Record Retention

What Is A Record?
A record is a document, data, set of data that:

- is created or received in the course of an organization’s business
- has Content, that is the text, data, metadata, symbols, numerals, images, and/or sounds that make up the substance of the record
- has Structure, that is the physicality and internal organization of the Content.
- has Fixity, that is the quality of the Content being stable and resisting change
- has Context, that is the organizational, functional, and operational circumstances surrounding a record’s creation, receipt, storage, or use, and
- is maintained as Evidence of an organization’s activity(s)

Therefore, a record is “…any document, device, or item, regardless of physical form or characteristic…” that has been created or received in the course of a University department/unit/organization’s business that meets the criteria of content, structure, fixity, context as discussed above, and is maintained as evidence of the organization’s activity(s).

Records may include but are not limited to:

- general correspondence
- financial transactional records
- working papers, including drafts, versions, and copies databases (including the underlying tables, as well as routine reports)
- student and course documentation and transcripts
- personnel documentation
- web sites (including Web pages, images, documents, and audio/video files)
- electronic backup media (including tapes, disks, and other storage devices)
- electronic messages (including e-mail, instant messaging, and voice mail and including copies thereof on PDAs, cell phones, and/or home e-mail/instant messaging/voice mail systems)
- metadata associated with records

What Is A Non-Record?
If a “record” is “…any document, device, or item, regardless of physical form or characteristic, created or received…which serves to document the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities of the office…” then a “non-record” is any document, device, or item, regardless of physical form or characteristic, created or received that DOES NOT serve to document the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities of the office. Non-records may include, but are not limited to:

- personal correspondence
- non-OSU publications
- Listserv® materials
- junk mail/spam
- catalogs
- journals, books, other library materials
- faculty papers (Faculty papers are the property of the faculty member, not the university and as such are not university records.)

Transient/Transitory Retention:
Transient or transitory records have a very short lived administrative, legal or fiscal value and should be disposed in an appropriate manner once that administrative, legal or fiscal use has expired. Typically the retention is not a fixed period of time and is event driven; it maybe a short as a few hours and could be as long as several days or weeks. Transient/transitory records may include, but are not limited to:

- preliminary drafts (when superceded)
- memoranda (paper-based or email) pertaining to scheduling an event
- documents designated as superceded or as-updated
- user copies (not original document)
- routing slips
- voice-mail
### Key Retention Schedules

Please note: The “original” of any document/record initiated by the Department of Theatre’s main office is retained by the main office; therefore you are not responsible for keeping your “copy” of that document/record. Examples of such records are indicated below.

A complete listing of this schedule can be found at [http://library.osu.edu/sites/archives/retention/general-schedule.pdf](http://library.osu.edu/sites/archives/retention/general-schedule.pdf)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Series Title</th>
<th>Additional Description</th>
<th>Retention</th>
<th>Disposition</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Files</td>
<td>Consists of correspondence, reports, email, and publications of other departments of OSU and external agencies.</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Destroy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Files, Upper Administrative</td>
<td>Consists of files of the President’s Office, deans, directors, chairs and upper-level administrators including email.</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>Destroy all materials not documenting a significant action or interaction; transfer remainder to University Archives.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transient Materials</td>
<td>All informal and/or temporary messages (including, but not limited to, e-mail and voice mail) and all notes and all drafts used in the production of public records by any Ohio State University employee. Transient material also includes anonymous, unsigned and/or unsolicited written or electronic materials, including, but not limited to, anonymous student complaints, anonymous writings from individuals inside or outside the institution, and voice mail messages.</td>
<td>Until no longer of administrative value</td>
<td>Destroy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Activity Reports</td>
<td>Record of faculty teaching, research, and community service.</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>Destroy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leave Documentation, Sick</td>
<td>(Final)</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>Destroy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leave Documentation, Vacation</td>
<td>(Final)</td>
<td>1 year after termination</td>
<td>Destroy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leave Forms</td>
<td>Sick &amp; Vacation</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Destroy</td>
<td>Original kept in Theatre Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaves of Absence</td>
<td>Requests and related documentation</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>Destroy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters</td>
<td>Congratulatory</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>Destroy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search Committee Records</td>
<td>Consists of job posting, lists of candidates, final report.</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>Destroy</td>
<td>Originals kept in Theatre Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admission Files, Accepted</td>
<td>Includes letters of reference, application, biographical data and letters regarding admission and/or enrollment for applicants accepted to a program of study within the university.</td>
<td>Active + 1 year</td>
<td>Destroy</td>
<td>Originals to be kept in Theatre Office – email correspondence should be copied to Bowerman.11 for file.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admission Files, Rejected</td>
<td>Includes letters of reference, application, and biographical data for rejected applicants and those who did not complete dossier.</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Destroy</td>
<td>Originals to be kept in Theatre Office – email correspondence should be copied to Bowerman.11 for file.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advising Files</td>
<td>Includes notes about student, possible courses the student would take, and correspondence with student</td>
<td>Active + 1 year</td>
<td>Destroy</td>
<td>Originals to be kept in Theatre Office – email correspondence should be copied to Simon.286 for file.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Is email a public record? Well that depends…
...what we have to understand is that email is not a record type or series, but is a means of conveying information similar to the United States Postal Service. As such its retention is based upon the content of the email message, not the fact that it is an email message.

What is email?
An email (electronic mail) message is comprised of the following components:

- textual message
- metadata (To, From, Subject, Time, Date, System, etc.)
- attachments
- As such each component is part of the record or non-record, as the case may be. In many instances, email has taken over the role of "general correspondence" and memorandums, as well as the telephone message. If an email message meets the criteria of a record, it must be managed as such with as much effort and vigilance as one would a "traditional" record, however, keep in mind there are only a small percentage that we have to manage for any significant period of time.
- See http://library.osu.edu/sites/archives/retention/email.php for complete details

Email Management:
The key to effectively managing email is to get rid of the non-records and any transient/transitory records that have outlived their administrative/legal/fiscal value as quick as possible so that one is left with a small percentage, of what they have sent and/or received, that truly needs to be managed on an on-going basis. One should approach the management of email in a manner similar to how they handle processing their "snail mail" at work and home:

Open the email and review the document's content; this may mean thoroughly reading the document, but more often than not, one is able to judge just by a cursory look at the document, the subject line, and/or the sender:

- If it is a non-record, one should delete the message outright, just as one would dump the "snail mail" non-record into the trash can or recycle bin;
- If it is a transient/transitory record, then place it in a folder or sub-folder (analog or digital) that is designated for periodic review and dispose of as soon as allowable. One might create a "Transient/Transitory" folder or create sub-folders of record type/series or projects for the transient/transitory messages.
- If it is a record, place it in an appropriate folder by record type/series, project, retention time, or other filing schema that works for one's office/organization and allows that unit to effectively manage the life cycle of the record.

Categorizing and managing email is much more straightforward when we utilize intelligent and information rich "Subject Lines". Additionally, some simplistic subject lines like, "Hi!" are treated as SPAM or a potential virus containing email. Below are several examples of bad subject lines, along with good alternative subject lines that are more meaningful:

Bad: Minutes
Good: Minutes Executive Committee June 30, 2007

Bad: Meeting
Good: Seismic Project Meeting Tuesday (7/4) @ 2PM - Agenda Attached

Bad: Email Question
Good: Need advice regarding email management

Adapted from The Ohio State University Archives http://library.osu.edu/sites/archives/retention/records.php Rev. 09/24/2008