Drexel University Libraries

Creating a Local Records Guide

Before creating a local records guide, consult Drexel University's Records Management Policy at the website of the Office of the General Counsel: http://www.drexel.edu/generalcounsel/drexelpolicies/OGC-6/. The policy clearly explains each unit's records management responsibilities, contains a link to a PDF of the full retention schedules, and provides information for departments that wish to use DocuVault for offsite storage of inactive records.

Create a Records Retention List

List records that appear on the retention schedule along with their required retention period. If the department creates or maintains copies of records that it is not the custodian of record for, decide how long they will be kept for business purposes. This period may not exceed the retention period on the retention schedule.

List any additional records that the department creates and uses, but that are not on the retention schedules. Select retention periods based on how long the records are active. With the exception of records having historical value, these records must be destroyed as soon as they become inactive.

For historical records, which include records labeled as permanent on the retention schedules, determine how often to transfer these records to the University Archives. Historical records include, but are not limited to:

- Departmental and committee meeting minutes and proceedings
- Strategic plans
- Annual reports
- Lists of staff, students and/or faculty
- Newsletters
- Event programs, brochures, flyers, posters, press releases, and other publications and public relations materials
- Photographs
- Videos
- Audio recordings
- Syllabi and other curriculum materials
- Grant proposals
- Accreditation records

Records posted on the departmental website can be automatically captured by the Drexel University Archives. If you are not sure that we are doing regular captures of all of your web records, please contact us to confirm or make arrangements to have your content added to our regular captures.

Organization/Indexing

Decide how you will organize your records. This is called a file plan. A file plan includes a list of records created in your unit, and a description of how they will be organized and maintained. You will also need to create a structure for your files. There is no one right way to do this. A good way to start is to determine the major functions of your department in order to identify major categories of records that you create. These are called records series. Within each records series, choose an organizational structure. Common ways of organizing files include: chronological, alphabetical, numeric, and alpha-numeric. You should also consider your department's retention and disposition requirements so that you implement a file plan that makes retention and disposition as efficient as possible for office staff. If members of your department who regularly create and maintain records already have working organizational schemes and records series, you should still describe these structures in detail to ensure continuity in the case of staffing changes in the department and to ensure the Records Management Administrator can find relevant information to meet business and legal requirements. If you are keeping or plan to keep records in a centrally managed IT system, you still need to think about how you will index the files so that they can be found and used for business needs as well as classified for retention and disposition according to University policy.

Location, Security, and Disaster Planning

Determine and document where all records are kept, both hard copy and electronic, active and inactive. This part of your guide should indicate physical location for both active and inactive hardcopy records as well as the location of electronic records. The location of electronic records should include the name of the system being used as well as any other information needed to locate the records, such as a brief description of how the records are organized or searched.

Document security procedures that are in place for restricted and confidential records. This includes both hardcopy and electronic records. Ask yourself the following questions when writing this part of the guide: Are hardcopy records kept in locked filing cabinets? In a locked room or office? Who has access to those cabinets and rooms? What measures are in place to ensure the security of electronic records? For electronic records, you can simply indicate that the system you are using meets approved security standards for centrally managed systems per the Records Management Policy. However, if any additional measures are implemented by your department, you should describe them in this section of your records guide.

For both hardcopy and electronic records describe the measures in place to prevent the records from being damaged by fire, water, pests, or magnets (for electronic records only). Possible measures include using the DocuVault service, storing in a room outfitted to protect against natural disasters, and any disaster planning measures implemented by IRT for electronic records.

Security procedures are especially important for financial records and records that contain information governed by FERPA or HIPAA. Taking the time to choose appropriate safeguards and document them will protect you and this vital information.

Roles and Responsibilities

Assign roles and responsibilities for managing records. Will different records series be managed by different people or will one person manage all records? These decisions will differ from department to department based on size, functions, and records created. Smaller departments may find it best to have one records manager, while larger departments may find that assigning records management responsibilities to more than one person will make more sense. Regardless of the decision, the department should document who is responsible for records management within the department and what responsibilities each individual has. Departments must also designate one or more alternate records management administrators to take over responsibilities if the initial designee is unable to or leaves the University. Records management responsibilities include, but are not necessarily limited to, management of active records, storage of inactive records, maintenance of a secure and safe location for both electronic and hardcopy records, destruction of records when mandated, and transfer of historical records to the University Archives. Regardless of who manages individual record series, the department's Records Management Administrator should maintain and update the local records guide.

Destruction and Transfer to the Archives

The department should decide and document how expired records that are not of historical value, both hardcopy and electronic, will be destroyed. This may include using DocuVault, contacting IRT to have media erased or records deleted from centrally managed systems, in-house shredding, and recycling for records that do not contain confidential information. If records are historic, the department should decide and document how often those records will be transferred to the University Archives.

In addition to selecting destruction practices and transfer schedules, the department should document each act of destruction in order to ensure that proper destruction has occurred. If the department uses DocuVault, you can use the certificates of destruction provided by DocuVault as evidence of proper destruction. It is also advisable to keep your own copy of the box lists and expiration dates that you send to DocuVault. If you are deleting electronic records, recycling, or shredding in house, you should implement a system to document when, how, and by whom the records were destroyed. You can find best practices for documenting records destruction on the University Archives website. Transfer to the Archives is documented when you fill out the University Archives' records transfer form. You should keep copies of this form for your own records.

Assistance

If you need help understanding the policy, interpreting the retention schedules, determining if records have historical value, or implementing a records management program in your office please contact the University Archives. You can also find helpful resources at http://archives.library.drexel.edu/content/records-management.