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Municipal Records Management (4455) What to Toss and When

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Records Management

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Municipal Records Management What to Toss and When (4455)

Course Agenda

Course Objective: Know how to implement and maintain efficient records management systems that are in compliance with sound records management principles and laws pertaining to the TN municipal government environment.

Topics to be covered:

1. What is the importance of records management to the municipal government environment?
2. What are the legal requirements of records management according to Tennessee law?
3. How do you to implement a records management system? What does it take? What are the steps involved? How long will it take?
4. What steps should be taken to protect records from a disaster?

Course Outline

1. Introductions
2. Course Objectives
3. Importance of Records Management
4. Legal Requirements of Tennessee Law
5. Personal Records Management
6. Implementing a Records Management System
7. Protecting Your Records

LEGAL COMPONENTS OF RECORDS MANAGEMENT

Records management is in part mandated by legal requirements found in the state and federal statutes and case law, and in administrative rules and regulations. Cities must concern themselves with requirements from such varied federal sources as the Family and Medical Leave Act, the Fair Labor Standards Act, the Occupational and Safety Act (OSHA), numerous environmental laws and regulations, and such diverse topics as student records and voter registration records. These requirements are primarily located in the U.S. Code and the Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.). Tennessee laws can also affect records management by cities. Most of these requirements come from *Tennessee Code Annotated* and the Tennessee Administrative Compilation of Rules and Regulations. State laws affect how particular officers of a city must conduct business and impose requirements on types of records to be kept by the various agencies of the city. Sometimes the only guideline for records management comes from examining the statutes of limitation, that is, the time frame during which a legal action can be brought against a person or entity. Where there is no specific time frame for records retention on a particular subject, the period during which a legal action could be brought becomes the logical default period of retention.

1) What are the Statutory Requirements in Tennessee for Cities' Management of Records?

Cities can use general guidelines for records management, but there are also specific requirements imposed by statutes. The most pertinent directives come from §§ 10-7-101 through 10-7-702, *Tennessee Code Annotated*, also called the Public Records Law.

All documents, papers, records, books of account, and minutes of the governing body of any municipal corporation, or of any office or department of any municipal corporation, within the definition of "permanent records," "essential records," and/or "records of archival value," as defined in §10-7-301, constitute "public records" of the municipal corporation. All documents, papers, or records of any municipal corporation or of any office or department of the municipal corporation that constitute "temporary records" and/or "working papers" within the definition set forth in §10-7-301(13) and (14) constitute "public records" of the municipality, except that "temporary records" may be scheduled for disposal as authorized in this part. § 10-7-701, *Tennessee Code Annotated*.

This is the primary requirement for municipalities to meet concerning records in Tennessee. This statute was written in 1999. Before that time, there were few general guidelines or requirements for the cities and towns in dealing with records. Before §10-7-701, *Tennessee Code Annotated*, was enacted, the county records commissions technically had jurisdiction over all the documents,

papers, records, books of account and minutes of the governing bodies of all municipalities within each county. That is no longer the case. While Tennessee has state offices that deal only with records (the State Library and Archives, for example) there has not been a parallel requirement or established structure to help the municipalities deal with the ever-increasing flow of documents and electronic records. Aside from §10-7-701, there is a provision that authorizes the Municipal Technical Advisory Service to draft retention schedules to be used as guides for all records created by municipal governments. §10-7-702, *Tennessee Code Annotated*. MTAS has completed its draft which is being distributed to the cities.

The Public Records Act also authorizes the “head of a governmental entity” to “promulgate rules” to safeguard records to protect the confidentiality of documents required by federal statutes to be kept confidential or documents used in participating in a “federally funded program.” § 10-7-503(b), *Tennessee Code Annotated*. MTAS suggests that cities implement a single records management policy that would guide the handling of all records, rather than enacting separate policies for different categories of records.

There are several categories of records in the text of the statute, which are further defined within the statute. An integral part of records management is in the proper classification of records, since retention and or disposal depends upon what type of record a document or electronic file is.

“Permanent records” are “those records which have permanent administrative, fiscal, historical or legal value.” §10-7-301 (5), *Tennessee Code Annotated*.

“Essential records” are “any public records essential to the resumption or continuation of operations, to the re-creation of the legal and financial status of government in the state or to the protection and fulfillment of obligations to citizens of the state,” §10-7-301 (4), *Tennessee Code Annotated*.

“Records of archival value” are “any public record which may promote or contribute toward the preservation and understanding of historical, cultural, or natural resources of the state of Tennessee.” §10-7-301 (10), *Tennessee Code Annotated*.

“Working Papers” are “those records created to serve as input for final reporting documents, including electronic data processed records, and/or computer output microfilm, and those records which become obsolete immediately after agency use or publication.” §10-7-301, *Tennessee Code Annotated*.

“Temporary records” are “material which can be disposed of in a short period of time as being without value in documenting the functions of an agency.” §10-7-301(13), *Tennessee Code Annotated*. Obviously, there is some discretion in distinguishing between these two types of records, but experience and common sense should help the person managing the records to learn the differences. For “working papers,” once the data has been accumulated into a report, table, chart or other final document, the “working papers” may be destroyed. A note of caution, though, is that where a city or town has involvement in a project or incident that will likely lead to litigation, all records about the project or incident should be kept as possible evidence.

"Temporary records" are somewhat more problematic, but a city could lessen the confusion by appointing a records manager to evaluate disposal or retention.

2) Can The Public Inspect Records in Tennessee?

Yes, in Tennessee, all citizens of the state have the right to inspect virtually all public records and have the right to make copies of those records. § 10-7-503, *Tennessee Code Annotated*. Unless there is a specific exception, this means that records are public and shall be available for inspection during regular business hours. This is a broad mandate, and judges generally err on the side of disclosure unless there is a statute exempting a particular type of record from disclosure. The public's right to look at records is part of the larger movement toward "Government in the Sunshine" which has been a national trend for several decades. The law allowing public inspection of records is construed to allow the fullest possible access.

Note that "citizen" also includes prisoners and inmates, even if those persons have been stripped of other political rights, such as voting rights and the ability to hold public office. Persons who are not citizens of Tennessee have no rights of inspection of public records in the state. The Attorney General found that the right of inspection of records is not a "fundamental right" protected by the Privileges and Immunities Clause of the federal Constitution. *Tenn. Op. Atty. Gen.* 99-067. The facts which led up to that opinion were that a California organization had requested copies of twenty traffic citations from the City of Bristol. The Attorney General emphasized that the City did not have to allow inspection of the records on the premises where the records were kept to a non-citizen, and further, the City had no duty to "supply copies of those records to individuals who are unable to appear in person at the place where the records are kept." *Id.*, p.3. The Attorney General noted that a public agency could allow inspection by non-citizens if it wanted, but that there was no duty to do so. That decision is within the discretion of the custodian of the records. MTAS recommends that each city develop a written policy concerning disclosure to citizens and non-citizens and that the city enforce the policy consistently.

3) How Far Must a City Go to Provide Access to Records?

A city and its departments must allow access to records for inspection during all normal business hours. Reproduction of the records must also be allowed, either by photocopy or photostat or by copying a computer file onto a disk. Note that while copies must be made available, the custodian of the records still has a statutory duty to ensure the safety of the records. It would not be unreasonable for the custodian to insist on maintaining physical custody of the records; this might require extra time on the custodian's part to make copies, but MTAS believes that extra effort is preferable to the alternative of letting the requester take physical custody of the records.

Many cities have experienced the “fishing expeditions” some requesters have tried to make. Can someone come into a city office and demand to see all the records maintained there? Probably not, as that could easily be deemed unreasonable, with the potential to disrupt the operations of the office or agency. MTAS recommends that each city adopt a policy for records requests. These rules must not be unreasonable, as courts would probably strike down any limitations on access. The custodian of the records must balance free access with his/her responsibility to preserve and protect the records from theft, vandalism or negligent handling, and to maintain efficient operation of the city or one of its departments.

Some rules that would probably be found reasonable include:

1. Requests for a large number of records would be facilitated if the requester makes an appointment, although an appointment cannot be required since the statute doesn't authorize that. (The city can define a reasonable number of records or pages.)
2. Copies will be provided within a reasonable time frame (for instance, the next business day for small requests and within five business days for larger requests.)
3. Prohibiting inspection and copying by a citizen unless the custodian of records can supervise.
4. Prohibiting the handling by a requester of old bound volumes or any other fragile records.
5. A reasonable per-page copying fee that covers the actual costs (remember that copying records is not considered an avenue for the city to raise revenues):

While Tennessee authorities generally agree that a city has no affirmative duty to send copies to a requester who does not appear in person, two recent court decisions indicate that some degree of extra effort is required where the requester is incarcerated and cannot make his/her records request in person. In *Waller v. Bryan*, 16 S.W.3d 770 (Tenn. App. 1999), *cert. den.* April 17, 2000, the court found that if a prisoner sufficiently identifies the records desired (so the custodian does not have to do an extensive search for them which would be unreasonable), the custodian must retrieve those records and send them to the prisoner. The court affirmed that the custodian could charge a reasonable fee for both retrieving and delivering the records. The court mentioned that not allowing access to records to a person who cannot come to the place where the records are kept because of “health reasons or other physical limitations” would defeat the intent of the legislature to provide full access. In another case, *Davis v. Sanders*, Case No. M2000-01600-COA-R3-CV, March 28, 2001, the Court of Appeals for the Middle District found that the prosecutor and the chief of police had a duty to provide proof of mailing of copies of records to a prisoner. It is not apparently enough for the custodian of records to aver that the requested records were sent, as the prosecutor unsuccessfully argued in that case.

It is likely that courts would enforce this type of extra effort to comply with requests for records made by other persons under some type of disability. Examples could include persons confined to a mental institution, or persons with limited physical mobility arising from injury or disease. Public entities are encouraged to provide an alternate means of access or inspection for

persons unable to request documents in person to obtain them. The recent prisoner cases, as well as Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act would mandate a "reasonable accommodation" to this class of persons.

4) Which Records May Be Kept Confidential?

§§ 10-7-503 and 10-7-504, *Tennessee Code Annotated*, list certain records which are exempt from the disclosure requirements. These include:

1. "Adoption proceedings or records required to be kept confidential by federal statute or regulation as a condition for the receipt of federal funds or for participation in a federally funded program." §10-7-503(b), *Tennessee Code Annotated*.
2. The records of certain nonprofit organizations which are otherwise held to be public bodies may be exempt from the records disclosure requirements provided they have an annual audit of their financial affairs performed. §10-7-503 (d), *Tennessee Code Annotated*. [See this statute for the particular requirements of the audit.] The Attorney General has examined this statute in light of the Tennessee Municipal League records and has opined that although the records of TML are public records, the fact that the League complies with these audit provisions exempts its records from public disclosure. *Tenn. Op. Atty. Gen.* 01-014. The Attorney General has also advised that legislation would be necessary to open the records of the Tennessee School Boards Association, another private non-profit organization, from public disclosure, if the association has complied with the audit requirements. *Tenn. Op. Atty. Gen.* 01-069.
3. Law enforcement contingency plans to deal with violence or terrorism. §10-7-503(e), *Tennessee Code Annotated*.

§10-7-504, *Tennessee Code Annotated*, provides a more complete listing of records which may be kept confidential. The following provides a brief summary of the types of records included in the exemption from disclosure or inspection:

1. Medical records, including the source of donated body parts.
2. Investigative records of the TBI and criminal investigative records of the motor vehicle enforcement division of the Department of Safety, as well as gun permits and driver's licenses issued to undercover law enforcement officers.
3. National guard records.
4. Students' educational records (Note: §49-6-6001(c) specifically exempts from disclosure all the questions, field testing documents and all answers to the comprehensive exam required of all seniors in Tennessee high schools for graduation).
5. Records in the possession of the Attorney General related to pending or contemplated legal action, work product, and any documents or records which are confidential or privileged.

6. Assessments of real or personal property being taken by eminent domain, until the action is finalized.
7. Certain proposals for personal and professional services and sealed bids, until the bids have been evaluated.
8. Records of the internal affairs division of the Department of Correction or the Department of Children's Services.
9. Health certificates collected by the state veterinarian.
10. Information submitted to the Middle Tennessee State University's venture capital network.
11. Historical documents donated to public institutions, whose owner/donor has placed restrictions on the disclosure of the documents.
12. Personal information in motor vehicle records.
13. Work product and files related to mental health interventions.
14. Riot, escape and other emergency plans of jails or prisons.
15. Orders of protection, restraining orders and other documents filed with utility companies or other government agencies to prevent the disclosure of the identity or whereabouts of a person holding such a court order.
16. Identifying information about the location of a rape crisis center or domestic violence shelter.
17. Copyrighted computer programs and software used by a state agency.
18. Any record designated as "confidential" by legal authority.
19. Records of an employee assistance program.
20. Unpublished telephone numbers, social security numbers, bank account information, and driver's license information of public employee or member of the employee's immediate family.
21. Address and home phone number of undercover police officers.
22. Information about anyone who has been or may be involved in executing a death sentence.

Some other categories of records that are confidential by law include:

- A. All notes, files and other work product from the victim-offender mediation centers § 16-20-103, *Tennessee Code Annotated*.
- B. Adoption records. § 36-1-102, *Tennessee Code Annotated*.
- C. Information divulged in paternity proceedings that might be used to locate a victim or alleged victim of domestic violence. § 36-2-311 (e) *Tennessee Code Annotated*.
- D. Many records involving juveniles. §§37-1-153, 37-1-154, 37-1-155, 37-1-409, 37-1-615, and 37-2-408, *Tennessee Code Annotated*. (These include records on the identity of the reporter of child abuse, all records accumulated about child sexual abuse, and placement of children in foster care.)
- E. Consent forms for an abortion by a minor and other documents concerning abortion. §§37-10-304, and 39-15-201, *Tennessee Code Annotated*.

- F. Whistle blowing reports of violations of the Education Trust in Reporting Act. §49-50-1408, *Tennessee Code Annotated*.
- G. Records from an employer's drug testing program. §50-9-109, *Tennessee Code Annotated*.
- H. Tax audits, returns and letter rulings with taxpayer identifying information. §67-1-1702, *Tennessee Code Annotated*.
- I. Reports of business tax statements, audits, returns or other records. §67-4-722, *Tennessee Code Annotated*.
- J. Health department information about sexually transmitted diseases. §68-10-113, *Tennessee Code Annotated*.
- K. Patient medical records from hospitals or regional health departments. §68-11-305, *Tennessee Code Annotated*.
- L. Patient records from nursing homes. §68-11-804, *Tennessee Code Annotated*.

Although these lists appear to be exhaustive, there may be other categories of records that are "confidential." One example is §10-8-102, *Tennessee Code Annotated*, which prohibits the disclosure of library records, unless the library user consents in writing to the disclosure, or there is a court order requiring disclosure, or to seek reimbursement for lost or stolen library materials. Similarly, information obtained by law enforcement officers during a polygraph are not subject to disclosure. § 62-27-125, *Tennessee Code Annotated*. A third example comes from the Tennessee Rules of Criminal Procedure, Rule 16(a)(2), which prohibits the disclosure of internal reports or memoranda made by a district attorney general or other state agents or law enforcement officers during the investigation or prosecution of a case. Please contact the city attorney or MTAS should questions arise about whether or not a particular record is confidential.

Once a record has been designated as "confidential" the confidentiality must be maintained throughout the life of the record, that is, until it is destroyed. After a record has been in existence for seventy (70) years or more, the record must be opened to public inspection, unless it pertains to services for mental illness or retardation, adoption records kept by the office of vital records, and confidential records of the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation.

CAUTION: Personnel files of public employees are subject to public inspection, unless information falls into one of the protected categories. Salary and disciplinary information do not fall within a protected class.

REDACTION--What if information exempted from disclosure appears in a document that is otherwise subject to public inspection? Is the whole document exempted from inspection? NO. Confidential information can be redacted (blacked out, cut out) from the document before its release to a requester, but the document itself is still subject to the open records law.

5) What are the Requirements for Electronic Storage of Documents?

Some statutes in Tennessee address the use of electronic storage of records. One statute allows the use of computers to store various media, including CD ROM disks, instead of using bound books or paper provided:

1. The information is kept available for public inspection (unless it's confidential);
2. The information is kept for the required period;
3. Data generated by and stored in a computer system must be copied daily, and the copies are to be stored at a different location from the original; and
4. A paper copy can be easily provided when requested by a member of the public.

§10-7-121, *Tennessee Code Annotated*.

Another statute addresses a public agency's provision of a computer for use by the general public to inspect records that are kept on the same premises. For records kept elsewhere, the agency may charge "a reasonable amount sufficient to recover the costs of providing such services and for no other services." These charges must be uniformly applied. §10-7-123, *Tennessee Code Annotated*. (Emphasis added.) The custodian of the records must take precautions so that records inspected in this manner can not be altered, deleted or impaired in any way. Charges for the cost of reviewing records online cannot include the costs of storage and maintenance of the records, or of the electronic data storage system. Fees cannot be charged to view computer records on site, only for those at remote locations. **This statute explicitly states that once records are available electronically, they must be made available to any party who requests them, "including those who may use such information for proprietary purposes."**

If a city chooses to keep data in electronic form (and that is becoming the rule rather than the exception), the question arises about how to charge a requester for copies if it is necessary to change the format in which the records are kept. The Tennessee Supreme Court has decided that public records are still public records, even if they are kept in an electronic format. *Tennessean v. Electric Power Board of Nashville*, 979 S.W.2d 297 (Tenn. 1998). The Court found that trying to distinguish "between information and a record" has become impractical. If a public entity chooses to keep records electronically, then it must provide requesters with access to a terminal to inspect the records or be prepared to translate the electronic data into a usable form. In the *Tennessean*, a newspaper had requested all the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of all the customers of an electric power board. The board refused on the ground that such a compilation was not kept and that making one would be prohibitively expensive. It informed the newspaper that it could produce the record but needed to write a new computer program to consolidate the data at a cost of about \$4,500.00. The board also had in place a customer notification policy that required letting all customers know if a third party accessed any of the customer's information, so the board attempted also to bill the newspaper about \$86,000.00 in

postage to notify all the customers of the newspaper's request. The Court of Appeals had upheld the imposition of all these charges, but the Supreme Court allowed only the costs of the new computer programming and reproduction expenses, finding there was statutory authority for such charges, while none for charging the newspaper for notification of customers' costs.

6) Is E-Mail of City Employees or Officers a Public Record?

Generally, yes. E-mail on government-owned computer systems are public records, just as any other format of record would be. Cities are authorized to conduct business electronically and are also directed to implement policies governing electronic records. §5-24-104, *Tennessee Code Annotated*. This statute also designates electronic records as "public" unless they are confidential under a specific legal authority. [§ 5-24-104(c)(1)]. It also lists specific requirements for municipalities to submit to the Comptroller of the Treasury showing an assessment of the system by the public official, the responses from a survey of users, and any recommendations for improvements suggested.

Another section, § 10-7-512, *Tennessee Code Annotated*, requires each political agency or subdivision to adopt a policy on electronic mail communications system, which must include a statement that any form of e-mail on the system may be a public record and subject to public inspection. Cities should include in their policy statements about e-mail the fact that the user can have no expectation of privacy when using a city computer. Issues concerning privacy on the internet continue to develop as technology progresses. Arguably any e-mail can be inspected by virtually anybody who is proficient with computers. MTAS recommends that cities and towns include warnings about the lack of privacy surrounding e-mail in their policies, and that employees be given guidelines on appropriate content of e-mail. [See the Appendix attached to these materials for an example of such guidelines.] MTAS also has examples of policies governing electronic communications from other states available upon request. This area of law will continue to develop. It is doubtful that privacy can truly be protected on the internet, so caution in use of e-mail is advised.

7) What Could Happen to a City that Denies Public Access to Records?

If access to records is denied by a city or one of its employees, the requester can file an action in Chancery Court asking for judicial review of the denial and for access to the records. If an official is found to have wrongfully denied access, the court is empowered to assess all costs of the requester to get the records, including the requester's reasonable attorney's fees against the governmental entity. § 10-7-505, *Tennessee Code Annotated*. The public official will not be found liable either civilly or criminally, and the court cannot order that the records be released into the custody of the requester. The burden of proof in such cases shall rest upon the public official who denied the access to prove that the record was not subject to the right of inspection.

The Eastern District Court of Appeals addressed the issue of imposing costs and attorney's fees against a city in *Arnold v. City of Chattanooga*, 19 S.W.3d 779 (Tenn. App. 1999), *cert. den.* June 19, 2000. There the city had attempted to withhold reports from an outside consultant based on the theory that they were part of the city's attorney's work product during a lawsuit involving the city's attempted acquisition of a privately owned water system. "Work product" of attorneys is the accumulation of memoranda, written and oral statements, and the mental impressions of a lawyer while preparing a lawsuit, and these items are generally protected from disclosure. *Hickman v. Taylor*, 329 U.S. 495 (1947). The lower court held that the consultant's report had not been filed "in anticipation of litigation," and therefore was not "work product" of an attorney, and ordered the city to release the consultant's reports and imposed a portion of the requester's attorney's fees against the city. The Court of Appeals did a lengthy analysis of the facts of the case and concluded that the consultant's report was part of the attorney work product and could have been protected from disclosure, but the consultant who prepared the report waived the privilege the document had enjoyed when he discussed the report at a public meeting. This led to affirming the lower court's order requiring disclosure to the requester. The Court further found, though, that the city did not "willfully and knowingly" try to protect a public document from disclosure, and reversed the award of partial attorneys' fees against the city. The Court emphasized that the city had acted on the correct assumption that the consultant's report was part of a work product and therefore there was no element of willfulness in their refusal to disclose.

8) Can a City Charge the Requester for Copies?

Until very recently, MTAS was advising cities that they could charge a reasonable fee for supervising a record inspection and for making copies of records. MTAS interpreted "actual costs" to include costs of retrieving, supervising, access, and reproduction. Logically this would include reproduction expenses, personnel costs related to time spent retrieving and supervising inspection, and time spent reproducing records. This author still believes a valid argument can be made to include such costs. However, a recent Attorney General's Opinion has imposed a caution on MTAS' position. *Tenn. Op. Atty. Gen.* 01-021. The opinion analyzed the basic question of the propriety of charging a requester for access to records. It concluded that:

1. The Public Records law does not authorize a local government to charge a fee to allow inspection of records.
2. There is no provision allowing a local government to charge a research or location fee.
3. Requiring payment for access to records could be tantamount to denying access to records.
4. No statute authorizes a government to require that requesters make an appointment to inspect public records.
5. Failure to provide a means to inspect records would be a violation of the Public Records Law.
6. A government may generally recoup its costs for supplying requested copies.

This leaves local governments in a bit of a quandary. The opinion arguably leaves the door open to charging personnel time spent in responding to the requester, but it also contains a warning not to impose such restrictions as would violate the spirit and purpose of open records of the statute. Accordingly, MTAS is revising its recommendation that personnel costs can be included in the "actual cost" of reproducing records, and is saying only that actual costs of reproduction can be charged. This could result in undue burdens on local government, but MTAS expects this result to be challenged when a proper factual situation presents itself.

9) How Does a City Handle Public Records with Commercial Value?

Can cities bar the inspection and reproduction of records that have a commercial value? Usually no, unless the speech is misleading or concerns illegal activities. Commercial speech is protected by the First Amendment as are other types of speech. *Florida Bar v. Went for It, Inc.*, 515 U.S. 618 (1995). The U.S. Supreme Court has outlined three requirements that must be met before commercial speech can be regulated:

1. The government must assert a "substantial interest in support" of the regulation;
2. The government must demonstrate that the regulation "directly and materially advances" the government interest; and
3. The regulation must be "narrowly drawn." *Id.*

A city must not assume that public records with an arguable commercial value are not subject to inspection and reproduction. Although there is still some debate about the degree of access a public entity must provide to records requested for a commercial purpose, the main weight of authority leans toward disclosure. See *Tenn. Op. Atty. Gen.* 98-091 for a full discussion of the protection of commercial speech.

Tennessee law differentiates commercial use where the records requested are "computer generated maps or other similar geographic data that was developed with public funds." §10-7-506, *Tennessee Code Annotated*. The issue, however, is not whether the records are subject to inspection and reproduction, but the amount of fee that can be charged for those records. The statute governing records with commercial value was amended in 2000 to provide a mechanism for partial development cost recovery for some records. The partial recovery fees can be collected in addition to reasonable costs of reproduction. Such fees cannot be collected if a person is seeking the record for a "non-business use by an individual" or if the record is to be used for "news gathering" by the "news media."

The statute outlines items that can be included in the development costs. These are "labor costs," "costs incurred in design, development, testing, implementation and training," and "costs necessary to ensure that the map or data is accurate, complete and current, including the cost of adding to, updating, modifying and deleting information." §10-7-506 (c)(2), *Tennessee Code*

Annotated. The recovery of development cost is limited to ten per cent (10 %) of the total development costs. Under certain conditions, recovery can increase to between ten (10) and twenty (20) percent of total development costs. A city could collect the higher amount 1) when the cost recovery is “contained in a proposed business plan obtained from the governing body,” and 2) upon approval by the governing body, the recovery plan must be submitted to the Information Systems Council (an agency of the state) for approval, 3) subject to audit by the Comptroller of the Treasury, and 4) once the allotted portion of development fees have been collected, then the local government can collect additional fees only in the “amount necessary to maintain the data and ensure that it is accurate, complete and current for the life of the particular system.” §10-7-506(c)(3) *Tennessee Code Annotated.* Note that maintenance fees are not subject to the limitations that recovery of development costs are.

The Attorney General has discussed whether a local government can enter into a contractual business venture with a private entity to sell public records. *Tenn. Op. Atty. Gen.* 00-101. The entity discussed was a county. The conclusion reached by the Attorney General was that a public entity can charge only “actual costs” incurred unless the request pertains to the maps discussed above, and that such an arrangement would not be proper since there was no express or implied power to enter into such agreements given by the legislature.

10) Can a City Require a Requester to Provide the Reason for the Request?

Generally, no. § 10-7-503 (c)(2), *Tennessee Code Annotated*, lists the information a person making an inspection of records “shall” provide, and it includes: the person’s name, address, business telephone number, home telephone number, and driver license number or other appropriate identification. The statute does not say that the requester must tell the agency the reason he/she wants the record, except for the limited situation of the expensive maps described earlier. A requester can request for a good reason, a bad reason, or no reason at all.

Conclusion

Records laws are constantly being refined as new fact situations arise that result in court rulings. Statutes are amended as needed. This guideline was written in June 2001. Cities are advised that legal guidance such as this document can quickly become outdated. Please contact your city attorney or MTAS if a records question arises.

Importance of a Records Management Program

Proper records management is a vital task necessary for local government offices in fulfilling important legal requirements and duties. The following are just a few reasons your municipality should take records management seriously:

1) Space:

In most municipalities, space is not the final frontier, it's the final battle. It is rare for a city hall to have all the space it needs. Most local officials would complain that the necessary records of the office are rapidly filling up all available space. City Halls are busting at the seams with old records stuffed into basements, storage closets, attics, and other more creative locations. For this reason alone, it is important and cost effective for a city to implement a records management program.

2) Records Serve as a Legal Foundation:

In a society of laws, local governments and the citizens they serve are both dependent upon good documentation to demonstrate their legal status. Court orders, city maps, and minutes of the city council meetings are just a few examples of important documents that create relationships, establish rights or liabilities, and authorize certain actions. When disputes arise over legal issues, it is important to have good documentation to rely on. Local governments have an important responsibility to preserve these records.

3) Open Records Requirements:

Since government records are generally open to public inspection, the task of managing records becomes even more important, and more complicated. The principle of allowing public access to government records, combined with the so-called "sunshine law" that requires open meetings, is considered an important check on government and an important defense against corruption in public office and mismanagement of public resources. Unless there is a specific statutory exemption that makes a record confidential, the public has the right to inspect and get a copy of the records of government agencies. So, as a municipal official you are responsible for maintaining and keeping records, and you must allow public access to these records for inspection. Unless your records are well organized and well protected, you may not be able to comply with public request for information.

4) Historical Preservation of Documents:

Cities play a vital role in preserving documents that have historical significance to the community. Cities with too many records and too little space end up putting records wherever they can. Oftentimes, the storage areas do not adequately protect the records from the elements. Heat, moisture, mildew, insects, and vermin can quickly render records useless. With proper records management, the important records are preserved, and the less essential records are destroyed when no longer useful, so that they don't take up valuable space. The important records are catalogued and organized so that officials and the public can access them, and records

with historical value are stored under proper conditions to enable long-term preservation.

5) Cost Savings:

After personnel costs, records keeping is the largest expenditure of government. Record creation, maintenance, filing, office storage space, filing supplies, and equipment all contribute to the high cost of keeping records. Based on figures calculated by Oregon State University's Archive and Records Management Program, the annual cost of maintaining a 5-drawer filing cabinet in an office is \$2, 099.00 The calculations are based on the following:

Salary and benefits	\$1,912.50*
Floor space	104.00
Supplies	55.00
5-drawer filing cabinet	<u>27.50**</u>
Total	\$2,099.00

*Based upon industry standards of one clerical employee maintaining and serving 12 filing cabinets. Salary figures are thus one twelfth of the annual salary and benefits of an average state clerical employee.

** Base upon a 10-year amortization of a 5-drawer steel filing cabinet purchase on state contract for \$275.00.

Certain strategies can greatly reduce these costs.

Records Management Action Plan

Listed below is a sample checklist or action plan that will help you implement a records management program, as well as set dates and keep you focused on what needs to happen next:

Steps:	Planned Completion Date	Actual Completion Date
1. Evaluate the current system by completing a filing system audit/survey.		
2. Establish authority for the program by drafting for adoption an ordinance or administrative regulation.		
3. Inventory your records.		
4. Classify files.		
5. File control - select filing arrangements.		
6. Establish records retention schedules and procedures.		
7. Establish storage area for inactive and permanent records.		
8. Protect your records with a vital records program.		
9. Develop records manual - written policies and procedures.		
10. Maintain System. TRASH Train others Annual transfer of files according to retention schedule Annual Dump Day		

Step 1 - Evaluate Current System:

Complete a Filing System Audit/Survey:

	Questions:	Yes	Some-times	No
1	Each record storage unit (filing cabinet drawer) has 10 to 20 % free space.			
2	Records are purged regularly.			
3	Active files are easily identified with a specific color or in a specific location that is easily accessible.			
4	There is a retention schedule for files.			
5	Labels are clearly visible and easy to read.			
6	Labels are easily understood by all those that use them.			
7	Documents are filed daily.			
8	There are no loose documents around the filing area.			
9	Only appropriate files are in the file area.			
10	Filing and storage equipment is up-to-date and well maintained.			
11	There is sufficient space for accessing equipment and files.			
12	Missing records can be found.			
13	There is an effective file check-out system.			
14	Records are in clean and reasonable condition.			
15	Those who access the files understand and respect system procedures.			
16	Those who maintain the system understand the laws pertaining to those records.			

Scoring:

Score 3 points for every "Yes" answer, and 2 points for "Sometimes" and 1 for every "No".

37 - 48 Effective system that works

26 - 36 Have a system, but needs work

16 - 25 Need to put a system in place, and SOON.

Additional questions to analyze your current system:

1. What areas of the filing system cause you the greatest frustrations for you and your co-workers?
2. What areas of the filing system result in the greatest loss of time?
3. Do you have a strategy or plan that would ensure that records are protected in the event of a disaster?
4. What procedures or operations are in place to protect the records against loss or facilitate reconstructing the records?
5. Are duplicate copies of information being kept by individual divisions?
6. Are your "vital" records identified and stored in a secure environment?
7. Do you maintain a records disposal program?

Question: Why do you need to conduct a file audit?

Answer: Before you go any further in implementing a records management system, you need to evaluate or analyze your current system. After all you may already have a system in place that meets your needs, and fulfills all legal requirements. If that is the case, you needn't go any further and can pat yourself on the back for being so smart. By completing this sample file audit you can get just a very quick picture of the status of your records management system.

Step 2 - Establish Authority and Scope of the Records Management Program:

It is recommended that you establish authority for your program by drafting for adoption an ordinance or administrative regulation. This ordinance should spell out the following: the scope of the records management program and who is authorized to establish and administer the program.

In almost every instance the city recorder or city clerk is the person responsible within the municipality to maintain municipal records. As with any system, having a single person responsible for the records management efforts within your city hall and to coordinate communications about your records with entities outside your office (such as a records center, or state archives center) can be key to achieving success. In larger municipalities it will probably be necessary to appoint records management coordinators for each department.

Step 3 - Inventory Documents:

After completing a filing system audit (step 1) and coming to the conclusion that you do indeed need a records management system (or at least an improved records management system), and receiving the authority to implement the program, the next step is to complete an inventory of the existing files.

Improvement in records management begins with comprehension of what the records include. The best way to gain that understanding is through a records inventory.

In the words of Jan Hart, deputy city secretary of Irving, Texas, "The physical inventory is the foundation of the records program. Every subsequent step is based on its accuracy and completeness. It must be done correctly."¹

This step will help you identify problem areas and begin the process of identifying what kind of files you have, how they are used, and where they are located.

A form is provided on the appendix. Simply print off copies, or create your own form, and begin the file inventory.

1. "Records Management: An Overview," International Institute of Municipal Clerks(IIMC) *New Digest* ND-72. 1.

Step 4 - Classify Files:

When trying to decide what to do with records, the first step is to identify them and classify them. For disposition purposes, records fall into one of three classes: working papers, temporary records, and permanent records.

1. Working Papers (Nonessential records): Working papers are defined as "those records created to serve as input for final reporting documents, including electronic processed records, and/or computer output microfilm, and those records which become obsolete immediately after agency use or publication." (T.C.A. 10-7-301). This class of records comprises all those little records that come and go in the course of a day that we usually don't even think about as records. Whether it's notes for a meeting or a rough draft of a report, if the record becomes obsolete after you use it, consider it a working paper. Many working papers generated by city offices are extremely informal types of records. Because of that, city officials may not find anything in the retention schedules that describe them. Consider whether the record matches the definition above when trying to determine if it is a working paper.

2. Temporary Records: If a record needs to be kept around for some reason after its initial use, then it is at least a temporary record. Temporary records are officially defined as "...material which can be disposed of in a short period of time as being without value in documenting the functions of an agency." (TCA 10-7-301) Financial and payroll records are good examples. Payroll records have fulfilled their immediate purpose once your employees receive their checks. But, those records also must be kept in order to comply with federal statutes and regulations and are important documents in the case of an audit.

Once a temporary record has been retained for the period described in a retention schedule, which is linked to the rules and regulations of the state, it may be destroyed.

Alternative Formats for Temporary Records:

Generally speaking, if you are only keeping a record for five years or less, it is not cost-efficient to microfilm the original paper records or convert them to other media. But certain records that are "temporary" actually have a rather lengthy retention period. Many court records need to be kept ten years, and employee earning records that may be used for computing retirement benefits are kept for the approximate life of the employee. Even though these records don't have to be kept permanently, you may find it useful to convert them to other more compact formats for storage and destroy the paper originals shortly after they are created. Microfilming or electronic storage of these long-term temporary records can be ideal solutions to storage space problems.

3. Permanent Records: Permanent records are records of such value that they must always be retained in some kind of permanent format. Examples of permanent records are the deeds filed in a register's office, the minutes of the city council meetings, and the original process in a civil or criminal proceeding. Some records, like deeds, are kept permanently

because the record continues to have legal significance in perpetuity. Other records are permanent because they preserve certain information about the way we live and conduct government and are therefore valuable historically. Still others are useful for statistical or planning purposes. Then there are those that are permanent simply because there are laws that have declared them to be so. All of these need to be kept in such a manner as to preserve them indefinitely. But, you don't necessarily have to keep the original paper copy of these records.

Step 5 - File Control: Selecting Filing Arrangements:

The purpose of any filing system is to make it easier to quickly retrieve information when needed. The cost of a misfiled record has been estimated to be **\$100**. This should make it perfectly clear that good filing systems save money as well as time. A common approach makes it easier for users and keepers of records to retrieve and use information.

There are basically two types of filing systems: direct access and indirect access. The direct access system allows you to go directly to the files without accessing an index. The indirect access system is based on codes. Codes require an index. The effectiveness of the indirect system depends on the effectiveness of the index.

Principles of Filing Arrangements:

Method:	Description of method:
Chronological	This method puts records in order by date. (Use only if number of files is under 100.)
Alphabetical	This method material is sorted in alphabetical order by subject. It is the most common application for files on individuals, companies, organizations, projects and other subjects. This system is easy to set up, flexible, expandable and is self-indexing. (Used 90% of the time) Two systems: 1) Topical-merely placed in alpha order and not arranged in related groups. Should be limited to small filing systems of only 1 or 2 filing cabinets. 2) Classified - related material is filed under a major subject heading. Major heading usually appears to the left and secondary headings to the right.
Numeric	Uses numbers instead of letters or names for guide and folder captions. This system is well suited to records that are prenumbered, such as invoices, purchases orders, vouchers, and licenses. Types: -duplex -middle-digit

Method:	Description of method:
	-terminal-digit This is an indirect filing system and may be totally dependent on the accuracy of the indexing system.
Alpha-numeric	Involves classification of records by codes, either alphabetical, numerical, or in combinations.

Each of these methods have their strengths and weaknesses. The approach used should be such that it preserves the order of the records, simplifies retrieval, and maintains continuity of information.

No matter what method is chosen, a successful filing system depends on a number of factors. If a filing system is to succeed, everyone in the organization needs to support it and use it. Alternative or parallel systems must be discouraged. Training sessions are useful when a system is established and orientation is needed when new employees are hired. A records management manual that describes the system is invaluable.

Additional Information on Numeric Systems:

1) Duplex numeric system: Consists of two or more parts, separated by a dash, space, comma, or period. Examples:

100-150

200.50.123

600 50 120

An example of the duplex numeric system applied to main subject headings and secondary headings would be:

Parks and Recreation	50
Maintenance	50-1
Supplies	50-1-1
Equipment	50-1-2
Labor	50-1-3
Scheduling	50-1-4

2) Middle-digit indexing system: In a middle-digit indexing system, numbers of units are divided into groups of two digits each. Documents are filed first by the middle digits (referred to as the primary digits), next by the digits to the left (secondary digits) and last by the two digits to the right (tertiary digits).

An example: document 842956 would be filed in this order:

1st primary 2nd secondary 3rd tertiary

Advantages of this system:

- a) Using this system means filing errors are more easily avoided because only the primary digits need be considered in locating the drawer, and only the secondary digits need to be considered in locating the guide.
- b) Records numbered sequentially are separated, thus distributing activity throughout the files.

Disadvantages of this system:

- a) File clerks must be retrained. (Reoriented to the middle digits)
- b) The system works best only if the numbers do not exceed six digits.

3) Terminal-digit filing: According to this method the numbers are read from right to left in small groups beginning with the terminal group. This approach can be used when the numbers contain five or more digits.

Example: In the number 197246 the digits would be separated into three groups of two digits each.

3 rd final	2 nd secondary	1 st primary
19	72	46

This method has the same advantages and disadvantages as middle-digit filing.

File Maintenance Tips:

An assessment of your filing system should begin with the expectations of the administration of the municipality. They are as follows:

- 1) Every requested record should be located
- 2) Records access should be immediate
- 3) Cost of filing and finding files should be low

Some of the typical things to look for are:

- 1) Unnecessary duplication
- 2) Lack of standards and controls over files, forms, and correspondence
- 3) Lack of policies and procedures for creation, retention, and disposal of records
- 4) Poor work procedures
- 5) Lack of training for filing personnel

Ten Steps for Files Improvement²

1. Get the non-record material out of your files. This alone often frees a third of the file space.
2. Using an inventory form, develop a database for the record types in the file.
3. Evaluate the effectiveness of present equipment and supplies. Focus on shelf filing if possible.
4. Analyze the current filing arrangements. Conversion to alpha, number, or subject classifications may lead to increased efficiency.
5. Decide whether to improve the present system or initiate a new one. Study the costs and become familiar with the latest technology to aid in the decision making.
6. Use the appropriate equipment and supplies. Use color coding and seriously consider bar coding. Study media other than paper.
7. Choose a records management software package especially for indexing.
8. Standardize as much as possible: equipment, supplies, procedures, and software.
9. Establish a record retention/disposition schedule.
10. Develop a file manual.

²Source: Mark Langemo, "Ten Steps for Improving Your Filing System," *The Office* (April 1992), pp.20-22.

Step 6 - Establish a Retention Schedule and Procedures:

A. Appraising Records

Appraisal is at the heart of scheduling records, because it determines the life and form of the records. Important questions to ask during this process are: What is the record worth to you?

What type of information does it contain? How long will it be needed in the office? Should it be placed on media such as microfilm? What should be its ultimate disposition?

Records have administrative, fiscal, legal, or historical value. Perceiving these types of value in an individual record helps us to manage it properly.

Administrative (or Operational) Value: Records with administrative value enable the organization to perform its daily primary functions. Examples are: correspondence, letters and reports. Since these records have operational value only, these type records tend to have a shorter retention period than do fiscal, legal or historical.

Fiscal Value: Records that relate to the financial transactions of the local government, especially those required for audit or tax purposes, have fiscal value. Examples: canceled checks, payroll data, vouchers and budgets. Commonly, these are required until an audit can be completed. However, many fiscal records have a longer retention because of requirements under tax law.

Historical Value: Historical value is a long-term value of records to document past events. Traditionally such records constituted less than 10% of all records generated.

Legal Value: Records with legal value are those records which are required to be kept by law or those that may be needed in case of litigation or governmental investigation. Examples: deeds, contracts, property-right-of-way, and case files in criminal or civil court. Less than 10% of all records must be kept for legal reasons. However, the task of knowing and applying all the legal requirements connected with records retention is huge:

Legal value is normally determined by 4 factors:

- 1) statutes or regulations requiring records to be kept for specific periods
- 2) statutes or regulations requiring records to be kept but with no specific period stated
- 3) limitations of actions stating the period during which legal action can be initiated
- 4) impending litigation or government investigation that affects records

Types of legal requirements:

- 1) **Statutes** - laws enacted by the US Congress, or Tennessee State Legislature.
- 2) **Rules and regulations** - issued by government regulatory agencies. These are published daily in the Federal Register and compiled annually in the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations.
- 3) **Statutes of limitation** - prescribe a time frame during which a legal action may be brought or a government agency investigation or audit begun.
- 4) **Judicial or administrative opinions** - interpret existing law and are generally binding for cases involving similar situations.
- 5) **Letter opinions** - establish the opinion of an agency in regard to an individual case.

Consequences of failure to meet legal requirements for records retention:

A great deal of time and diligence should be spent in making sure that all legal requirements for record retention is met. The potential impact of a records retention program that fails to meet legal requirements may include loss of rights, time and money, penalties for obstruction of justice or contempt of court, and adverse trial results.

Courts take a very dim view of poorly managed records programs. Thousands of staff hours and millions of dollars can be the penalty for an ineffective records retention/disposition program.

B. Creating the Retention Schedule

Even the best planned and operated records management program will fail miserably if it never gets rid of records. No area of records management so clearly separates the pros from the amateurs as the evaluation of how long to keep a record.

It is important to keep a record for as long as it is needed. But, it is equally important not to keep a record any longer than it is needed. If the government is taken to court and evidence from records retained longer than the retention period stipulated is the reason for prosecution, a great monetary loss could occur.

On a more practical level, a good retention scheduling program can reduce your value of office records by as much as two-thirds, thus saving your municipality money.

Example of cost savings:

The first year of the records management program you achieve only a 10% reduction in the prime space of a 160,000 square foot building @ \$22 per square foot. The potential savings for storing inactive records in less costly space @\$3.50 per square foot is \$296,000.

If you already have schedules, a reduction of 25-30% in the volume of records on prime floor space is possible if the schedules have not been followed properly. Files grow typically at 20%

per year.

A retention schedule should:

- identify each type of record. Since records are usually identified by more than one title, alternate titles should be noted.
- have a description of records. Insufficient information has been cited as the fundamental flaw of most schedules.
- state how long a record should be kept
- state how long a record should be maintained in prime office space
- state what should be done with duplicate copies (should identify which copy of the record is to be designated as the "record" copy)
- list media application for each record (should data be put into computer, microfilm, etc)
- list method of records disposal
- list procedures for compliance with the retention program

C. Schedule Negotiation and Approval

The process of arriving at an approved schedule generally involves one of two methods:

- 1) Committee method - This method operates under the assumption that the best retention decisions result from a consensus of views among professionals such as records managers, lawyers, administrators, auditors, and department heads. The committee has its limitations in that sessions of the committee may not allow the time and depth of analysis needed to determine retention periods.*
- 2) Individual method - This method involves the appointed records manager (coordinator) and individual department heads. At extended or repeated conferences, retention periods are discussed and approved.*

*Both methods should involve consulting with your source of legal advice.

It is a good idea to have a retention schedule approved by the governing body. This will authorize the recorder or anyone who has the responsibility to dispose of records without going back to the governing body for permission.

D. Auditing the Schedules

It is important to build a tracking system whereby cumulative totals are maintained of records destroyed. This should be part of the reporting of space savings through records disposition and should be well publicized since that is one of the benefits of the overall records program. There

is no point in making appraisal decisions and developing schedules if there is no mechanism in place to enforce them.

A typical annual audit schedule to assure compliance could be as follows:

First two years.....all records of an office

Third year.....questionnaire

Fourth and each consecutive year.....five record series, chosen at random

Step 7 - Establish Storage Area for Inactive and Permanent Records

Once your records retention schedules are approved and implemented, it is time to develop a systematic records storage system. A properly designed storage system will house inactive records in a central, low-cost area. This frees valuable office space, saves time in accessing records, and encourages efficient operations.

Office space is expensive and limited. Only the most current and frequently used records should be housed in an office area. Records that are accessed less often are sent to storage where they can be retrieved quickly when needed.

Selecting a storage site:

Consider the following when looking for an appropriate storage site:

- ☐ Buildings owned by your municipality.
- ☐ A storage area central to its users is best. If necessary, several locations may be designated.
- ☐ Smoke detectors in the area are important.
- ☐ Attics, basements, garages and warehouses are not the best choices for storage because of temperature variances.
- ☐ Avoid areas with water pipes in the ceiling.
- ☐ Permanent, historic and vital records have special storage considerations. Consult the State of Tennessee Records Management Program, Dept. of General Services, Records Management Division, State Records Center, 843 Cowan Street, Nashville, TN 37243-0555.

Selecting records for storage:

- ☐ Active and Inactive records means the reference rate of a records series. As records get older, they are needed less often.
- ☐ Records series that are referred to more than once a month per file drawer are considered **active** and are kept in the office.

- ☐ Records series that are referred to less than one search per file drawer per month are considered **inactive** and can be sent to storage.
- ☐ To check the reference rate of a group of records, keep a small piece of paper on each file drawer for a few months. Place a tally mark on the sheet each time a file is pulled from that drawer.

Managing the storage area:

- ☐ To keep track of items in the records storage area, a computer software database or program or paper index cards can be used to identify the contents and location of each box.
- ☐ Boxes should be marked with their number and storage location.
- ☐ Do not mix records with different destruction dates in the same box. The objective is to discard the entire box of records when its retention period is met.³

Step 8 - Protect your Records - Establish a Vital Records Program:

A vital records program is akin to an insurance policy except that it is designed not to reimburse for losses but to reduce their consequences. It is, in a sense, an aspect of risk management.

Vital records are the ones that you must have to continue operations. To grasp what records actually are vital, ask the question, “What if disaster struck tonight? What records would I need to reopen for business in the morning?” You will immediately perceive that payroll, accounts receivable, warrants-to-be-served, licenses, project files, and the like hold the kinds of indispensable information that constitutes vital records. They are at the center of your operations, and they contain information that cannot be reconstructed from any other sources. Remember, you are just trying to resume operations with the most essential records.

Some records that are typically not thought of as vital records should be categorized as such simply because of their importance during emergencies. Examples include: engineering drawings for water and sewerage, gas, electrical grids, and bridges.

It is impossible to provide full protection to all records. The level or method of protection depends, therefore, on the consequences of loss and the cost of protection.

A vital record is not necessarily permanent. A record may be vital for only a short period of time.

³International Institute of Municipal Clerks (IIMC) Records Management Technical Bulletins, No. 5, January 2000.

Steps for setting up and operating a vital records program:

1. Identify those records which have such importance that measures need to be taken to protect them against loss.
2. Determine the level of protection needed.
3. Evaluate the most effective or cost-efficient means for providing the needed level of protection.
4. Put in place the necessary procedures in carrying them out, including training staff.
5. Run tests to see that the plan is effective and make any adjustments needed.
6. Monitor the program to make certain that it is working properly.
7. Re-evaluate from time to time to determine if changes are necessary.

A properly operated vital records program should be an integral part of the records management program. For all its records, the government should have retention schedules in place which state how long and where each record series is to be maintained. Then these schedules can be used as a basis for reviewing each series to determine the level of protection needed.

If there are no retention schedules, the best procedure would be to conduct a records inventory survey. Such a survey identifies the records of the organization and tells what information they contain, how they are used, where they are located, and how long they should be retained.

No office can afford to expend the amount of resources it would take to insure the protection of every record in the office. For that reason, it is important to determine which records are truly vital and which are not.

Records management experts have divided records into four classes:

- (1) Nonessential records: those that if lost would not really be missed. Most convenience files, internal memos, and many routine papers of completed transactions fall into this category.
- (2) Useful records: records containing information which if lost would cause some difficulty but which could be easily replaced.
- (3) Important records: those records that cannot be dispensed with and that can be replaced only through the expenditure of substantial time, money, or manpower.
- (4) Vital records: those records which are essential and cannot be replaced. Vital records contain information essential to the continuity of operations or to the protection of the rights of the government or of individual citizens.

Begin by protecting those records that are indispensable. Since you cannot anticipate and prevent every possible disaster, the best course of action is to make sure there are off-site archival quality copies of the city's most important records.

If you need assistance in developing these plans for your city, both MTAS and the Tennessee State Library and Archives can help. Copies of contingency plans and other publications on records protection are available upon request. In addition, there are a number of commercial, non-profit, governmental and educational sites on the Internet that provide a wealth of contacts and links to valuable information. These Internet sites are places you might want to start:

- ▶ <http://www.ala.org/alcts/publications/disaster.html> (last updated April 3, 2001)
- ▶ <http://www.nagara.org/>(last updated March 29, 2001)
- ▶ <http://palimpsest.stanford.edu/bytopic/disasters/index.html> (last updated April 7, 2001)
- ▶ <http://www.arma.org>

Step 9 - Develop Records Manual:

For any system to work, it is going to require the cooperation of others. One person can't do it alone. One way to communicate to your organization the importance of a good records management program is to develop a Records Management Manual. This lets people know the purpose of the system, who's in charge of implementing and maintaining it, and the procedures they need to follow.

Listed below are some of the things that should be contained in the manual:

1. Purpose
2. Policy
3. Personnel Responsibilities
4. Procedures
5. Vital Records Plan
6. Retention Schedule
6. Maintenance Schedule
7. Definitions

The records management manual affirms policies and procedures, serves as a reference and training book, and encourages uniformity and standardization of job performance.

Step 10 - Maintain the System:

Records Management Habits:

Good records management begins at each person's desk. TRASH is an acronym that is easy to remember and yet can make a powerful difference in keeping the paper to a minimum.



T = Toss it!

R = Refer it, Pass it on.

A = Act on it. (IF under 5 minutes)

S = Store it. (File it if deemed worthy)

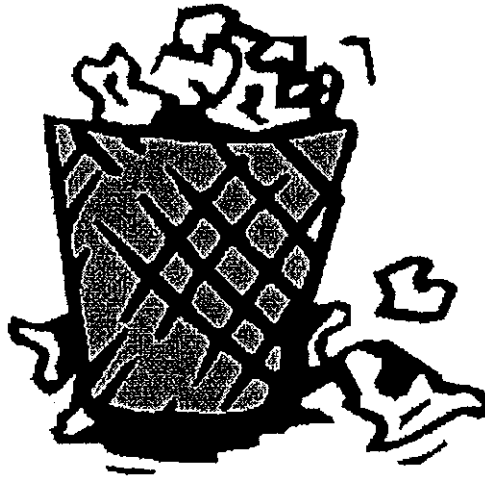
H = Halt it. (Get off the mailing list)

Other good records management suggestions include:

1. File weekly, don't let things stack up.
2. Keep whatever system is in place simple.
3. Eliminate whenever possible.
4. Invest a few minutes in planning your system to save time later.
5. When sorting mail, write the appropriate file name in the top right hand corner in pencil.
6. If a document is FYI only, read it and toss it.
7. Avoid using paper clips. Use staples instead.
8. Handle an item only once after you've taken it out of your in-box.
9. Allow 10 minutes each day to organize, clean up, and tie up loose ends.

Train Others:

The next step is to train others how to use the system. This will require a "sell" job. You will need to emphasize the benefits of having a records management system such as saving money, saving time, and the ability to purge records without guilt. You can purge without guilt because you are simply following a retention schedule. A good records management manual can also be the perfect training tool.



Annual Dump Day:

To maintain the records management system you have put place it is highly recommended that you annually conduct a "Dump Day". This keeps the non-essential records from "stacking up" in filing cabinets, desk drawers, and storage areas. The following is a step-by-step plan that will assist you making this an effective event.

Organize an Annual Dump Day within your organization. This is a day in which everyone within the organization devotes their time to cleaning out their files, and office space and dumping "working" or "non-essential" files that are no longer needed. (Special care should be given to make sure everyone is aware of the recommended retention schedule for "temporary" or "permanent" files.)

To organize this you will need to do the following:

- 1) Get approval from top management.
- 2) Be creative! Make it fun and productive.
- 3) Pick a day and put it on the organization's calendar.
- 4) Assign one person as "coordinator".
- 5) Advertise within the organization, again keeping in mind that you need to be creative.
- 6) Have copies of the records-management manual and retention schedule, and tip sheets.
- 7) Arrange for temporary staff to answer phones and take messages.
- 8) Encourage staff to wear comfortable clothes.
- 9) Notify the cleaning staff that there will be extra trash that day.
- 10) Make sure there are plenty of trash cans and recycling bins available.
- 11) Establish a centralized location for files that need to go to other departments or off-site storage.
- 12) You might consider having pizza ordered in for lunch. Make it a FUN DAY!!!

Annual Transfer of Files:

Effective records administration should include an annual transfer of files. An audit may be necessary to ensure compliance with the retention schedules. There is no point in making appraisal decisions and developing schedules if no mechanism is in place to enforce them.

A sample audit schedule may look like this:

1st two years.....all records of an office
3rd year.....questionnaire
4th and each subsequent year.....5 record series chosen at random

An annual audit also provides an opportunity to fine-tune the schedule—making additions, deletions, changes in wording, or other improvements in the original retention guidelines.

Sources

Records Management: A Practical Guide for Cities and Counties, Mims, Julian L. III, International City/County Management Association, Washington, D.C., 1996.

Records Management for County Governments, County Technical Assistance Service, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN, 1999.

"Guide for Local Governments: Protecting Records," Local Government Records Technical Bulletin Series, No. 4, National Association of Government Archives & Record Administrators, June 1993.

"A Guide for the Selection and Development of Local Government Records Storage Facilities," Local Government Records Technical Publication Series, No. 1., National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators, November 1989.

"Records Management Technical Bulletins: For Municipal Clerks and Records Managers," International Institute of Municipal Clerks, Bulletins No. 1 - 6, January 2000.

Appendices

Record Management Terms

Active Records - Records that are referred to more than once per month per file drawer. Active records should be maintained in the office.

Administrative Value - defined as the importance or usefulness of records to assist the agency in performing its primary functions.

Fiscal Value - defined as the importance or usefulness of records in case of financial investigation or audit.

Historical Value - defined as the importance or usefulness of records to comply with legal requirements for maintaining information or to provide protection for an agency or State in case of litigation or investigation.

Inactive Records - Records with a reference rate of less than one search per file drawer per month.

Legal Value - defined as the importance or usefulness of records to comply with legal requirements for maintaining information or to provide protection for an agency or State in case of litigation or investigation.

Nonessential Records - those that if lost would not really be missed. Most convenience files, internal memos, and many routine pages of completed transactions fall into this category. Such records are not recommended for special care in a records protection program.

Public Records Commission - consists of the Secretary of State, State Treasurer, Comptroller of the Treasurer, Director of Legal Services for the General Assembly, Commissioner of General Services. The PRC determines and orders proper disposition of state records.

Record - all documents, papers, letters, maps, books, photographs, microfilms, electronic data files and output, films, sound recordings, or other material regardless of physical form or characteristic made or received pursuant to law or ordinance or in connection with the transaction of official business by any governmental agency.

Records Disposition Authorization (RDA) - the official document utilized by an agency head to request authority for the disposition of records.

Record Series - a group of similar or related records that are used and filed together as a unit.

Records Retention Schedule - A listing and schedule of records series by office, indicating for each series the full records series title, function/purpose, location of official copy, retention period in the office and/or records center, and whether or not the series is to be microfilmed, destroyed, and/or transferred to the State Archives for permanent retention.

Useful Records - records containing information which if lost would cause some difficulty but which could be easily replaced.

Vital/essential Record - Records essential to:

- the resumption and/or continuation of operations.
- the re-creation of the legal and financial status of the agency; or
- the fulfillment of obligations to local , state, and federal governments and outside interests.

CITY OF _____

REQUEST FOR PUBLIC RECORDS FORM

Person Making Request

Address _____

Telephone Number - Work _____ Home _____

Description of Record(s) Being Requested:

I, the undersigned, have read and understand the attached Resolution providing for the maintenance, preservation, and protection of public records, and establishing procedures for accessing and copying public records.

I agree to abide by all provisions of the resolution.

Signature _____

Date _____

RESOLUTION NO. _____

**A RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR THE MAINTENANCE, PRESERVATION,
AND PROTECTION OF PUBLIC RECORDS, AND ESTABLISHING
PROCEDURES FOR ACCESSING AND COPYING PUBLIC RECORDS.**

Be it resolved by the City Council of the City of _____,
Tennessee, that:

Section 1. Procedures regarding access and inspection of public records:

- A Consistent with the Public Records Act of the State of Tennessee, personnel at the City of _____ shall provide full access and assistance in a timely and efficient manner to persons who request access to open public records.
- B. Employees of the City of _____ shall protect the integrity and organization of public records with respect to the manner in which such records are inspected and copied. All inspections or copying of records shall be performed by, or under the supervision of, employees of the City of _____.
- C. Personnel with the City of _____ shall prevent excessive disruptions of essential functions and duties and shall seek to provide access to records at the earliest possible time.
- D. Requests for inspection or copying of records shall be made in writing on a form provided by the City of _____. Such form shall be completed by the person requesting the record, and city employees may demand reasonable identification of any person requesting a record.
- E. Hours for making requests for inspection or copying records shall be the regular office hours of city hall.
- F. Removal of records from City Hall shall not be permitted.
- G. Reproduction of records shall not be undertaken when in the judgment of personnel of the City of _____, such reproduction would cause damage to the record(s).

Section 2. Fees for inspection and copying of public records:

- A.** The City may establish reasonable fees to cover the cost of reproduction of records. Such fees may include the actual cost of reproduction.
- B.** All fees for purposes identified in Section 2A above shall be due at the time such costs are incurred.
- C.** No fees shall be assessed against officers or employees of the City of _____ who make requests which are reasonably necessary to the performance of their official duties.
- D.** No reproduction fee shall be assessed when an employee of the City of _____ determines that the cost of charging and handling the fee exceeds the cost of providing a copy without charge.

ADOPTED BY THE CITY OF _____, TENNESSEE
ON THIS THE _____ DAY OF _____, 2000.

MAYOR: _____

CITY RECORDER: _____

NOTE: The Municipal Technical Advisory Service does not advise cities and towns to create a Records Commission unless the number of records generated is sufficiently large to require such a formalized means of records management. The City Records are charged by statute with the custody and preservation of records, § 6-4-203, *Tennessee Code Annotated*. MTAS believes that most municipalities in the state can manage their records efficiently through the Office of the City Recorder, with guidance about preservation from the Retention Schedules developed by MTAS. The following ordinance is provided as a sample for those cities which would benefit by a more formal management process for records management.

SAMPLE ORDINANCE

ORDINANCE NO. _____

ORDINANCE TO ESTABLISH A RECORDS COMMISSION FOR THE CITY/TOWN OF _____, TENNESSEE, WITH DESIGNATION OF ITS DUTIES AND MEMBERSHIP.

WHEREAS, it is necessary to the public welfare to establish a records commission to fulfill the responsibilities of managing all the records of _____ (City/Town), The Code of Ordinances of _____ (City/Town) is amended in the following particulars:

Section 1. There is hereby created The Records Commission of _____ (City/Town) which shall be charged with the maintenance, preservation, and management of the records of the municipality. The Commission shall protect the integrity and organization of the municipality's records by publishing standards and policies to govern:

- a.. The storage of records in the most efficient and economical means possible;
- b. The protection of the public's right to inspect and reproduce public records;
- c. A means of training all employees of the municipality on proper records' management to balance the public right of inspection with safeguarding of the records ;
- d. A review process to determine compliance of all municipal offices and agencies with the retention schedules established by the Municipal Technical Advisory Service of the University of Tennessee;
- e. A means of review before the disposition of any records; and
- e. General oversight of the management of all records in the municipality.

Section 2. The following persons shall be appointed by the legislative body of the municipality to serve on the Records Commission for _____ year terms:

a.. [INSERT HERE THE MEMBERS NAMED--SUGGESTIONS WOULD INCLUDE THE MAYOR, THE CITY RECORDER, THE CITY MANAGER AND SUCH OTHER PERSONS AS EACH MUNICIPALITY DEEMS ADVISABLE.]

b. Such members shall serve at the pleasure of the legislative body.

c. Such members shall receive no compensation, except reimbursement for travel expenses approved by the legislative body.

Section 3. The Records Commission shall meet _____ times each year and all meetings of the Commission shall be open to the public.

Section 4. This ordinance shall become effective on the date of final passage.

SIGNATURES

First reading_____

Final reading_____

Tennessee Code Part 7 Municipal Records

10-7-701. Public records - Temporary records.

All documents, papers, records, books of account, and minutes of the governing body of any municipal corporation, or of any office or department of any municipal corporation, within the definition of "permanent records," "essential records," and/or "records of archival value," as defined in § 10-7-301, constitute "public records" of the municipal corporation. All documents, papers, or records of any municipal corporation or of any office or department of the municipal corporation that constitute "temporary records" and/or "working papers" within the definition set forth in § 10-7-301(13) and (14) constitute "public records" of the municipality, except that "temporary records" may be scheduled for disposal as authorized in this part.

[Acts 1999, ch. 167, § 1.]

10-7-702. Retention schedules.

The municipal technical advisory service, a unit of the Institute for Public Service of the University of Tennessee, is authorized to compile and print, in cooperation with the state library and archives, records retention manuals which shall be used as guides by municipal officials in establishing retention schedules for all records created by municipal governments in the state.

[Acts 1999, ch. 167, § 1.]

Evaluating an Office's File System

Yes No

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| ☐ | ☐ | 1. Is the filing system proper for the function the records have? |
| ☐ | ☐ | 2. Are the records given the required protection against fire, theft, and dampness? |
| ☐ | ☐ | 3. Are records filed daily if necessary? |
| ☐ | ☐ | 4. Are important records being "filed" in desk drawers or trays? |
| ☐ | ☐ | 5. Are useless materials being filed? |
| ☐ | ☐ | 6. Are there many instances of misfiled or lost records? |
| ☐ | ☐ | 7. Are there new developments in equipment or supplies that will improve operations? |
| ☐ | ☐ | 8. Are file drawers overcrowded? |
| ☐ | ☐ | 9. Is there an adequate number of guides (at least 20 for each drawer, or 5 per shelf)? |
| ☐ | ☐ | 10. Is the number of papers in any standard folder limited to a maximum of 100? |
| ☐ | ☐ | 11. When papers need fastening within a folder, are staples rather than paper clips used? |
| ☐ | ☐ | 12. Do the file drawers, guides, and folders bear descriptive labels and captions? |
| ☐ | ☐ | 13. Are standard indexing rules used, and do you have an automated correspondence log? |
| ☐ | ☐ | 14. Is there adequate cross-referencing? |
| ☐ | ☐ | 15. Are the records properly coded? |
| ☐ | ☐ | 16. Are the records sorted in the best way before storing? |
| ☐ | ☐ | 17. Is there a charge-out and follow-up system that is used properly by all employees? |
| ☐ | ☐ | 18. Is there adequate provision for transfer and disposal? |
| ☐ | ☐ | 19. Is there a manual that describes the filing operations of the office? |

Source: Robert Allerdig, "The Cost of Managing Information," *The Records & Retrieval Report* (April 1992), p. 7.



DEPARTMENT OF GENERAL SERVICES
RECORDS MANAGEMENT DIVISION
RECORDS INVENTORY WORKSHEET

1. Department/Division		Allotment Code	Cost Center
2. Person Completing Inventory		Date	Telephone
3. Records Series Title		RDA No. Assigned ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, indicate RDA No. _____	
4. Purpose of Records			
5. Description (Include form numbers and titles, attach sample and include additional sheets if needed)			
6. Location of Records (specify room number, building, etc.)			
7. File Arrangement ☐ Alphabetical ☐ Numerical ☐ Other If other, explain _____			
8. Current Media Format Records are Generated ☐ Paper ☐ Magnetic/Electronic ☐ Other If other, explain _____			
9. Media Format Records are Maintained ☐ Paper ☐ Magnetic ☐ Microfilm ☐ Microfiche ☐ Other If other, explain _____			
10. Date Range of Records From: _____ To: _____		11. Annual Accum. (cu. ft.)	12. Current Volume (cu. ft.)
13. Records Value (more than one box may be checked) ☐ Administrative ☐ Fiscal ☐ Legal ☐ Historical			
14. Are records subject to fiscal audit? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Federal ☐ State ☐ Both			
15. Statutory Requirements ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, cite statute and state length of retention period required. (Attach Copy of Statute)			
16. File Reference Frequency Current Year _____ Ref./Monthly; Past Year _____ Ref./Monthly; 2 thru 5 years _____ Ref./Monthly; Over 5 years _____ Ref./Monthly			
17. ☐ Vital ☐ Confidential ☐ Original ☐ Duplicate If duplicate, where are original records maintained? _____			
Note statute for confidential records			
18. Media Recommendation Recommend records be maintained in ☐ Current Format ☐ Microfilm ☐ Microfiche ☐ Other If other, explain _____			
19. Recommended Disposition: The files are to be cut off at the end of each ☐ calendar year ☐ fiscal year ☐ other (specify) _____ then, ☐ Maintain in agency _____ month(s) _____ year(s); then ☐ Retain permanently ☐ Transfer to State Records Center; Hold _____ year(s); then ☐ Transfer to Library and Archives where records will be screened and evaluated for historical purposes. ☐ Destroy ☐ Other (specify) _____ ☐ Destroy after _____ ☐ Destroy when _____			

This Inventory Worksheet has been reviewed and approved by the Records and Forms Review Committee.

Chairman Signature _____

Division Director Signature _____

Records Officer Signature _____

Records Inventory Worksheet

1. Department _____	Division _____	Section _____
2. Name & Title of officer immediately responsible for series. _____		
3. Record Series Title _____		4. Series number _____
5. Description of records series (content, purpose, by whom created, form numbers, etc.) _____ _____		
6. Earliest date/Latest date _____	7. Records still being created? Yes _____ No _____	8. Annual accumulation _____ cubic feet
9. Arrangement Alphabetical by _____ Numeric by _____ Other _____		
10. Reference frequency (check, insert number, circle appropriate words) _____ times daily, weekly, monthly, annually for _____ months, years. Never after _____		
11. If there are other copies of these records, including microfilm, identify them _____		
12. Relationship to other records series (indexed, summarized, listed, etc) _____		
13. Location of records (building, room, file section, etc) _____		14. Volume _____ Cubic feet
15. Size and format of record _____		16. Type & quantity of file equipment occupied: _____
17. Statutory or state archival requirement for retention _____		
18. Suggested retention period with justification _____		
19. Additional comments _____ _____		
20. Inventory taken by and date: _____		21. Reviewed by and date _____
22. Appraisal: _____ confirms suggested retention period or _____ substitutes following: _____ _____		
23. Department head and date _____ _____		24. Records officer and date _____ _____

County, City, Town, etc.

Number

Records Inventory Worksheet

1. Department		Division	Section
2. Name and title of officer immediately responsible for series			
3. Records series title			4. Series number
5. Description of records series (content, purpose, by whom created, form numbers, etc.)			
6. Earliest date/Latest date	7. Records still being created? ☐ Yes ☐ No		8. Annual accumulation _____ cubic feet
9. Arrangement Alphabetic by _____ Numeric by _____ Other _____			
10. Reference frequency (check, insert number, circle appropriate words) ☐ _____ times daily, weekly, monthly, annually for _____ months, years. ☐ Never after _____			
11. If there are other copies of these records, including microfilm, identify them			
12. Relationship to other records series (indexed, summarized, listed, etc.)			
13. Location of records (building, room, file section, etc.)		14. Volume _____ cubic feet	
15. Size and format of record		16. Type and quantity of file equipment occupied	
17. Statutory or state archival requirements for retention			
18. Suggested retention period with justification			
19. Additional comments			
20. Inventory taken by and date		21. Reviewed by and date	
22. Appraisal ☐ confirms suggestion retention period or ☐ substitutes following:			
23. Department head and date		24. Records Officer and date	
25. Other local authority and date		26. State Archivist and date	

From H.G. Jones, *Local Government Records: An Introduction* (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1979) as it appeared in *Managing Records on Limited Resources - A Guide for Local Governments*, Stephen E. Haller, CRM, issued by NAGARA (November 1991). Local officials are welcome to reproduce this worksheet. This constitutes formal permission from author and publisher for its reproduction, with proper acknowledgment to source.

Appendix

15. ANNUAL Accumulation of the Records Letter/Legal-size drawers _____ Letter/Legal-size boxes _____ Other (specify) _____ _____ _____	16. TOTAL Accumulation of the Records (include all storage locations) Letter/Legal-size drawers _____ Letter/Legal-size boxes _____ Other (specify) _____ _____ Location(s) of records _____
17. Cite any agency, state or federal policy, regulation or law, or professional organization's recommendation pertaining to the actions documented in this series. Please attach a copy of citation.	
18. Access to Records (attach copy of citation) ☐ No restrictions ☐ Protected under _____ ☐ Exempt from public disclosure under the _____ ☐ Other legal restrictions (specify) _____	
19. Your Recommended Retention and Disposition (complete as applicable) a. Total length of retention _____ (days / months / years / permanent) b. Retain on-site _____ (days / months / years) c. Retain off-site _____ (days / months / years) ☐ Agency storage ☐ Records Center ☐ Archives ☐ Other d. Reformat after _____ (days / months / years) Reformat to ☐ microfilm ☐ optical disk ☐ _____ Retain reformatted material _____ (days / months / years / permanently)	
20. Comments/reasons for recommendations listed in No. 19 (include any citations requiring or recommending specific retention).	
21. Additional Comments (if needed)	
22. Survey Conducted By _____	23. Date of Survey _____

IIMC TECHNICAL BULLETIN
SAMPLE FORM[illegible]

We certify that the records listed above have been retained for the scheduled retention period, required audits have been completed, and no pending or ongoing litigation or investigation involving these records is known to exist.

8. _____
DESIGNATED RECORDS OFFICER (PRINT NAME) SIGNATURE DATE

9. RECORDS DESTROYED BY:

NAME (PRINT OR SIGNATURE)	DATE OF DESTRUCTION



RECORDS DISPOSITION AUTHORIZATION

STATE OF TENNESSEE

PUBLIC RECORDS COMMISSION

1. Department/Division	Allotment Code
2. Division Address	
3. Contact Person	Telephone () -
4. Records Officer Signature	Date
5. Division Director Signature	Date
6. Agency Head Signature	Date
7. Action Requested ☐ Establish Records Disposition Authorization ☐ Revise Records Disposition Authorization Number(s) If this RDA supersedes any existing RDAs, indicate RDA number(s) _____ ☐ One Time Disposal	
8. Record Series Title	Date Range of Records From: To:
9. Records Series Description (include content)	
10. Recommended Disposition: The files are to be cut off at the end of each ☐ calendar year ☐ fiscal year ☐ other (specify) _____ then, ☐ Maintain in agency _____ month(s) _____ year(s); then ☐ Transfer to State Records Center; Hold _____ year(s); then ☐ Destroy. ☐ Destroy after _____. ☐ Destroy when _____. ☐ Maintain permanently. ☐ Transfer to Library & Archives where records will be screened and evaluated for historical purposes. ☐ Migrate tapes or other media every _____ years, then; ☐ Other (specify) _____	

FOR PUBLIC RECORDS COMMISSION USE ONLY

Chairman (Signature)	RDA Number _____	Date Approved Mo. Day Year / /
Member (Signature)	Member (Signature)	
Member (Signature)	Member (Signature)	

Records Management Resources

American Association for State and Local History

(615) 255-2971; www.aaslh.org/

Association for Information and Image Managers (AIIM)

(301) 587-8202; www.aiim.org/

Association of Records Managers and Administrators (ARMA)

(800)422-2762; www.arma.org/

International Institute of Municipal Clerks (IIMC)

(909) 592-4462; www.iimc.org/

National Association of Government Archivists and Records Administrators (NAGARA)

(513) 225-4284; www.nagara.org/

National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC)

National Archives and Records Administration

(202) 501-5610 (202) 501-5601; www.nara.gov/nara/nhprc/nhprc.html

Tennessee Records Management Division

843 Cowan, Nashville, TN 37243 (615) 741-7996; www.state.tn.us/generalserv/

RECORDS MANAGEMENT

A PRACTICAL GUIDE

FOR CITIES AND COUNTIES

Julian L. Mims III, CRM, CA



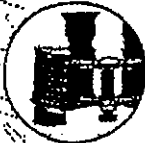
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that addresses all the basic tasks of records
management. \$45.00

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IIMC

RECORDS MANAGEMENT

TECHNICAL BULLETINS

For Municipal Clerks and Records Managers
January 2000



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MUNICIPAL CLERKS

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ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATORS



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When to Get Rid of It!*

QRMS is a fully featured Records Management Software package that runs on most major standalone, LAN and Client/Server based Windows® systems and has all the functionality you'll require for *complete* records management. The functions in the QRMS base system:

- Allow you to manage your information Classification system
- Assist you in determining where information should be filed in order to ensure consistent and accurate storage of your records
- Create your files
- Produce various reports, including labels and file inventory lists
- Assist you in retrieving information using comprehensive searching facilities including keyword searching and system wide searching using boolean logic and a form of query by example
- Allow you to automatically generate keywords for files or classifications
- Automatically roll over or close your fiscal or calendar year files each year
- Tells you when to move information into storage to reduce the cost of expensive on-site filing space and enables you to specify where the file is stored and tells you when to dispose of records eliminating the cost of storing information that is no longer required (Culling)

Components

With the addition of optional components you can also:

- Track incoming correspondence and/or the individual documents within a file
- Manage box of files which have been moved to offsite storage
- Manage the circulation of items (charge out items, charge them in, waitlist and transfer)
- Identify files/volumes/supplementals/offsite codes or Accession numbers/boxes and documents that are required to be brought forward and be automatically be notified which Bring Forward items are due.
- Use Bar Codes to speed up various processes
- Produce reports which can be used by color labeling packages such as TabQuick to generate color coded labels.

Modules

You can also purchase additional modules for:

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- Consolidating data from multiple QRMS systems and populating an Oracle® database for searching and report purposes
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