

**RECORDS MANAGEMENT MANUAL  
OF THE  
GOVERNMENT  
OF THE  
HONG KONG SPECIAL  
ADMINISTRATIVE REGION**

**2001  
(with minor updates in November 2020)**

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Validity and Objective

100. The Records Management Manual is issued by the Director of Administration to provide guidance and instructions for proper and coordinated management of government records.
101. The purpose of issuing this Manual is to prescribe the code of practices required for the establishment of a comprehensive records management programme in bureaux and departments to accomplish the following goals :
  - a. Accurate and complete documentation of the policies, procedures, decisions, functions, activities and transactions of the Government.
  - b. Effective control of the quality and quantity of government records.
  - c. Streamlining activities, systems and processes of the creation, distribution, use, maintenance and disposal of records for efficient and cost-effective operation of the Government.
  - d. Adequate and proper identification, protection and preservation of records valuable to the Government and the community.
  - e. Effective establishment, implementation and maintenance of such other systems, techniques, standards, procedures and practices to meet the purpose of this Manual.
102. Bureaux and departments should make records management an integral part of their business routine. They should manage their records as a ***vital resource*** to support effective decision-making, meet operational requirements and protect the legal, financial and other interests of the Government and the public.
103. Bureaux and departments should follow the provisions of this Manual as far as possible to ensure quality, consistency, accountability, efficiency and cost-effectiveness in the management of government records.

104. Heads of bureaux or departments are reminded that it is their duty and responsibility to accord appropriate priority and resources to implement a proper records management programme throughout their organization.

### **Scope and Key Provisions**

105. “Records management” in this Manual refers to the planning, directing, organizing, controlling, reviewing, training and other managerial activities involved with respect to the creation, classification and indexing, distribution, handling, use, tracking, storage, retrieval, protection and disposal of records to achieve adequate and proper documentation of government policies, decisions and transactions as well as efficient and cost-effective operation of bureaux and departments.
106. This Manual, unless specified otherwise, applies to the management of all government records in the conduct of bureaux’ and departments’ official business and activities.
107. With the increasing popularity of computer technology and the rapid growth of electronic records, the Government is in the process of formulating a new strategy and relevant policies for the management of electronic information systems and records. Detailed guidelines and instructions for the management of e-mail and other forms of electronic records will be issued in due course.
108. This Manual contains a number of key provisions on the management of government records :
- a. Making and keeping full and accurate records of its official functions and activities;
  - b. Protecting records in the custody of a bureau or department;
  - c. Establishing and maintaining a records management programme in conformity with government policies and standards, and the code of best practices;
  - d. Making arrangements for monitoring and reporting on the records management programme; and
  - e. Managing records to fulfil various statutory and regulatory requirements.

## **Distribution and Application**

111. The Records Management Manual is intended to be read by all officers, particularly those who have records management and/or custodian responsibilities.
112. The Manual should be used in conjunction with the series of Records Management Publications issued by the Government Records Service (GRS). These publications give explanations and detailed procedures for achieving the outcomes of the Manual. They also provide options and flexibility to suit the circumstances and needs of individual bureaux or departments.
113. The Records Management Publications issued by the GRS are listed at Appendix A.

## **Amendments**

114. The Director of Administration may update and issue amendments to this Manual from time to time. Comments by bureaux and departments should be addressed to the Government Records Service Director.

## **Definition of Government Records**

115. A government record is any recorded information or data in any physical format or media created or received by a bureau or department during its course of official business and kept as *evidence* of policies, decisions, procedures, functions, activities and transactions.
116. To be considered as *evidence*, a record must possess content, structure and context and be part of the recordkeeping system that provides the necessary information to document accurately the decision, transaction, activity, etc. for which the record was created or collected.
117. The content of a record refers to its subject matter. The structure relates to the use of headings, visual emphasis and other devices to identify, label or convey meaning of the content of the record. Context is the environment and web of relationships in which a record was raised and used. (For example, how the record relates to others in a group of records.)

## **Definitions of Recordkeeping, Recordkeeping System and Recordkeeping Requirements**

118. Recordkeeping is making and maintaining complete, accurate and reliable evidence of business functions and transactions in the form of recorded information.
119. Recordkeeping system is a manual or automated information system in which records are collected, organized and categorized to facilitate their retrieval, distribution, use, disposal or preservation.
120. Recordkeeping requirements of a bureau or department are requirements for maintaining complete, accurate and reliable evidence in the form of recorded information to protect legal, financial and public rights and interests relating to the functions, transactions and activities of the organization.

### **Other Definitions and References**

121. For the purpose of this Manual, the records related definitions are detailed at Appendix B with normative reference made to the standards issued by the International Organization for Standardization on records, documentation and information.

### **Records Regulatory Framework**

122. Apart from this Manual, bureaux and departments need to identify relevant regulatory or other requirements that may affect their records management activities such as the following:
  - Copyright Ordinance
  - Electronic Transactions Ordinance
  - Evidence Ordinance
  - Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance
  - Code of Practice on Human Resources Management
  - Code on Access to Information
  - Civil Service Regulations
  - Financial and Accounting Regulations
  - Standing Accounting Instructions
  - General Regulations
  - Stores and Procurement Regulations
  - Security Regulations
  - Civil Service Bureau Circulars
  - Financial Circulars
  - General Circulars
  - Information Technology Services Department Circulars
  - Public Records (Access) Rules



## **Electronic Records**

123. Records created, collected or generated electronically by bureaux and departments as evidence of their official business are government records and should be properly managed like other official records. For the management of electronic records, see paragraph 107.

## **Chapter 2**

### **GOVERNMENT RECORDS MANAGEMENT POLICY AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### **Government Records Management Policy**

200. It is government policy to require the establishment of a comprehensive records management programme in each bureau or department that will :
- a. Make and keep full and accurate records;
  - b. Minimize the costs of managing government records;
  - c. Provide quality services to users;
  - d. Provide necessary security for government information;
  - e. Facilitate public access to records and information that encourages better understanding of government policies and operations; and
  - f. Identify, preserve and provide access to archives that have continuing or permanent value for research, educational, cultural and other related purposes.
201. Responsibilities for proper management of government records are shared between bureaux and departments that create and collect records, and the Government Records Service, which is the central records management and service agency of the Government.

202-205

#### **Responsibilities of Government Bureaux and Departments**

206. Records are created, received and maintained in the conduct of business activities. To support the effective conduct of business, satisfy applicable regulatory requirements, ensure efficient and cost-effective operations and provide necessary accountability, bureaux and departments should create, collect and maintain authentic, reliable and usable records as long as required.
207. To this end, a comprehensive records management programme is necessary to provide proper handling of government records through establishing control for the creation, organization, maintenance and disposal of government records.

208. Bureaux and departments should each institute and implement a comprehensive records management programme which covers the following :
- a. Determining what records should be created, what information needs to be included in the records, and what level of accuracy and security is required;
  - b. Deciding what form and structure records should be created and captured;
  - c. Determining requirements for retrieving and using records, and how long they need to be kept to satisfy those requirements;
  - d. Deciding how to organize records to support requirements for use;
  - e. Ensuring that records are managed in accordance with legal and regulatory requirements, applicable standards and organizational policy;
  - f. Preserving the records and making them accessible over time to meet business and community needs; and
  - g. Ensuring that records are retained for as long as required and practicable.

### **Responsibilities of the Head of Bureau or Department**

209. The head of a bureau or department, through his or her officers designated with record management and/or custodian responsibilities, should ensure that :
- a. A records management programme is established, maintained and supported by corporate policy with allocation of appropriate priority and resources;
  - b. Records are made to document and facilitate decisions and transactions of business, and captured into a recordkeeping system accordingly;
  - c. Records are created and retained as they are needed;
  - d. Records contain the content, structural and contextual information necessary to document a transaction or activity;

- e. Records are authentic, accurate, readily identifiable, accessible and usable;
- f. Records are protected from unauthorized access, alteration, removal or destruction;
- g. Records of vital and/or historical value are properly protected or preserved as appropriate; and
- h. Records staff are adequately trained to carry out their records management responsibilities.

### **The Departmental Records Manager**

- 210. To assist the head of bureau or department to establish and implement a proper departmental records management programme, a Departmental Records Manager (DRM) should be appointed.
- 211. “Departmental records management programme” means a programme instituted within a bureau or department to provide efficient handling of government records by establishing control for the creation, organization, maintenance and disposal of government records.
- 212. The DRM, normally expected to be the Departmental Secretary or an officer holding equivalent position, should oversee the departmental records management programme according to established government policies and procedures, encourage the cooperation of personnel in daily handling and use of records across the organization, and coordinate with the Government Records Service and other bureaux and departments in records management matters. Major duties of the DRM are given at Appendix C.
- 213. Newly established bureaux and departments should forward the name, title and contact number of the DRM to the Government Records Service Director (GRS Director) for reference. Any changes or replacement of the DRM should be reported to GRS Director as soon as possible.

214-219

### **Responsibilities of Government Records Service**

- 220. The Government Records Service (GRS) is the central records management and service agency of the Government. The main responsibilities of the GRS are :

- a. Development and implementation of government-wide records management policies;
  - b. Development of records standards, guidelines and procedures;
  - c. Provision of records related advisory services and training;
  - d. Administration of records centres, records disposal and centralized microfilming services;
  - e. Survey, inspection, study and evaluation of departmental records management programmes to facilitate compliance with records management policies, regulations and directives;
  - f. Selection, administration and preservation of government archives and valuable publications;
  - g. Provision of access and reference services to government archives and selected publications; and
  - h. Authority in advising and providing instructions on proper administration and management of government records, archives and publications that are of long-term (30 years or over) or permanent value.
221. Bureaux, departments and the GRS should work closely together in applying proper records management standards, procedures and techniques that would :
- a. Help ensure the effective management of government records;
  - b. Promote efficient and accountable government operations through improved recordkeeping practices; and
  - c. Provide proper protection for records of long-term and permanent value that form part of the collective cultural heritage of the community.

## **Chapter 3**

### **RECORDS CREATION AND COLLECTION**

#### **What Records should be Created/Collected?**

300. Records should be created and collected to meet operational, policy, legal and financial purposes.
301. Bureaux and departments should identify clearly their business functions and assess their information needs as early as possible so as to collect, create or generate records only as necessary.
302. The following are examples of what records should be created and kept :
  - a. Inward and outward communication with external persons and bodies directly relating to the functions and activities of the organization;
  - b. Minutes and other records of meetings, consultations and deliberations pertinent to the decision-making process, formulation of policies and procedures or transaction of business;
  - c. Major oral decisions and commitments; and
  - d. Individual exercise of a discretionary judgement which has a major effect on the functions and activities of the organization.
303. The creation/collection of records should be adequate but not excessive. For the collection of personal data, the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance should be strictly adhered to (see Data Protection Principles in Schedule I of the Ordinance).
304. Bureaux and departments should encourage the shared use of records as far as practicable and minimize duplication and proliferation of unnecessary records.
- 305-309

#### **How Records should be Created/Collected?**

310. In creating/collecting records, bureaux and departments should ensure that the recorded information documents accurately and adequately government functions, policies, procedures, decisions and transactions.
311. All records, regardless of format and the technological environment in

which they are collected, created or generated, should be captured into and maintained in an identifiable recordkeeping system. The latter is a manual or automated system in which records are collected, organized and categorized to facilitate records retrieval, distribution, use, disposal or preservation.

312. The captured records should be complete: a record should contain not only the content but also the structure and contextual information necessary to document an official transaction or activity. It should be possible to understand a record in the context of the organizational processes that produced it and of other linked records.
313. A complete record should show or have links to the following as appropriate :
  - a. The name of the organization and the person who prepared and transmitted it;
  - b. The name of the organization and/or person it was intended for;
  - c. The date and/or time it was prepared and sent; or
  - d. The date and/or time it was received;
  - e. Security and sensitivity classification according to content;
  - f. For paper record, a file number and title;
  - g. For electronic record, links to subject matter, function identification or related records.
314. Records should be created in the most suitable medium and format that would facilitate access, use and preservation as required.
315. The basic format for keeping most paper records in the Government is the standard file. The block of pages on file should not be thicker than 7 cm. All pages are preferably of uniform size and properly aligned without folded items.
316. “Post-it” notes and thermal paper should not be used for adding permanent information to the file.
317. In using paper clips to hold pages together, a small piece of paper folded under the clip as a kind of sleeve should be added to protect fragile documents or those of long-term value (30 years or over).
318. Bureaux and departments should create records which are known to have

permanent value in a format that will permit such records to be transferred to and preserved by the Public Records Office (PRO), the central archives of the Government. Details could be obtained from the PRO.



## Chapter 4

### RECORDS CLASSIFICATION, RETRIEVAL AND ACCESS

#### Recordkeeping System

- 400. Records should be identifiable, retrievable, accessible and available as needed using systems and methods that verify their existence and enable them to be found quickly and easily.
- 401. To facilitate efficient access and retrieval, records should be organized, classified, described and controlled with unique numbers (and/or letters) and titles in accordance with a recordkeeping system.
- 402. A recordkeeping system is a manual or automated information system in which records are collected, organized and categorized to facilitate their retrieval, distribution, use, disposal or preservation. It should include at least a records classification scheme(s) with related index(es), a complete records inventory, records disposal schedules, vital records lists, and procedures and documentation for records coding, filing, retrieval, movement tracking, disposal as well as identification and protection of vital records.
- 403. The general principles, methods and procedures for records classification and retrieval can be found in *Records Management Publications No. 2 - Managing Active Records : File Management*.

#### Records Versus Non-Records

- 404. Bureaux and departments should distinguish between record and non-record materials and maintain only those of record status (official record copy) in the recordkeeping system. Definition of government records is given in paragraphs 115-117 of this Manual.
- 405. The determination of whether a particular document is a record does not depend on whether it contains unique information. Copies of the same document or documents containing duplicative information have record status if they are created or received to document official functions, policies, decisions, operations, procedures and transactions, and are kept as evidence of such activities.
- 406. Non-record materials are documentary materials that do not meet the conditions of record status. They may include :
  - a. Library and museum material acquired solely for reference or

exhibition purposes;

- b. Stocks of publications and blank or obsolete forms;
- c. Extra copies of the same documents generated for convenience or reference;
- d. Drafting materials or working papers, on condition that the official record copy is properly filed; and
- e. Routing slips, etc.

407-409

### **Identifying Personal Papers**

- 410. Personal papers are documentary materials of a private nature that do not relate to or have an effect upon the conduct of official business. Such papers are excluded from the definition of government records. Examples of personal papers include :
  - a. Materials accumulated by a government officer before joining government service that are not subsequently used in the transaction of government business;
  - b. Materials relating solely to an individual's private affairs such as outside business pursuits, professional affiliations or private associations that do not relate to official business and do not require declaration to the Government; and
  - c. Diaries, journals, personal correspondence or other personal notes that are not prepared or used for or circulated or communicated in the course of government business.
- 411. Personal papers should be clearly designated and should at all times be separated from official government records.
- 412. If information about private matters and official business appears in the same document, the document should be copied and treated as an official record at the time of receipt, with the personal information deleted from the record. Nevertheless, with agreement of the officer concerned, the original document may be put on file in the recordkeeping system of the organization.
- 413. Materials labeled "personal", "confidential", "private" or similarly

designated and used in the transaction of government business are official records. They should be managed and disposed of as other government records.

### **Content Classification**

414. Records classification is defined as the systematic arrangement of records according to a method or system. Records are often classified according to their content to facilitate organization of related papers/materials and future retrieval.
415. A records classification scheme or system is a plan for logical arrangement of records according to their intellectual content, physical formats or other criteria to reflect the programmes and functions of the organization.
416. Each bureau or department should establish and maintain a records classification scheme that builds around its functions and organization and the classification scheme should cover all official records.
417. Programme or function records are defined as those records created or received by a bureau or department whilst carrying out the primary functions, activities or missions for which the agency was established. Records of this nature are unique to each bureau or department. Bureaux and departments should develop their own classification scheme for their programme records. Details on how to develop a programme subject files classification scheme are given in ***Records Management Publication No. 3 - Subject Filing***.
418. Bureaux and departments should adopt the subject classification scheme for administrative records, as set out by the GRS in its ***Records Management Publication No. 3 - Subject Filing***. Administrative records refer to those records which document common service activities relating to the internal administration of bureaux or departments.
419. The subject classification scheme for administrative records allows uniformity and consistency in classifying administrative records of common nature across the Government. It also facilitates the disposal of such records with the disposal sentence as provided in the ***Records Management Publication No. 4 - General Administrative Records Disposal Schedules (GARDS)***.
420. A proper classification scheme should have the following characteristics :
  - a. It should show linkages between individual records to provide a continuous record of activities;
  - b. It should enable records to be uniquely named and coded in a

consistent manner over time;

- c. It should properly determine security protection and appropriate access for different records;
  - d. It should be supported by vocabulary control to suit the complexity of the records of the organization; and
  - e. It should be current, comprehensive, logical, consistent and structured to provide an effective means for organizing and locating records.
421. Bureaux and departments should incorporate their most current records in their records classification schemes in a timely manner.
422. Bureaux and departments should also prepare and maintain an inventory of all records titles, status (in terms of active or inactive) and locations.
423. The classification scheme and the records inventory should be regularly reviewed to cater for changes and new records needs.
424. There should also be written procedures for coding, classifying, preparing indexes, retrieving records, and updating the classification system. Records staff should be well trained in these procedures.

425-429

### **Security Classification**

430. To provide sensitive information with adequate protection, records are to be classified according to their level of sensitivity at a particular time.
431. There are four categories of classified information :
- a. Top Secret
  - b. Secret
  - c. Confidential
  - d. Restricted
432. Please refer to the Security Regulations for the definitions and examples of the four categories of classified records.
433. A document should not be given a particular security classification purely because it refers to other documents so classified or because previous papers on that subject have received that classification or because of the classification of the record on which it was filed.

434-439

### **Downgrading of Classified Documents and Records**

- 440. Security classification restriction should be imposed for a stated period of time to ensure that the need for special handling and protection of such records is not longer than necessary.
- 441. With the passage of time, sensitive information or records may cease to require security classification. The possibility of downgrading should be considered as soon as the need for special security protection diminishes.
- 442. Classified documents should not be downgraded without reference to its originator and the agency or operation on which the functions and activities of the originator have devolved.
- 443. The Departmental Records Manager in each bureau or department should review the classified documents and records in his/her custody at least every **5 years** to downgrade suitable items. He/She should adhere to the Security Regulations and coordinate his/her review with agencies that bear a direct relation or have a direct interest in the subjects or contents of the documents or records to be reviewed.

444-449

### **Records Retrieval**

- 450. Bureaux and departments should adopt an effective means to retrieve records, which may be reference manuals, processing forms, index cards or a computer assisted system.
- 451. Each bureau and department should establish and maintain effective indexes to its recordkeeping system. These indexes may be alphabetic, numeric or in any forms that contain sufficient details to ensure that information in records can be made available as and when required.
- 452. Relevant Security Regulations should be adhered to in the processing and transmission of classified records.

453-459

### **Records Access**

- 460. Having regard to their security classification, records should be made

accessible throughout their life cycle to authorized users only.

461. The Code on Access to Information (the Code), and the Public Records (Access) Rules provide public access to government records. They also set out circumstances under which public access to records may be exempted.
462. As required by the Code, bureaux and departments should ensure, where practicable, that their records holdings, except for the exempted categories, are identified and described so that they can be made readily accessible to the public as required within 10 days of receipt of a written request and for more complicated cases, not exceeding 30 days.
463. According to the Code, bureaux and departments are to publish or make available a list of their categories of records. A list of information either published or otherwise, and the procedures and any charges for access to information not routinely published should also be made available.
464. It should be noted that under the Code, the fact that a record is classified may not be itself a valid reason for refusing public access to the information it contains.
465. As regards the Public Records (Access) Rules, the Public Records Office (PRO) has a general responsibility for granting public access to archival records of not less than 30 years old or those archival records whose contents have been published or otherwise wholly disclosed to the public.
466. Unclassified archival records reaching 30 years old that are held and accessioned by the PRO should be released for public access automatically.
467. Classified archival records held by the PRO and reaching 30 years old are to be reviewed by the records creating/responsible bureau or department to determine their access status.
468. As it is government policy to encourage openness and transparency in the administration of public affairs, and allow liberal access to government records by the public, bureaux and departments should fully cooperate with the PRO in conducting the annual classified records review exercise.
469. Members of the public can apply for access to closed archival records regardless of their security classification. It will be the responsibility of the head of the transferring or responsible agency to decide on the access status of such records.
470. The Government Records Service Director (GRS Director), in his or her discretion and in accordance with the general instructions of the Chief Secretary for Administration, may permit any persons to inspect closed archival records held by the PRO.

- 471. The GRS Director may withhold access to archival records to ensure their safe custody and proper preservation.
- 472. As for personal data, according to the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance, data subjects should be given access to their own personal data. Access by data users for purposes other than those for which the personal data were collected requires the consent of the data subjects. Exemptions from these provisions are given in sections 51-63 of the Ordinance.

473-479

### **Records Tracking**

- 480. Bureaux and departments should maintain audit trail of transactions and be able to identify the operational origin of individual records where the recordkeeping systems have been amalgamated or migrated.
- 481. Physical movement of records should be documented to ensure that items could always be located when required.
- 482. The recordkeeping system, whether manual or using barcode, should maintain control on issue of records between persons, return of records to their home location and disposal or transfer to authorized bodies.

## **Chapter 5**

### **RECORDS STORAGE AND SECURITY**

#### **General Rules**

- 500. Information of continuing relevance to the business of bureaux and departments should be stored in a records medium appropriate to the characteristics of the information to facilitate user access and satisfy the length of time required to meet business needs, accountability, and legal, policy and archival requirements.
- 501. Bureaux and departments should offer proper storage and protection to records needed to support decision-making, programme operations and service delivery, and meet regulatory and policy requirements.
- 502. Bureaux and departments should protect records from unauthorized access, use, disclosure, removal, alienation (i.e. transfer outside the control of the Government), deterioration, loss or destruction.
- 503. Records should also be stored and protected in ways that reflect their security/sensitivity classification, importance and retention requirements.
- 504. In addition to the provisions of this Manual, the Security Regulations should also be adhered to in the protection and storage for classified records.

505-509

#### **Proper Records Storage**

- 510. All records should be stored in an environment protected from dirt, insects and rodents, smoke, chemical exhausts, and away from direct sunlight.
- 511. Records storage area should be kept clean. Food, drinks and plants should be avoided.
- 512. Storing records on underground level, under water pipes or near unblocked windows should be avoided due to the increased risk of water damage.
- 513. Designated record storage areas should be used for storing records only.
- 514. Smoking should be strictly prohibited in records storage and adjacent area.



515. Chemicals and inflammable or combustible materials should not be put in or near records storage areas.
516. There must be an effective fire detection and suppression system installed in the records storage area.
517. Records should not be placed on top of storage equipment that obstructs the proper functioning of fire fighting sprinklers or equipment.
518. Records should not be stacked on the floor but rather should be kept in records storage equipment preferably of at least 7 to 10 cm off the floor.
519. Records should be stored on shelves, in cabinets or on racks that are appropriate to the records format, size and other physical conditions. Suitable shelving or storage equipment combined with clear passageway would enhance safe access and protection to records.
520. Floor loading requirements of the records storage area must be observed as densely stored records especially on mobile shelving can have a considerable weight.
521. As records belonging to a recordkeeping system may vary in form, and be used and stored in various locations, it is essential that records management staff are aware of their existence and current locations.
522. Records appraised to have long-term (30 years or over) or permanent value should be stored in an 24-hour air-conditioned and dust free environment with stable and controlled temperature and humidity ranged between :
  - a. Paper based records : 20°C +/- 2°C and RH 50 % +/- 5 %
  - b. Microfilm records : 14°C +/- 2°C and RH 40 % +/- 5 %
  - c. Electronic records : 18°C +/- 2°C and RH 40 % +/-5 %
  - d. Audiovisual records : 4°C to 16°C and RH not higher than 40 % with minimum fluctuations.
523. The above requirements may not currently be met by all government records storage facilities due to various constraints. Heads of bureaux and departments should, however, note these requirements and include them in newly furnished or constructed records storage facilities. For assistance or advice, bureaux and departments may contact the Public Records Office of the Government Records Service.

## Chapter 6

### RECORDS SCHEDULING AND DISPOSAL

#### Authority

600. The need for records to be created, retained and disposed of should be appraised systematically with consistent criteria in the context of the functions and activities documented by the records. Such criteria include the business need of the bureau or department; accountability to the public, regulatory requirements; resources implications and public expectations that some government records will be preserved for archival or other purposes.
601. Records disposal does not mean destruction only. It refers to the actions taken to determine the future of a record when it is no longer in active use. Records disposal action may include permanent retention, retention for a specified period before destruction, transfer of recorded information into other storage media such as microfilm or optical discs, or destroying the records.
602. The Government Records Service (GRS) has the overall responsibility for authorizing the disposal of government records through approving records disposal requests and records disposal schedules (which document the decision on the retention period and disposal action to be taken for a particular series of records), and issuing disposal authority or agreement.
603. Details of records scheduling and disposal are given in *Records Management Publication No. 1 – A Practical Guide to Records Scheduling and Disposal* (revised and retitled, 2000).
604. Responsibility for the development of records disposal schedules and decision for records disposal action should be exercised by the Departmental Records Manager as approved by the head of bureau or department.
605. No government records are to be destroyed without the prior agreement of the Government Records Service Director (GRS Director).
606. Any cases of unauthorized removal, defacing, alteration, destruction or loss of government records should be reported to the GRS Director immediately.
- 607-609

#### Records Scheduling

610. Records scheduling is the action for developing records retention and disposal schedules which stipulate the length of time that records should be retained and the ways they are to be disposed of.
611. The procedures and requirements for disposing of administrative records are different from those for programme records. Administrative records refer to those records which document common service activities relating to the internal administration of bureaux or departments. Programme records are those records created or received by a bureau or department whilst carrying out the primary functions, activities, or missions for which the bureau or department was established. Records of this nature are unique to each bureau or department.
612. Bureaux and departments should follow the provisions set out in ***Records Management Publication No. 4 - General Administrative Records Disposal Schedules*** developed by the GRS, in disposing of administrative records of common nature.
613. Bureaux and departments should develop records retention and disposal schedules for their programme records.
614. Preparation of records retention and disposal schedules is detailed at ***Records Management Publication No. 1 – A Practical Guide to Records Scheduling and Disposal*** (revised and retitled, 2000).
615. Bureaux and departments must obtain the disposal authority for the disposal schedules of their programme records from the GRS Director through his Records Management Office (RMO) of the GRS.
616. Most records disposal schedules will periodically require some changes to meet new recordkeeping requirements. All changes to records disposal schedules should be agreed with the GRS Director. A request for amendment should be lodged with the RMO in the first instance.
617. All records retention and disposal schedules should be reviewed at least every **5 years** to determine whether amendments are required.
618. Where practicable, all records should be assigned definite retention periods before any disposal action is taken.
619. Permanent retention of records in a bureau or department is usually valid only when required by legislation.
620. Each bureau or department should maintain adequate information about their records which are transferred elsewhere, destroyed or migrated to other formats. This includes at least a master set of its records disposal schedules and disposal authorities as agreed with the GRS Director as well as

documentation on the disposal of its records.

621-624

## **Records Disposal**

625. All government records should be disposed of through permanent retention; transfer of records to other storage media before destruction of the original copy; transfer of inactive records to off-site storage to lower administrative costs or immediate destruction when they have no retention value.
626. Those records appraised as possessing archival value by the Archivist of the Public Records Office (PRO) should be transferred to and preserved by the PRO of the GRS.
627. Bureaux and departments should dispose of their records in accordance with the agreed disposal schedules or separate approval by GRS Director. Records should not otherwise be destroyed or removed from the control of the Government.
628. Bureaux and departments should avoid ad hoc disposal of records to minimize the risk of unplanned, inconsistent or unauthorized destruction or alienation of records.
629. Bureaux and departments should use the Record Centre facilities operated by the RMO for managing their inactive records as far as practicable. Procedures for using the Records Centre services are given in ***Records Management Publication No. 1 – A Practical Guide to Records Scheduling and Disposal*** (revised and retitled, 2000).
630. Destruction of inactive records stored in the Records Centre operated by the RMO would not be arranged unless with the prior consent of the transferring bureau/department in writing. Nevertheless, the RMO reserves the right to destroy such records if the transferring bureau/department fails to respond to the request for confirmation of records destruction in **3 months** after the records are due for disposal.
631. Bureaux and departments should contact the Central Preservation Library for Government Publications, an integral part of the PRO, when they wish to dispose of library collections or printed materials. A copy of their newly published reports, books, posters or other printed material should be sent to the Central Preservation Library for Government Publications unless otherwise specified (see General Circular 1/2001). The Library will select and preserve items that warrant permanent retention.
632. The PRO should be consulted for instructions and advice on the

preservation, proper administration and disposal of any government records, archives and publications that are of long-term (30 years or over) or permanent value kept or controlled by bureaux and departments.

633-635

### **Transfer of Archival Records**

636. Each bureau or department should systematically transfer its archival records to the control of the PRO in accordance with schedules approved by the GRS Director.
637. All government records reaching *30 years* old should be appraised by the PRO to determine whether or not they possess archival value for permanent preservation.
638. When transferring records to the PRO, bureaux and departments should include any supporting documentation or indexes as required.
639. The acceptance of records for permanent preservation at the PRO must meet the following conditions :
  - a. They have been confirmed to be possessing sufficient value to warrant preservation by the Archivist of the PRO;
  - b. The transfer is considered an appropriate means of facilitating their preservation and future access; and
  - c. They have been appropriately prepared for transfer as required by the PRO.

## Chapter 7

### VITAL RECORDS PROTECTION

#### General

700. Vital records are those records containing information essential to the continued and effective operation of a bureau or department during and after an emergency or disaster.
701. Bureaux and departments should identify and protect their vital records to improve their ability in managing crisis situations, ensure uninterrupted operation of major business functions during and after an emergency or a disaster, mitigate loss and damage, and protect the legal and financial rights of the Government and the people it serves.
702. Detailed guidelines and procedures for establishing a vital records protection programme are given in ***Records Management Publication No. 6 - Manual on Vital Records Protection***.

703-705

#### Identification and Categories of Vital Records

706. Bureaux and departments should identify and categorize vital records as follows :
- a. Essential records - emergency operating records for conducting emergency services;
  - b. Important records - records documenting legal and functional status, and protecting financial assets and ownership of the Government which are essential to re-establish functions and responsibilities; and
  - c. Useful records - records documenting the rights and claims of individuals, organizations, and members of the public.
707. The set of vital records may comprise any combination of copies, synopses or extracts, and any type of media used for the storage of information.
708. Finding aids and indexes to the records selected for protection should also be treated as part of the vital records to facilitate prompt records retrieval.
709. For vital records stored in electronic media or formats, documentation on the hardware, system and application software, technical and procedural documentation, data sets and files, hardcopy and softcopy of inputs, indexes

and output, and the processing files for information integrity and protection of the essential contextual relationships of different components of the recordkeeping system should also be protected.

710. Designation of vital records must be highly selective. This should be done by the DRM with the approval of the head or deputy head of a bureau or department as appropriate. Only those records that are absolutely essential to the proper functioning of the organization or those that are irreplaceable, costly or time-consuming to replace or reconstruct should be chosen.

711-715

### **Protection Methods**

716. Bureaux and departments should provide adequate protection for their vital records and make them accessible and usable as and when required.
717. The methods used for protecting vital records should be economical, simple and suit the needs of the organization. Advice from the Security Bureau, Fire Services Department, Information Technology Services Department and the Government Records Service (GRS) should be sought as appropriate.
718. Bureaux and departments should ensure that all equipment to read vital records or their copy would be available in case of emergencies or disasters.

719-725

### **Programme Maintenance**

726. Bureaux and departments should regularly update the set of vital records at designated secure sites.
727. Only authorized personnel should deal with access to and transmittal of vital records.
728. For vital records stored at the GRS, records transferring bureaux or departments must document the essential information of the records as required and register the vital records schedule(s) with the GRS. They should also periodically review or update the vital records according to the agreed schedules by removing the obsolete items and replacing them with the most recent version.

729. Bureaux and departments should issue written procedures and ensure proper training for the staff who are responsible for handling and protecting vital records. These procedures should be tested and reviewed regularly to ensure their adequacy and overall effectiveness.
730. Procedures for disposing of time-expired vital records are the same as other government records detailed at Chapter 6 of this Manual.



## **Chapter 8**

### **MANAGING RECORDS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES**

#### **Examples of Administrative Changes**

800. An administrative change refers to a change in the administration of government functions in a bureau or department. It may involve :
- a. Establishment or deletion of function within the organization;
  - b. Transfer of function from one unit to another within the organization;
  - c. Transfer of function to other government bureau(x) or department(s);
  - d. Outsourcing of function to a contractor;
  - e. Sale or transfer of function to a private organization; or
  - f. Corporatization of functions to become a government business enterprise.
801. To ensure smooth operation of a newly established or transferred function and save resources required for maintaining unneeded records of the function-losing agency, proper transfer and/or disposal of records are necessary.
802. Records not to be transferred and not required for further use as a result of administrative changes should be disposed of as all other government records.
803. It is the duty and responsibility of the Departmental Records Manager in the bureau or department that terminates an operation or holds records of a defunct operation to take the necessary action to arrange records transfer and/or other disposal action with the prior approval of the Government Records Service (GRS).

804-805

#### **Creation and Deletion of Functions**

806. For newly established functions, a new or expanded recordkeeping system should be prepared to service the newly created records. The system should include at least a new or expanded classification scheme, a related index, an update records inventory, disposal schedules and a list of vital records.

807. For deletion of functions, the related records should be scheduled for disposal. This may involve amending existing records disposal authority with the Records Management Office (RMO) of the GRS or sending a complete list of the records to be disposed of to the RMO for consideration. The RMO will arrange temporary records storage facilities, records appraisal by the Archivist of the Public Records Office or authorization of records destruction as appropriate.

808-809

### **Transfer of Functions within the Government**

810. When functions of a bureau or department are transferred to a unit within the organization or to another bureau or department within the Government, the function-losing agency needs to relinquish control and transfer the related records to the agency to which the transferred functions are devolved.
811. Only those records relating to the transferred functions that will help the continued operation and administration of the functions should be made available to the agency which inherits responsibility for those functions.
812. If the records are maintained in an automated system, formal arrangements regarding access, security, compatibility and servicing contracts have to be agreed between the concerned parties.
813. For the function-losing agency, it should :
- a. Consult action officers to identify the records related to the transferred functions that are needed by the inheriting agency;
  - b. Inform the GRS of the transfer of the functions and related records, and arrange disposal with the GRS of records not needed by itself and the inheriting agency;
  - c. Pass the transferred records and their control records (including the records disposal authority) in their entirety to the inheriting agency; and
  - d. Keep a list of the records handed over to the inheriting agency or at least, list the record types and quantity for accountability purpose.
814. For the function-inheriting agency, it should :

- a. Contact the function-losing agency to discuss the arrangement for records transfer;
  - b. Check the records actually received for completeness against the lists supplied by the function-losing agency and ensure that the transferred records can be retrieved by reference to the control records provided;
  - c. Decide on the recordkeeping arrangement and requirement for the continued administration of the new functions, especially if the records are automated;
  - d. Retain the original reference of the transferred records and raise new records for continued action. The transferred records should not be altered or top numbered into current or new records series as the latter will change the original context of the records; and
  - e. Ensure that relevant documentation and adequate information about charges, contracts and responsibilities concerning the transferred records are also received.
815. Where categories of records are needed by both the function-losing and function-inheriting agencies, a decision should be made on whether special arrangements for access are required or whether there should be duplication of the relevant portion of records.

816-820

### **Privatization, Corporatization and Outsourcing**

821. Where government functions are outsourced, transferred or sold to the private sector, the agreement of such changes in relation to records should specify the custody, ownership and use of records as well as the types of records that are to remain as government records, and their final disposition arrangement. Prior concurrence of the GRS should also be obtained.
822. It is government records policy that no records should be included in any legislation, contract of sale or agreement in respect of privatization or the transfer of a function outside the Government unless an authority to transfer custody or ownership of the records has been issued by the Government Records Service Director (GRS Director).
823. Any transfer of records custody or ownership should be adequately documented. A documented agreement between the transferring bureau/department and the new custodian/owner should be made and endorsed by the GRS Director.

824. A transfer of records **custody** means that the day-to-day management responsibility of records will be transferred from the Government to a quasi-government or private organization. In such a case, the Government retains the intellectual and other property rights over the records while the receiving organization holds the records physically and is responsible for their management and use. A transfer of custody does not change the Government's legal ownership of these records which are still subject to government regulatory requirements.
825. A transfer of records **ownership** means that the Government will relinquish all legal, physical and intellectual rights over the records which will no longer be subject to the in-house regulatory or administrative requirements of the Government.
826. When a bureau or department outsources to a private party to deliver services on its behalf, ownership of the records arising from delivery of the services or contract supporting services is normally vested with the Government. It is the responsibility of the bureau or department to ensure that the private party will meet government recordkeeping requirements.
827. Any bureau or department involved in an organizational or administrative change that requires the transfer of either the custody or ownership of government records should inform the GRS in advance for authorization and appropriate disposal action. It is the role of the GRS to ensure that records needed by the Government or important to the community would remain under the ownership of the Government.
828. The transferring bureau or department is required to make recommendations to the GRS in respect of the future custody and ownership of the records and, as appropriate, to include any conditions to be attached to the transfer of the records.
829. Sometimes to meet the record needs of the organization which takes up the transferred or sold government functions, it may be appropriate to adopt the following alternatives :
- a. Making copies available to the organization;
  - b. Making arrangement for temporary transfer of custody of records that will be returned to the Government after an agreed period of time; or
  - c. Allowing the organization to access the records while the Government keeps custody.
830. Detailed requirements concerning the transfer of custody and ownership of records to non-government agencies are discussed in ***Records Management Publication No. 2 - Managing Active Records***.

### **Transfer of Employment Related Personal Data**

- 836. When the functions of a bureau or department are outsourced, privatized or corporatized, those employment related personal data which were collected for purposes directly related to employment may be transferred to the non-government agencies. Practical steps should be taken to protect employment related personal data from unauthorized or accidental access or disclosure.
- 837. When there is a need to transfer employment related personal data from one bureau or department to another due to staff movement such as posting and redeployment, there should be documentation on the transfer of such records. Adequate security should also be provided to guard against loss, damage and unauthorized alteration and access to the records.
- 838. Bureaux and departments should observe the statutory requirements of the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance and the mandatory provisions in the ***Code of Practice on Human Resource Management*** issued by the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data.

## Chapter 9

### MONITORING RECORDS MANAGEMENT

#### Records Review

- 900. Where circumstances warrant, the Government Records Service (GRS) will review the records management function of bureaux and departments to ensure compliance with records management policies, procedures, directives and disposal authorities.
- 901. The selection for records review will be based on perceived needs by the GRS or specific requests by bureaux and departments.
- 902. The GRS will notify the selected bureaux or departments in writing the intent to conduct a records management review at least **3 months** in advance.

903-905

#### Records Study and Survey

- 906. The Government Records Service Director (GRS Director) may conduct records management studies and give such instructions and advice so as to ensure accurate and complete documentation, safe retention, and efficient and cost-effective management of records as considered necessary.
- 907. The GRS Director will from time to time coordinate with the heads of bureaux and departments in conducting service-wide surveys of records and records management practices.
- 908. Bureaux and departments should implement the recommendations from the above mentioned reviews, studies and surveys as far as practicable to promote economy and efficiency in the selection and use of resources, including staff, space, technology and systems, equipment, and supplies, etc. for improving the management of government records.

909-914

## **Internal Assessment and Evaluation**

915. In addition to the reviews and studies carried out by the GRS, it is important for the records management function to be examined by the departmental management periodically. It is recommended that the Departmental Records Manager in each bureau or department should, as far as possible, conduct an evaluation of the records management function every **5 years** or more often.
916. In conducting the internal evaluation, bureaux or departments may make reference to the provisions in this Manual as yardsticks to assess the effectiveness of its records management programme.
917. ***Records Management Publication No. 7 - Checklist for Proper Records Management Practices*** also provides a useful framework and essential tips for bureaux and departments to assess the status of their records management programme. It should be adopted for use whenever applicable.

**List of Records Management Publications  
by the Government Records Service**

1. Publication No. 1: *A Practical Guide to Records Scheduling and Disposal*  
(revised and retitled, 2000)
2. Publication No. 2: *Managing Active Records: File Management*
3. Publication No. 3: *Subject Filing*
4. Publication No. 4: *General Administrative Records Disposal Schedules (GARDS)*
5. Publication No. 5: *The Microfilming User Manual*
6. Publication No. 6: *Manual on Vital Records Protection*
7. Publication No. 7: *Checklist for Proper Records Management Practices*
8. Publication No. 8: 《中文檔案管理指引》
9. *Handbook on Records Management*



## **Records Management Glossary**

### **Access**

Right, opportunity, or means of finding, using, or retrieving information.

### **Accountability**

Principle that individuals, organizations, and the community are required to explain their actions to others.

### **Active records**

Records needed to perform current operations and are usually stored near the users.

### **Administrative records**

Administrative records are defined as those records created or received during the course of day-to-day administrative activities that deal with finance, accommodation, procurement and supply, establishment, personnel and other general administrative activities. They include all records that perform the functions as described irrespective of the records medium (media) used. Records of this nature are common to government bureaux and departments.

### **Alienation**

Unlawfully transferring records or losing custody of them to an unauthorized organization or person.

### **Archives**

1. Also known as archival records, they are the documents and materials created or received and accumulated by a person or organization in the course of conducting affairs, and are preserved because of their continuing or permanent value.
2. The agency or programme responsible for selecting, acquiring, preserving, and making them available for use. The Public Records Office of Government Records Service is the designated central archives of the HKSAR Government.

### **Audit Trail**

Listings or notations that trace the creation, movement and use of a record.

### **Automated records/information system**

Any system that applies computer technology to any or all of records management tasks.

### **Backup copy**

A copy of document made in order to preserve the information it contains in case the original is lost, damaged, or destroyed.

**Classification**

Systematic identification and arrangement of business activities and/or records into categories according to subject matters, logically structured conventions, methods, and procedural rules represented in a classification scheme.

**Classification scheme**

A plan or list in which the records of an organization are categorized according to its business functions, contents of the records and a coding system expressed in symbols (i.e. alphabetical, numerical, alpha-numerical, or decimal, etc.).

**Coding**

Act of assigning file designation to records as they are classified.

**Content classification**

Classification of records according to their content to facilitate organization of related papers and materials and future retrieval.

**Contextual information**

Information that is in addition to the actual text of the document such as date sent, sender's identity, addressee's identity and routing information, etc.

**Copyright**

The right vested by law in the author of a document and his/her heirs or assignees to publish or reproduce the document.

**Corporatization**

The process of turning the functions of a government agency to become a government business enterprise.

**Cross-reference**

A notation in a file or on a list showing that a record has been filed or stored elsewhere or as an entry directing attention to one or more related items.

**Custody**

The responsibility for the care of document based on their physical possession. Custody does not always include legal ownership, or the right to control access to records.

**Data**

Group of characters representing a specific value or condition. They provide the building block of information.

**Destruction**

Process of permanently eliminating or deleting data, documents and records.

**Disposal**

See **Records disposal**

**Document**

1. Recorded information regardless of medium or characteristics. Sometimes used interchangeably with the word “record”.
2. A single record item (letter, memo or report) consisting of one or more pages.

**Electronic records**

Electronic records are any information recorded in a form that only a computer or other electronic devices can retrieve and process, and that satisfies the definition of record given in this Manual.

**Electronic records management**

Applying records management principles to electronic records that are located on disks, tapes, or any form of magnetic, optical or electronic media.

**Evidence**

Information contributing to proving a fact and/or a process.

**File**

A collection of related records put together in a named/coded folder.

**Floor load**

The capacity of a floor area to support a given weight expressed in terms of weight per unit of area.

**Government agency**

Government agency means any bureau, department, office, division, or unit established and operated under the HKSAR Government.

**Government record**

A government record is any recorded information or data in any physical format or media created or received by a government bureau or department during its course of official business and kept as evidence of policies, decisions, procedures, functions, activities and transactions.

**Inactive records**

Inactive records are those records which are no longer or rarely required for action or reference. As a general yardstick, records are inactive if they have not been referred to for two years or their average retrieval rate is lower than three references per linear metre per month. This yardstick may be varied or re-defined according to individual office's operational consideration.

**Index**

A systematic guide that allows access to specific items contained within a records list, scheme or plan.

**Indexing**

Process of establishing access points to facilitate retrieval of records and/or information.

**Information**

Data that has been given value through analysis, interpretation, or compilation in a meaningful form.

**Life cycle**

The span of time of a record from its creation or receipt, through its useful life to its final disposal or retention as a historical record.

**Long-term records**

Records that have specific value(s) that warrant to be retained for at least 30 years.

**Media (Storage)**

The various types of storage materials on which information is recorded such as paper, microform, magnetic and optical.

**Migration**

Usually involved moving records, while maintaining authenticity, from one electronic system to another without major conversion or inputting of data.

**Misfile**

A file or a record item being inadvertently placed in an incorrect location within the recordkeeping system.

**Non-record**

Non-record materials are documentary materials that do not meet the conditions of record status. They may include library or museum materials intended solely for reference or exhibit, stocks of publications, extra copies of documents generated for convenience or reference, drafting material or working papers provided the official record copy is properly filed, and routing slips, etc.

**Outsourcing**

The process of contracting out those activities not related to agency's core business or primary mission.

**Ownership**

The possession of legal, physical and intellectual rights over the records.

**Permanent records (archival records)**

Information that has been designated for permanent retention or as long as possible because of specific value or importance.

**Personal papers**

Documents or materials not related to or have any effect upon the conduct of agency business are excluded from the definition of government records.

**Preservation**

The processes and operations involved in the stabilization and protection of records.

**Privatization**

The process of selling, transferring or changing the functions of a government agency to a private organization.

**Programme records**

Programme records are defined as those records created or received by a government bureau or department whilst carrying out the primary functions, activities or missions for which the agency was established. Records of this nature are unique to each government bureau or department.

**Record**

Recorded information regardless of physical format or media created or received in the course of official business and maintained for reference and as evidence of such business.

**Record copy or official copy of record**

The designated copy of record retained for legal, fiscal, operational or historical purposes.

**Recordkeeping**

Recordkeeping is making and maintaining complete, accurate and reliable evidence of business function and transactions in the form of recorded information.

**Recordkeeping requirements**

Recordkeeping requirements of a government agency are requirements for maintaining complete, accurate and reliable evidence in the form of recorded information to protect legal, financial and public rights and interests relating to the functions, transactions and activities of the organization.

**Recordkeeping system**

Recordkeeping system is a manual or automated information system in which records are collected, organized and categorized to facilitate their retrieval, distribution, use, disposal or preservation.

**Records centre**

A low-cost centralized area for housing and servicing inactive records whose reference rate does not warrant their retention using expensive office space and equipment. The Records Management Office of the Government Records Service

provides centralized records centre services for government bureaux and departments.

### **Records disposal**

The actions taken on inactive records which have little or no values to bureaux and departments. Records disposal takes the forms of records destruction, records transfer to the Public Records Office of the Government Records Service for permanent preservation, records transfer to temporary inactive storage, records migration to different formats or systems and transfer of records outside government control.

### **Records inventory**

1. A detailed listing that may include the types, locations, dates, volume, classification schemes, equipment and usage of an organization's records.
2. A complete list of titles, dates and quantity of all records.

### **Records management**

Records management includes planning, directing, organizing, controlling, reviewing, training, and other managerial activities involved with respect to the creation, classification and indexing, distribution, handling, use, tracking, storage, retrieval, protection and disposal of records to achieve adequate and proper documentation of government policies, decisions and transactions as well as efficient and effective operation of government agencies.

### **Records retention and disposal schedules**

A systematic listing or description of an organization's records which indicates the arrangements to be made for their custody, retention, and final disposition. Records disposal schedules of government agencies should be drawn up with the concurrence of the Government Records Service Director.

### **Records retrieval**

Process of recalling specific records from storage.

### **Records scheduling**

The action for developing records retention and disposal schedules which specify the length of time that records should be retained and the ways they are to be disposed of.

### **Records survey**

A survey that gathers basic information on the records of an agency with respect to their quantity, type, functions, locations, storage facilities, rate of accumulation and uses for the purpose of planning records management activities.

### **Records tracking**

Capturing and maintaining information about the movement and use of records.

### **Relative index**

A dictionary-type index which lists all possible words and combinations by which a document or a record may be requested and cross referenced to a file location.

**Retention period**

The time period records are kept according to requirements including operational, legal, regulatory and fiscal.

**Security classification**

A classification placed on records limiting their accessibility to those having specific authority to receive, read or use them.

**Storage medium**

See media

**Tracking**

See **Records tracking**

**Transfer**

1. Change of physical custody, ownership or responsibility for records.
2. Moving records from one location to another.

**Vital records**

Records which contain information essential to the survival and continued operation of a bureau or department during and after an emergency or disaster.

**Vital records list**

A detailed list containing information such as titles, subject matters, dates, reference numbers and location on vital records.

**Vital records schedule**

A document or plan which identifies the series of vital records, their locations, protection methods and instructions, and updating and disposal requirements.

**Vocabulary control**

The use of a regularized or standardized list of terms to increase consistency or uniformity.

### Major Duties of the Departmental Records Managers

- a. Ensure that the design of the recordkeeping system, the choice of equipment and the use of resources and space are as efficient and cost-effective as possible;
- b. Establish, implement and document departmental records management practices and procedures according to the guidelines and instructions of the Government Records Service;
- c. Provide records management staff with appropriate expertise, training and guidance;
- d. Appoint Assistant Departmental Records Manager(s) (ADRM), where necessary, to monitor records management routines;
- e. Introduce the use of technology in a cost-beneficial manner to any aspect of the records management function that improves operation of the organization and helps achieve the records management policy of the government;
- f. Use the Records Centre run by the Records Management Office of the Government Records Service (GRS) as far as practicable to store, service and dispose of inactive records;
- g. Facilitate records appraisal and records access review conducted by the Public Records Office (PRO) of the GRS and ensure prompt and systematic transfer of archival records to the PRO for preservation;
- h. Identify and protect vital records so as to ensure their availability in the event of any emergency or disaster;
- i. Foster cooperation between records management personnel and other staff to facilitate the most effective management of departmental records;
- j. Cooperate with the GRS in evaluating and improving the effectiveness of the records management programme on a regular basis; and
- k. Consult the GRS when records management advice is required.



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