process: Archival appraisal is a multi-step process which begins with the analysis of state agency Records Retention Schedules by the State Archives Appraisal Committee. Records may be re-appraised later after their transfer to the archives and prior to their disposal. In some cases only a portion of the records are saved for archives. State agencies are kept informed of the archival status of the records which they have created, and if it is determined that the “archival” status of a record needs to be changed they are consulted.

Once records have been designated as “archival” they are earmarked for eventual transfer to the State Archives. When the state agency that created the records no longer has a current administrative, legal or fiscal need for such records (as defined in the agency’s records retention schedules), they must be transferred to the State Archives. The maximum length of time a state agency may retain archival records is fifty years, but usually the retention period is much shorter. If an agency is required by law to keep certain records permanently (such as board minutes), the State Archives assumes the responsibility for such requirements.

Ownership of Transferred Records

All records created, collected or maintained by state agencies are the property of the State of Washington and the public that paid for their creation. The agency that creates or maintains the records is the legal custodian of the records until such time as they are transferred to the Archives or destroyed.

Records transferred to the Archives come under both the physical and legal control of the Archives. The Archives can decide, after careful consideration and in consultation with the agency of origin, to weed, sample or dispose of records that have been transferred. The final decision as to which records are to be preserved forever by the State Archives is up to the State Archivist and staff.

Records transferred to the Archives are open to the public for research under the terms of the Public Disclosure Act with no further reference to the agency of origin. They may be researched and copied, but they may not be removed from the Archives.

Agencies are not charged a box storage fee for records transferred to the Archives. Instead, their maintenance and storage are paid for out of the Archives and Records Management Revolving Fund, which is not based upon the number of boxes stored.

Access to Records

Public records transferred to the Washington State Archives are open for inspection and examination by the public unless prohibited by specific statute or restricted under the terms of the Public Disclosure Act (RCW 42.17). All records that have been transferred to archival custody are available to researchers on equal terms of access. The Archives does not grant privileged or exclusive use of materials to any person or organization. Records that are in the custody of the Archives must be used and copied on site at the Archives. They may not be removed for any purpose unless special arrangements have been made or they are subpoenaed into court.

Differences Between the Archives and the Records Center

Often when people speak of “archiving” their records or sending their records to archives they are really speaking about the State Records Center. Although both the State Records Center and the State Archives are part of the Washington State Division of Archives and Records Management, and although the jobs of both sections are to store records and provide reference services, there are several fundamental differences.

State Records Center:

- Serves as an off-site storage facility for state agency records
- Only stores records which have Records Retention Schedules and have not yet reached the end of their retention period
- Only allows the agency of origin access to the records
- Checks records back out to the agency of origin upon request
- Charges the agency of origin for storage based upon the number of boxes stored
- Assigns each box a unique bar-code number for inventory control, tracking and reference

State Archives:

- Only stores records which have historical value
- Only takes in records which have completed their retention period (or in some cases, records which were never scheduled)
- Allows access to anyone, under the terms of the Public Disclosure Act
- Does not check records out except under very special circumstances
- Does not charge for box storage
- Catalogs its holdings by subject, content and origin

Transfer and Disposition of Archival Records

Records designated as, “archival” on the Records Retention Schedule, are determined by the State Archives as having continuing historical significance. They must be transferred to the Archives at the end of their retention period. If the records are first sent to the State Records Center for temporary storage prior to the expiration of their retention periods they must be accompanied by an Archival Box Content List. This is important, for when the boxes reach the end of their retention periods they will be transferred directly to the Archives where the Content List will be essential in the cataloguing process.

Transfer Procedures for Archival Records

Records are transferred to the State Archives either directly from the agency that created them or via the State Records Center.

Direct Transfers: State agencies may transfer archival records directly to the State Archives if they have reached the end of their retention periods or if they are records with historical value which have never been scheduled. The records must be boxed in records center boxes and the boxes must be labeled. An Archival Box Content List must accompany the boxes.

Records from the Office of the Governor, Office of the Lieutenant Governor, the House of Representatives and the State Senate are always transferred directly to the State Archives.

Transfers from the State Records Center: When the end of the total retention period of archival records stored at the State Records Center has been reached the Records Center automatically transfers those records directly to the State Archives, informing the agency of origin of the transfer. In order to catalog the records into the Archives system it is essential that the Archival Box Content List has been prepared.

Preparing the Records for Transfer

Records designated for transfer to the Archives should be placed in file folders upright in records center boxes. They should be in the order in which they were originally used. Do not put hanging files in the boxes. If the records are being sent to either the Records Center or the Archives, the Archival Box Content List needs to be prepared.

Instructions for Filling Out the Archival Box Content List

The Archival Box Content List is used to transfer records directly to the Archives and also is placed in the box when sending archival records to the Records Center, which will later be transferred to the Archives. *Records designated as "archival" which are being shipped to the State Records Center will require both the Records Center Transmittal and the Archival Box Content List.*

1. Leave the top set of boxes blank
2. On the next set of boxes fill in: Agency Name, Office Name, name and mail stop of the person sending the records.
3. In the next section, leave Location blank, fill in Box Number, Record Series and File Titles, and the Inclusive Dates.

After the boxes have been received and accessioned by the Archives, a copy of the Archival Box Content List will be mailed back to the agency of origin.



**SECRETARY
of STATE**

**DIVISION OF ARCHIVES & RECORDS MANAGEMENT
ARCHIVAL BOX CONTENTS LIST**

<i>Archives Use Only</i> ↔	Received By	Date	Accession Number
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Name of Agency Office of the Governor	Office / Sub-Division Correspondence Unit	Transmitted By Jane Doe
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Location	Box #	Record Series / File Title	Date(s)
<i>Archives Use Only</i>		GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE FILES	
	25	Accountancy Board Administrative Law Judge Arts Commission Asian-American Affairs Commission Attorney General Awards	1983
	26	Blind, Commission for the Boards and Commissions Bob Hope Heart Research Center Boeing Company	1983

Please attach one copy of this form to the Record Center Transmittal Form (if applicable) and place one copy of this form in the Record Center Box

Labeling the Boxes

Boxes should be labeled consecutively, beginning with Box #1. It is essential that the number on the box label correspond with the box number on the Archival Box Contents List.

Instructions for Filling out the Archival Box Label:

1. **Record Group Name:** Agency or department where the records came from
2. **Sub-Group Name:** Name of the office which created the records
3. **Record Series Name:** From the Records Retention Schedules or name commonly applied to the records
4. **Arrangement:** The way in which the files are arranged. i.e. alphabetical, numerical, chronological, none
5. **Description:** Usually the titles of the first and last file in the box
6. **Inclusive Dates:** The earliest and latest dates of the files in the box
7. **Control Number:** Leave blank
8. **Accession Number:** Leave blank
9. **Box Number:** Relates to "Box Number" on Transmittal form

 SECRETARY of STATE <i>Ralph Munro</i> Division of Archives and Records Management <small>ARCHIVES BRANCH</small> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <small>NW PS SW CE EA SA</small> <small>STACK LOCATION</small>	RECORD GROUP TITLE	Office of the Governor		
	SUB-GROUP TITLE	Correspondence Unit		
	SERIES TITLE	General Correspondence Files		
	ARRANGEMENT	Alphabetical		
	DESCRIPTION	Accountancy Board – Awards		
	INCLUSIVE DATES	1983	BOX NO.	25
	CONTROL NO.		ACCESSION NO.	

SSA-16 (REV. 10/97)

Supplies, Shipping, and Referencing

Supplies: Boxes, labels, and Archival Box Contents List forms may be ordered from the Archives by calling 586-1492. The Archival Box Content List may also be downloaded as a Word document at our web page at www.secstate.wa.gov/archives. If you wish you may replicate the forms as closely as possible on your own computer.

Shipping: Once the boxes are packed, labeled and the forms are prepared, call the Archives for a records pickup at 586-1492. Records are generally picked up within three working days.

Referencing Records: Requests for access to records stored in the Archives may be arranged by calling the State Government Records Section at 586-1492. The records may be researched and copied at the Archives.

Reference service can be expedited by referring to your copies of the Archives transmittal forms and supplying the Archives with the Accession Number, Box Number, File Name, and Location.

