



# ARCHIVES & HISTORY

General Commission on Archives and History

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Records Management Guidelines

# **Guidelines for Managing Records of the General Agencies of The United Methodist Church 2024 Edition**

**GUIDELINES FOR  
MANAGING RECORDS OF  
THE GENERAL AGENCIES OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

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## Purpose of this Manual

This manual is produced by the General Commission on Archives and History. Its purpose is to provide for each agency some general guidance in developing retention policies for their records. This is a manual of examples and ideas. It is not meant to provide an exhaustive or comprehensive records management plan. That only can be done at the agency level. The intention is to provide enough material and ideas, and some examples, to assist in starting a records management program. Some of the ideas mentioned here will be used directly in a local program, while others just offer a place to begin. Please read the *Who's Responsible* section and the *Records Transfer Procedures* section. Consult the *Model Records Schedule* to see what we recommend. We have listed items which should be sent to Archives and History and some which should not. For a clearer idea of what is involved in creating a record schedule see the *Creating a Record Schedule*, the *Storage of Non-Permanent Records* and *Other Resources* sections. If you have any questions contact the General Commission on Archives and History at (973) 408-3189, (973) 408-3909 (FAX), or write to: Archivist/Records Administrator, [research@gcah.org](mailto:research@gcah.org) or the mail address is: GCAH, P. O. Box 127, Madison, NJ 07940.

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## What is Records Management?

Records management is the attempt to systematically control the growth and disposition, or destruction, of office, committee and other official records. Its basic purpose is to help answer that nagging question of what do I keep, for how long do I keep it and when can I remove it from my office. For a concise definition of a "record" refer to the *Disciplinary Responsibility* section.

Now we need to define some terms. In every office there are a variety of records which are related because they result from the same filing process, or the same function or the same activity, or have a similar form or contents. This group of related documents we will call a *series*. For example file folders of bank statements from different banks would be a series. A collection of check requests would be another series. Staff memos are yet another series. For each series there are two important concepts, or questions to be asked. The first is "for how long are these records used?" - this is referred to as the *records life cycle*. The second is "how significant are these records?" - this is referred to as *appraisal*. Understanding these two concepts are key to understanding the nature of records management.

### What is Records Management?

The essence of records management can be summarized as follows: The task of managing our office records so that we have the records on hand to conduct today's ministry, to dispose of those we no longer need, and to see that valuable records are preserved. Its basic purpose is to help answer that nagging question of what do I keep, for how long do I keep it and when can I remove it from my office.

### Records Life Cycle:

Records can be considered like a living organism; they are born, or created, mature during their use, and then are retired or removed. In records management the task is to recognize when a record has reached the end of its life cycle. That is to say that there comes a time when every record **no longer serves a useful administrative function**. In general, the less a record is consulted, the less useful it is administratively. There are some significant exceptions to this rule, but the main focus is on those records occupying important space in an office and when can they be removed from that office. There are some records which will always have value, and which need to be kept, but which don't need to be in the main office files occupying valuable space. When a records has reached the end

of its *useful administrative purpose* it is ready to be retired from the office. It is the function of *appraisal* which helps us determine when to retire the record and what to do with the record once it is retired.

### Records Appraisal:

Appraisal is the process which identifies the administrative, legal, and fiscal value (primary value), and the historical and long-term research value (secondary value) of records. Once the value of a record series has been determined, a realistic retention period can be assigned to it. Appraisal can take place at any point during a record series' life cycle, but is most frequently done when the records become inactive.

There are several questions to be asked when appraising a series: How frequently is the record used by those who created it? If the record is still frequently consulted then it should probably remain in the

office. But even for records which are not consulted frequently, is there still a consistent, although low, demand for the record? Is there some legal or fiscal need to hold on to the record even though it is no longer consulted or used? An example here might be financial information. What is the historical significance of the record? Always consider records as historical when they contain information about the institution which created the record. An example here might be agency board minutes.

## Disciplinary Responsibility

Each agency is responsible for developing its own retention policies in consultation with GCAH. Your agency should select at least one individual to function as its records officer. This person will be the primary contact between your agency and GCAH. This records officer is responsible for seeing that the records management policies are carried out. This person should see that the files are weeded at the proper time, and that the appropriate files are sent to Archives and History or that files are disposed of in the proper fashion for each series. If a new series appears, which can be a frequent occurrence in some offices, then that person should also be responsible for bringing the situation to the attention of the records committee so that an appropriate action can be taken. The records committee, along with the appropriate advisors, should then assess the new series and create a new schedule for those records. For more information about a series see the “Creating a Records Schedule” section below. The disciplinary authorization for these actions are found in ¶1711.3b.

The bishops, General Conference officers, the Judicial Council, general boards, commissions, committees, and agencies of The United Methodist Church shall deposit official minutes or journals, . . . in the archives quadrennially and shall transfer correspondence, records, papers, and other archival materials . . . from their offices when they no longer have operational usefulness. No records shall be destroyed until a disposal schedule has been agreed upon by the General Commission on Archives and History and the agency.

*The Book of Discipline* is the basic body of administration and law for our denomination. It is reviewed, revised and edited once every four years by the General Conference. The General Conference is the only body which can speak for the entire denomination. It is composed of representatives selected from every annual conference. This means there are delegates from within and without the United States.

Definition of “records” from the *Discipline* ¶1711.1b):

*Documentary record material* shall mean all documents, minutes, journals, diaries, reports, pamphlets, letters, papers, manuscripts, maps, photographs, books, audiovisuals, sound recordings, magnetic or other tapes, electronic data processing records, artifacts, or any other documentary material, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received pursuant to any provisions of *The Discipline* in connection with the transaction of Church business by any general agency of The United Methodist Church or of any of its constituent predecessors.

Finally, each agency should have a records committee to plan and implement an agency-wide records policy.

## Reasons for Records Management

There are a variety of reasons for a general agency to deal with records management; other than the obvious one that the *Discipline* requires it. Every office is faced with problems of storage space, as well as decisions about which records to keep and which to discard. This manual was designed to

It must be made clear at the outset that this is a manual of **guidelines** only. Every effort has been made to provide reliable and accurate information. However, records management policy, rules and regulations, can vary from state to state. Before you put any records management program into place please check your plans with your local counsel.

assist offices with these problems and decisions. A records management program strives to achieve economy and efficiency in the creation, use, maintenance, and disposal of agency records.

### Preservation of the Important and the Historical:

In order for our future to have a past we must be concerned for the records of today. The development of a records management policy is the first step in preserving our past by deciding what needs to be kept today. A concern for the historical, the legal and the fiscal needs of our church motivates us to faithfully preserve our important records.

### The Effective Use of Space & Time:

It is estimated that after personnel costs, records keeping is one of the largest expenditures in the church. Record creation, maintenance, filing, office storage space, filing supplies, and equipment all contribute to the high cost of keeping records. In our usually limited office space we are often faced with the question of what can we remove in order to have room for what we need.

We need to be aware of certain factors which can help us make the most effective use of space:

- Dispose of records as soon as legally possible. It is estimated that between 90 to 95 percent of all records are non-permanent; an estimated 85 percent have a retention period of less than eleven years.
- In comparison to government, the church has fewer restrictions on what we are required to keep. For the majority of the records we

#### Three Reasons for Records Management

1. Preservation of important and historical documents
2. Removing older records from the office means less time spent filing/searching for files and fewer storage requirements
3. Financial and legal concerns - will have the documents necessary for audits or for legal needs

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produce we can set our own guidelines. There are laws affecting financial, personnel and legal files. But the majority of the material in our files falls outside these regulations.

- Having a controlled filing system means a smaller system. This can save time by making record retrieval and refileing easier and faster, and reduces the number of misfiles.

### Legal Protection:

If an office is ever faced with legal action, having a records management program in place is one way to assure courts and litigants that records are being cared for and disposed of properly and in a routine manner, not maliciously or in a capricious way.

### Church's Attitude to Openness:

The denomination has committed itself to openness. The relevant section from the *Discipline* is ¶ 721.

In the spirit of openness and accountability, all meetings of councils, boards, agencies, commissions, and committees of the Church, including subunit meetings and teleconferences, shall be open. Portions of a meeting may be closed for consideration of specific subjects if such a closed session is authorized by an affirmative public vote with at least three-fourths of the voting members present. The vote shall be taken in public session and recorded in the minutes. Documents distributed in open meetings shall be considered public.

Great restraint should be used in closing meetings; closed sessions should be used as seldom as possible. Subjects that may be considered in closed session are limited to real estate matters; negotiations, when general knowledge could be harmful to the negotiation process; personnel matters; [See Judicial Council Decision 751,869] issues related to the accreditation or approval of institutions; discussions relating to pending or potential litigation or collective bargaining; communications with attorneys or accountants; deployment of security personnel or devices and negotiations involving confidential third-party information. Meetings of the committee on pastor-parish or staff-parish relations are to be closed meetings pursuant to ¶ 258.2e. While it is expected that the General Conference, the Judicial Council and the Council of Bishops will live by the spirit of this paragraph, each of these constitutional bodies is governed by its own rules of procedure.

A report on the results of a closed session is to be made immediately upon its conclusion, or as soon thereafter as is practicable.

We need to remember that all have a right to view various documents. A well managed record environment enables the retrieval and reviewing of our public documents with greater ease and efficiency.



## Vital Records

Vital records are those records necessary for basic agency operations. They are the records which can not, or should not, be lost. While it is true that all records created by an agency are important it is also true that some records are more important and significant to the operation and well-being of the institution. The best way to understand the importance of vital records is to ask the question, if the building was destroyed which records would be most important for getting the agency back into operation? Some of those vital records are identified in the *Discipline* while others are identified by state or local laws. A few records which need to be included in any list would be agency journals and administrative policy. In addition to these basic records, there are also personnel records, financial records, deeds and contracts among other important records.

Copies or originals of these records should be stored offsite of the agency, perhaps in a local bank or other secure place. Some of these records may well exist in electronic format. Copies of these electronic records should be stored offsite and frequently updated by replacing the older files with the most recent copies.

Having copies of your institution's vital records stored in a safe place will assist in the transition back to normal operations (or at least basic operations) after a disaster.

## Electronic Records Issues

What follows is a summary overview of electronic records issues. Please consult our *Guidelines for Managing Electronic Records* for a more detailed discussion of this important topic. The management of electronic records usually revolves around word processing documents. There are other types to be considered however. Most of the examples given will relate to word processing. To gain an idea of the complexity of the problem one only needs to consider the different number of word processing formats in use. A popular program which converts one type of word processing format to another currently has conversion routines for around 48 different formats. Without such a program, and if an archives wanted to maintain the electronic files in their native format, an archives would need more than 40 different word processing programs to deal with all of these formats. Not only would they need the programs, but also the operating system on which the program was designed to run. In the past twenty years there has been at least six different operating systems and a variety of versions under those six. It quickly becomes obvious why an archives cannot maintain electronic files in their native format. Electronic files, in order to be used, are dependent on software and hardware. This dependency makes them extremely vulnerable over time to loss due to changes in technology and the market. And this doesn't even touch the issue of the stability of the medium on which electronic records are stored. To preserve an electronic file for the future it either needs to be converted to some standardized electronic format or printed. While there are standardized formats for both electronic document files and for databases which are supported by the archival and technological communities, they are minimalist file formats, which means that much of the formatting of a document will be lost and some of the flexibility of complex databases will also be lost. The most secure way to deal with most electronic documents is to print the document out on paper. The document can then easily be managed under records retention guidelines.

It must also be admitted that the use of electronic records in the office are vital to its smooth operation. Without the ease of use electronic records affords the office today much of our productivity would be lost.

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So, while electronic records in their native format are not useful, and in fact detrimental, for long term storage they are essential to today's productive office environment. In using electronic records there are several points which must be kept in mind.

- The first is migrating the records when operating systems or software are upgraded. This is one of the most easily overlooked issues. Most offices have a variety of records on their hard drives, servers and backup media like CDs. Many of the records are not used on a daily basis but need to be near by for routine occasional use. When a computer's operating system or software is upgraded the data files need to be migrated as well. This usually isn't a problem for the files stored on the computer or server and which are probably used on a regular basis. But files on backup media, diskettes, Zip drives, and CDs may be overlooked and could be found inaccessible when they are finally used. This could especially be the case if the files were created more than two upgrades ago. When software or operating systems are upgraded you want to make sure that all of your files can be accessed by the new system. Take the time to open and access files especially on your backup media and if necessary open them all and save them in the new format. And don't assume that the upgrade of the same product will mean that your files are always accessible. It is well known that a popular word processing product cannot read files from earlier versions. A person has to go back to an earlier version of the product, open and save the files and then they can be accessed by the most current version. If you are going to keep records in an electronic format always make sure that you migrate them along with each upgrade.
- Organizing your computer's file system is another important element. The same retention guidelines apply to electronic files as it does to paper files. Many users just store files on their hard drives without any planning. Some with just minimal planning. This has negative consequences in several areas. The first is a degradation of your computer's performance. Folders (or directories) which contain a large number of files are inefficient for the computer. It takes more memory and time to manage a large amount of files in a single folder. It is also takes longer to search a large folder or directory, either visually or with a search engine. As much as possible replicate your paper filing structure on your computer. This will make it easier for the computer to manage itself and for you to manage your files. Where appropriate make sure you can distinguish between files which do not need to be kept from those which have a longer or permanent retention. You can do this either by creating appropriate folders or by a naming convention. This makes backup easier and it makes management of your files easier. Copying entire directories is much faster than hunting through a long file list.
- Making backups is probably the most important task to be done. Computers do wear out and cease to operate and all information on them will be lost. Offices are damaged during storms and vandalism happens. Where are you keeping copies of your data? Backing up data is the most difficult thing to do, as it takes time and seems unproductive. But without it, after an accident, productivity will really cease. In a networked environment it is a little easier to backup data. Files can be stored on the server and the server automated to make backups on a regular basis. But in the small office the single-user computer also needs to be backedup. That may be as simple as copying files to a CD-RW on a daily basis, or using a backup program. And for very important files you will want to store the copies somewhere else than at work, just as you do for important papers. This has been touched on in the Vital Records section.

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It is worth mentioning, as a final note, the longevity of some electronic media. None of the electronic storage media has as long a shelf life as does acid-free paper. Disks, diskettes, and hard drives all have about a twenty-five year life expectancy. Zip drives also fall into this category. There have been several claims about CDs. Different claims actually apply to different types of CDs. The ones purchased in stores, such as music CDs and games, are usually pressed CDs which means that their data is actually pitted into the surface of the CD. That might be fairly stable. CD-Rs and CD-RWs use a heat sensitive dye which changes color when data is written to it. Both are encased in plastic and there are questions about the stability of the plastic. There are questions about what happens to heat sensitive dye when subjected to temperature extremes. There are questions about the stability of the CD if the plastic surface is scratched allowing air in to oxidize the metal. And finally, and more importantly, there are questions about stability as the technology that allows the CDs to be read. Just as there are hardly any computers which can read 8-inch floppy disks, the next generation of CD readers won't be able to read earlier CD versions. This is another way of emphasizing the importance of migration. Not only must electronic records be migrated as operating and software systems change, but they must be migrated as storage system change as well. It doesn't matter how long the media lasts if there is no equipment left which can read the media.

## Basic Issues

The following basic records should always be sent to the archives on a regular, preferably yearly, basis.

- Minutes of your board's annual meeting(s)
- Minutes of all committee meetings of your board
- Reports generated by your board
- Minutes of staff meeting
- If your agency is staffing a committee established by the General Conference please see that the committee's minutes and other records are sent to Archives and History when the committee's work is completed.

Records that are to be sent to the archives and which are kept in your office in an electronic format need to be printed out and placed in appropriate files before they are sent to GCAH. It is physically and financially impossible for the archives to maintain, and or migrate, all the electronic formats currently in use in our agencies. The needs of historical preservation, at this time, require that these electronic records be placed on acid-free paper. An alternative would be for you to transfer your electronic records directly to microfilm before sending the microfilm to us. Please contact GCAH for further information concerning electronic records transfers.

Staff personnel should not remove records from their office when they retire or otherwise leave the agency. There is often the temptation to want to organize and help preserve history by taking the records home to work on them. This often results in the loss of a significant portion of an agency's history. If the simple transfer procedures of this manual are followed, the records will arrive at Archives and History where they can be processed by the professionally-trained archivists and thereby insure a continued record of our denomination's history.

Sending records to GCAH will be an implicit statement that the records no longer have an administrative value and if GCAH staff determine that the records have no historical value then GCAH may dispose of the records.

## A Responsible Person - The Records Officer

Every office ought to have at least one person who is responsible for seeing that the records management polices are carried out. This person should see that the files are weeded at the proper time, and see that the files are then disposed of in the proper fashion for each series. If a new series appears, which can be a frequent occurrence in some offices, then that person should also be responsible for bringing the situation to the attention of the records committee so that an appropriate action can be taken.

The records committee, along with the appropriate advisors, should then assess the new series and create a new schedule for those records.

## Storage of Records

In some cases records might be able to stay in their office of origin until they are destroyed or transferred to the archives. But in the case of small offices, another solution may be necessary. If office space is at a premium, then it may not be advisable to retain records which aren't used for seven or 20 years in the office. So, another step in the retention schedule concept is to determine how many years a record should remain in the office and then, if it still has some years to go before it can be destroyed, move it to some other storage location where it will remain until it can be destroyed. Permanent records could be immediately sent to the archives once they are removed from the office.

As an example of the procedure let's consider the case of some financial records which have no permanent value, but need to be kept for five years before they can be destroyed. However, let's say that the records are not used after their second year and so are taking up valuable space in the office. Yet the records can't be thrown out. The answer is to remove the records from the office, packed in a box, and store them in another safe location, either on the premises or at some secure rented space. The box could be labeled with the date of destruction for the records, and when that date rolls around the records officer removes the box, verifies there is no historical value to the records and/or no pending legal or financial actions and then appropriately disposes of the contents. Financial and other records which contain personal or financial information should be securely shredded or pulped. In the mean time the office has not been crowded with unnecessary records.

In a case like this always make a list of the material which is removed from the office and keep the list in the office. Be sure the list notes where the material is located, just in case the records are needed.

Before disposing of your records be sure that there is nothing of historical value or no legal actions pending on those records.

In today's world there is no reason not to have a shredder in the office. A secure shredder will help to protect sensitive information from prying eyes.

## Destruction of Records

In today's world of identity theft it is important to thoroughly destroy the records which your institution is not keeping. Any record which contains personal information, financial information or any type of information which can be considered private should be thoroughly destroyed when permanently removed from the office. This means either shredding the document or having it pulped. Secure shredders are affordable and within the budget range of most offices. There is no reason not to have one. A single cut shredder, one which cuts the paper into strips, is no longer satisfactory. Multi-cut or screening shredders, ones which cut the paper into random sizes, should be used. Be sure to get a shredder which can cut credit cards and CDs as well. If you store your office's sensitive files on a CD-R once that CD is full and no longer useful it should be shredded. Even with shredding the institution should consider turning the paper over to an organization which pulps the paper. Almost every major city has one or more records management companies which provide secure shredding and pulping as one of its services.

## Records Transfer Procedures

Please follow these procedures before transferring records to the Archives. Your cooperation in the systematic transfer of our agency records to the Archives will enable us more efficiently to identify, transfer, preserve, and make available the historical records of our denomination and will result in the disposal of useless records. The following procedure is for physical records. If you need to transfer electronic records please contact the archivist at [research@gcah.org](mailto:research@gcah.org) for the latest set of instructions.

### STEP 1: RECORDS SELECTION

Before you remove records from office filing cabinets or storage areas and pack in containers bound for Archives and History, check for material not accepted by the Archives.

Transfer only noncurrent records to Archives and History. If you occasionally refer to the material, the records are of administrative use.

Please refer to the records retention schedule at the end of this document, or to your own agency's official retention schedule, to see what type of records should not be saved. Those that must be saved for a period of time should be placed in a separate container and stored at your location. Only permanent records should be sent to the Archives.



Typical Record Center Box

### STEP 2: CONTAINERS

Place the records to be shipped to Archives and History in sturdy record center containers. These containers, measuring about 15 x 12 x 12, are available at any office supply store. Please feel free to

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purchase what fits your budget. Once at the archives we will transfer the records into new containers. Do not use larger boxes, such as “bankers’ boxes,” as these tend to break open during shipping

The postal address for the General Commission on Archives and History is: GCAH 36 Madison Ave., Madison, NJ 07940.

### STEP 3: TRANSFER FILES TO CONTAINERS

Place the files upright in the containers. Try to keep the files in the same order as they were stored in your office. For example, if you had a group of files (called a series) dealing with annual reports try to keep that material together.

Keep material from one office together. Be sure to identify on the box, and on the forms, from which office the material and the name of the staff person in that office.

Do not lay files flat in the containers.

Do not remove the records from the file folders, unless the material has been kept in hanging file folders. In that case replace the hanging file folders with new regular file folders.

If the records are not contained in file folders, give us a call for assistance.

Do not overload the containers; allow at least one inch room in each container.

If a container (it should be the last container in the shipment) is not full, please note this on the transmittal form (see step 4).

Write the agency’s name, the office name, and the box number on the outside of the box.

### STEP 4: THE TRANSMITTAL FORM

Please fill out the transmittal form provided to you from GCAH using either the WordPerfect or Word template version. Follow the instructions at the top of the first page. If you do not have any forms in your office please give us a call. There are also copies of these forms at the end of this document.

Examples of how the pages should look are included for your reference.

Each shipment should be composed of a page one and then as many continuing pages as are necessary to complete the description of the shipment.

Complete sections 1 through 7. Be sure that you list your agency's name, address, your name and a telephone number on the form. List the box numbers in ascending order in the column marked 'Box no.' and beside each box number list the titles of all folders or materials as they appear in that container. The transmittal form should contain a folder title listing for each container transferred to the General Commission on Archives and History.

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Make a copy of the finished forms and retain for your files. Print out the finished form and enclose with the shipment. You may also wish to print out a copy for your own files. Email the finished WordPerfect/Word file to GCAH. We will return the WordPerfect/Word file with the accession number added to the document.

Please refer to this accession number when you request records or information from your records at the General Commission on Archives and History.

## Sample Retention Schedule

Each entry in the following records retention schedule contains a record type or series title (bold capitals on the left), some typical examples (smaller type on the right), a general description of the material, where the official copy is kept and how long it should be kept. The place the official copy is kept is usually referred to by an office or function, e.g. personnel officer or treasurer, rather than a particular person or agency personnel. Retention deals with how long to keep the record. The term *Other copies* refers to where other copies of the record series may be found, the term *units* refers to either agency staff or could refer to various agency committees. The terms agency, commission or board, for the purpose of this model schedule, should be considered synonyms.

Remember: Some states and cities will have slightly different requirements for some of these records than the models listed here. As you draw up your own schedule check with GCAH and with counsel knowledgeable about the applicable laws in your own area.

## Paragraph-Style Retention Schedule

### ACCIDENT AND INJURIES RECORDS

*Workers Compensation Claims Records*

This series documents claims made by institution employees for occupational injuries, accidents, or illnesses; insurance coverage and related reimbursement issues; and safety analysis and compliance inspections. This series may include but is not limited to Report of Accident forms; Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Form 200; OSHA Form 101; incident logs; employer payroll reports; hearing transcripts; notices of claim disposition; determination orders; opinions and orders; appeal letters; claim adjustment documentation; medical reports; cost statements; and related documentation and correspondence.

Official copy: Personnel officer

**Retention:** 6 years after case settlement.

Destroy the Official copy 6 years after case settlement.

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### ACCOUNT REQUEST FORMS

This series documents a request to establish a new account or change an existing one. This series reflect account titles and numbers; types of accounts; sources of funds; grant or contract numbers; dates of start

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or change to accounts; positions or names of staff members who will control accounts; and approving authority signatures.

Official Copy: Treasurer

**Retention:** 3 years after account becomes inactive.

Destroy the Official Copy 3 years after account becomes inactive.

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### ACCOUNTS PAYABLE RECORDS

*Claims and Disbursements Records, Expenses,  
Accounting, Bookkeeping, Paid Invoices,  
Finance, Purchasing*

This series documents expenditures and purchases. The series may also be used to research, evaluate, and monitor prior transactions and/or track the budget. This series may include but is not limited to Purchase Orders; Contract Release Orders; Balance Sheets; bills; invoices; Invoice Vouchers; Journal Voucher/Entry Forms; price quotes; requisitions; justifications of purchases; payment authorizations; reports of receipt of goods or services; and related documentation and correspondence.

Official Copy: Treasurer

**Retention:** 7 years

Destroy the Official Copy after 7 years.

Other copies used in offices

**Retention:** 2 years.

Destroy other copies after 2 years.

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### ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE RECORDS

*A/Rs, Billing Records, Charges Records,  
Sales Fiscal Records, Rentals Fiscal Records,  
Journal Vouchers, Invoice Records*

This series is used to provide a record of billings and collections for the office and units/programs which report to the office. It is also used to provide a record of customers owing monies and to reconcile the account. This series may include but is not limited to Account Edit sheets; classified advertisement forms; VISA/MasterCard payment forms; invoices; journal vouchers; receipts; and related documentation and correspondence.

Official Copy: Treasurer

**Retention:** 7 years.

Destroy the Official Copy after 7 years.

Other copies used in offices

**Retention:** 2 years.

Destroy other copies after 2 years.

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### ACT OF INCORPORATION

*Acts of Incorporation, incorporation papers*



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Official papers relating to the incorporation of an agency or institution

Official Copy: General Secretary

**Retention:** Permanent

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### ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

*Annual meeting minutes, Annual staff report, committee reports, and special session reports*

This series documents the annual activity of the commission and its subdivisions. Final annual reports may be printed and bound or they may be less formal unpublished documents prepared for limited distribution. Report sections may include but are not limited to administrative activities; goals and objectives achieved; fiscal status; project work performed; personnel activity and accomplishments; facility changes; and related sections. This series may include but is not limited to annual meeting minutes, committees' reports to the commission, events supported by the commission and special projects run by the commission and related documentation and correspondence.

Official copy: General secretary

**Retention:** Permanent; annually transfer two copies to the Archives.

Other copies: Units

**Retention:** Until superseded or obsolete.

Destroy all other copies when superseded, obsolete, or no longer needed for reference.

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### AFFIRMATIVE ACTION RECRUITMENT REVIEW RECORDS

*Affirmative Action Compliance Record, Affirmative Action Compliance Data (AACD),*

This series documents review of all stages of hiring by Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity. This series may include but is not limited to position descriptions; Affirmative Action Compliance Data sheets; Affirmative Action compliance statements; and related documentation and correspondence.

Official copy: Personnel officer

**Retention:** 6 years.

Destroy the Official copy after 6 years.

---

### ANNUAL FISCAL REPORTS

*Closing of the Books Records, Financial Reports, Balance Reconciliation Records, State Accounts Reports*

This series documents annual fiscal year-end status of accounts and is used to provide the office with summary information relating to its programs which may be used for planning or review. The series includes reconciliation reports; annual operating statements; schedules of rates; and related correspondence.

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## 2017-2020 EDITION

Official Copy: Treasurer

**Retention:** Permanent

Send official copy to Archives on regular basis.

Other copies used in offices

**Retention:** 3 years.

Destroy other copies after 3 years.

---

### ARCHITECTURAL DRAWINGS, BLUEPRINTS, AND MAPS

This series provides a detailed graphic record of land and buildings of the Agency. The series is used as a primary source tool when working on projects to improve or maintain existing buildings and/or land and also when working on new construction. These records are largely created as part of individual construction projects but may include drawings, maps, and photographs worked up independently by the office and from various sources. This series may include but is not limited to architectural blueprints; sketches; aerial photographs; preliminary planning drawings; as built drawings; drawings reflecting changes to the original plans; soil testing maps; any other type of graphic representation produced relating to buildings, systems, and land; and related documentation.

Official Copy: Administrative office

**Retention:** Permanent.

Transfer the Official Copy to the Archives when superseded or inactive.

Other copies used in offices

**Retention:** 3 years after contract completion.

Destroy other copies 3 years after contract completion.

NOTE: Check with the Archives before destroying any other copies of records in this series.

---

### AUDIT RECORDS

This series documents the unit's response to internal and independent management, operations, and fiscal audits. This series may include but is not limited to audit reports; written responses showing how recommended changes will be implemented; and related documentation and correspondence.

Official copy: Treasurer

**Retention:** Permanent.

Send official copy to Archives on regular basis

---

### BANK DEPOSIT RECORDS

Official records of bank deposit transactions

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## 2017-2020 EDITION

Official Copy: Treasurer

**Retention:** 7 years

Destroy official copy after 7 years

---

### **BANK DEPOSIT SLIPS**

Receipt from bank of deposit transaction

Official Copy: Treasurer

**Retention:** 3 Years

Destroy official copy after 3 years

---

### **BANK STATEMENTS**

Routine statement of accounts (see canceled checks below).

Official Copy: Treasurer

**Retention:** 7 years

Destroy official copy after 7 years

---

### **BENEFITS POLICIES AND PROCEDURES RECORDS**

This series documents policy and procedure decisions and important events in the operations history of the office and includes formal documents which state or form the basis for policy or set precedents. This series includes but is not limited to records concerning dependent care flexible spending account program records; early retirement programs; employee orientation program; injured worker benefits; medical, dental, life/disability insurance program records; open enrollment records; Retirees; tax deferred investment programs; US Savings Bonds; Volunteer Insurance; and related documentation and correspondence.

Official copy: Personnel officer

**Retention:** Permanent

Transfer superseded documents to Archives

---

### **BEQUEST AND ESTATE PAPERS**

*Wills, gift agreements, bequests and other grants of real property or assets.*

This series relates to gifts, financial or otherwise, to the agency. These papers document the origin, transfer and requirements or restrictions of the gift

Official Copy: Treasurer/Financial Officer

**Retention:** Permanent

Transfer to Archives for permanent safe keeping

---

### **MANAGING AGENCY RECORDS**

## 2017-2020 EDITION

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### **BUDGET RECORDS**

*Annual Budget*

This series documents the annual budget; and related documentation and correspondence.

Official copy: Treasurer

**Retention:** Permanent.

After 2 years, transfer the Official copy to the Archives.

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### **BYLAWS**

*Bylaws, procedural regulations, meeting policies, constitutions*

Organizational bylaws and other regulations relating to the conduct of meetings or organizations

Official Copy: General Secretary

**Retention:** Permanent

Transfer previous version to Archives after amendment

---

### **CANCELED CHECKS**

*Cashed Checks*

This series documents redeemed checks written on agency accounts. Information on each check may include check number, date, amount, endorsement, account number, validation date, and related documentation.

Official Copy: Treasurers

**Retention:** 7 years.

Destroy the Official Copy after 7 years.

---

### **CERTIFICATES OF DEPOSIT, CANCELED**

Redeemed or canceled certificate of deposits

Official Copy: Treasurer

**Retention:** 3 Years

Destroy official copy after 3 years

---

### **CHECK REQUESTS AND DEPOSITS RECORDS**

*Check Request forms, Deposit records*

This series documents requests for expenditures and deposits. The series may also be used to research, evaluate, and monitor prior transactions and/or track the budget. This series is primarily check request forms, receipted check deposits and supporting documentation.

Official copy: Treasurer

**Retention:** 7 years.

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## 2017-2020 EDITION

Destroy the Official copy after 7 years.

Other copies: Other offices in the archives

**Retention:** 2 years.

Destroy other copies after 2 years.

---

### COMMITTEE RECORDS

*Commission Committees Records  
Special study commission records*

This series documents the activities of standing and ad hoc committees of the commission. This also includes any special General Conference study committees which are staffed by this agency. They may function as steering committees, activities committees, standards committees, planning committees, awards committees, councils, etc. This series may include but is not limited to agendas; meeting minutes; reports; notes; working papers; and related documentation and correspondence.

Official copy: Agency personnel relating to committee or General Secretary

**Retention:** Permanent

Other copies: Units

**Retention:** Until no longer useful

Destroy all other copies when no longer needed.

---

### CONTRACTS

*Repairs and Maintenance, Lease Agreements, Loans and Notes*

This series contains contracts that have either been completed or terminated. This includes Repairs and Maintenance, Lease Agreements, Loans/Notes and Service type of contracts

Official Copy: Financial Officer

**Retention:** 4 Years for Service contracts

Destroy after 4 years

**Retention:** 6 Years for Repairs/Maintenance, Lease, Loans and Notes

Destroy after 6 years

**Retention:** Permanent for contracts on new construction, betterments/improvements

Transfer to Archives for permanent safekeeping.

---

### CORRESPONDENCE

*Transitory correspondence,  
Subject correspondence*

A large amount of correspondence should be considered transitory or routine general correspondence. Correspondence of this type might include responses to inquiries concerning various functions of the commission, and other routine correspondence which reflects a normal part of the commission's program. Special or subject correspondence may focus on a special program or service in which the commission is involved, such as correspondences with specific committees or commission members, correspondence with other agencies about common projects, correspondence relating to special funded events or

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programs or some other program which has a specific beginning and end. Transitory correspondence should be reviewed and destroyed on a yearly basis, while subject correspondence should be kept, as it documents a special event in the agency's life.

Transitory correspondence  
Official copy: office of origin  
**Retention:** 1 year  
Destroy after one year

Subject correspondence  
Official copy: Office of origin  
**Retention:** Permanent; transfer to archives on regular basis or after end of program

---

### DEDUCTION AUTHORIZATION RECORDS

*Deductions Input List*

This series documents deductions from salary checks authorized by employees. These records include lists with notation of authorized deductions as well as actual deduction forms. This series may include but is not limited to deduction information on medical, dental, life, and disability insurance; United Way and Foundation contributions; and miscellaneous deductions.

Official Copy: Personnel Officer  
**Retention:** 4 years after authorization expires or is superseded.  
Destroy the Official Copy 4 years after authorization expires or is superseded.

---

### DEEDS

*Deeds, conveyances, covenants, easements, certificates of title to property*

This series is comprised of documents which deal with ownership and related correspondence.

Official copy: Legal Officer  
**Retention:** Permanent

---

### EMPLOYMENT ELIGIBILITY VERIFICATION FORMS

*I-9s*

This series documents information used to establish the identity and to verify the employment eligibility of employees to preclude the unlawful hiring of persons not authorized to work in the United States. This series includes completed I-9 forms and copies of documents that establish the identity and the employment eligibility of the employee.

Official Copy: Personnel Officer  
**Retention:** 1 year after employee separation or after 3 years, whichever is longer.  
Destroy the Official Copy 1 year after employee separation or after 3 years, whichever is later.

---

**EMPLOYMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES RECORDS**

*Employment Policies*

This series documents employment policies and procedures administered by personnel offices. This series may include but is not limited to information on appointments; employment of handicapped persons; family employment program; interviewing; job sharing; nepotism; temporary appointments; transfers; and related documentation and correspondence.

Official copy: Personnel officer

**Retention:** Permanent.

Retain the Official copy in office until superseded and then transfer to the custody of the Archives.

---

**FISCAL REPORTS**

*Closing of the Books Records,  
Financial Reports (both monthly and yearly),  
Balance Reconciliation Records, State Accounts Reports*

This series documents fiscal status of accounts, for both monthly and yearly status, and is used to provide the office with summary information relating to its programs which may be used for planning or review. The series includes reconciliation reports; annual operating statements; schedules of rates; and related correspondence.

Official copy: Treasurer

**Retention:** Permanent

Transfer superseded documents to Archives

Other copies: Units

**Retention:** 2 years.

Destroy other copies after 2 years.

---

**GRIEVANCE RECORDS**

This series documents grievances brought forward by employees against the institution concerning affirmative action; equal opportunity; policies and procedures. This series may include but is not limited to notices of grievance; informal discussion notes; grievance responses; formal hearing records, including tapes; transcripts and tapes of individual interviews; logs of persons interviewed; action(s) taken; settlement agreements; case histories; final summary statements; appeals documentation; and related documentation and correspondence.

Official copy: Personnel officer

**Retention:** 3 years after grievance is settled.

Destroy the Official copy 3 years after grievance is settled.

---

**INSURANCE POLICIES, INACTIVE**

This series is comprised of inactive insurance policies and related correspondence.

Official Copy: Personnel Officer

**Retention:** Permanent

Transfer inactive policies to the Archives

---

**INSURANCE ELECTION RECORDS, EMPLOYEES'**

This series is comprised of the forms filled out by employees when they make their insurance options elections

Official Copy: Personnel Officer

**Retention:** 6 years after termination of employment

Destroy official copy after 6 years

---

**INVENTORIES OF PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT**

This series consists of lists, both written and photographic, of the property and equipment of the agency

Official Copy: Financial Officer

**Retention:** Until superseded by new version

Transfer old copies to Archives for review.

---

**INVOICES**

This series contains invoices and paid bills

Official Copy: Treasurer

**Retention:** 7 years, except for major building construction/alterations - Permanent

Destroy official copy after 7 years (transfer construction records to Archives)

---

**PAY AUTHORIZATION RECORDS**



## 2017-2020 EDITION

This series consists of pay documents which substantiate and, in part, authorize the issuance of payroll checks for particular amounts. This series may include but is not limited to Payroll/Budget Request Forms and time cards.

Official Copy: Treasurer

**Retention:** 5 years.

Destroy the Official Copy after 5 years.

Other copies used in offices

**Retention:** 1 year.

Destroy other copies after 1 year.

---

### PERSONNEL RECORDS

*Personnel Files*

This series documents the employee's work history, evaluation reports and includes routine, non-evaluative information such as job title, rank, full-time equivalency (FTE), dates of employment, salary, employing department, education and employment background. Some of the documents comprising this series include confidential information such as social security number, birth date, and marital status, deduction authorization forms, and employment eligibility verification forms. This series may include but is not limited to copies of Affirmative Action Compliance Data Forms; Applications and Contracts for Sabbatical Leave; Conditions of Employment; Memoranda of Agreement; Notices of Appointment; Pay/Budget Action Forms; Personnel Action Forms (PAs), including Salary Adjustments Requests for Approval for Outside Employment; resumes or curriculum vitae; Retirement Agreements; Sick Leave Accrual Forms; and related documentation and correspondence, such as letters of resignation and memos confirming appointments.

Official copy: Personnel officer

**Retention:** 7 Years after termination

Destroy official copy 7 year after termination

---

### PROPERTY FILES

*deeds, title papers, repair history, permits,  
lease agreement and correspondence*

This series contains records dealing with the ownership and maintenance of property.

Official Copy: Financial Officer

**Retention:** Permanent

Transfer to Archives for permanent safekeeping

## **PURCHASE ORDERS**

This series documents purchase of items, or repair of items and related correspondence

Official Copy: Treasurer

**Retention:** 7 years

Destroy after 7 years

---

## **REAL ESTATE SURVEYS**

*Real estate survey, plots plans*

This series contains real estate surveys, plots plans and related correspondence.

Official Copy: Financial Officer

**Retention:** Permanent

Transfer to Archives for safekeeping

---

## **REJECTED APPLICATIONS**

*Rejected and Incomplete  
Employment Applications*

This series documents employment applications that were submitted for jobs with the agency and for reasons of incompleteness or inadequate qualifying experience/training are rejected.

Official copy: Personnel officer

**Retention:** 2 years.

Destroy the Official copy after 2 years.

---

## **SEARCH RECORDS**

This series documents the selection process for advertised management service and classified positions. This series may include but is not limited to applications; curriculum vitae or resumes; academic transcripts; samples of writing or publications; approvals of recruitment proposals; Certificate of Eligibles; candidate lists; position announcements; position advertisements; position descriptions; copies of Affirmative Action Compliance Data Forms; interview materials such as rating sheets, tallies, screening and interview notes, review committee notes and memoranda; telephone conversation notes; and related correspondence such as cover letters and reference letters.

Official copy: Personnel officer

**Retention:** 7 years after termination for application materials of successful candidate; 5 years after search completed for all other records.

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Retain application materials of successful candidate in the Personnel Files; destroy the Official copy of all other records 5 years after the search is completed.

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### SHIPPING AND FREIGHT RECORDS

This series documents the shipping receiving of material , either by freight carrier or by such carriers as UPS or FedEx, and related correspondence

Official Copy: Office of origin

**Retention:** 3 years

Destroy after 3 years

---

### STAFF MEETING RECORDS

This series documents the meetings of the staff of a department, or office which sets policy and procedures for the unit. Participants at meetings may be composed exclusively of or a mixture of staff, administrators, and managers; specialized and task oriented sub-committees composed of unit personnel are also documented as part of this record series. These meetings may concern routine matters of procedure and topics such as program development, planning, administrative and personnel management, and assessments of future needs. This series may include but is not limited to meeting notes/minutes; reports; working papers; agendas; and related documentation and correspondence.

Official copy: Units

**Retention:** Permanent.

Retain the Official copy permanently.

---

### TAX-EXEMPT CERTIFICATES AND FORM 990

This series documents the tax-exempt status of the agency and its functions.

Official Copy: Financial Officer

**Retention:** Permanent

---

### TAX RETURNS

*Tax returns, tax filings*

This series comprises tax returns, supporting documentation and related correspondence

Official Copy: Treasurer

**Retention:** 7 years

Destroy 7 years after filing period provide no legal action being taken

---

### MANAGING AGENCY RECORDS

**TAX WITHHOLDING AUTHORIZATION RECORDS**

W-4s

This series documents amounts withheld by Payroll from employees' checks for taxing authorities. This series may include but is not limited to the Statement for Claiming Benefits Provided by Section 911 of the Internal Revenue Code; Withholding Allowance Certificates (W-4s); and Non-resident Alien Request for Exemption from Tax Withholding (CO-477). Individual forms may include employees' names, addresses, social security numbers, and tax identification numbers.

Official Copy: Treasurer

**Retention:** 7 years after authorization expires or is superseded.

Destroy the Official Copy 7 years after authorization expires or is superseded.

---

**TIME SHEETS**

This series contains time sheets and related correspondence and memoranda.

Official Copy: Office of origin

**Retention:** 3 years

Destroy after 3 years

---

**TRAVEL RECORDS**

This series documents approved travel by employees and is used to monitor travel expenditures and for planning purposes. This series may include but is not limited to travel request forms indicating purposes, itineraries, methods of travel, funds from which travel is to be paid, and estimated expenditures; Travel Reimbursement Requests (employee and non-employee); receipts; authorizing signatures; and related documentation and correspondence.

Official copy: Office of origin

**Retention:** 5 years.

Destroy the Official copy after 2 years.

Other copies: Units

**Retention:** 1 years.

Destroy other copies after 1 years.

## Table-Style Retention Schedule

MODEL AGENCY RECORDS SCHEDULE				
RECORD SERIES TITLE	DESCRIPTION	Total	Current	Archives
Accident and Injuries Records	Workers Compensation Claims Records	settled+6	active	NO
Account Request Forms	Request to establish a new account	active+3	2	NO
Accounts Payable Records	Claims and Disbursements Records, Expenses, Accounting, Bookkeeping, Paid Invoices, Finance, Purchasing	7	2	NO
Accounts Receivable Records	A/Rs, Billing Records, Charges Records, Sales Fiscal Records, Rentals Fiscal Records, Journal Vouchers, Invoice Records	7	2	NO
Act of Incorporation	official papers and records	Permanent		As Necessary
Administrative Reports	Annual Meeting minutes, Annual reports for commission committees	Permanent	4	YES
Affirmative Action Recruitment Review Records	Affirmative Action Compliance Record, Affirmative Action Compliance Data (AACD)	6	2	NO
Annual Fiscal Reports	Closing of the Books Records, Financial Reports, Balance Reconciliation Records, State Accounts Reports	Permanent	4	YES
Architectural Drawings, Blueprints, and Maps		Permanent.		YES
Audit Records		Permanent	4	YES
Bank Deposit Books		7	2	NO

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**MODEL AGENCY RECORDS SCHEDULE**

Bank Deposit Slips		3	3	NO
Bank Statements		7	3	NO
Benefits Policies and Procedures Records		Permanent	Active	YES
Bequest and Estate papers	wills, gift agreements, bequests	Permanent		As Necessary
Budget Records	Annual Budget	Permanent.	4	YES
Bylaws		Permanent	Active	YES
Cancelled Checks	Cashed Checks	7	1	NO
Certificates of Deposit, Canceled		3	3	NO
Check Requests & Deposit Records	Check Request forms, Deposit records	7	2	NO
Committee Records	Commission Committees Records	Permanent	4	YES
Contracts	repairs, maintenance, lease agreements, loans	4 - service contracts 6 -Repairs, Lease, Loans Permanent - new construction	4	NO - expect for those going to Archives
Correspondence - subject	Correspondence on special or topical interest	permanent	Active	YES
Correspondence - transitory	Routine correspondence	1	1	NO
Deduction Authorization Records	Deductions Input List	Active +4	Active	NO
Deeds	Deeds, Conveyances, Covenants, easements	Permanent		As Necessary

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**MODEL AGENCY RECORDS SCHEDULE**

Employment Eligibility Verification Forms		Employed +1 (3 yrs min)	3	NO
Employment Policies and Procedures Records	Employment Policies	Permanent.	Active	YES
Fiscal Reports	Closing of the Books Records, Financial Reports (both monthly and yearly), Balance Reconciliation Records, State Accounts Reports	Permanent	4	YES
Grievance Records		Settled +3	Active	NO
Insurance Policies		Permanent	Active	YES
Insurance Election Records, Employees		employment +6	Active	NO
Inventories of Property and Equipment		Until superseded	Active	Transfer to Archives for Review
Invoices		7 (except for major construction)	3	NO (transfer major construction series to Archives)
Pay Authorization Records		5	1	NO
Personnel Records	Personnel Files	active+7	Active	NO
Property Files	deeds, title papers, repair history, permits, lease agreement	Permanent		As Necessary
Purchase Orders		7	3	NO
Real Estate Surveys	surveys, plot plans and related correspondence	Permanent		As Necessary

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**MODEL AGENCY RECORDS SCHEDULE**

Rejected Applications	Rejected and Incomplete Employment Applications	2	1	NO
Search Records- accepted		Active+7	Active	YES
Search Records - all others		5	1	NO
Shipping and Freight Records		3	3	NO
Staff Meeting Records		Permanent.	4	YES
Tax-Exempt Certificates	Certificates and Form 990	Permanent		As Necessary
Tax Returns		7	5	NO
Tax Withholding Authorization Records		Active +7	Active	NO
Time Sheets		3	3	NO
Travel Records		5	1	NO



## Other Resources

For those who want to read further on the planning and use of records management below is a list of useful texts. All are available from the Association of Records Managers and Administrators, Inc., 13725 West 109<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 101, Lexena, KS 66215 (website: [www.arma.org](http://www.arma.org).)

*Developing and Operating a Records Retention Program*. ARMA International: Prairie Village, KS 1989.

Penn, Ira A., Gail Pennix, Jim Coulson. *Records Management Handbook*, 2nd edition. Gower Press: Aldershot, UK 1994

Skupsky, Donald S. *Record Keeping Requirements*. Information Clearinghouse: Denver, 1988.

Maedke, Wilmer O., Mary F. Robek, Gerald F. Brown. *Information and Records Management*. Glencoe Press: Beverly Hills, 1974.

Aschner, Katherine *Taking Control of Your Office Records: A Manager's Guide*. Knowledge Industry Publications: White Plains, NY. 1983.

You can also contact the General Commission on Archives and History, P.O. Box 127, Madison, NJ 07940, 973-408-3195, 973-408-3909 (FAX) with any questions.

## Appendix: Creating a Records Schedule

### What is a Records Schedule?

Records, as they reach the end of their life cycle, need to be removed from the office filing system. This should be done on a regular or annual basis. The basic tool to guide the records officer in this task is the *records retention and disposition schedule*. This tool helps remove the old and obsolete records from the office, making room for more recent and active records.

A records schedule identifies record series and prescribes the time period that they must be retained before they reach their ultimate fate or disposition. The disposition of a record, as prescribed in a records schedule, may range from immediate destruction, to destruction after a period of time, or to permanent retention in the archives.

### Steps in Creating a Records Schedule:

If a record series is not listed in the existing records retention and disposition schedule (or if no schedule exists at all), the department's Records Officer should contact the appropriate records committee. The committee, after reviewing the existing schedule, may determine that an addition to the schedule is required. These are the steps in the scheduling process:

- \* Inventory the record(s) series in question, using the *Record Series Inventory Data Sheet* (see steps below). This is to be done either by the local responsible person, the committee, or by both working together.
- \* Retention periods based upon frequency of use and archival value will be agreed upon and incorporated into the records schedule.

### Steps in a Records Inventory

1. Locate records: they may not only be in offices, but also in basements or homes.
2. Once all records have been located the inventory can begin. Use an inventory sheet similar to the example in Fig 1.
3. In order to help identify your records and how long they should be kept, it is important that you always include the following information in your inventory: Type of record (see Fig. 2); whether the original or copy is in your office, the location and the format ( e.g. computer, cassette tape, paper)

RECORDS INVENTORY SHEET
Type of Record:
Location:
Format
Original/Copy

Example Inventory Sheet

minutes  
annual reports  
by laws/charter  
incorporation records  
annual audits  
annual budgets  
financial ledgers of final  
entry  
subject correspondence  
manuals/handbooks  
newspapers/newsletter  
s  
brochures/promotional  
materials  
photographs  
will, bequests  
legal/judicial cases  
personnel  
records/employee  
records  
accounts payable  
invoices  
bank deposit slips  
mailing lists  
expense reports  
invitations  
meeting notices  
travel plans and  
arrangements  
resource files

Types of records commonly  
found

actually disposing of any records one should verify that there are no pending legal actions against the agency which necessitates keeping the records longer. If a record is needed in a legal case it has, in effect, become an active record again. Its useful administrative value continues until the legal case has been resolved, which could also change the long-term status of the record. In such issues always be sure to consult with your legal counsel.

## Retention Periods

The term "retention period" refers to the maximum and minimum lengths of time that a record must be kept. Once you have identified your records you will need to determine how long they are to be kept. At the end of this manual are some examples of retention schedules. However, it is important to remember that, especially concerning financial records the laws governing retention can vary from state. Before implementing any retention schedule be sure to let your legal counsel see it. What is listed in this manual are examples and suggestions only.

Several different retention period designations can be used, such as: "Permanent", "Until Superseded", "Until Obsolete," or a specific number of years. "Permanent" indicates that the record series will be kept indefinitely. Records with a permanent designation should probably be sent to the archives.

"Until Superseded" is a retention assigned to records that are routinely updated or revised and where the previous version has no continuing value.

"Until Obsolete" is assigned to record series that become valueless on a non-routine basis. Specific time period retention periods are based upon usage factors and legal requirements, such as audits.

With the exception of financial and personnel records the records committee, acting in consultation with the office it is surveying, will assign the retention periods. For the most part, most denominational records are not governed by any specific legislation which affects their retention. Always be sure to check your locale for any legislation which might affect financial records or personnel records. While establishing the retention period will be dependent upon the needs of the office or the committee it is should be mentioned here that before

## Calculating Retention Periods:

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Retention periods usually begin at a chronological file break, such as the fiscal, or calendar year. The retention period applies to all records created during the time period. For example, the official copy of many accounting records has a five-year retention period, by fiscal year. The retention period for journal vouchers created during the 1992-93 fiscal year (July 1, 1992-June 30, 1993) begins July 1, 1993. After 5 years, on July 1, 1998, they will be eligible for destruction.

## Appendix: Transmittal Form

**The United Methodist Church  
General Commission on Archives and History  
Records Transmittal Form**

Directions: Please **type** all information. **Complete sections 1 through 7.** List the box numbers in ascending order in the column marked "Box No." and beside each box number list the titles of all folders or materials as they appear in that container. The transmittal form should contain a folder title listing for each container transferred to the General Commission on Archives & History ( See "Records Transfer Procedures" in the *Guidelines*, available from GCAH, for further instructions.) Print this form out when finished and either retain the printout or its electronic version in **your** office. Send a copy of the printout and the electronic file along with the shipment to GCAH. You will receive back from us either a paper copy or electronic version with items 9-14 completed. This is the copy to which you will need to refer when requesting your records or information from your records at GCAH. All previous version of this transmittal form may then be disposed.

To be filled in by the Agency Staff	To be filled in by GCAH staff
1. Agency Name:	9. Accession Number:
2. Agency Address:	10. Date Received
	11. Total Extent
3. Contact Name:	12. Received by
4. Phone Number:	13. Record Group
	14. Location

Use the TAB key to move from cell to cell and the table will automatically add new rows  
Each cell will expand to accommodate the amount of material you type into it.

5.Box	6. Folder Title/ Record Description	7. Inclusive Dates



