

RECORDS DISPOSAL

Disposal, or disposition, is the action taken on non-current records in accordance with an approved records retention schedule after all retention requirements have been met. Disposal is not synonymous with destruction; it can mean either destruction of the records or their transfer, in whole or in part, to Archives. Regular disposal of non-current records is necessary to avoid accumulation in registries, offices, records centres or other records storage areas of records that no longer have value to the public service organisation and to prevent loss of records of continuing value.

Public service agencies should establish a policy that prohibits the destruction of records unless under an approved records retention schedule in order to ensure that government and citizens are not placed at risk from loss of records required for on-going transaction of business, to meet legal or financial requirements, for accountability to the public, or for historical research.

Records retention schedules should be carefully monitored on an annual basis so that records which have become non-current and reached the end of their specified retention period can be either destroyed or transferred to Archives in a timely manner.

If disposal is being carried out on records stored in a records centre on behalf of a transferring agency, some time prior to the scheduled disposition of the records, the records centre should inform the transferring agency of the impending disposition. The transferring agency should be given a reasonable amount of time within which to reply to the notification and either certify agreement with the disposition of the records or request that the records be retained for a further period. If the transferring agency is requesting an extension of the retention period for the records, a legitimate reason should be given (e.g. because the records are required for litigation).

Once approved for final disposal, the records must be carefully selected and separated from other records stored in the records centre that have not yet met their full retention period to ensure that no accidental early disposal of records takes place. At this point, it is important that the records centre update its inventory control and retrieval systems (e.g. the location codes on records transfer forms and indices) to indicate that the records have been selected for disposal. This must be done in order to ensure that the records can be accounted for in the event of a request for them from the transferring agency.

In some cases, records will meet their full retention and become non-current while still in the custody of the creating agency. When the final disposition for such

records is destruction, best records management practices call for a central agency, such as a records centre, to co-ordinate the destruction to ensure that it is properly documented and securely performed using appropriate methods. If a central agency assumes responsibility for the co-ordination of all destructions, public service agencies must notify the central agency whenever there are non-current records to be destroyed. A special form developed for this purpose will streamline the process.

DESTRUCTION OF RECORDS

A number of different methods can be used to destroy records. The choice of method will be based on:

- the volume and dimensions of records to be destroyed;
- local restrictions on certain methods of destruction (e.g. banning of public burning);
- local availability of recycling services;
- desire for organisational control over the destruction process; and
- the confidentiality of the documents.

Pulping or shredding is the preferred method of destruction for the majority of paper records, but when this is not possible due to lack of available facilities or because the records contain a high level of contaminants (e.g. plastics and metals), incineration may be necessary, though environmentally unfriendly. Placing records in the garbage or dumping records into landfill sites is not advised as such action may lead to unauthorised access to confidential or sensitive information. Re-use by overwriting can be used as a means of destruction for records stored on computer disks and tapes, audiotapes and videotapes.

In all cases, destruction of records should be witnessed and certified to ensure that proof exists that a particular set of records was actually destroyed in accordance with its approved records retention schedule. Certification of destruction traditionally is documented in a destruction certificate. A copy of the destruction certificate should be filed with the appropriate records retention schedule so that there is a record of all destructions carried out under it. In addition, the transferring agency should retain a copy of the destruction certificate in the event that any questions arise surrounding the destruction of the records. It is also important that the transferring agency update its numerical file index to indicate that records once

stored in the records centre have now been destroyed, otherwise much time could be wasted searching for records that no longer exist.

APPENDIX L

Certificate of Destruction

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES

OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATION
UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES AND
RECORDS MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

CABLE AND TELEGRAPH
"UNIVERS"

PHONE: (809) 927-1661-9

TELEX: 2123
FAX: (809) 927-4869

MONA, KINGSTON 7,
JAMAICA, W.I.



Our Reference M91-2

CERTIFICATE OF DESTRUCTION

I hereby certify that the University records described below were destroyed on MAY 31, 1994

in accordance with approved Records Retention and Disposition Authority M91-2

Record Description: FILING ROOM ACADEMIC AND SENIOR ADMINISTRATION STAFF FILES - 1986

Extent Destroyed: 3 LINEAR FEET

31.5.94
Date

Horace Stamp
Witness: (University Archivist/designate)

TRANSFER OF RECORDS TO ARCHIVES

Records, the final disposition of which is transfer to Archives in whole or in part, once received by the archives should be assigned an archives accession number. If the final disposition of the records is selective retention, or samples or specimens for Archives, the Archives usually will make a selection of the records to be preserved and destroy the remainder prior to assigning an accession number to the records. In order to facilitate future retrieval of the records, the Archives should send details to the originating agency and the records centre, if the records have been transferred from there, of which records have been selected for preservation in the Archives, the Archives' accession number for those records and, if applicable, which records have not been selected and therefore destroyed. Upon receipt of this notification from the Archives the originating agency should record the archives accession number in its numerical file index so that the records can be located easily if requested. Similarly, if the records centre transferred the records to Archives, the records centre's inventory control and retrieval systems should be updated with the Archives' accession number.

Record of Transfer to Archives from Records Centre

Records Title: <i>Faculty of Social Sciences Departmental Files.</i>	
Extent of Records Transferred: <i>3 Boxes</i>	Date Span of Records: <i>1968-1970</i>
Record Centre Accession #: <i>92.11</i>	RRDA #: <i>M96-23</i>
Archives Accession #: <i>MA97.5</i>	Date GENCAT Updated:
Signature of Transferring Officer: <i>[Signature]</i>	Date of Transfer: <i>1997</i>
Instructions: Complete one form for each transfer of records to the Archives and place completed form(s) on the appropriate RRDA file.	