

SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

RECORDS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Revised January 15, 2014



Introduction

In compliance with the Code of Virginia, Section 42.1085, Southwest Virginia Community College (SWCC) has established a records retention program to ensure the proper scheduling, storage and disposal of College records.

The Virginia Public Records Act (Sections 42.1-76 et. Seq.) of the Code of Virginia “establishes a single body of law applicable to all public officers and employees to ensure that the procedures used to manage and preserve public records will be uniform through out the Commonwealth.”

In addition to being mandated by the Code, following sound records management practices is good business. Public officials are legally responsible for creating and maintaining records that document the transactions of government as it conducts business. These records provide evidence of the operations of government and accountability to its citizens. Public officials must maintain this information according to established retention requirements – regardless of the format in which they are kept (i.e., paper, microforms, electronic records, magnetic tapes, or digital optical disks).

Importance of Program

The Virginia Public Records Act was established to ensure that state and local public records are protected throughout their life cycle. The Library of Virginia is responsible for the overall development of retention and disposition schedules. The list of schedules is available at:

http://www.lva.virginia.gov/agencies/records/sched_state/GS-111.pdf .

The SWCC Records Management Program will assist the college by:

- Aiding and assisting government officials in making informed policy and program judgments.
- Maintaining good business practices – proper records management saves money by:
 - Space savings – resulting from freeing valuable office space from the storage of records that can be destroyed.
 - Staff savings – resulting from relieving staff of the time-wasting burden of managing valueless records.
 - Equipment savings – resulting from freeing up filing equipment by removing records that can be destroyed.
- Improving access to valuable information; thereby, making it easier to retrieve current information.
- Eliminate unnecessary duplication of records.
- Consistency of records destruction by providing for the systematic destruction of records in accord with College, VCCS, and State policies, and ensuring that records are not prematurely destroyed.
- Enabling citizens to judge the conduct of the college by providing administrative, fiscal and legal accountability and documenting rights and responsibilities.

- Allowing information to be open for observation and access, while safeguarding privacy and confidentiality.
- Assuring the fullest possible historical documentation of the college's actions.
- Legal compliance – ensuring that the College complies with laws governing college records.
- Protection during litigation, government investigation or audit – by ensuring that designated records exist and that other non-designated records do not exist.
- Protecting the records information in order to ensure a smooth reconstruction of vital information following any disaster. This includes the safeguarding of records and information media from records disasters; i.e. fire, water, power failures, light, dust, insects, rodents and acids.

Definition of a Public Record

The Virginia Public Records Act defines a public record as: “Information that documents a transaction or activity by or with any public officer, institution, or employee of state government or its political subdivisions. Regardless of physical form or characteristic, the recorded information is a public record if it is produced, collected, received or retained in pursuance of law or in connection with the transaction of public business.” Formats can include paper, microforms, electronic records, magnet tapes, maps, disks, photographs, film and sound recordings.

Remember that “public record” means that it is a government record; however, it does not mean that these records must always be available to the public. Public records must be available for appropriate access throughout their retention period. *The Virginia Freedom of Information Act* of the *Code of Virginia* (Sections 2.1-340 et. seq.) governs access to public records.

Designation of Records Retention Manager

The college president is required to designate a Records Retention Manager, who is responsible for the following:

- Develop and implement SWCC's records management program based on records management policies and procedures set by the Records Management and Imaging Services Division of the Library of Virginia.
- Provide training in records management procedures, policies and use of appropriate forms, as necessary. Work with departmental records coordinators in maintaining the college's records management program.
- Distribute Library of Virginia-approved records retention and disposition schedules throughout the college. Assist staff in surveying records that are unique to the college in order to compile and implement accurate and current records retention and disposition schedules.
- Assist in identifying records that can be destroyed in accordance with retention guidelines, which includes federal, state and VCCS guidelines. Approve the accurate and timely destruction of records by completing or reviewing *Certificate(s) of Records Destruction* (RM-3 form), pursuant to Library of Virginia policy and procedures for the destruction of records.

- Identify all vital, archival and permanent records. Ensure records are properly maintained, protected and accessible for the length of time cited in applicable records retention and disposition schedule.
- Participate in decisions concerning the reformatting and storage of records.
- Coordinate the development of a Records Disaster/Emergency Preparedness Plan to ensure the appropriate preparation for and protection of institution or locality records in the event of a disaster.

Statutes Related to Records

In addition to the *Virginia Public Records Act*, there are other statutes in the Code of Virginia that relate to public records management:

Freedom of Information Act (Sections 2.1-340 et. seq.)

Privacy Protection Act (Sections 2.1-378 et. seq.)

Copies of Originals as Evidence (Section 8.01-391)

Government Data Collection and Dissemination Practices Act (Section 2.2-3800 – 2.2-3902)

Commonwealth of Virginia Information Technology Resource Management (Section SEC 514-03)

Institutional Crisis and Emergency Management Plan (Section 23-9.2:9)

Virginia Uniform Electronic Transactions Act (Code of Virginia, 59.1-479-59.1.498)

Virginia Civil Remedies and Procedure (Code of Virginia, 8.01)

Program Objectives

SWCC's Record Management Program is designed to provide the correct information at the appropriate time to the correct person in the most efficient and economical manner. It also includes a process of maintaining information in a format that allows for its timely access through the following activities:

- Developing policies and procedures for managing records and information.
- Conducting a survey or inventory of records (in all formats).
- Following LVA's Retention Schedules available at:
- http://www.lva.virginia.gov/agencies/records/sched_state/index.htm
- Identifying and using technology appropriately to create, store and retrieve materials.
- Destroying obsolete records in a timely and systematic manner and document their destruction.
- Storing inactive records in a cost-effective and secure location.

- Identifying and preserving vital records.
- Identifying and preserving archival records.
-
- Conducting a risk assessment utilizing an all hazards approach.
- Developing an Emergency Plan to protect and recover records in the event of a disaster.
- Appendix A – What is a Record details how to identify your documents as to whether the documents are official, non-official, or personal documents.

Official Records

1. Any documentation related to the department’s official duties or activities. Examples may include:

- Decision papers
- Correspondence:
 - Memoranda
 - Letters
 - E-messages
- Data files
- Reports
- Official Publications
- Supporting materials sufficient to document and/or explain the document trail/decision making process for administrative, legal, fiscal, programmatic, and historical purposes.

2. Official records may be original materials or copies of original materials – regardless of media or format. These records must be maintained for the period specified on the State’s Records Retention Schedule.

Non-Record Materials

1. Materials that do not contribute to an understanding of the department’s operations or decision-making process.

2. Materials that have no substantial administrative or operational value

3. Extra copies of official records retained elsewhere that serve as:

- Convenience copies kept solely for ease of access and reference
- Information/Reference copies of records sent to individuals or departments that are interested in, but not acting upon, the information
- Technical reference documents needed for general information

YOU MAY DISPOSE OF NON-RECORD MATERIALS WHEN YOU NO LONGER NEED THEM.

Personal Papers

1. Diaries and journals not prepared for transaction official business
2. Papers accumulated by an employee prior to employment with the department
3. Privately purchased books and publications that do not relate to official business

TREAT PERSONAL PAPERS IN THE SAME MANNER AS NON-RECORD MATERIALS.

ELECTRONIC RECORDS

E-MAIL MANAGEMENT

E-mail messages—both sent and received—that provide evidence of a government transaction are considered public records. Agency and locality Records Officers must ensure that e-mail is organized for convenient retrieval, maintained, and disposed of in accordance with an approved Records Retention and Disposition Schedule, and accessible as technology is upgraded or changed.

The effort to develop and implement an e-mail management policy is the responsibility of each agency or locality and involves a cooperative effort between records management staff, administration, legal counsel, and information technology departments. While IT is necessarily involved in many aspects of records management, such as server maintenance and destruction of backup tapes, creation and dissemination of e-mail management policy is the responsibility of the Records Manager.

Some examples of public record e-mails include policies and directives, correspondence or memos pertaining to the organization's business, work schedules and assignments, documents circulated for approval or comment, and any message that initiates, authorizes, or completes a business transaction, final report, or recommendation. Not all e-mail messages, however, are considered public records. Personal messages or announcements, courtesy or reference copies, routine chat on e-mail listservs, and announcements of social events are all examples of nonrecord e-mail correspondence. These lists are by no means inclusive.

E-mail messages are subject to the same retention requirements as all other records. This means that there are no set retention periods for e-mails as a format type. Instead, retention periods for e-mail vary according to the information contained within the message as well as the function the message performs. As mentioned above, the *Code of Virginia* §42.1-77 defines records by their content, not their format. E-mail, like paper, is a format. The life cycle of a record is determined by its Records Retention and Disposition Schedule. Often e-mail is considered correspondence, which is covered under [General Records Retention and Disposition Schedule \(101\)](#) for state agencies. For records that are not classified as correspondence, review the appropriate retention schedule to determine the applicable retention and disposition period.

E-mail records are also subject to the same legal requirements regarding access as other government records. In addition, e-mail records are subject to the same accessibility requirements as any other public record, unless they fall within the exemptions provided under FOIA. Requests from the public for e-mail records must be honored in the same manner as other public records. E-mail records, like all other public records, must remain accessible during their entire retention period and should be maintained in a manner that permits efficient and timely retrieval. Developing a standardized system of document naming and filing, along with planning for indexing and retrieval points, will assist an agency or locality in maintaining the accessibility of all e-mail messages throughout the required retention period.

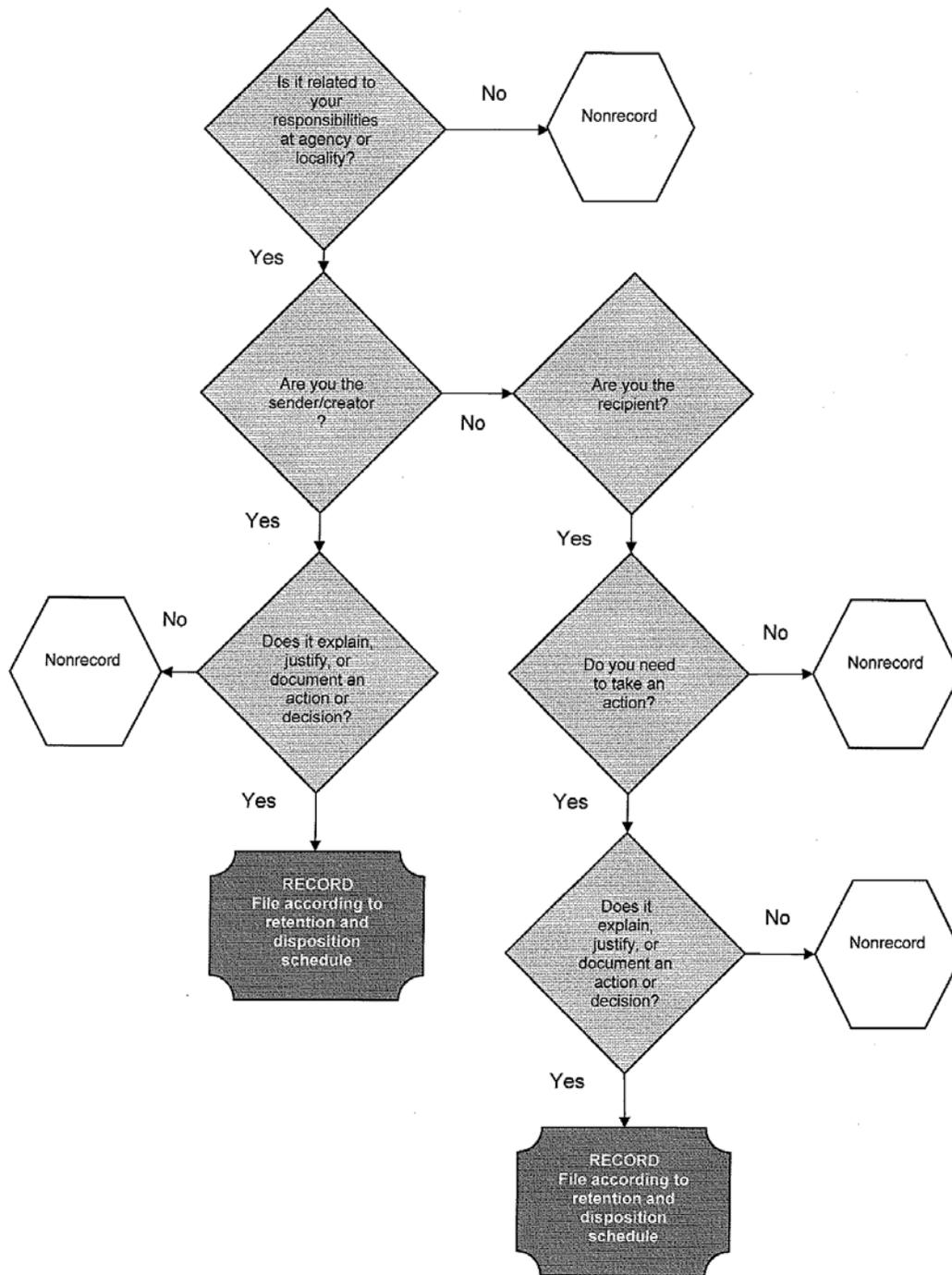
Practical tips for managing e-mail

1. Clean up your e-mail

College personnel are responsible for managing e-mails, including sent and received messages. The following are suggestions for managing your e-mail:

- Delete e-mails that do not need to be retained as public records, such as out-of-office responses, meeting announcements, and listserv correspondence. Start by performing a search for the following words or phrases: accepted, declined, tentative, out of office, FYI, or meeting.
- It is not always necessary to retain e-mails in which you are not the primary recipient. If an e-mail is **internally** generated and sent to a primary recipient within the agency, the e-mail should be maintained by the primary recipient. The secondary recipients, that are those in the CC line, may filter out and delete the e-mail. If an e-mail is sent from a source **external** to the agency and an individual within the agency is copied, that e-mail may be the only copy within the agency and it should therefore be retained.
- Sort messages by sender for easy identification and purge personal correspondence.
- Retain only the final e-mail in a thread, as long as the entire thread is contained in the final e-mail. Be sure any attachments are also saved.
- Permanently delete items in your Deleted Items folder on a regular basis. You may also bypass the Deleted Items folder and delete items permanently in Outlook by highlighting the appropriate messages and holding down the Shift and Delete keys simultaneously.
- File your e-mail regularly. Once you've read and responded to an e-mail, place it in one of your e-mail folders, or delete it according to the appropriate retention and disposition schedule. Remember to file or delete sent items as well as received items.

ELECTRONIC RECORDS GUIDELINES



2. Set up an archiving system

Because of mailbox size limitations in most organizations, e-mails should only be stored within electronic mail systems temporarily. In addition, if this method is in use, e-mail accounts must not be deleted until a supervisor certifies that all public records in the e-mail accounts have been transferred to another record-keeping system or that any retention periods have passed and there is no litigation, audit, investigation, or request for records pursuant to the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (§2.2- 3700 et seq.). There are three methods of archiving e-mail communications outside of the e-mail system:

- Create personal folders that are stored outside of your mailbox but can be viewed using your e-mail client. If you store e-mail on a shared drive, make sure drives are backed up properly on a regular basis.
- Store, access, and manage e-mail messages and other electronic records using an Electronic Content Management system (ECM), such as IBM FileNet.
- Print e-mails and maintain them in a manual system. Include names and e-mail addresses of recipients and sender; time and date sent; subject line that describes the content of the e-mail; text; and attachments, if applicable. If an e-mail is sent to a distribution list, include names and addresses of all members of the list.

Regardless of the chosen approach, make sure folders are named and arranged logically, just as they would be in a paper filing system. Organizing archived e-mail in folders according to records series and fiscal or calendar year facilitates the monitoring of records retention and disposition. In addition, never password-protect an e-mail archive, as doing so may result in retrieval issues in the future.

Keep in mind that there is a difference between archiving and AutoArchiving within Microsoft Outlook. Archiving involves a manual transfer by the user and AutoArchiving is an automatic process that, if turned on within Outlook, takes place at regular intervals. Rather than using the AutoArchiving function, users should set aside time to clean up mailboxes and archive appropriate folders manually.

3. Dispose of e-mail appropriately

E-mail, like all other records, may be disposed of in one of two ways: [destruction](#) or transfer to the Archives, Library of Virginia.

E-mail that does not contain confidential or privacy-protected information may be disposed of by deleting it from the e-mail system. For e-mails containing confidential or privacy-protected information, be sure that you electronically shred the e-mail or wipe clean the media on which it resides. E-mail destruction should be reported on a [Certificate of Records Destruction \(RM-3 Form\)](#). Work with your IT department to ensure all duplicate copies, which may reside on servers or backup tapes, are also destroyed.

E-mail may be transferred to the Archives, Library of Virginia on a case-by-case basis by completing the <http://www.lva.virginia.gov/agencies/records/electronic/index.htm>

For additional information regarding SWCC's email policies refer to <http://sw.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Information-Security-Standard.pdf>.

Retention Schedules

A retention schedule lists records series and provides instructions and special guidelines for their care-how long to maintain them, and procedures for disposing of them. Retention schedules reflect the length of time that records have administrative, legal, fiscal or historical value.

Records cannot be destroyed before the stated period, nor should they be retained longer than the stated period (unless they are needed for an investigation, litigation or audit).

There are two types of schedules – general and specific.

General Schedules – apply to records that state agencies have in common (e.g., fiscal, administrative and personnel records). A complete list of these schedules can be located on the web at http://www.lva.lib.va.us/whatwedo/records/sched_state/index.htm.

Specific Schedules – apply to records that are unique to a state institution’s operations and mission. The schedules identify records that the institution produces, collects, receives or retains in carrying out its special functions.

Records Surveys

A records survey or records inventory, is the process of identifying all records series, their functions and the extent of their use. It is a data collection tool.

Record series: A group or unit of related documents or information that is normally files or kept together because it relates to a particular subject or function, results from the same activity, or documents a particular transaction or activity. Examples: correspondence, time sheets, contracts, ordinances, fiscal vouchers, project files and minutes.

A records survey requires cooperation, persistence, patience, curiosity and a “big picture” perspective. SWCC will conduct an annual records survey utilizing RM-19, which is located on the web at <http://www.lva.virginia.gov/forms/rm19-ins.pdf>.

The Records Manager and the Records Retention Committee form an ad hoc records management committee to become familiar with the survey forms and procedure, and then conduct surveys within their areas. Forms are submitted to the Records Manager.

Records Destruction

The Virginia Public Records Act requires that you have a valid retention schedule before destroying public records. The destruction of records is documented on the Certificate of Records Destruction (RM-3 form). The form is found on the web at: http://www.lva.virginia.gov/agencies/records/sched_state/index.htm

Destruction Procedure

The following steps document compliance with legal requirements for destroying public records:

- Refer to a LVA approved *Records Retention and Disposition Schedule*.
- Ensure that the retention period stated on the schedule has passed.
- Ensure that all known audits, investigations or litigation are resolved.
- Complete a Certificate of Records Destruction.

- Obtain signatures of the Records Manager and the person requesting destruction of the records. **The Records Manager must approve all dispositions.** Dr. Betsy Summerfield serves as the SWCC Records Manager. These signatures constitute approval to destroy.
- Identify the person who can verify the records were destroyed.
- Once the records have been destroyed, the original RM-3 form with signatures will be forwarded by the Records Manager to LVA.

Methods of Destruction

The nature of the information in the records, as well as its format, dictates the method by which they should be destroyed. Frequently, disposition by recycling or daily waste pick up is appropriate. However, when records contain personal, private or confidential information, they must be destroyed so as to prevent unauthorized access to them.

- **Trash.** Many records may be destroyed by simply placing them in a trash receptacle. Records disposed of in this manner must not contain private, sensitive or confidential information.
- **Electronic Data.** To protect individuals who may have private or confidential information stored in an electronic format, you must be certain that the data is obliterated-the data must be “wiped,” not merely deleted. Special software programs will wipe data and make it permanently irretrievable and inaccessible.
- **Recycling** (also known as pulping). This is an acceptable method of destruction for paper records with no special disposition requirements.
- **Private or confidential records** can be recycled if the recycling company and its personnel are bonded, and will certify that the information has been protected.
- **Shredding.** This is the most popular method of destroying private or confidential information.

Records Reformatting

Records should not be converted or reformatted solely for space-saving purposes. The following analysis is to be followed when evaluating the necessity and practicality of reformatting.

- Historical or otherwise valuable records that are in bad physical condition.
- Records that have a long retention period are permanent, vital or historical.
- Records that have a high retrieval rate.
- Records that are needed by multiple users simultaneously.
- Records needed at multiple locations.
- Records that have important research value.
- Records that are oversized and bulky and meet one or more other criteria for reformatting.

- Records that need to be stored separately for security reasons.
- Records that incorporate workflow.

Legality of Reformatted Records

Laws of evidence. Both Virginia and federal laws recognize the legal status of copies made from various sources; including electronic data stored on optical media (refer to Code of Virginia, Section 8.01-391, *Copies of Originals as Evidence*). The law of evidence allows copies produced from originals to be admissible as evidence as long as the final reproduced image:

- Accurately reproduces the original.
- Was made or received during the performance of the institution's official business.
- Is satisfactorily identified and authenticated by a custodian of the original record.

However, when an image can be easily manipulated or changed, the burden of proving the information is acceptable as evidence increases.

Appendix A - What is a Record?

The documents on your desk, on your PC or network, and in your file cabinets are one of three things:

- Official Records
- Non-Record Materials
- Personal Papers

The following two steps can help you further determine what a record is.

Step 1. Determine the purpose, value, and adequacy of the documentation.

What is the purpose of the documentation?

Was the material mandated by statute, administrative rule, or any other state or federal regulation?

Does the material support a financial or legal claim or obligation?

Is the material required to operate the department's programs or provide program support functions?

Was the material created or received in the conduct or transaction of official SWCC business?

What is the value of the documentation?

Does the material have administrative, operational, fiscal, legal or evidential value?

Does the material have historical research, or information value?

Is the documentation adequate?

Does the material provide evidence of, or verify:

- the department's actions that ensure its continuity?
- the department's actions that demonstrate the consistency of those actions?
- formulation of policies, procedures, or decisions?
- board, committee, or staff meeting minutes?

Step 2. Ask yourself the following series of questions:

1. Have you answered "yes" to any of the question in Step 1?

- YES – Go to question 2
- NO – Go to question 5

2. Are you or your department the creator or office of record for such documentation?

- YES – Go to Official Records

- NO – Go to question 3

3. Did you comment or take action on the document?

- YES – Go to question 4
- NO – Go to Non-Record Materials

4. Is the retention of the document necessary to support the decision trail of your comment or action?

- YES – Go to Official Records
- NO – Go no Non-Record Materials

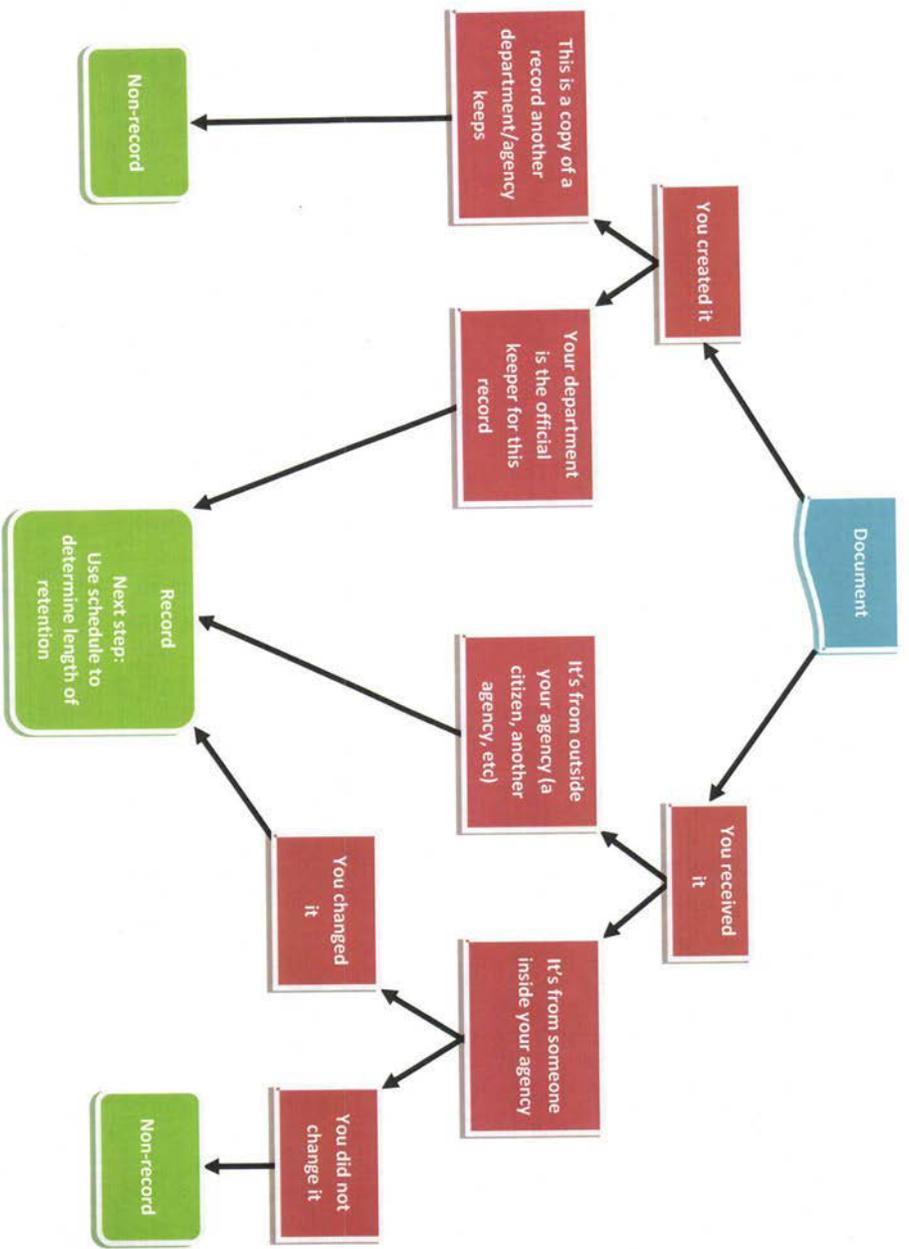
5. Have you answered “no” to all the questions in Step 1?

- YES – Go to question 6
- NO – Go to question 2

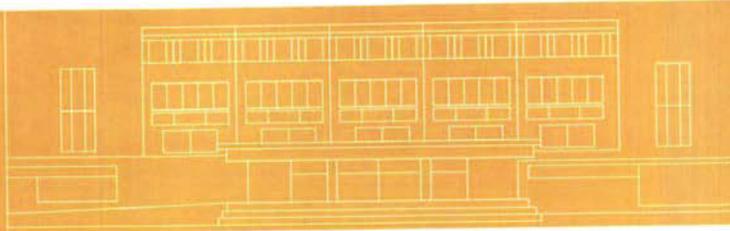
6. Does the material consist of non-official or private information which pertains solely to an individual’s own affairs and does not relate to or have an effect upon the conduct of the institution’s business?

- YES – Go to Personal Papers
- NO – Go to Non-Record Materials

APPENDIX B – LVA RECORDS MANAGEMENT TIPS



RECORDS MANAGEMENT TIPS



January 2013

[Records Management and the Virginia Public Records Act](#)

The Virginia Public Records Act ([Code of Virginia 42.1-76 et seq.](#)) was established in 1976, with the intention of putting uniform procedures in place to manage and preserve public records throughout the Commonwealth.

State agencies, localities, and regional entities are required to do the following under the VPRA.

1. Identify their public records

A public record is any information produced, collected, received, or retained that documents a transaction or activity of government business. A record is determined by content, not format, so the medium on which the information is recorded has no bearing on the determination of whether or not that information is a public record (i.e., public records may exist on paper, in e-mail, in software databases, on microfilm, etc).

2. Designate a records officer with the Library of Virginia

Each agency must designate at least one records officer to serve as a liaison to the Library of Virginia. The records officer is responsible for implementing and overseeing a records management program and coordinating records disposition, including destruction of non-permanent records and the transfer of permanent records to the Archives. A records officer is designated by mailing a [Records Officer Designation and Responsibilities \(RM-25 Form\)](#) to the Library.

3. Maintain a records management program

Each agency must establish and maintain an active, continuing program for the economical and efficient management of their public records. Agencies will cooperate with Library of Virginia to survey records and create records retention and disposition schedules.

4. Ensure the safety and accessibility of electronic records

Agencies are responsible for ensuring that public records are preserved, maintained, and accessible throughout their lifespan as designated by the LVA-approved retention schedules. This includes converting and migrating electronic records as often as necessary so that information is not lost due to hardware, software, or media obsolescence or deterioration.

5. Destroy records that have reached the end of their LVA-designated retention period

Each agency will destroy records in a timely manner. LVA encourages agencies to destroy records no more than one year from the date they are eligible. Records that contain identifying information must be destroyed within six months of the expiration of the retention period.

Records Analysis Section
www.lva.virginia.gov/agencies/records/



RECORDS MANAGEMENT TIPS

January 2013

Records Management and Social Networking Sites

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to state and local government agencies regarding the retention of public records of posts to social networking sites such as blogs, wikis, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.

Agencies need to consider the following five factors when managing the retention of their public records created or received through social networking sites.

1. Are the posts public records?

If posts are made or received in connection with the transaction of the agency's public business (such as providing advice on or receiving comments about the agency, its programs, core business, etc.), then they are public records and need to be retained for their full retention period.

2. When are posts a copy or non-record?

If the posts duplicate records that the agency is already retaining (such as publications, documents stored on a network drive, etc.), then the posts may be considered copies. If the posts do not exist elsewhere, such as comments made by members of the public, the posts are the agency's record.

3. How long do posts determined to be records need to be retained?

Retention is based on content, not format. Agencies should use the records series for a post that they would use if the same information was distributed in a letter or an e-mail. Agencies need to retain their primary record of posts for their full period specified in the appropriate records retention and disposition schedule.

4. How should the agency retain the posts?

Agencies need to determine how they will retain the posts that are under their custody and control. When control of the posts is outside of the agency (as with Facebook or Twitter as opposed to an agency created blog), the agency needs to consider what other records they can retain, such as confirmations of each post/comment or screenshots. Agencies should consider these issues when reviewing service contracts of social networking sites, as well as the settings configuration within each of their social networking accounts.

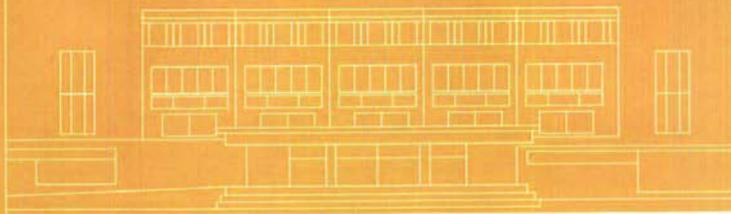
5. For which types of records is this technology appropriate?

Agencies should determine the business activities for which social networking technology is appropriate and put a policy in place before creating any social networking accounts. Refer to the Virginia Department of Human Resource Management [Policy 1.75 – Use of Electronic Communications and Social Media](#) for further guidance.

Records Analysis Section
www.lva.virginia.gov/agencies/records/



RECORDS MANAGEMENT TIPS



April 2013

Records Management and Documenting Destruction

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to state and local government agencies on effectively destroying public records.

Agencies need to consider the following five factors when undertaking the destruction process:

1. Documenting records destruction is not an option

The Virginia Public Records Act (VPRA) [§ 42.1-86.1](#) prescribes that all records destruction be documented on a Certificate of Records Destruction ([RM-3 Form](#)) that is currently published by the Library of Virginia, proved accurate and complete by the agency's designated records officer, and authorized by an agency's approving official.

2. Report destruction of only "the record"

Destruction of copies of records should not be reported. For example; if a set of paper records are scanned, stored electronically, and declared to be the record, then the paper originals become a copy, and destruction of that copy should not be reported.

3. Reporting the Volume of records destroyed need not be exact

When reporting the quantity of records destroyed be as accurate as possible, but estimate whenever necessary, especially when reporting the destruction of electronic records. A [Volume Estimation Table](#) is available for guidance on the Website under "Forms." However, always report the volume using either cubic footage (cf) for paper or a byte size for electronic records (MB, GB...).

4. The signer of Line 9 does not have to destroy, or witness the destruction of, the record

The current RM-3 form allows for the affirmation of the records destruction, rather than require that the signer either perform or witness the destruction. Any agency personnel with knowledge of the destruction, whether obtained through observation of the destruction or through the receipt of a vendor's destruction certificate, may affirm that the records were destroyed by signing Line 9 next to their printed name.

5. The agency's copy of the RM-3 is a record

Following the records destruction and completion of the RM-3, a copy is made, and the original is mailed or delivered to the Library of Virginia. The copy becomes a record of the agency, per GS-19 and GS-101, and is to be kept by the agency for three years, after which time, the destruction of the certificate of records destruction is reported on a certificate of records destruction.

Records Analysis Section

www.lva.virginia.gov/agencies/records/

**LIBRARY
OF VIRGINIA**

RECORDS MANAGEMENT TIPS

January 2013

Records Management and E-Mail

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to state and local government agencies regarding the retention of public records created through e-mail.

Agencies need to consider the following five factors when managing e-mail.

1. Is my e-mail a public record?

If the e-mail is created or received in connection with the transaction of the agency's public business (such as discussion of a policy revision, review of a grant application, evidence of a decision made, etc.), then it is a public record and needs to be retained according to the appropriate retention schedule.

2. When is my e-mail not a public record?

If the e-mail is not related to agency business, such as "chit chat" between colleagues (making plans for lunch, forwarding a joke, etc.) or messages from family or friends of a personal nature, then the e-mail is not a public record and should be deleted. Do not mix business and personal e-mail. When e-mail contains both personal and business discussion, the e-mail must be treated as public record.

3. How long do I need to keep my e-mail?

Retention is based on content, not format. Employees should use the same records series for the contents of an e-mail that they would use if the same information was distributed on paper. E-mail can most often be classified as correspondence (GS-19 for localities; GS-101 for state agencies). When e-mail is not correspondence, the employee must determine the content and identify an appropriate retention period based on the retention schedules.

4. How should I retain my e-mail?

Agencies need to determine how they will retain e-mail classified as public records through a collaborative discussion between the agency records officer, management, and IT staff. Agencies should not purchase e-mail "archiving" systems that will not allow them to purge e-mail from the system.

5. How can I make managing my e-mail easier?

Set aside time daily or weekly to manage your e-mail; delete those that are non-records and sort those that are records into folders according to the appropriate records series. Use a meaningful subject line to make sorting and retrieving e-mail simpler (for example, refer to the project name or case number in the subject line); change the subject line if the subject changes throughout the thread. Retain only the final thread in an e-mail instead of each individual e-mail. Save attachments, either by e-mailing them back to yourself at the end of the thread or saving them to a network drive.

Records Analysis Section
www.lva.virginia.gov/agencies/records/

**LIBRARY
OF VIRGINIA**