

PRASC




**Project for the Regional
Advancement of Statistics
in the Caribbean**

**Projet régional pour
l'avancement de la statistique
dans les Caraïbes**

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Canada



Information Management Module 5: IM practice – Preserving & Disposing of Information

Project for the Regional Advancement of Statistics in the Caribbean (PRASC)

Delivering insight through data, for a better Canada



Statistics
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Module 5: Preserving and Disposing of Information

- **Maintain, Preserve and Protect**

- Employees' responsibilities
- Protection concepts
- Considerations for electronic records
- Considerations for paper records

- **Disposition**

- What is records disposition?
- Establishing retention periods
- Implementing disposition
- Keeping a record of disposition
- Considerations for different formats

Maintain, Preserve and Protect

Employee Responsibilities

All employees are responsible for:

- Safeguarding information under their control
 - Applying security controls to their area of responsibility
 - Reporting security incidents through appropriate channels
 - Maintaining awareness of security concerns
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- This applies to both active and inactive information.

Maintain, Preserve and Protect

Protection Concepts

Protecting information includes:

- Guarding against unauthorized access
- Preventing unauthorized disclosure
- Preventing destruction
- Preserving the integrity and authenticity of the information

Maintain, Preserve and Protect

Protection for Paper Records

- Protect classified and protected information by ensuring it isn't left in waste or recycle containers.
- Storing it in locked desks or cabinets after work hours and during extended periods of absence.
- Store classified information in approved locked cabinets.
- Only store it on open shelves if the room has been constructed according to the secure room standards
 - Examples: card swipe access or PIN code for door, documents cannot be seen through a window

Maintain, Preserve and Protect

Protection for Electronic Records

- Mark each information resource according to its proper security classification in the appropriate metadata field in the electronic document profile.
- Avoid sending or storing any information above the security level for which your institutional network has been rated
- Avoid populating fields or subject lines with personal information
- Have sufficient metadata not just for current users but for future requirements – eg. searching for past surveys or historical information
- Implement effective access control procedures, including updating permissions and access rights upon employee departures

Maintain, Preserve and Protect

Preservation Techniques – Scanning

If your already utilizes an Electronic Document and Record Management System (EDRMS) you may consider a program of scanning paper documents.

Why? Several reasons...

Maintain, Preserve and Protect

Preservation Techniques – Scanning

1 - Gained efficiencies in moving away from paper will:

- Result in increased office productivity (i.e. less time spent by employees searching for and retrieving documents)
- Facilitate enhanced information searching and collaboration
- Reduce and eliminate the risk of misplaced documents.

Maintain, Preserve and Protect

Preservation Techniques – Scanning

2 - Improved service delivery:

- Digitization can result in a more rapid retrieval of information, supporting:
- Increased accuracy and faster reporting capabilities for business lines, resulting in more informed decision making for service delivery
- Ease of access to information when needed

Maintain, Preserve and Protect

Preservation Techniques – Scanning

3 - Cost savings:

- Elimination of paper document storage costs associated with either productive office space or commercial storage providers
 - Particularly for information with long retention periods
- Salary savings associated with significantly decreased requirements for paper-based document management
- Reduced use of paper, toner and printer maintenance
- Reduced reliance on delivery of paper documentation (e.g. mail, courier, fax)

Maintain, Preserve and Protect

Preservation Techniques – Scanning

4 - Risk, security, liability:

- Reduced risk of misplacing and/or losing sensitive (e.g. classified) documents
- Greater ability to identify and restrict access to sensitive (e.g. classified) documents
- Enhanced accuracy and timeliness of responding to ATIP requests, thus mitigating liabilities associated with late responses
- Reduction of human error in document delivery and document sharing

Maintain, Preserve and Protect

• Preservation Techniques – Scanning

- Adobe PDF or PDF-A, 300 dpi recommended
- Scan colour documents in colour
- Ensure sufficient metadata for the scanned documents to preserve the context of the records over time
 - Rename the scanned document according to the organization's naming convention
- Have a quality control procedure in place

Maintain, Preserve and Protect

RECAP

All employees are responsible for maintaining, preserving and protecting information under their control

Both electronic and paper records require tactics to ensure preservation over time

Scanning documents can reduce costs and increase service delivery

Disposition

What is records disposition?

Disposition is the disposal of information once it has reached the end of its retention period, or transfer of the information to an archives for long-term storage.

Disposition can involve destruction of physical documents and files or deletion of electronic records or data.

OR

Disposition can involve transfer of historical information to an archival repository.

Disposition of Business Value information

- Business value information is disposed of at the end of its retention period.
- The retention period is an indication of the period of time that records are kept, often after a specific point in time has been passed.
 - Some examples might be:
 - Five years after completion of the project
 - Seven fiscal years (for finance documents)
 - For personnel files, until the employee turns eighty years of age
 - Reason: the records may still be needed for pension reasons
 - Two years after the last action on a file
 - 92 years after the completion of the Census of Population of Canada (Canadian census records)

Establishing retention periods

- Retention periods can be established based upon:
 - Business needs
 - How many years will the business need to refer to the information or use it?
 - For a statistical organization, some statistical information may have long retention periods (eg. Longitudinal studies taking place over several decades)
 - Each unit of an organization has specific business needs.
 - Example: Employee personnel records are kept several years past retirement because the employee is collecting a pension.
 - Legal requirements
 - Regulations or other legal instruments may indicate how long records need to be kept, or may establish the right of access to information over a certain amount of time.
 - Financial requirements
 - How long must records be kept to satisfy financial purposes?
 - Are the records subject to audit, and if so, how far back can an audit go?

Establishing retention periods

Best practices for retention periods for unstructured information

- Where records are duplicated, determine which copy constitutes the official record (business value). Once that is determined, other copies may be considered transitory.
- Where the information contains personal information about an identifiable individual, set as short a retention period as possible.
 - Keeping identifiable information about individuals too long creates the risk of unauthorized access to that information.

Establishing retention periods

- **Retention periods for data**
- Some data may need short retention periods (eg. Working files, test files, data in support of testing questionnaires, data used as input to create a more complete dataset)
- Consider if the data contain personal information and will be aggregated and personal information removed
 - Keep personal information for as short a time period as possible
- Some data may need long retention periods, if the intention is to measure changes over a long period of time (eg. Longitudinal studies, Census of Population, Census of Agriculture)

Establishing retention periods

- Retention periods for data: some examples
- Source: Statistics Canada, Directive on the Management of Statistical Microdata Files

Category	Definition	Retention Period
Unprocessed collection administrative data files	Administrative data files that are not or minimally modified (or processed) by Statistics Canada and are used as is in a program, much like an internal master file.	Retain as long as operational requirements remain, up to a maximum of 20 years after receiving it at Statistics Canada.
Collection data files (from surveys or administrative data)	Files that represent the information as collected from respondents by Statistics Canada or administrative data as received from other organizations	Retain for a maximum of 5 years after the end of collection, or 5 years after data release, as appropriate.

Establishing Retention Periods

- Records Retention Schedule
- Develop a documented records retention schedule which lists records retention periods.

Disposition

Implementing Disposition

- Use either a manual or electronic system to identify records that have passed the end of their retention period. Segregate the records (eg. Move paper records to a separate area or box them up).
- Verify the retention period against the retention schedule.
- Have a file list of the records that are going to be disposed of.
- Request management approval.
- After disposition, update tracking systems to indicate that the records have been disposed of.

- Have a documented procedure for how you carry out these steps!

Disposition

Keeping a Record of Disposition

Document management approval of the disposition action to keep a record of disposition.

- Efficiency
- Track and Manage Expenses (eg. Costs of shredding documents)
- Regulatory Requirements
- Litigation Protection / Access to Information requests

Disposition

- **Considerations for Different Formats**

Where possible, carry out disposition for all formats of the record or information at the same time.

Example: When disposing of electronic information, consider if the information also exists in hard copy, and vice versa. Make an effort to dispose of both at the same time.

If the information is sensitive, ensure that paper records are disposed of by shredding and electronic records are completely deleted from network drives (including back-ups, where possible).

Disposition

RECAP

**Keep information only for as long as it is needed,
then transfer or destroy it!**

Apply What You Have Learned

Create an action item for how to improve one aspect of preserving information in your organization, or to improve how your organization disposes of information.

Add this to your action plan.

You can contact the PRASC team at:

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