

# The University Archives and Records Center: A Guide to Records Management



photo by John Sanger

Managing the University's records—from routine financial forms to historically significant Trustees' proceedings to extremely confidential personnel or medical records—is a matter of some concern to all administrators. All offices file current records, stored on-site, in order to expedite daily business. Most offices must retain non-current or inactive records for a period of several years in order to meet administrative, fiscal, legal, technical or other requirements. Some offices call upon an archive of permanently retained materials for research purposes. Each of these functions brings its own set of service responsibilities.

The creation, transmission, retention and retrieval of information is often said to be central to the mission of the University. As the accumulation of information has steadily expanded, the significance of records storage and servicing has imposed itself on every office. The difficulties are common: establishing definitions of active and inactive records, stripping inactive records from current files, deciding what to keep and for how long, finding sturdy storage containers and sufficient storage space, creating finding aids which enable reliable retrieval. Penn is like many other large organizations, both public and private, which have devised formal systems for assuring administrative efficiency in records storage and retrieval and for cutting operating costs. This is the business of professional records management.

It has been thirty years since the formation of the Association of Records Managers and Administrators (ARMA), a national professional association which has standardized practice in the field. There are two cardinal rules: increase control of records by the preparation and updating of inventories and other finding aids; and decrease the cost of records by removing them from expensive office space, placing them in low-cost storage and imposing upon them a retention schedule. In establishing its own records management program, the University has adopted the proven methods of the best practitioners.

Acting on the recommendations of a University-wide Committee on Records Management, the President has directed the establishment of a University Records Center. Its purpose is to apply to Penn all the best elements of records management. The Center's Manager envisions a program which will reduce the bulk of records on campus; will guarantee the University's administrative, fiscal, legal, employee and student records responsibilities; will provide for the funneling of historically significant records to the University Archives; and will reduce the cost of University records keeping. This is an ambitious program, one which will appeal to the entire University community. As it introduces new administrative efficiency and saves University dollars, it will come to enjoy widespread participation.

## An Introduction and Summary

When the present University Archivist assumed his post in May 1984, he faced the challenge of renewing the records center function of the Archives. Over the previous fifteen years limitations of space and staff had cut off the flow of historically significant records to the University's official historical repository. A preliminary investigation found most University schools and administrative units utilizing ad hoc and thoroughly inadequate storage facilities. Many departments were using poorly maintained space for self-service records storage. Others, opting for a very expensive alternative, were microfilming their records and destroying the originals. Still others were spending University dollars for professional records management at outside, commercial facilities. At least two schools were actively pursuing the possibility of establishing their own archives and records centers. The issue was University-wide: how to manage records efficiently, but at the lowest possible cost.

In November 1984 President Hackney appointed a Committee on Records Management to study this problem and report to him. The Committee numbered thirty-six, representing every School and administrative area of the University. In May 1985 it presented its recommendations. Penn should follow the lead of Cornell, Harvard, Johns Hopkins, the University of Delaware, Yale and other large, research-oriented universities in establishing a University-wide records management program. A University Records Center should be created in a former storage warehouse now owned by the University. The Center should be headed by a professional records manager who would be responsible for establishing and maintaining a working relationship with all University records administrators. The cost of the Center should not be allocated across the University, but supported by user fees. In November 1985 the President and other members of senior management approved this plan and it was funded through a creative proposal offered by the Department of Real Estate.

Three-quarters of the current year has been spent preparing for

the "grand opening" of the Records Center. Work has been directed by a nine-member Advisory Committee on University Records Management. The Records Center occupies the fifth and seventh floors of 4015 Walnut Street, with plans to occupy the sixth floor by the end of 1987. Space has been cleared, fire suppression and security systems installed and floor-to-ceiling shelving constructed. Administrative offices and a processing room have been renovated on the mezzanine level at the Sansom Street entrance. Microfilming equipment was purchased for those University offices which desire security or convenience copies of records. Steps have been taken to link the Records Center with the emerging PennNet fiber-optic cable network.

In June, Laura G. Thomforde was appointed Manager of the Records Center. She is a Certified Records Manager with six years experience in the field. The staff has since been rounded out by the appointment of Louise S. Chaney, Assistant Manager, and Leslie G. Stevenson, Clerk. They will be assisted by University students in providing records management services to the entire University community.

In the fall of 1986 the University Archives and Records Center will once again fulfill its original mandate. Inexpensive, secure and reliable records storage and service is readily available at 4015 Walnut Street. The permanent repository for historically significant materials will continue at the North Stand of Franklin Field, with renewed capacity to accession appropriate record groups. The archival function has seen improvements also: a climate-controlled vault room has been added for housing the most valuable documents and objects; the office has been automated and an original cataloger is entering descriptions of record groups in the Archives and Manuscripts data base of the Research Libraries Information Network (RLIN). The support of the President and his staff are deeply appreciated. The Archives and Records Center has embarked on new ventures in seeking to achieve its long-term goals.

—Mark Frazier Lloyd, University Archivist

## Welcome to the University Records Center

*Laura G. Thomforde, University Records Manager*

The following guide to the University Records Center provides you with an introduction to the University Records Management Program and Records Center facility. The University Records Center is located at 4015 Walnut Street, Sansom Street entrance, with offices on the Mezzanine level. The University Records Center provides a number of services, including: inactive records storage, retrieval, destruction, and microfilming. In addition, the staff is available to assist departments in setting up records retention schedules, conducting file audits, reorganizing and implementing file systems and identifying and developing microfilm conversion systems based on the specific needs of your department. For more information as to how the University Records Center can help you solve your records-related problem, contact us at 898-9432.

### Did You Know . . .

- The volume of records generated by offices within the University continues to increase between 10 and 15% each year?
- Filing records in offices at the University costs about \$10 per file drawer per year?
- 95% of references to records occur in the first two years after creation?
- The cost of locating a single misfiled document can be as much as \$10 to \$25 in staff time?
- Up to 25% of office staff time is spent servicing filed records?
- Only 3 to 5% of the University's records are historically significant or have intrinsic value that would warrant permanent retention in the University Archives?

The President's Committee on Records Management has found many University offices have common problems relating to records maintenance and control, including: available space to store records

is at a premium; file cabinets are so full that servicing is difficult; paper records and files have torn, ripped and bent edges; records are temporarily misplaced or lost in the files; working areas are cluttered with piles of records which will not fit in the file cabinets; and records stored in "dead storage" areas cannot be easily retrieved. The staff at the University Records Center is trained to help find a solution to these and other record-related problems.

*The University Records Center has a Three-Fold Mission:*

1. to improve office efficiency by promoting the establishment of better controls over records through the implementation of records management principles and techniques;
2. to save you money and space by providing low-cost storage and servicing of inactive records;
3. to ensure the security of the University's vital records and the preservation of the University's historically significant records.

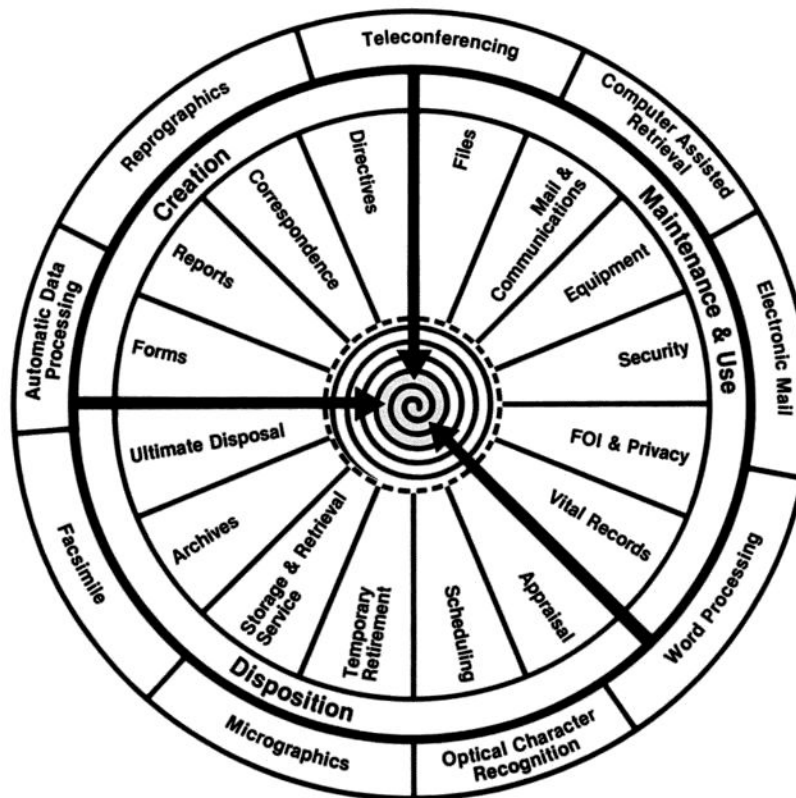
### What is Records Management?

Records management is the systematic control over the total life cycle of an organization's records.

The University's records management program will provide immediate benefits for each participating department or administrative office. Benefits include:

- increased space available for active files or personnel,
- decreased time required by staff to retrieve active records,
- decreased costs for the storage of inactive files,
- decreased numbers of misfiles or "lost" files,
- decreased need for the purchase of expensive file equipment.
- complete assurance that your inactive records are available whenever they are needed, guaranteed protection against unauthorized access, theft, and fire.

## Total Records Management: The "Life Cycle" Approach



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### Implementing a Records Management Program

Implementation of Penn's records management program involves the following steps:

1. A preliminary office survey
2. A detailed records inventory
3. A records inventory analysis
4. The preparation of records retention schedules
5. An annual records audit

The records management process begins with the preliminary office survey. Each department will be asked to appoint a Records Liaison Officer to work with the University Records Manager. This person will be the primary contact for all facets of the University Records Management program. The University Records Manager will visit your office to conduct an initial survey of the number and types of filing units your office has; filing methods/systems in place; and the present use of microfilm or other record technologies. The initial survey provides the records manager with the information necessary to scope out the time and assistance that will be required to complete the detailed records inventory.

The actual records inventory involves the identification and description of each records series maintained by your office. This process will require the assistance of the departmental/school liaison, that is, someone knowledgeable about the function of the records.

The Records Manager will analyze each inventory sheet and develop a records retention schedule for each administrative unit or academic department. The schedule must be reviewed and approved by the department head. Once records are identified and scheduled for eventual disposition, inactive records can be separated and transferred to the University Records Center. Records already satisfying retention requirements can be disposed of by the departments.

Each year the University Records Manager will be in contact with the liaison from your school or department to conduct an audit of your retention schedule. This will ensure that your schedule is up-to-date and continues to meet your needs.

### University Records Center

The University Records Center provides secure, low cost storage for University records which must be retained to meet legal, fiscal, administrative or historical requirements. By using the URC for the storage of inactive and semi-current records, departments are able to free valuable space in offices for current records and for staff.

All official University records included on records retention schedules can be stored at the Records Center. Records that are not on an approved retention schedule may be stored at the Center provided that the School or Department agrees to the development of a schedule at the earliest possible time. Bulk storage items will not be accepted into the URC.

Records stored at the URC remain under the control of the depositing department. Access to a department's records will be limited to the person or persons identified by the department. Each department or academic office using the URC facility will receive a unique access authorization code from the Center. Departments using the Records Center will be asked once a year to review the list of persons authorized to request files from the URC.

### General Rules

- 1) All records stored at the URC must be included on an approved Records Retention Schedule.
- 2) Bulk storage items, such as furniture and office supplies, will NOT be accepted at the Records Center.
- 3) Access to the stack areas is restricted to Records Center staff.
- 4) Each department using the Records Center facilities will be asked to identify personnel authorized to access departmental records. Each office will be assigned a unique authorization code that must be given when records are requested.
- 5) Departments are permitted to access only their own records. If a situation arises in which one department requires access to another department's records, written authorization allowing access will have to be arranged in advance.
- 6) In transferring records to the URC, do not write anything on the outside of the box other than what is specified in the Guidelines that follow.



## Records Center Procedures

### Records Storage

1) Records must be packed in standard records center boxes. The boxes are available only through the URC at a cost of \$1.25 per carton. Each box will hold one cubic foot of either letter or legal-size file folders. Fifteen inches of letter-size or twelve inches of legal-size folders will fit in each carton.

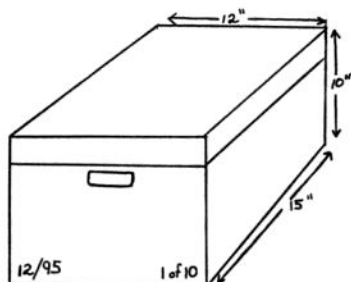
\* Do not pack files in pendaflex or hanging folders.

\* Do not lay additional files on top of files already packed.

\* Leave 1.5 inches of space in each box to allow for easy retrieval of files. If it is known that additional material will have to be interfiled at a future date, sufficient space should be left.

2) Each box must have a typed Inventory or Box List that identifies what files are in the box. This inventory will be checked when boxes are received at the URC. Departments will be notified of any discrepancies.

3) Only two pieces of information should appear on the end of each box:



Disposition Date  
According to the  
Retention Schedule

Department  
Box Number

4) A "Records Transfer Request", as shown in the example below, must be completed. Copies of the "Records Transfer Request" are available from the University Records Center.

University of Pennsylvania Records Transfer Request				
<b>School</b>	<b>Department/Office</b>	<b>Dept. #</b>	<b>Budget#</b>	
General Studies	Computer Studies	99999	00-99999-000	
<b>Name of Person Requesting Transfer</b>		<b>Ext.#</b>		
Joe Smith		X8-9999		
<b>Location/Address</b>	<b>Building</b>	<b>Room#</b>		
1100 34th Street	La Chance	708		
.....				
This list must be completed and returned with records being transferred to the University Records Center.				
<b>Series #</b>	<b>Record Description</b> (Title, range, incl. dates)	<b>Disp. Date</b>	<b>Dept. Box #</b>	<b>URC Use</b>
1	Administrative Files, A-M, 1983	6/90	1	
1	Administrative Files, N-Z 1983	6/90	2	
6	Invoices, copies, #001-589, 1984	12/91	3	

5) Send the completed "Records Transfer Request" to the University Records Center, 4015 Walnut Street/6198.

6) A URC staff member will contact the department liaison to discuss the transfer of boxes. Each department will be responsible for contacting Physical Plant to arrange for the transfer of their boxes to the Records Center.

7) When your boxes are accessioned by the Records Center, a Records Center Location Number will be assigned to each box. These RC numbers will be entered on the "Records Transfer Request" submitted for the boxes. A copy of the request with the new numbers will be returned to your department liaison.

\* It is extremely important that the department copy of the "Records Transfer Request" be kept and not discarded. To facilitate records retrieval the records center location number must be given when requests for records are made.

### Records Retrieval

1) To request materials stored at the University Records Center, the office of origin should contact the center by telephone at Ext. 9432. The URC staff member handling a retrieval request will require the following information:

requestor's name and job title,  
department name and number,  
department or office budget number,  
office authorization code,  
name or number of the file required,  
Records Center box location,  
where the file is to be delivered, or if it is to be picked up.

Each request will be handled as soon as it is received and delivered immediately.

2) When you are ready to return a file or record, contact the URC to arrange for a pick-up or to notify us that you will be returning the file. Do not return material by intramural mail.

### Records Destruction or Disposition

1) Approximately one month prior to the disposition date, the URC will notify departments of boxes eligible for disposition.

2) Department heads should review the list of box contents and identify any boxes that should be retained longer. You will be asked to identify the extenuating circumstances requiring the retention of any records beyond the minimum requirements set by the approved retention schedules.

3) Department head or designated liaison should sign and return the "Request for Authorization of Disposition of Records" to the Records Center.

4) The URC will arrange for the final disposition of all the records approved, unless the department specifically requests that the records be returned to them. A copy of the "Destruction Request" will be returned to the department liaison for your records.

## University Record Center Rate Schedule

### I. Supplies

Standard cubic foot boxes measuring 10" x 12" x 15" \$ 1.25 Per Box

### II. Storage Fee

\$ 2.10 Per Cu. Ft. Per Year

### III. Service Fees

#### A. Deposit Services

1. Pick-up boxes for deposit To be arranged by each department with Physical Plant (est. \$30.00 per hour)  
2. Processing Incoming Records \$1.00 Per Box  
3. Interfiling Records \$1.00 Per File

#### B. Access Services

1. Courier delivery of files \$3.00 for first 6 files, (\$3.00 for each additional unit of 6)  
2. Courier pick-up of files \$3.00 for first 6 files (\$3.00 for each additional unit of 6)  
3. Prepare requested files for pick-up by department \$1.50 for first 6 files (\$3.00 for each additional unit of 6)  
4. Return of files by department \$1.50 for first 6 files (\$3.00 for each additional unit of 6)

#### C. Disposition Services

1. Process disposition authorization \$10.00 Per Authorization  
2. Delivery of boxes to destruction site  
a. Witnessed destruction of confidential records \$2.50 Per Box  
b. Assured destruction of non-confidential records \$2.00 Per Box

#### D. Special Services

1. Packing boxes for storage \$13.00 Per Hour  
2. Preparing inventories/box lists \$13.00 Per Hour  
3. Photocopies \$.25 Per Copy