

# **Procedures of Requisitioning of Archival Records from the Public Records Office (PRO) of the Government Records Service (GRS)**

## **Introduction**

1. Records transferred to PRO have become the documentary heritage of the community, and their primary use is access by members of the public in accordance with the Public Records Access Rules 1996 (PR(A)R). While the records transferring bureau or department (B/D) may at times need to refer to the archival records, no special arrangement is necessary if the B/D wishes to inspect archival records open for public inspection (e.g. unclassified records which have been in existence for 30 years or more) at the Search Room of the Hong Kong Public Records Building (HKPRB). Other than this, special arrangement has to be made for requisition of archival records by transferring B/Ds, as follows -

- (a) on-site inspection of archival records at HKPRB; and
- (b) over-night loan of archival records involving removal of archival records from the archival repositories.

## **Guiding principles for PRO's requisitioning service**

2. The guiding principles of PRO's requisitioning service are –
- (a) archival records must be protected and made available to meet the needs of current and future users; and
  - (b) archival records may be requisitioned only if their physical condition permits. Requisitioning is possible only if the physical condition of the archival records allows and this is assessed by the Preservation Services Office (PSO) of GRS. If the archival records in question are considered not suitable for temporary removal from PRO repository to the transferring B/Ds because of their physical condition, the transferring B/D is required to view the records in question in the Search Room of HKPRB.

## **Restrictions on overnight loan and loan period for archival records**

3. In light of the guiding principles set out above, the following restriction on overnight loan and loan period for archival records will apply –

- (a) if the archival records in question are considered not suitable for temporary removal from PRO repository to the requesting B/D because of their physical condition as assessed by the Preservation Services Office of GRS, the requesting B/D is required to conduct on-site inspection of the records in question in the Search Room of PRO;
- (b) if the physical condition of archival records permits their temporary removal from PRO repository to the requesting B/D, the loan period should not normally exceed three months. Subject to the prior endorsement from a directorate officer in the requesting B/D and with full justifications provided to PRO for consideration, a loan extension of up to two months from the original due date may be granted. This means that the loan period for overnight loan of archival records on each occasion will be restricted to a maximum of five months each year.<sup>1</sup> The requesting B/D is required to return the archival records to PRO immediately upon expiry of the loan period.

## **Procedures**

4. To minimize damage and maximize public access to archival records, facilitate records retrieval and prevent unauthorized access, a records transferring B/D should designate an officer or officers not below the rank of Senior Executive Officer or equivalent as Requisitioning Officer(s) to carefully consider ways to meet the transferring B/D's operational needs without unduly jeopardizing the well-being of and public access to archival records, and to personally sign on the request forms. The request forms are available at CCGO. (<http://grs.host.ccgo.hksarg/>) The Requisitioning Officer should first consider whether on-site inspection of the archival records is appropriate. If so, he/she should sign Request Form A "Onsite Access to Archival Records at the Hong Kong Public Records Building".

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<sup>1</sup> The maximum loan period of five months each year is determined based on a scientific estimation of the life expectancy of records having regard to the climatic conditions of the storage environment.

5. If, after due consideration, the Requisitioning Officer considers that there are compelling reasons to request over-night loan of archival records, he/she should exercise due care to minimize both the quantity and the period of loan. He / She should complete Request Form B “Overnight Loan of Archival Records” and state the detailed reason(s) for over-night loan. Please note that “operational needs” or “for reference” without further elaboration are not acceptable reasons. For records required in respect of a court case, it is necessary to provide details such as the expected hearing dates. In addition, the Requisitioning Officer has to undertake in writing that-

- (a) he /she will ensure the return of the archival records before the end of the loan period;
- (b) he/she will take steps to safeguard the archival records from loss, damage or tampering by putting in place appropriate security measures and arranging their storage in air-conditioned environment (preferably round the clock, and at least during office hours); and
- (c) if it subsequently transpires that the loan of the archival records needs to be extended, prior agreement will be sought from PRO of GRS as early as possible. In case the aggregate period of loan will exceed 3 months, the Requisitioning Officer will seek endorsement from a directorate officer in the transferring B/D and confirm this in writing before putting the request with full justification to PRO for consideration.

6. To protect the integrity and authenticity of archival records, the transferring B/D must not remove any information from or add any information to the archival records on loan. The B/D should raise a new part for continued action or re-activated business.

7. In general, archival records in existence for less than 30 years will not be made available for public inspection unless with the written agreement of the records transferring B/D.

8. After completion of physical accession of each consignment/deposit of archival records, PRO will provide the records transferring B/D with a set of Records Transfer List (RTL). RTL serves as an essential tool for future requisitioning of records. A transferring B/D should keep its copy of RTL properly.

9. Since GRS has introduced an Electronic Recordkeeping System, the

Requisitioning Officer should complete and send the Request Form A or B in PDF format to PRO by email at ARCHIVES REQUISITION PRO/GRS/HKSARG@GRS in making a requisition request. He/she should provide the Record ID (i.e. Hong Kong Records Series Number, Deposit Number and Serial Number), and the Original Reference (if any) of the records to be requisitioned as they appear in RTL in the space provided in the form. The request form should bear the departmental chop in addition to the signature of the Requisitioning Officer. Requisitions may not be entertained if the request form is not completed in the prescribed manner. In case of over-night loan, the requested archival records will be despatched to the B/D by post or collected by the B/D directly from PRO and the corresponding Despatch and Receipt Note (PRO 3) will be sent to the transferring B/Ds through email. Transferring B/Ds are required to complete and return the signed PRO 3 to PRO upon receipt of the requisitioned records.

10. As a 3-day acclimatization process is required for microfilm, electronic and photographic records, transferring B/Ds may examine or collect the archival records on the 4th day after faxing the completed request form to PRO.

11. Transmission and carriage of security-graded documents requisitioned from PRO are governed by the relevant procedures laid down in the Security Regulations.

### **Enquiry**

12. For enquiries on this subject, please contact Mr. Jack LAU, Senior Assistant Archivist of PRO at 2195-7774.

Government Records Service  
January 2019