



Western
University
OF HEALTH SCIENCES

Records Management 6: Managing Email

University Archives

What is Email?

A communication medium originally not considered a “record.”

- Personal – not University official business, delete anytime
- Spam – unsolicited, delete immediately
- Informational – transitory, routine, has temporary value
 - Similar to phone calls
 - Junk Mail
 - Post-it Notes
- Administrative – can be a University record with long-term value

Email Issues

- The riskiest form of business communication.
- Most legal problems stem from personal use.
- Incorrect assumption that email messages are private.
- Encourages “conversational atmosphere” as opposed to a business-like communication.
- Record no longer a static document.
- Preservation unsure.

Why Keep Certain Emails?

- Documents day-to-day office operations.
 - Decisions and discussions
 - Issues instructions or advice
 - Approves or authorizes actions and expenditures.
- Documents committee, faculty, and campus activities.
- Provides information during University negotiations or litigation.

Is It a Record?

- The content should determine whether it is a record.
- Does it have continuing or permanent value?
 - Policies & procedures - Directives
 - Guidelines - Statistics
 - Authorizations - Analyses
- Is the message the record or the attachment?
- In multiple recipients, who retains the email message?

When Is It NOT a Record?

- Routine messages with short-term value
- News bulletins, circulars, meeting notices, etc.
- The email is the “envelope” for an attachment
- Personal messages not work related
- Junk mail
- Spam

Why Can't I Keep Everything?

- Email is subject to legal processes (discovery and subpoena).
- University's email servers are not intended for prolonged records retention.
 - Control the quality and quantity of email.
 - Forgotten emails contain obsolete data and take up storage space.

How Long Should I Keep Email?

- General Correspondence should be maintained for one year.
- Administrative Correspondence which documents significant institutional information should be maintained for five years, then transferred to the University Archives for purging.
- Check the Records Retention Schedule for more information.

Retention of Electronic Mail

- The legal standards for retention and disposition of university records also apply to email.
 - Email with continuing value must be retained in accordance with the Records Retention Schedule.
 - Must retain metadata
 - Be careful about sending sensitive information.

Secure Your Email

- Avoid forwarding email or copying recipients unless the person has a legitimate reason for needing the information.
- Periodically change your password.

How to Save Emails as Files?

- Create folders on your network drive.
- Folders can be organized based on correspondent, project, date, subject, etc.
- Save messages as Outlook files (.msg) (.eml), text-only files (.txt), rich text files (.rtf), HTML, etc.
- Print messages and save the paper document.

Value of Electronic Mail

- The legal standards for retention and disposition of university records also apply to email.
 - Email with continuing value must be retained in accordance with the Records Retention Schedule.
 - Must retain metadata
 - Always write in a business tone
 - Be careful about sending personal or sensitive information.

When To Dispose Emails

- Emails should have the same retention as similar paper based records.
- Include your email folders in your inventory sheet and indicate a retention period.
- If you maintain all your email correspondence entirely in Outlook, periodically go thru your inbox and archive folders.

Litigation Holds

- Litigation hold directives override any records retention schedule transfer, disposal, or destruction of relevant documents.
- No employee may alter or delete an electronic record that falls within the scope of the hold.
- Electronic messages and their attachments are subject to discovery during litigation, government investigations, audits, or FERPA requests.

A large, irregular red shape with a white outline, resembling a stylized speech bubble or a shield, positioned on the left side of the slide.

Consult the
University
Archivist for
guidance

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