

DEPARTMENTAL INACTIVE STORAGE PROCEDURES

Part of any effective records management program is the timely disposal of records that are past their period of their active use.

All departments and offices are responsible to maintain their active, semi-active, and inactive records in a safe, stable, and secure manner that supports their timely and accurate retrieval with appropriate controls on their accessibility. Each Records Custodian should determine storage after review with the College Archivist & Records Manager. Consideration should be given to confidentiality, space limitations, and the physical safety of the records and buildings. The information outlined below will help ensure that the records are protected until they surpass their minimum retention period and move toward their final disposition.

Prepare Records for Inactive Storage

Office files should be transferred to inactive storage in the original order in which they have been arranged and used, since their organization reflects the functions and activities of the office that created the records and will be helpful for quick and effective retrieval.

Containers

Records should be stored in containers designed for records storage purposes such as filing cabinets or records boxes. When storing records in record boxes, be sure to load the box with just enough space so as to allow for easy removal of folders without too much space. A good measure of the right amount of space is approximately the width of three fingers. An ideal box is 10" x 12" x 15." Boxes should have lids and handles. For records of unusual size, shape, and form, it is important to consult with the College Archivist & Records Manager to identify proper containers for storage.

Folders

Folders are commonly used to store related records. Folders should not be stored in a pile but, rather, they should be stored upright to allow for retrieval without disturbing nearby folders. The use of hanging folders in file cabinets is encouraged as they prevent folders from sliding underneath one another and losing their contents if the file cabinet drawers are not amply full.

Arrangement

Records should be arranged in a manner that allows for easy retrieval and disposal. For instance, financial files might be grouped by fiscal year and then arranged alphabetically by vendor. When possible, avoid storing together different categories of records or records that cover long spans of time as this can hinder retrieval and disposal.

Labels

Each folder should have a unique title, such as a person's name or an account number about which the records relate. Each box or file cabinet drawer should also be labeled with a unique title to identify and distinguish its contents from other records. The label will typically also include a date range and box or file cabinet/drawer number.

Inventory

A list of the locations and contents of all records, including date range and box number, should be maintained to identify the office they belong to, to ensure easy retrieval, and to account for the records. Where possible, the inventory should also include a list of folder titles as well as the date when the records may be disposed of or transferred to the College Archives.

Environmental Controls

Temperature

Prolonged exposure to extreme heat or cold or excessive temperature variations should be avoided, particularly for archival, audiovisual, and other sensitive materials or for records that require long-term retention. Unconditioned spaces such as attics or outbuildings may be acceptable for storage of materials requiring only short-term retention, such as 5 years or less, but should always be monitored for environmental changes that may have adverse effects on the records.

Humidity

Excessive humidity can promote the growth of mold. Humidity should not exceed 60%, while long-term or sensitive materials should ideally be stored below 40% humidity. Minimizing excessive variations in humidity and ensuring proper air circulation are important factors in regulating the effects of humidity.

Water

Water is one of the greatest threats to records. Floods, burst pipes, and roof leaks are all common sources of water, which can rapidly destroy records. Care should be taken to protect against such sources of damage. Records should be stored at least 3 inches off the ground on shelving or pallets. Where possible, records should be located away from overhead sources of water including pipes and sprinkler systems, or they should be covered to prevent damage caused by a possible leak.

Pests

There are a variety of insects and rodents that will cause damage to files. Storage areas should be inspected on a regular basis for the presence of pests and appropriate pest control measures should be implemented as soon as possible if pests are detected. Avoid the storage or consumption of food near records storage areas to limit the potential of attracting pests to these areas.

Security

Space Access

To avoid intentional or unintentional loss of records, it is important to know who has access to the records storage space. Department/office staff, other building occupants, custodians, students, and the public may all potentially have access to the space unless precautions are taken to restrict their access. The location for stored records should be carefully chosen to minimize the potential for unauthorized personnel to have access to the records.

Locks

Records should be stored in a locked environment, ideally behind a keyed door or cage with no other easy entry points such as windows. A key log should be maintained in order to know who has access to the space. The door or cage should be locked sturdy enough to withstand attempts at forceful entry or vandalism.

Visibility

The storage space should be in a visible location and regularly visited in order to identify actual or attempted vandalism. *Notify authorities as soon as possible if an attempt at unauthorized access is identified.*

Safety

The storage space should have sufficient lighting to allow staff to work in the space safely. When working in the space, care should be exercised to ensure that shelves do not tip due to an unbalanced weight distribution. Boxes should not be stacked more than four high to prevent their collapse or accidental toppling.