

ELECTRONIC RECORDS MANAGEMENT AT THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

A record—information created, received, and maintained as evidence and information by an organization or person, in pursuance of legal obligations or in the transaction of business¹—is not retained and maintained based upon the media in which it is created, but upon the informational value it contains. Therefore, electronic records are subject to the same retention and management guidelines as paper-based records. The retention periods of records of The Ohio State University are based on legal statutes, university rules, administrative need, and best practices.

As with paper-based records, most electronic records have an informational value that requires a limited period of retention. The retention is based on the function of the record, and once that retention period has expired, the record must either be transferred to the University Archives or destroyed.

Email has become one of the most ubiquitous forms of electronic records, virtually taking over the role of general correspondence and memoranda, as well as the telephone message. If an email message meets the criteria of a record, it must be managed as such with as much effort and vigilance as one would a “traditional” record, although only a small percentage of email has to be managed for any significant period of time.

Records—electronic and paper-based—fall into the following retention categories:

- **Non-record:** Those that do not document a function of the university—e.g. personal email message like, “Let’s have lunch!”)
- **Transient Records:** Records of that have short-term—but not a specific period—administrative value—e.g. a meeting announcement sent by email
- **Short Term Record:** Records with a specific retention period typically less than ten years—e.g. e-requests for payment
- **Long Term Record:** Records with a specific retention period typically ten years or greater—e.g. contracts
- **Permanent Record:** Records of enduring administrative or historical value—e.g. meeting minutes

The University Archives currently collects electronic records from offices throughout campus. The Archives is working on long-term management and preservation of electronic records with the Office of the CIO. The first large-scale transfer of records will come from the Office of the President in fall 2011.

The University Archives website provides guidelines for managing electronic records, suggestions for email management, and guidelines for digitization (<http://go.osu.edu/records>). Questions about electronic records and digitization should be referred to Dan Noonan at noonan.37@osu.edu or 247-2425.

Additional Resources:

- Electronic records information: <http://go.osu.edu/e-records>
- E-mail management: <http://go.osu.edu/email-management>
- Document imaging: <http://go.osu.edu/document-imaging>
- OSU Records Management Policy: <http://go.osu.edu/records-policy>

¹ ISO 15489: Information and documentation -- Records management