TAHO
Tasmanian Archive + Heritage Office

Information Management Advice 61 How to review your records holdings

There are many reasons why agencies may decide to survey records holdings. Agencies may be implementing information security classification, identifying sensitive records, developing a vital records register, or identify records for transfer to a new agency during government administrative change.

Your information survey should include the information creator, the current owner, the format, and how the information needs to be used. By 'used' we mean how to find, open, work with, understand and trust your information. For digital information this must include the main software formats and an inventory of all IT hardware and software used for managing and disseminating information (including servers, hard drives, laptops, data sticks, databases, internet/intranet and information held by other organisations).

The information survey should cover:

- documentation and records
- email and communication logs
- database and/or file lists
- organisation charts
- contracts with external storage [paper/electronic] organisations
- previous information surveys/inventories

The survey should cover all the areas information could be stored in and information in all media, both physical filing locations and digital ones. Take particular care with personal filing systems, which may contain both original records and 'working copies'. These must be evaluated by the individual members of staff alongside information management teams, and re-integrated into the main information repositories or disposed where appropriate.

You may have existing surveys or inventories that you can build upon, such as an information asset register. TAHO has produced a range of guidance that can help you to document your information assets.

You must review the sensitivity of records of historical value before your agency is dissolved. This means you must identify information that may be exempt from disclosure under the Right to Information Act.

You must note categories of records with particular storage and handling requirements (for example, sensitive personal data or protectively marked material).

Carrying out a records inventory

1. Establish the purpose

The starting point is to know for what purpose you are gathering information about the records. In this case it is for moving premises - as a result, the information you require is not as complex as if you were, for example, developing a disposal schedule.

2. Determine the methodology

It is generally accepted that best results are gained by records management staff carrying out the survey. However this is resource-intensive and is often not practical. The alternative method is to send out questionnaires and ask business managers to complete these and return them. For best results, make sure you:

- explain clearly the purpose of the exercise
- design forms for easy use by non-records people
- if possible, give some training or provide guidance, for example, a completed pro-forma.

You may adopt a combination of the two methods for different parts of your agency, e.g. administrative functions do self-assessment, core business functions are surveyed by the records management team.

3. Design the tools

Bearing in mind the need to keep things simple, TAHO has developed some templates that you may customise for use within your agency. You may need to add, amend, or delete as is appropriate to your agency. See the attachments to this advice for:

- Records inventory sample questionnaire questions for managers and responsible officers
- Records inventory form
- System assessment sheet

Points to Consider when Reviewing your Records to Assess Value

Every record must be assessed for potential historical value and ongoing business value.

Records for Permanent Retention

Some records will be identified as permanent according to an approved Retention and Disposal Schedule. However, you may identify unscheduled records of historical value that clearly merit permanent retention. Consult TAHO on the method of selection and review.

Transfer records for permanent retention to TAHO if they are not required by a succeeding organisation. For more information about how to transfer records see TAHO's website. If required by the succeeding organisation, a Transfer of Custody authority will be required from TAHO.

Review the sensitivity of records of historical value before your agency is dissolved. Identify information that may be exempt under the Right to Information Act. Note categories of records with particular storage and handling requirements (for example, sensitive personal data or protectively marked material).

Records with Ongoing Business Value

Temporary records with ongoing business value should be identified and sentenced. During government administrative change temporary records with ongoing business value that are not required by any succeeding organisation should be transferred to your controlling agency. This includes records which need to be kept for legal purposes. For this you will require a Transfer of Custody authority from TAHO.

Ephemeral Records

Identify ephemeral records and make staff aware of DA 2158 Disposal Schedule for short term value records. During government administrative change records deemed not worthy of permanent preservation, and not required by your controlling agency or a succeeding organisation, should be securely disposed of according to approved Retention and Disposal Schedules or a Destruction Authority issued by the State Archivist.

Assigning Ownership of Records

During the survey assign ownership of records. This can be useful in the future if reeving formats of records for preservation actions of seeking permission to destroy records.

During administrative change temporary records required by a succeeding organisation will require a Transfer of Ownership authority from TAHO. All other records will remain the property of the State until dealt with under the provisions of the *Archives Act 1983*.

Preserving Publicly Available Material

The records survey should identify publicly available records like websites and social media sites. During government administrative change consider archiving/capturing websites, datasets, information made available for public inspection, and published/unpublished reports. Contact TAHO for more advice.

Websites

All central agency government websites are routinely captured and archived by TAHO. Your information survey should include websites and you should determine whether you need any supplementary web archiving, recommended if changes are likely due to government administrative change. If so, discuss at the earliest opportunity with TAHO Collections.

Datasets

As part of the information survey, datasets should be reviewed and a management strategy determined for the asset. During government administrative change datasets that are too sensitive to publish, but which have been selected for permanent preservation, should be transferred TAHO in a usable format if not required by a succeeding organisation - along with any supporting information. Your controlling agency should maintain the dataset until the sensitivity reduces.

Making sure Records are still Usable after Transfer

During Government administrative change it is vital that the usability of the records is not lost during transfer to your controlling agency, a succeeding organisation or TAHO. You must maintain the continuity of your information so that you do not lose the ability to find, access, work with, understand and trust the information in the way that you need. For paper records this may mean maintaining filing structures, listing files, or updating catalogues.

For digital records maintaining the continuity of the information may mean transferring or replicating entire technology support systems - it is not enough to transfer the digital files themselves if the recipient does not have the software or hardware to open the files. This is something you need to discuss and agree with your controlling agency, a succeeding agency and TAHO at the earliest opportunity.

These issues must be covered by the information survey and you should consult Information Asset Owners, Knowledge and Information Managers, Information Audit Managers, change managers and IT service providers (both in-house and external) to agree how records need to be used after transfer, and take the actions required to maintain that use.

Further Advice

For more detailed advice, please contact:

Government Information Strategy Unit
Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office
91 Murray Street
HOBART TASMANIA 7000
Telephone: 03 6165 5581
Email gisu@education.tas.gov.au

Acknowledgements

This Advice is largely based on:

- What to do with records if your Agency is being dissolved, The National Archives of the UK

Also referenced:

- Carrying out a records inventory Sample questionnaire for business managers and action officers, DIRKS Methodology, State Records NSW

Information security Classification

This document has been security classified using the Tasmanian Government Information Security classification standard as PUBLIC and will be managed according to the requirements of the Tasmanian Government Information Security Policy.

Document Development History

Build Status

Version	Date	Author	Reason	Sections
1.0	August 2014	Allegra Huxtable	Initial Release	All

Amendments in this Release

Section Title	Section Number	Amendment Summary
		This is the first release of this document.

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State Archivist

Attachment 1: Records Inventory Sample Questionnaire: Questions for Managers and Responsible Officers

Some of the questions are taken from DIRKS Step D Sample interview questions. For further questions, see State Records NSW DIRKS
http://www.records.nsw.gov.au/recordkeeping/dirks-manual/tools-and-tips/sample-interview-questions

Question	Response
1. What functions and activities is your business area responsible for?	
2. Do you interact with other business areas when performing your activities? (This will help you to find out whether there are other related records)	If yes, list business areas…
3. What business information systems do you use?	
4. What records do you create and why?	(List major records series on records inventory form)
5. Are they captured into the [corporate records management system]?	YES / NO / DON'T KNOW List any records that are not captured.
6. Have any records been sent to (commercial) off-site storage? If yes, are there lists of these?	
7. How long do these records need to be kept to meet your specific business needs? (Ask only if records are not covered by disposal authorities. Check if there are legal requirements for keeping records.)	
8. What indexes or other tools for controlling and finding information in these records do you have?	

Please complete the Records Inventory Form for the main records series for which you are responsible. Provide as much information as you are able as this will minimise the need for further follow-up.

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Attachment 2 Records Inventory Form

Name of person completing the form: **e.g. M. Smith**	Date of inventory: **e.g. 12/11/03**
Function: **e.g. Financial Management**	Responsibility for function: **e.g. J. Bloggs**
Location: e.g. name of regional office, name of building **e.g. Head Office**	Contact person (name and phone number): **e.g. J. Bloggs x123**

Main records series

Office location	Title of records series	Dates	Format and volume	Storage equipment	Status e.g. official record, duplicate, vital	Captured in official system? Yes/No/ Don't know	Disposal authority and action
For example:							
Finance	Invoices	1999/ 2000	paper; xx metres	open shelving	official record	Yes; Accounts Payable	Due for destruction GDA 7:2.1.22

Attachment 3: System Inventory Form

Note: Information in DIRKS on system assessments may also be useful. See DIRKS Step D State Records NSW at http://www.records.nsw.gov.au/recordkeeping/dirks-manual/step-by-step-through-dirks/step-d/step-d-assessment-of-existing-systems

Name of person completing form: **e.g. J. Bloggs**	Date of inventory: **e.g. 12/11/03**
Function: **e.g. Financial Management**	Name of system: **e.g. General Ledger**
Operating system: **e.g. Windows NT**	Software application: **e.g. Excel**
Date of system operation: **e.g. 1999-** (note any major upgrades)	Location: **e.g. Finance Office**
Business manager responsible: **e.g. J. Bloggs x123**	IT Support: **e.g. M. Smith x678**
Frequency of back-ups: **e.g. Daily**	Location of back-up storage: **e.g. Safe in Finance Office**
Main records series managed by the system Invoices Purchase orders	
Are records covered by a General disposal authority? **YES** / NO If yes, give details. **e.g. GDA 7: 2.1.22**	Functional disposal authority? YES / **NO** If yes, give details.
Description of the system: **e.g. Maintains a chart of accounts for the organisation, including payments and receipts.**	