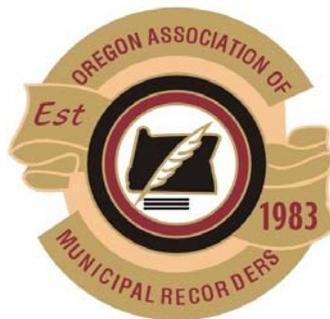


Historical Records Preservation Manual

Developed by the
Oregon Association of Municipal Recordors

Records Management Committee

2009



www.oamr.org

Introductory Statement

This document is designed to help local government record coordinators in the identification and storage of historical records. Record coordinators play a vital role in the preservation and interpretation of historical records in their community. A record that provides important evidence of how the government goes about its business or one that provides significant information about people, places, or events in the community can be historically significant. Every municipality has its own unique history and the historical merit of documents can vary from place to place. Unfortunately, records retentions schedules do not always reflect the historical importance of records. The people, places, or events in each community and the unique circumstances of each municipality determine which records are historically significant.

Role as a Historian

The Recorder's Role

The records a city keeps often become the historical record for the community. City Recorders or Records Coordinators can be advocates for the use of records for the preservation of the community's character. Often when records are being created no thought is given to the future value of that record. As you are archiving records thought should be given not only to the current records retention schedule, but to the potential for the records to be of historical value in the future. Your knowledge of the records being created and stored is valuable to the community.

Importance of Knowing Your City

As a Recorder or a Records Coordinator it becomes your responsibility to learn as much as you can about your city. Not only must you be up to date on all the current issues, but you should also learn about the history of the city, learn about the character, the people, the kinds of records your city has retained and what they mean to the community. You are often the only person in the city who has access to records allowing them to become the local historian. You should be one of the community's very own public historians.

What it Means to be the Historian

As a historian you will be tasked with the duties of establishing and promoting programs for the management and preservation of documents with enduring values for historical or other research. Your role as a will also include preservation of non-governmental records by libraries, historical societies and others repositories. Part of this role also includes seeking out both governmental and non-governmental records to add knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the city's history. Some smaller communities do not have these kinds of resources for preserving the city history in which case you become the person responsible for preserving the records that have, or will have historical value for the community. The key is to develop an information rich network of records to be used by the community for research and preservation of community character.

Future Thinking

Sometimes it can be hard to remember most records created by a city were not created with the idea that historians would be eventually using these documents to preserve community history. Rather most documents were created to serve an immediate purpose in the course of conducting business. Every city has valuable records that include information on the development of the community, its institutions and its people. It is your role to think to the future when archiving records and consider the preservation of community character when working with city records. Setting aside records into the historical category for future review is a good practice to test the historical value of certain kinds of documents, especially those with shorter retention periods.

Historical Records Preservation

Preservation of Historical Records

- Equipment
- Files
- Boxes

Preservation Supplies and Resources

- Metal Edge, Inc. www.metaledgeinc.com
- The Hollinger Corporation www.hollingercorp.com
- National Center for Preservation Technology and Training www.ncptt.nps.gov
- National Endowment for the Humanities Preservation Assistance Grants for Smaller Institutions www.neh.gov
- Light Impressions for photographs www.lightimpressionsdirect.com
- Gaylord Paper Products www.gaylord.com

Research Avenues- To learn more about your city or town, or an historical event, you may want to contact the following organizations in your community:

- County historian
- Local History Resources
- Local authors
- Local history books
- Local writers
- Local museums
- Churches
- Benevolent organizations (Elks, Lyons, Rotary, etc.)
- Library
- State Archives
- Local founding family members
- Local cemeteries
- People familiar with the government and community – longtime employees, former officials, etc.
- Local college or university
- Funeral homes

Technical Resources – these resources can provide the technical, hands on information instructions for preserving documents. Some offer grants to assist in the cost.

- National Archives www.archives.gov
- ARMA www.arma.org
- Oregon State Archives <http://arcweb.sos.state.or.us>
- National Association of Government Archives & Records Administrators (NAGARA) www.nagara.org
- Academy of Certified Archivists www.certifiedarchivists.org

- FEMA – Federal Funding for Cultural Institutions www.fema.gov
- Conservation Project Support (CPS) Program www.ims.gov/grants/museum/index
- Council of State Archivists (COA) www.statearchivists.org/prepare
- NARA www.archives.gov/preservation

Storage Standards

Housing and Protecting the Collection- Consistent appropriate environment key to long-term maintenance of records. Ongoing monitoring of environment necessary: temperature, humidity indicator cards; hygrometer; thermo hygrometer (measures both temperature and relative humidity)

Attics and basement are not suitable although they are convenient

Attics too dry/brittle/can become fire hazard

Basements too wet/damp/flooding

Additional issues:

Light levels

Fire protection

Water protection

Pests and rodents

Building Security

Storage areas should be:

Locked

Temperature and relative humidity constant

Shelving at least 4" off the floor

Smoke alarms installed

Fire extinguishers in place

Keep area clean, no food or drink

Monitor for pests

Collections

Inventory and location of items (what is it and where is it)

Boxes clearly labeled

Sign out sheets/cards

Record / insure valuable items

Supervise researchers

Check collection before and after researchers have used them

Reappraisal

The purpose of reappraisal is to provide a framework for the rationalization and effective management of archival holdings. Reappraisal should be treated as appraisal for functional and procedural purposes. The same policies, procedures, and standards apply to appraisal apply also to reappraisal. Our cities are an ever-changing entity. Trends, ways of thinking and priorities also are continually changing. With this in mind the records coordinator knows what is deemed of high importance today has a good chance of moving down the priority list in future years. Together with the fact that most entities can not afford to maintain and store marginal records or records deemed no longer of importance to the entity. Technological advances should be considered. It is therefore important to schedule a review of those records not required for permanent retention, but noted as having historical importance. Three things of consideration for review of such records include: current retention schedules, reasonable expectations of the records use, and the implication for the entity if the records are not available.

Appraisal Check List

State of Oregon
Information Resource Management Unit
Procedure – Appraisal of Agency Records

Definition

Appraisal is the process of evaluating the administrative, legal, financial, and historical value of public records to determine whether they merit permanent retention in the State Archives.

Records with **administrative value** document policy formation, data accumulation and analysis, interaction between the agency and its constituency, the political and public relations value of records, and the historical development of the creating agency or person.

Records with **financial value** demonstrate how the agency conducted its business by documenting the financial obligations, authorizations, and transactions of the creating agency. Records with financial value document fiscal accountability and provide an audit trail.

Records with **legal value** document the legal, civic, citizenship, property, and other rights and obligations of individuals. Records with legal value explain judicial opinions or legal interpretations, document activities or events with legal significance, prove property ownership, or establish legal obligations or delegations of authority.

Records with **research value** may be of long-term interest to the creating agency, the public at large, and to researchers from a variety of fields. Records with historical value connect government to the world around it and place governmental functions and activities in a broad social, political, environmental, or economic context. *The historical value of records must not be hypothetical or remote.* Records with historical value must be important now and their

importance must remain obvious. To be approved for permanent retention based on historical value, records must be obviously and continually valuable now and over time, valuable in a broad context, and relevant to a broad constituency. Historical value is not based on the utility of records to potential or hypothetical researchers, rather it is based on information about people and the natural and man-made environment surrounding them.

The State Archives will schedule records for permanent retention only when the records have sufficient administrative, financial, legal, or historical value to merit accessioning by the Archives.

Procedure

The appraisal procedure applies to all state agency records. Appraisal will identify records that document major policies, procedures, or actions of the creating agency or have significant historical value. The basic phases of records appraisal during an agency retention scheduling project are:

Preparation - Appraisal of agency records begins when an inventory project begins. Project staff learn about the agency and its records before starting the inventory by preparing an administrative overview (see separate description for Administrative Overview) and meeting with agency staff to discuss the project.

Inventory - Appraisal continues during the inventory phase by examining records and interviewing agency employees. Discussions with agency staff and management result in draft retention periods based on appraisal of the administrative, fiscal, legal, and historical value of the records. Record series which may be candidates for transfer to the State Archives will be identified in the draft schedule.

Records will be described at the program level and appraised at the series level according to established descriptive standards. In order to appraise them adequately, archivists must be aware of the total context in which the records were created, that is, the relation of records in one series to records:

- in other records series
- in other records within the program,
- in other records series within the agency,
- in other records series created by other agencies,
- in the custody of the Archives

Records to be retained permanently must be the best source of the information, and they must be understandable, comprehensive, and accessible. Information found in the records should not be duplicated in content or quality in other sources. The records must be understandable to the average user, not just to the creator or specialized researcher. The archivist should consider whether classification schemes or indexes are available, if necessary, both for current and future use of the records. Permanent records must cover a sufficient time span to enable researchers to draw adequate conclusions from the information contained in the records. Records which are

complete, concise, and limited in quantity will have more value to users than voluminous records in which information may become obscured or buried. Records that are not comprehensive and have a comparatively low research value may be retained if they fill gaps in documentation. Information contained in the records must be accessible to the user. Accessibility is influenced by the physical condition of the records and by legal restrictions placed on the information contained in the records. Legal restrictions which limit or preclude use of the records must be carefully evaluated and the source of the restriction, such as the appropriate statute, must be clearly identified. The arrangement and format of records (paper files, photographs, maps, computer records, microfilm) and their physical condition (faded ink, brittle paper, broken bindings) may affect accessibility. The ways records may be used must also be taken into consideration. Archivists should be aware of new areas of research and methodology, but potential or hypothetical historical or research value should not be used to support permanent retention.

Arrangement, description, preservation, and storage costs must also be considered. Because storage space is limited and expensive, permanent retention is reserved for those records of highest quality. The costs of processing records include the expenditure of staff time on such tasks as accessioning, arranging, describing, preserving, labeling, filing, boxing, indexing, and preparing finding aids that meet established description standards. The costs of preservation involve the staff, equipment, and supplies necessary to adequately preserve the records, including microfilming, photocopying, or other reformatting expenses. The costs of storage involve maintenance costs, that is, the cost of shelf space and building maintenance. The resources available to the Archives must be balanced against the responsibility to select and acquire records which document significant government activity and the commitment to public access.

Retention periods for records approved for permanent retention will be stated as described in the Retention/Disposition section. The Archives will not schedule records for permanent retention in agencies.

Review and Revision - During the project, appraisal decisions may be modified based on more completely developed knowledge of programs and records. Draft schedules are reviewed by an Archives Appraisal Team, agency management, and the State Archivist.

Archives Appraisal Teams shall be convened as outlined in the IRMU Procedures Manual. The team shall consist of the lead project archivist and representatives from the Reference and Information Resource Management units. Team members shall be assigned by the State Archivist on a rotating basis.

Prior to the team meeting, team members shall review the administrative overview, Appraisal Checklists prepared by the project archivist (see separate description for Checklist procedure), and the entire draft schedule to identify records as candidates for accessioning into the State Archives. If necessary, the project archivist shall schedule agency visit(s) in order for team members to examine records.

The team shall produce, as a result of the meeting(s), a list of series the team agrees to propose for accessioning. An Appraisal Checklist will be prepared for any additional series that have been identified for accessioning (see separate description for checklist procedure). The Appraisal Checklists may be revised to reflect discussions and decisions made by the team. Should a team member disagree with the team's final decision, that member shall prepare and attach supplementary Appraisal Checklists explaining the reasons for the dissenting opinion.

The Appraisal Checklists and a sign-off sheet (see following examples) shall be forwarded by the project archivist to the State Archivist for final review and approval. The appraisal team may meet with the State Archivist to discuss records which the team proposes for accessioning. The team shall produce, as a result of this meeting, if held, a final selection list. Approval by the State Archivist will be documented on the sign-off sheet. Appraisal Checklists for series on the final selection list and sign-off sheet shall be filed in the appropriate agency folder in the Central Files.

An appraisal team shall finish its work before a draft schedule goes to the agency for management review. The lead project archivist shall notify the agency of the appraisal decisions, as part of the agency management review of the draft schedule.

Appraisal documentation will be retained permanently.

Effective Date: April 5, 2005

Oregon State Archives Appraisal Checklist

The appraisal team will complete one appraisal checklist for each series to be transferred to the State Archives. Completed checklists will be filed in the appropriate agency file in the Archives Central File. The answers to the questions below must clearly demonstrate that the record series being considered has significant historical, administrative, legal, or fiscal value to merit permanent retention in the State Archives. Refer to the Appraisal Manual for definitions of value.

Agency Name:

Division Name:

Section Name:

Program Name:

Series Title:

Schedule Number:

Inclusive Dates:

Volume:

Series Function:

Appraisal Team, please answer each question below by marking "yes" or "no." Provide a brief explanation for your answer when necessary. Note: Your explanation should not be a restatement of the records function.

Do the records document major policies?

Yes No

Do the records document major procedures?

Yes No

Do the records document major actions of operating programs of the agency?

Yes No

Are the records obviously and continually important now and over time?

Yes No

Are the records valuable in a broad context?

Yes No

Are the records relevant to a large constituency?

Yes No

Are the records the best source of the information contained within?

Yes No

Are the records understandable?

Yes No

Are the records comprehensive?

Yes No

Are the records accessible?

Yes No

Does the appraisal team recommend these records for transfer to the State Archives?

Yes No

Records Analysts:

Appraisal Team:

Date: