

LIBR 289 e-Portfolio  
Fall 2008

Evidence for Competency A

LIBR 257 – Records Management

Final Exam

May 18, 2005

LIBR 257 RECORDS MANAGEMENT  
TAKE HOME EXAM

PART I: (33 points)

Identify or define each of the following terms briefly but clearly.

1. Active record - Any record that is referred to on a frequent basis and it is currently used to fill the need for which it was originally produced or acquired.
2. Direct access filing - A system that permits access to files without reference to an index.
3. Vital records - Any records essential to conducting or resuming the operations of an organization including those records necessary to recreate the organization's legal and financial position, and to fulfill obligations to the organization, its employees and constituency. Vital records considerations are usually part of an agency's records disaster prevention and recovery program.
4. Provenance – The office of origin, or person or agency that created or collected records in the course of their activities.
5. Retention period – period of time during which records residing in a recordkeeping environments should be kept before final disposition.
6. Project ELF – Project E.L.F. (Eliminate Legal-Size Files) was a 1991 ARMA initiative to promote the use of letter sized paper instead of legal size paper in order to minimize costs associated with creating and filing the larger documents.
7. ARMA – The Association of Records Managers and Administrators is a not for profit professional association and the authority on managing records and information in paper or electronic formats. With approximately 11,000 members, it develops and publishes standards and guidelines related to records management.
8. Hoover commission – Either of two task forces (1947-49 and 1953-55) headed by former President Hoover to recommend reorganization and administrative changes in the U. S. Federal Government in order to improve economy and efficiency of federal agencies, get rid of overlapping bureaus and services, and define the executive functions, services, and activities. Among others, their recommendations resulted in the creation, elimination or consolidation of many departments but also sponsored a law that for the first time defined the term “records management” in federal statute.
9. CFR – The Code of Federal Regulations is the codification of the general and permanent rules published in the Federal Register by the executive departments and agencies of the

Federal Government and it is divided into 50 titles that represent broad areas subject to Federal regulation. Each volume is updated once each calendar year.

10. ISO – The International Organization for Standardization is the agency that published a document called ISO 15489 known as the International Standard for Records Management, which lists technical guidelines for recordkeeping in different types of organizations as well as practical guidelines for records managers.
11. Disposition – The final action to be taken on records at the end of their retention period which may entail destruction (i.e. shredding, recycling, or electronic wiping), or reformatting, transfer, or permanent retention.

PART II: (30 points)

Respond to each question with a short answer.

1. What are the two keys to successful records management?

Developing a solid records management policy and executing it with a well-planned implementation.

2. What is meant by the life cycle of a record?

The life span of a record comprised of eight sequential stages: creation or receipt; classification; maintenance and use; disposition through destruction or transfer to an archives; description in archival finding aids; preservation; reference, and use.

3. What is the Records Manager's role in the orderly migration of electronic data?

Data migration involves the periodic transferring of data between different configurations or technologies. During the conversion, there's a risk of data alteration, data corruption and even loss. The role of the Records Manager is to ensure the integrity of the data migration by developing an organized set of tasks and overseeing the process. For data migration to be successful, the person conducting it needs to have first-hand knowledge of the original application, data format, and content so that the ability to retrieve and use the records is not compromised.

4. What factors must be considered when choosing a method of storage for inactive records?

Inactive records are those that are not used in daily operations and as such do not have to be readily available, but have to be kept for legal or historical purpose. Considerations for

a proper storage medium for inactive documents include cost, location, size, cataloging, inventory, access, security, protection (fire, flood, ventilation, temperature control), and retention period.

5. Describe two different methods of destroying records and why you would select each one.

Recycling – Records are collected and handed over to the local recycling facility who will then pulp them to make new paper or other recycled materials out of it. This method is appropriate to use only if the records are not of a confidential or sensitive nature.

Shredding – Records are placed in a shredding machine fit with blades that cut through the records and either reduces them to long, thin strips of paper or to small paper squares. This is the most appropriate method to destroy records of a confidential or sensitive nature, or records that can be recycled once they are destroyed such as those made out of paper.

6. Choose any type of equipment for storing non-electronic files and describe it, its advantages and disadvantages, and use.

Cases/Shelves – Constructed of a variety of materials, they constitute an effective, cheap, quick and accessible way of storing records such as books, media, boxes of records, etc. However, items can easily be misfiled and the cases may not offer adequate protection as the records are mostly exposed.

Filing Cabinets – Can be constructed of wood or metal. These offer good protection from water, heat, and in some cases, fire. They also keep records in an organized and accessible environment which promotes consistency. On the down side, they are bulky, costly, and difficult to relocate. Filing cabinets are best used for company records such as accounting, legal, and customer records.

Microimaging – Microforms offer long lasting access in a small format to a number of documents that would otherwise take up too much storage room and be too costly to maintain. Business that need to retain a lot of information for long periods of time (i.e. banks, news agencies and government agencies) would benefit from converting their records (i.e. signature cards, newspapers and magazines) to microimages. Some considerations include the cost of converting and storing these microforms which can be quite costly.

7. Briefly explain what is meant by ECM and ILM in records management.

ECM – Enterprise Content Management refers to any technologies that are used to capture, manage, store, preserve, and deliver content and documents related to organizational processes. They allow the management of an organization's unstructured information, wherever that information exists.

ILM – Information Lifecycle Management refers to a wide set of strategies for administering storage systems on computing devices and the practice of applying policies in order to manage information effectively throughout its useful life.

8. Choose a type of record (e.g., personnel, accounting, etc.) and, using appropriate government documents, list the legal code (US or California) that determines how long that record must be retained, any circumstances that might affect retention, and the retention period you would recommend for it.

Employee wage records such as time-cards, wage rate calculation tables for straight time and overtime, shift schedules, individual employee's hours and days, piece rates, and records explaining wage differentials between sexes, should be kept and maintained for 2 years pursuant to the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) of the California Labor Code 1197.5 (c) and the statute of limitations for various wage and hour claims. I would personally recommend keeping them for 5 years in hard copy, after that electronic archives would satisfy.

9. How do Intranets and networked information concern a records manager?

Any documents generated through intranets (private network restricted to internal company use) and networks, are organizational property and as such should be managed as records under records management and/or retention practices.

10. Briefly discuss at least two factors that must be considered when creating a disaster plan for a records center.

A sound disaster plan for a records center needs to locate and identify potential hazards such as fire, hurricane, flood, earthquake, civil unrest and terrorism and to take corrective action as far as possible. Some of the considerations are:

Storage: Need to consider how the records will be stored (e.g. shelves, ground floor, near windows, etc.). The selected location must be in a relatively safe environment where they are not exposed to elements that can cause damage or destruction.

Location: Need to consider where the building is located (e.g. flooding area, other occupants of the building and the nature of their business, etc.) and the materials that it is made of (e.g. concrete, wood, metal, nearby faucets, air conditioning ducts, etc.).

Special Records: Vital records must be stored separately and identified clearly so they can receive special protection.

## PART III: (24 points)

Respond to each question with a short discussion.

1. Describe at least three ways that files can be classified for filing and explain the advantages and disadvantages of each. Also include suggestions of when or how each might be used successfully.

Class/Subject based – This classification scheme involves classifying records under common subject areas which allows for associated files to be easily consulted. The system requires an agreed list of the main subject areas that adequately cover a known body of work. Subject based classification works well for case, employee, and research files. The approach is not recommended for other types of records because the development of a comprehensive subject-based classification scheme is a lengthy and time consuming process both to create and to maintain. Moreover, as records are not produced on a subject basis, it can be difficult to know which subject to file a record under which can lead to duplication and difficulty locating the file.

Organization based – The filing scheme is created to reflect the structure of the organization. The main advantages of an organization based filing system are ease of filing and clustering of related business issues which when seen together can provide a rapid understanding of the work and structure of the business. The major disadvantages of the system is that since company organizational structures are rarely static, every time there is a reorganization, the filing scheme needs to be updated accordingly. Also, over time it becomes more difficult to locate information as those who remember earlier organizational arrangements may move on to other companies. Small organizations, businesses with static structures, and even independent departments such as human resources could benefit from this filing approach.

Function based – Records are classified according to the function they perform. The major groupings will be determined by the needs and the type of organization. This filing system allows for additions and deletions without undermining the filing scheme itself. For example if the accounting function moves from one part of the organization to another, little or no modification is required to the file plan itself. For this filing system to be successful all business functions must be included and the titles of files should be strictly derived from those functions and not from the organizational units. The disadvantage of this system is that is not always intuitive and can become overly complex. Obviously, this scheme works best for organizations with fairly constant functions such as accounting, public relations, and investment practices.

2. Discuss the value and importance of retention scheduling. In your discussion, include the  
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tools available to a records manager in creating a retention schedule as well as some discussion of the process of deciding retention values for an organization.

Retention scheduling is the process by which an organization applies the recommended time periods for document retention as dictated by the Records Retention Schedule. A properly developed and consistently implemented RS process protects the interests of the company and its stakeholders by ensuring that records are kept only for as long as they are legally needed for operational and legal purposes, reducing unnecessary storage and maintenance costs, and disposing of records appropriately.

Creating an RS doesn't need to be a chaotic process. There are many records management software applications (RMA's) that bring better management for paper-based recordkeeping systems, electronic document management software (EDMS) that bring better management to electronic documents created in computer environments, and electronic document imaging software which replace paper-based and micro-film recordkeeping systems.

In order to create a retention schedule some basic steps must be followed:

- Compile a list of all the different type of records the organization has that contains the records' provenance, usage and content information.
- Identify any duplicate or related records and review any existing policies
- Find out any legal or regulatory that may affect the records' retention period
- Decide how long to keep the records for after analyzing their business need, any costs associated with recordkeeping, and any long-term value to the organization.
- Collect input from users of the records
- Develop a draft and circulate as appropriate for approval
- Develop an implementation and maintenance policy (action plan)

3. Microforms are widely used in records centers. Describe the types of microforms commonly used, when they are appropriate, how they are created, and how they are stored, handled, and destroyed.

Microforms are processed films that carry images of documents to users for transmission, storage, reading and printing. The images they store are commonly about 25 times reduced from the original document size. Microfilm is recognized as very durable media for permanent records, with an estimated lifespan of 500+ years when stored in the proper environment. Records which are of permanent value or which have a retention longer than twenty years should be filmed because it is the most cost-effective way to store the information. Storing paper in an office setting, which is very expensive, would justify the cost of filming well before the twenty-year mark. Microforms can be easily destroyed by shredding them.

To make a microform, a special camera capable of photographing at a reduced scale is used. Through the technology of these cameras, the document can be reduced 99% from its original size. The image is then printed onto a special black and white film, which looks like the negative of a photograph. For businesses such as banks, news agencies, financial agencies, and government offices, microfilm can save massive amounts of space when storing information because it can be reduced to such a small size.

There are two primary forms of film used in the creation of microforms: silver halide film and vesicular film. Silver halide is much like traditional film, and the image is transferred to the film with a process using silver emulsion on a polyester strip. Vesicular film, on the other hand, utilizes microscopic bubbles to create the image on the polyester strip. Vesicular film is inexpensive and can be exposed to daylight without being damaged, making it the more popular choice for most businesses.

*Microfiche* – Microform containing multiple microimages in a grid pattern on a transparent sheet of film. 4” x 6” scratch resistant epoxy coated, hard gelatin cards on which photographic images are placed. The cards are read on microfiche readers which magnify the image back to its original size and project it onto the screen. The cards are usually stored in a filing cabinet in special envelopes. For easy location of a card within the set, each card is usually assigned an index number which is also indicated in a centralized indexing system. Microfiche allows additions more easily because extra fiche can be filed behind the first, keeping data intact. Each fiche holds approximately 90 pages of information. Microfiche is somewhat easier to use and to find information quickly but it’s easy to misplace. It should be used for active records.

*Microfilm* – Microform containing multiple microimages on a roll of transparent film. A roll of 35mm microfilm can hold about 900 pages and a roll of 16mm about 3000 pages. Thin 16mm film can store about 6000 pages. Microfilm comes in rolls 100 feet long or 200 feet for thin film. Microfilm is less expensive to produce than microfiche and it is stored and handled in much the same way. One drawback to it, is that once filming is completed, adding a new frame (page) somewhere in the middle of the film is difficult, so if files have to be added to frequently, microfilm may not be the best option. This system is best used for historical and inactive records.

4. Give an example of an issue that is unique to electronic records management and discuss it briefly.

Electronic records exist in an intangible medium altogether that happens to be very prone to change as the software and hardware originally used to create the record can be updated often. These changes would also imply changes to the records as they are reformatted or converted into the newer technology. This has implications on its accessibility, compatibility, and retention. Unlike paper records (i.e. books), management of an electronic record is not done taking into account its medium but rather its content.

PART IV: (13 points)

Write a short essay on the “ethics and the records manager,” include references from readings or interviews.

Records managers are responsible for the creation, use, maintenance, and disposition of records that are generated in the normal functioning of an organization. As such they are oftentimes responsible for a company’s legal, internal, and stakeholders’ compliance. As it turns out, upholding and adhering to the recordkeeping standards of an organization is not only guided by the organizational requirements of the profession but also by the records manager’s own system of moral principles and work ethic.

First and foremost, the records manager has the professional and moral obligation to maintain reasonably efficient records (Pemberton & Pendergraft, 1998). Organization can be the key in resolving legal issues and maintaining the confidence of employees, business relationships, and even clients by supporting the free flow of information (ARMA International) and offering appropriate access to truthful information. Also, organized records can aid in research, investigation, information backup, and legal proceedings while preventing misconduct and abuse.

Recently, in the wake of company scandals and lawsuits at the core of which there were poor records management practices, the field has come under intense scrutiny. Since then, more than before, the law obliges business to follow rigorous recordkeeping regulations attuned to the nature of the business. It does this to establish a documents trail and to hold each employee and individual accountable for being knowledgeable about the law (Montana, 1997). The law is clear

in its regulations pertaining to business recordkeeping and expects organizations and its employees to follow them closely. Thus, the records manager, both as an employee and as the keeper of records, is in the unique position to be doubly accountable for the records he or she maintains (Montana, 1997).

In addition, the records manager is expected legally and ethically to maintain truthful and accurate records (Montana, 1997). Even when the law may not specifically mention this, being honest in recordkeeping and general business practices is assumed to be implied. This means that the records manager cannot in good faith keep records which he or she knows to be altered, false, or misleading (Montana, 1997).

Finally, records managers are ethically bound to maintain confidentiality, ensure the right to privacy, avoid conflicts of interest, and enrich his or her professional competencies and education by the continuous pursuit of knowledge (ARMA International, 2007).

Records managers are not only expected to conduct their profession with efficiency but also required to be guided by deeply personal rules of social conduct. To assist these professionals in the commission of their duties, ARMA International (ARMA International, 2007), and other organizations as well, endorses a Code of Ethics that can be a valuable tool for the confused records manager.

## References

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