

Using Records Retention Schedules: What is an Archival Record?

Purpose: Provide guidance to state agencies and local government entities on what it means when a records series is designated as archival.

If a records series is designated as Archival (Permanent) or Archival (Appraisal Required), the Washington State Archives has determined that these types of records have (or may have) enduring historical and/or practical value to the public. The majority of records accessioned by the Archives remain in the collection permanently, and are open to the public for research.

What does Archival (Permanent) mean?

The Archival (Permanent) designation means that all records covered by a particular records series have long-term value and must not be destroyed.

- **State agencies** must transfer Archival (Permanent) records to the Archives when they have met retention.
- **Local government entities** must either transfer Archival (Permanent) records to the Archives when they have met retention or permanently retain and preserve them according to archival best practices.

What does Archival (Appraisal Required) mean?

The Archival (Appraisal Required) designation means that records covered by a particular records series *may* have long-term value and must be appraised by the Archives. During appraisal, Archives staff may determine that part or all of the records are eligible for archival transfer. Records that Archives staff choose not to accession may be destroyed by the agency after their retention has been met.

- **State agencies** can contact the Olympia Branch Archives to arrange for archival appraisal.
- **Local government entities** can contact their regional archivist to arrange for archival appraisal. The contact information for the five Regional Branch Archives is located under the Branches tab on the Archives' website: www.sos.wa.gov/archives

Will the Archives keep archival-designated records forever?

In most cases, yes. Occasionally, the Archives will reappraise records that are seldom-used or outside the current scope of collection to see if they still warrant permanent preservation. The Archives will contact the originating agency and other applicable historical institutions before destroying any unique records.

Can the public access archival records with restricted information?

Researchers cannot directly access archival records containing restricted personal or legal information. Please work with Archives staff to identify and secure information that should not be open to public research before transferring records.

**Additional advice regarding the management of public records is available from
Washington State Archives:**

**www.sos.wa.gov/archives
recordsmanagement@sos.wa.gov**