

International Council on Archives



Section of Records Management and Archival Professional Associations

ESTABLISHING A RECORDS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM: GUIDELINES FOR PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

2009

Introduction

Elected officials and administrative staff of records management and archival professional association need to create and keep records of their activities in order to provide evidence of actions taken and decisions made in the course of carrying out their duties. These records are required to ensure that associations are:

- accountable for decisions and actions made on behalf of association members
- complying with requirements set out in the governing documents of the association (e.g. Constitution, By-laws and Rules)
- complying with state laws
- undertaking activities in an orderly and efficient manner, and
- documenting the corporate memory of an association for short and long-term administrative and historical purposes.

Professional associations vary in administrative arrangements. Some are large with an established office and paid administrative staff, while others are run solely by elected members with no additional administrative support. Whatever the size or complexity of an association it is advisable to have a records management program in place ensure that records, documenting all association activities, are created and controlled appropriately.

The ICA Section of Records management and Archival Professional Associations (SPA) has produced these guidelines to assist associations develop a records management program.

In the guidelines the meaning of the word ‘record’ is taken from ISO 15489 *Records Management* standard, which provides the following definition:

Information created, received, and maintained as evidence and information by an organization or a person in pursuance of legal obligations or in the transaction of business. (Part 1: 3.15)

The definition of records management is also taken from the standard and means the:

Field of management responsible for the efficient and systematic control of the creation, receipt, maintenance, use and disposition of records, including processes for capturing and maintaining evidence of an information about business activities and transactions in the form of records. (Part 1: 3.16)

The word ‘recordkeeping’ refers to the formal practice of managing records in a centralized and controlled way to ensure that records needed by the association are created, that they are saved into systems where they can be found quickly and easily and are kept for as long as they are needed. ‘Recordkeeping system’ refers to a business information system that capture, maintain and provide access to records over time.

The guidelines are compliant with the ISO 15489, and are a companion document *Guidelines for developing a retention schedule for records management and archival professional associations - including a model retention schedule* issued by SPA in 2008.

Identifying recordkeeping requirements

In identifying their recordkeeping requirements associations will ensure that records are created and are available to support its aims, objectives and activities. The following questions will assist in identifying these requirements:

- What records should be created or made?
- How long should records be retained?
- How should records be controlled, stored, tracked?
- Who should have access?
- What are the approved record formats for the association?

Record creation

Generally, records should be created by either an office bearer, operating in a voluntary capacity, or paid association staff, to provide evidence of an action taken or a decision made.

Sometimes the Constitution or Rules of an association will detail specific records that must be created:

The Officers and employees of the Society shall faithfully keep all general records, accounting books and records of receipts and expenditure connected with the operations and business of the Society in such form and manner as the Council may direct. (Section 28 (2) Constitution of the Australian Society of Archivists)

The Council shall cause for proper minutes to be made of all proceedings of all meetings of the Society and of the Council and of the committees, groups, regions and working parties of the Society and all business transacted at such meetings. Any such minutes, if purported to be signed by the Chairman of such meetings, shall be sufficient without any further proof of the facts stated therein. (Section 69 Memorandum of Association of The Society of Archivists)

The council is authorized and directed to prepare, adopt, or amend such administrative guidelines, policies, and procedures as may be desirable to regularize the functions and operations of the Society's committees, task forces, boards, sections, roundtables, representatives, awards, programs, and other activities. (Bylaw 8 - Bylaws of the Society of American Archivists)

Sometimes recordkeeping requirements to create certain records are often not specific but rather implied in the Constitution and Rules of an association:

The president, vice-president, and secretary/treasurer shall be appointed by the members

from among those directors elected at the annual general meeting of the Corporation. (7.02 General Operating By-law No.1 Association of Canadian Archivists). In this example there is a requirement to record the appointment by the members of various office bearers.

The requirements to create records are sometimes far more general, for example the objectives of The Society of Archivists are to a) to foster the care and preservation of archives in the public interest and to promote the better administration of archive repositories; b) to advance the professional education and training of Archivists, Archive Conservators and Records Managers and those engaged in related activities; and c) to commission and support research into the creation, use, administration and conservation of archives and the development of new techniques and the publication of the useful results of such research. To carry out these objectives records are required.

Recordkeeping requirements can also be specified in the laws of the State e.g. taxation laws and employment laws.

To assist in the creation of records an association could develop templates or procedures to guide officers. A minute template is attached, which if used by officers of an association, will ensure the consistent recording of decisions and actions taken in conducting the business of the organization.

Retention and disposition

An association records retention schedule will define the temporary or permanent status for classes of records. It is advisable for all associations develop a schedule, approved by the President, to ensure the accountable retention and destruction of records. The ICA Section for Records Management and Archival Professional Associations has developed a generic Retention Schedule for associations which is available on the ICA website at <http://www.ica.org/en/node/39028>. The introduction to this document sets out steps for an association to follow to adapt the generic schedule to suite their own requirements.

For an association administered by elected officials, at the end of their term of office their files should be sentenced according to the association Retention Schedule. Records needed for ongoing administration purposes should be passed to the succeeding officer; archival records transferred to the association's archives (see section below 'Arrangements for archival records'); temporary records could be passed to the new secretary who could take charge of their destruction when retention requirements have been met, and records for destruction securely destroyed, and notice of this action provided to the Secretary.

For larger associations with paid staff, it is recommended that a records management program be considered for systematically applying retention periods to records as they are created so they can be managed throughout their whole existence. Alternatively, a program can be applied where sentencing (i.e. deciding on the fate of a record) is carried out regularly e.g. every five years. All destructions should be recorded in the records management system for accountability purposes.

Managing access

Associations need to formalize access arrangements for their records. Such arrangements may apply to paid staff of an association, members of the association, and if archival records are transferred to the custody of an archival institution, where they are available for public research, public access arrangements may also need to be established.

With regard to access, for a professional association, the main issues will probably concern private information about members given in confidence (e.g. details such as age, address, salary, employment histories). Other issues could include commercially sensitive information or issues regarding negotiations with external organizations that are being finalized (e.g. the development of memoranda of association with another association).

Managing different formats

In today's business environment records are generally created electronically in business systems; in messaging systems such as email; word documents, spreadsheets, PowerPoint slides, digital photographs. When an electronically generated record is used e.g. when an email or letter is sent, it becomes a record of the association and must be managed in the association's records management system. Born digital records are best managed in an electronic system e.g. if an association has an EDRMS, the record should be saved into that system. If the association does not have such a system the electronically generated record should be printed and kept in the paper based system. Electronic records of an association should not be retained in personal spaces on computers e.g. email folders, hard drives, shared folders as these storage areas do not have the functionality to keep and manage the records over time.

Recordkeeping systems

For records to be managed efficiently, found when needed, and kept for as long as they are required, an association should implement a recordkeeping system which will organize and control the management of records over time.

For associations who have a large membership and paid staff there are two options:

1. An electronic document and records management system (EDRMS) which captures electronically generated documents/records and where paper records can be scanned and saved into the system.

If an EDRMS is being considered associations are advised to use the ICA's *Principles and Functional Requirements for Records in Electronic Office Environments* <http://www.ica.org/en/node/38970> to assist in selecting a system with functionality that will manage the whole life cycle including registration, access, accountable destruction and retention, and link related records. Off-the-shelf EDRMS are available and open source systems provide a cheaper alternative.

As well as selecting the most appropriate product for an association, some of the questions that need to be thought about in implementing an EDRMS include:

- What business processes will be covered by the system?
- What systems will the EDRMS integrate with (e.g. email)?
- What systems contain data which need to be migrated into the EDRMS (e.g. personal drives and email folders)?
- Will paper records be scanned into the system?
- What business rules are required to manage the system?
- What are the configuration requirements (e.g. what system settings should be adopted)?
- How will roll-out occur (a direct or gradual rollout)?
- How will testing, reviewing and evaluating the implementation occur?
- How will change management issues be handled?

To implement an EDRMS, two key recordkeeping tools are needed – a classification scheme, which will inform a record titling framework, and a records retention schedule. These two tools are discussed in detail in these guidelines.

2. A paper based system with registration and naming controls. A paper based system could be managed by a simple file list, by a data base, or an electronic records management system. In choosing an option particular issues relating to records metadata need to be thought about including the type of number system to apply to the records; how to link related records (e.g. minutes and agenda papers); what naming conventions are going to be used for titling the records (the functional classification scheme developed as the framework for the generic retention scheme, referred to below under the heading ‘How long to keep records’ could be used as the basis for a titling scheme); and how are records going to be tracked to prevent loss and facilitate retrieval and access.

If the association depends entirely on elected officials, the recordkeeping system will be decentralized and depend on policies and procedures to guide the ongoing maintenance and control of records. Generally, each official should retain their own set of files covering activities they are responsible for in course of carrying out their duties (e.g. the central governance files of association should be retained by the Secretary and financial records by the treasurer etc). For ongoing continuity these files could be titled using an association titling scheme adopting the classification used to develop the generic Retention Schedule (see notes under heading ‘Retention and disposition’). For example:

PROMOTION & ADVOCACY MANAGEMENT – Exhibition Management -
International Archives Day 2009

GOVERNANCE MANAGEMENT – Meeting – Association Council Meeting June 2009

The Secretary should be responsible for retaining a central file title list.

Arrangements for archival records

Each association will need to make a decision about how to care and manage their archival records. There are two options – establish an in-house archives or use an established archival institution whose acquisition policy includes collecting local association records.

Establishing an in-house archives requires an ongoing commitment to sustain the archives by providing suitable space to store the records and staff to apply archival management controls, including managing access to the records.

Using an established archives means the association won't have the overhead requirements noted in the preceding paragraph. However, the association will usually have to comply with the deposit arrangements of the archives (e.g. listing the material for transfer) and signing a depositor agreement. Placing records in an archival institution means that the records will be available for research, but the association will probably be able to negotiate access arrangements if they are concerned about sensitivities in certain categories of records.

Records management policy

It is advisable for associations to have a records management policy setting out how the records of an association should be created and managed over time. A policy will support good governance and assist administrative continuity for associations where there is a regular turnover of elected officials. The existence of a policy will clearly communicate the importance of records to the association.

An association records management policy should:

- Be approved by the association's governing body
- Provide details of any laws and standards that impact on the association's recordkeeping
- Provide details about the association's records management system (e.g. whether its paper or electronic)
- Cover all records, regardless of format
- Set out recordkeeping responsibilities
- Indicate what records should be created, when and in what formats
- Provide details on classification systems to be used
- Give directions on retention and destruction requirements
- Provide instructions on transferring records to new office holders
- Set out access arrangements for the associations records
- Specify arrangements for the associations' archival records
- Include a requirement to regularly review the policy

It is important to promote the policy throughout the association (e.g. made available on the association's web site) and given to new staff members and all newly elected office bearers.

Monitoring records management practices

Compliance monitoring to ensure that the records management policy is being adhered to needs to be regularly undertaken. This work is probably best undertaken in a small association by the Secretary, and in a large association with a paid secretariat, by the Chief Executive Officer. A report should be prepared detailing outcomes and may result in modifications being made to the association's policies and processes if they are found to be inadequate.

Training

Records management training is advisable whatever the size of the association. For a small association this may take the form of a workshop for newly elected officers to introduce the policy and confirm their responsibilities. For larger associations training may be more complex, particularly if an EDRMS is used as the primary records management system, as staff will be required to learn and adapt to the technology.

MINUTE TEMPLATE

Name of meeting:

Date:

Location:

Attendees:

Apologies:

Confirmation of previous meeting minutes:

Matters arising from minutes:

Confirmation of the agenda & identification of additional items:

Agenda Item No.
Summary of discussion:
Outcome:
Action Required:

Agenda Item No.
Summary of discussion:

Outcome:
Action Required:

Agenda Item No.
Summary of discussion:
Outcome:
Action Required:

Other business:

Confirmation of date and place for next meeting:

Time of meeting closure:

Confirmation of minutes:

Chairperson:

Date of confirmation: