

RECORDS INVENTORY & MANAGEMENT

An Overview

Why do we care about retaining and managing records?

Because they are our institutional memory that:

- Document our management decisions;
- Provide historical references of transactions and events;
- Enhance our institution's operational efficiencies;
- Demonstrate regulatory compliance; and
- Provide litigation support.

Records Lifecycle



All records have a lifecycle. Records are created, used, kept for a valid legal, fiscal, or administrative reason, and more likely than not destroyed at the end of their lives. Some records with enduring historical value will be maintained in storage.

Records Lifecycle

Creation &/or Receipt

- Typing a document
- Typing & sending an email
- Constructing a spreadsheet
- Recording a meeting
- Entering a transaction in a system
- Receipt of documents
- Receipt of spreadsheets
- Receipt of email

Distribution & Use

- Once a record has been created/received, it goes through a phase of distribution & use in which the record is frequently in use. This phase may last only a few hours (transient record) or may last a few years (short to long term record).

Storage & Retrieval

- While many records may be disposed of after their initial use, others are required to be kept a longer period of time for legal, fiscal, or other administrative reasons. Since immediate access to these records is no longer required in this phase, they are typically placed in storage.

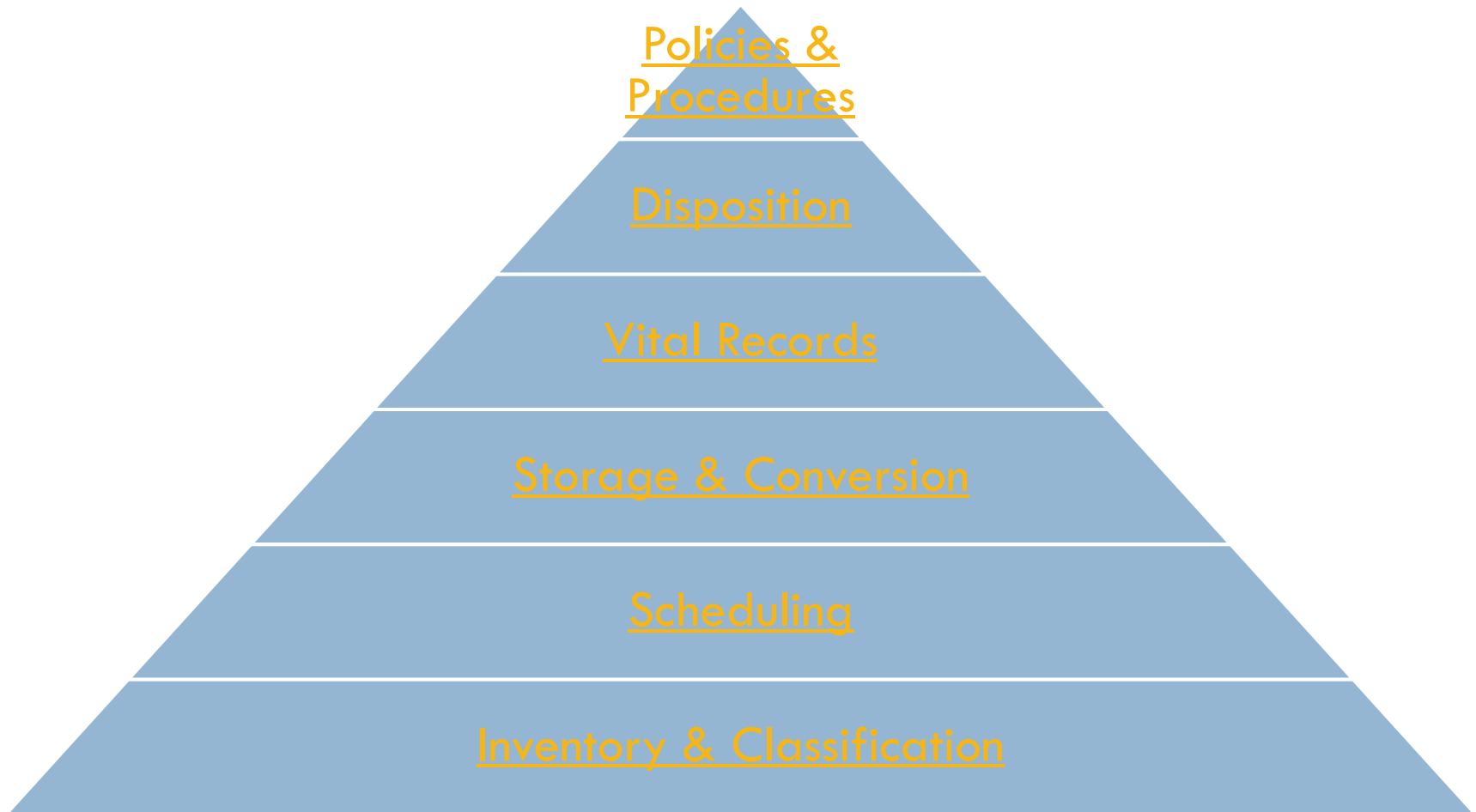
Destruction

- The final phase for the majority of an institution's records is destruction.
- Disposal in trash or recycling bin
- Shredding
- Incineration
- Deleting electronic file
- Shredding of optical disk

Archives

- For records that have an enduring historical value, their final disposition will be to reside in an archives, where they will be preserved for future use.

Elements of a Records Management Program



Inventory & Classification

At the start of any good records management program, one has to know what records they have and are responsible for. A records inventory is a complete and accurate listing of your records, whether paper-based, microfilm, or electronic, that indicates:

- how and where they are physically stored
- volume of storage
- how they are classified for future use & retrieval and sensitivity of information & access
- what its retention period is, if known OR its legal, fiscal, and/or administrative value, to determine retention

Retention Scheduling

All records have a life. That life may be as short as a few hours (as in the case with some transient records) or may be as long as forever (as in the case with records of enduring historical value). The record's lifecycle is determined through analysis of:

- 3 primary needs: legal, fiscal, administrative
- 3 second needs: evidential, historical, informational

Retention Scheduling (continued)

A records retention schedule is a comprehensive listing of the records the institution maintains that notes at a minimum how long they must be retained along with their ultimate disposition.

SSU has a Records Commission with members from across all divisions on campus who set the retention schedule for all records. The SSU Retention Schedule can be found on the Institutional Research & Assessment web site at:

<http://www.shawnee.edu/off/ri/RI.html>

Storage & Conversion

Once one has determined what records they have and how long they need to be retained, they need to develop a filing and storage strategy and/or determine if their existing filing and storage strategy is adequate. Questions to be addressed:

- How do you classify your records for ease of retrieval?
- What are the access procedures for sensitive records?
- Where & how do you store your active records?
- Where & how do you store your inactive records?
- Do you have a “records hold” procedure in event of litigation?
- What are your procedures for transferring records of enduring historical value to storage?
- How are you storing your electronic records?
- Have you identified your VITAL Records?
- What are the environmental conditions of your storage facilities?

Storage & Conversion (continued)

At some point in a record's life it may be converted to a digital image, to microfilm, or both to enhance access, reduce physical storage, or to provide disaster recovery and preservation tools.

Digital Imaging Pros

- Enhances access
- Enhances efficiencies of the business process & workflow
- Reduces the amount of physical space needed for storage
- Easier to replicate for disaster recovery purposes

Digital Imaging Cons

- Access to documents is technology dependent
- May not be cost effective for low-reference records
- Potential for format and/or system incompatibility
- Potential for migration disasters

Vital Records

Vital records are those essential institutional records needed to meet operational responsibilities under emergency or disaster conditions. An institution needs to ask itself: *“What records are absolutely crucial to our business operation that will need to be recreated from backup copies if the originals are lost or inaccessibly in a disaster?”*

Typically these are shorter term records that have legal and fiscal implications and amount to approximately 1-7% of an institution's records.

Disposition

Disposition is the final administrative action taken by an institution with regard to a record; these actions typically fall into two categories:

- Destruction via disposal in trash or recycling, shredding, macerating, incinerating, pulping, and deleting or other electronic obliteration;
- Transfer to storage for permanent preservation.

Policies & Procedures

Ultimately all the previous is rolled together in a written, adopted, and implemented set of policies and procedures. The policies and procedures manual encourages consistency in how to handle records. The manual is vetted on a regular basis by the SSU Records Commission to determine whether it is still effective and, if not, revised and adapted.