

# **A Guide to Preserving Historical Records at the University of Alaska**

## **University Archives**

Alaska & Polar Regions Department

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## **Introduction**

All University offices, committees, and departments create or maintain records of enduring value. These records document the functions and activities of the University at a given point in time and may have significance and usefulness long after their creation. These are documents that are vital to the ongoing operation of the University and are records of administrative, legal, financial, or historical importance. Materials with such enduring value are considered *permanent records* and special care is necessary to ensure that these records are preserved and remain accessible to those who need them.

All UA and UAF offices, committees, and departments create or maintain permanent records that may be eligible for transfer to the University Archives. These records should be transferred to the University Archives, which will hold them in perpetuity, because:

- the Archives can provide reference service and access to the records,
- the Archives ensures that records are stored in an environmentally stable and secure area, and
- the Archives improves office efficiency by providing less expensive storage for infrequently consulted materials.

Records held by the University Archives have been used by departments and University Relations for anniversary celebrations, consulted by writers for biographies, and served as crucial evidence in legal matters.

This guide is intended to assist university offices, committees, and departments in determining which records are considered permanent records and what steps are necessary to ensure their survival. This booklet serves as an introduction to a complex but vital issue. More detailed information and assistance is available by contacting the University Archives.

## **University Records Policy**

The University Archives at the University of Alaska Fairbanks is the official repository for records of the University of Alaska System and the University of Alaska Fairbanks that are of historical value and lasting administrative significance. The University Archives has the authority to determine which records meet the criteria for designation as permanently valuable records and to manage those records once they have been transferred into the Archives' custody. The University Archives operates in accordance with the records statutes of the State of Alaska and the United States of America.

Records produced or received in the transaction of University of Alaska business by a University employee, committee, department, or office are the property of the University. Records shall be conveyed by outgoing administrators and employees to their successors, and may not be removed, destroyed, or disposed of, except as provided by university records policy.

## **Assessing Records**

Assessing, or *appraising*, records is the process of determining the value of the record and, therefore, its final *disposition*. Records appraisal is a key step in efficient maintenance of all records and ensures the preservation of records with historical and research value.

### ***What are records?***

Records are any document, regardless of physical form, created, received, or maintained by an employee of the university in connection with the transaction of official business. Examples of records include but are not limited to papers, books, letters, drawings, maps, plats, photos, photographic files, motion picture films, microfilms, and electronic records.

### ***Is anything not considered a record?***

Yes, materials such as blank forms, surplus publications, duplicate copies, junk mail, vendor catalogs, and reference materials such as photocopies of articles are considered *non-records* and can be discarded when no longer useful.

### ***What are permanent records?***

Records that document the significant activities and core functions of a department, committee, or office are considered permanent records. Records of a department's policies, organizational structure, major projects, and publications explain a department's function and activities and are considered to be of historical value and lasting administrative significance. In other words: what would happen if a certain set of records disappeared? If people would no longer be able to tell what your department did, then those records are almost certainly permanent records.

### ***What records do not have permanent value?***

Records that document routine activities are considered non-permanent. Examples include purchase orders, requests for leave, requests for publications, and letters of acknowledgement.

### ***What are active records?***

Records to which the department refers on a regular basis to conduct business are active. Generally, if you need to use a set of records at least a few times a year, the records may be considered active. Usually, records of permanent value are transferred to the University Archives only after they have become *inactive*. Some records of permanent value may remain active indefinitely. Examples include donor files and student transcripts.

## **Selecting Records for Transfer**

Send us the records that show what your department, committee, or office contributes to the University. We are especially interested in administrative policy documents, curriculum-related materials, and publications. Records produced or received in the transaction of University of Alaska business by a university employee, committee, department, or office are the property of the university. If your office created or managed

the record for the University, your office is the *office of record*, and it is your responsibility to send these materials to the Archives when you no longer have active need for them. We recommend you transfer inactive, permanent records annually or biennially.

The University Archives does accept confidential files—as long as they fit the criteria of permanent records—and can provide secure storage and restrict access.

The following lists include the most common categories of records created by the University. There are almost certainly other materials that are not included in these guidelines. Please call us at x5590 if this guide does not fully answer your questions about which records you should send to the University Archives.

#### Materials Commonly Transferred

Records that document the significant activities and core functions of a department, program, or committee including:

- Reports, especially annual and biennial reports.
- Planning documents, including proposals for new programs and facilities.
- Curriculum development materials, accreditation reports, course syllabi and reading lists, and course schedules.
- Policy and procedure documents.
- Publications, including newsletters, bulletins, programs, and promotional material.
- Office files such as executive correspondence and memoranda concerning policies, procedures, and operations of the unit.
- Organizational charts and job descriptions.
- Records of grant and research projects (final reports, publications).
- Committee records, including minutes, reports, correspondence, and publications.
- Audio-visual materials, especially identified photographs, films, or videotapes.

#### Materials Generally not Transferred

Records that document routine activities, including:

- Convenience copies of materials created or maintained by other offices. These items include budget materials; student and personnel records; widely-circulated memoranda, publications, and reports; and committee records of members other than the chair.
- Routine financial and administrative records such as requisitions, travel expense vouchers, payroll time sheets, accounting reports, contracts, etc.
- Drafts: send only the final version of a document unless significant annotations appear.
- Routine acknowledgments, circulars, notifications, requests, and transmittals.
- Multiple copies, photocopies of articles, vendor catalogs, envelopes, blank forms, advertisements, and equipment manuals.
- Individual personnel records, including job searches, evaluations, disciplinary cases, and correspondence about personnel issues such as leave.

- Student records such as grade books, class rosters, student papers, and correspondence with students—especially those discussing grades or academic standing.

## **Preparing and Transferring Records**

### Preparing the Records

- ✓ Appraise the records for permanent value and inactive status. For help in conducting a records *survey*, please contact the University Archives.
- ✓ *Weed* the files: discard duplicates, drafts, envelopes, routing slips, phone messages, and other materials of no informational value.
- ✓ Print out electronic records and electronic versions of significant correspondence (email).
- ✓ Photocopy thermal faxes and newspaper clippings onto regular bond paper.
- ✓ Remove materials from ring binders and hanging folders and place in file. Transfer titles, headings, or other information from the binders and hanging folders to the file folders (e.g. Strategic plan, 1985-1987).

### Packing the Boxes

- ✓ Please use standard record cartons. Upon request, the Archives will provide boxes for the records to be transferred.
- ✓ Keep material in the same order as they were maintained in your filing system.
- ✓ Do not over-pack or under-pack boxes.
- ✓ Clearly label boxes with name of office or department, brief description of contents and dates, and box number and total number of boxes (e.g. President's Office; Correspondence, A-De, 1994-1995; Box 1 of 4).

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA ARCHIVES</b> (example label)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">PRESIDENT'S OFFICE Correspondence A-De 1994-95</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Box 1 of 4</p>
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### The Transfer Form

- ✓ The Records Transfer Authorization is available online at <http://library.uaf.edu/files/univrecords.pdf> or contact the Archives at x5590.
- ✓ Complete and sign two copies of the Records Transfer Authorization; retain one copy for your records and return the other to the Archives.
- ✓ Make a list of the box contents. The list should include the box label information (i.e. box number, brief contents description, and date) as the heading then the title of each

folder, exactly as it is written on the folder. Attach a printed copy and a computer disk to the Transfer Authorization and return to the Archives.

### Arranging Deliveries

Records can be sent in a number of ways:

- For large numbers of boxes, submit a Work Request through Facilities Services, x7000 or online at <http://www.uaf.edu/fs>. In the request, specify: "Pick up [number] boxes at [your location] and deliver to University Archives, 210 Rasmuson Library."
- With smaller amounts of material you may hand deliver to University Archives, 210 Rasmuson Library, or send through campus mail to Box 6808.

### **After the Transfer**

#### Accessing the records

University records are available for review in the Alaska and Polar Regions Research Room during regularly scheduled hours. Please see [www.uaf.edu/library/apr](http://www.uaf.edu/library/apr) or call x6400 for current hours. Unprocessed and restricted materials may be viewed by staff of the originating office or other authorized employees during these same hours. The Archives staff is available to assist researchers in locating the information they need. Research services are also available on a cost-recovery basis for those with extensive research needs who are unable to visit the Archives in person.

Reproductions, including certified copies, are available upon request. Only inactive records should be transferred to the Archives; on the rare occasion that an office requires the return of original records, arrangements may be made with the University Archivist.

#### Changes to the records

Transferred records document the state of the University at a given point in time. In general, subsequent alterations or additions to documents are added chronologically to the record series to reflect changes in administration over time. If, however, it is necessary to interfile additions or replace existing records, please contact the University Archivist at x5590.

### **Glossary**

*Accession:* The transferring of physical and legal custody of documentary materials to an archival repository.

*Active Records:* Records that are regularly used for the conduct of the current business of their creator, and therefore, continue to be maintained in office spaces (also called current or working records).

*Appraisal:* The process of analyzing the value of records and determining which records to retain or discard.

*Archives:* (1) Permanently valuable non-current (inactive) records, preserved because of their continuing value. (2) The repository where archival records are housed.

*Archivist:* A person responsible for the appraisal, preservation, and reference service of archival materials.

*Disposition:* The final action that puts into effect the results of an appraisal decision, usually transfer to the Archives for permanent retention or disposal for those materials deemed non-permanent.

*Inactive Records:* Records no longer needed by their creator to conduct current business (also called non-current records).

*Office of Record:* The office responsible for maintaining the most complete set of a particular records series.

*Record:* Recorded information, regardless of medium or characteristics, created, received, and maintained by an organization or person.

*Records Series:* File units or documents that are kept together because they relate to a particular subject or function, result from the same activity, document a specific type of transaction, take a particular physical form, or have some other relationship arising out of their creation, receipt, maintenance, or use.

*Permanent Records:* Records of long-term historical or research value that are retained permanently in an office or in the Archives after a period of active use (also called archival records).

*Survey:* The process of identifying record series created and/or maintained by an office and the extent and nature of their use.

*Temporary Records:* Records of limited administrative value that are maintained in an office for a specified period before destruction (also called non-archival records).

*Weeding:* The removal from a file series of individual documents or files lacking continuing value (also known as culling, purging, or stripping).

Adapted from: U. S. Environmental Protection Agency,  
National Records Management Program (2003), *EPA Records Glossary*.  
Retrieved from <http://www.epa.gov/records/gloss/>.

### **For More Information**

- Visit our website at <http://library.uaf.edu/university-records>
- Contact the University Archivist by phone at X5590.