

# FAQs – RIM

The answers to these Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) should provide a better understanding of the main areas of Records and Information Management (RIM) as well as more information about RIM activities and resources at LCC.

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## How do I organize College records?

The organization of College records depends heavily on the records' format, their use, and the nature of the activity or function they support. Arrangement and organization of College records should be established through guidelines and procedures created by your department.

## How do I keep records safe?

Keeping records safe means storing records securely so that the likelihood of accidental (or intentional) destruction, corruption, misplacement, or inappropriate disclosure or access is minimized. The handling and storage of records should also meet the risk management expectations within LCC's [Information Security Policy](#). For tips and best practices see the Security section of the ***LCC Paper Records Storage Guidelines*** which can be found on the [RIM website](#).

## Can anyone see the College records I create or manage?

Except as restricted by specific provisions in state or federal law, anyone may ask to see College records. Some College records may be viewed by contacting the appropriate office to request transcripts, degree verifications, employment verifications, and general information about admissions. Other records may be viewed by submitting a FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) request.

## Where can I get more information?

To obtain more information about records and information management at LCC:

- Contact the [Records Information Specialist](#).
- Visit the Records & Information Management website: <https://www.lcc.edu/its/records-management.html>.

## How long do I need to keep records?

There is no set period or magical 'seven year rule' for all records. The required retention period varies widely depending on the content of the records and the business function(s) that the records support. It is important to keep in mind that date-based events can vary the retention length of a record. For example, “five years from last term of attendance” may be a different length of time than “five years from the completion of a grant.”

If a record has a legal or business requirement to be kept for a specific time frame or if it has been listed on an approved retention schedule, then it will need to be kept until the minimum retention

requirement is met. If it is duplicate information or has very temporary value it is considered a non-record and you only need to keep it for as long as you need to reference it. In some cases, you may find records that aren't listed on a retention schedule. These records should be brought to the attention of the Records Information Specialist so that a suitable retention can be determined.

The retention period for a given type of record can be identified by looking it up in the **Retention Schedules**. LCC's approved retention schedules can be found on the O:\ drive [O:\Interdivisional\LCC-Records\_Management\_and\_College\_Archives\Records Retention Schedules]. Refer to the on the [RIM website](#) for further information about retention of materials at LCC.

## How long do we have to keep non-record material?

Consider how long the non-record materials are truly useful to the office, and establish a department best practice to follow in order to not retain the material longer than necessary. Usually, one to three years past the completion of a final document is the longest anyone might keep drafts or copies. For reference materials, a period of retention could be indefinite with a plan to periodically review and purge materials that were not used in five or more years.

All departments should establish simple procedures to clean up or dispose of non-record materials on a routine basis. If your department does not have an internal policy for the retention of non-record materials, consult with the [Records Information Specialist](#) to create one.

For more information about non-record materials, including examples, see ***Records vs Non-records at LCC*** on the [RIM website](#).

## What if the records I have are not listed in an approved records retention schedule?

Some records are unique to a department or office. If you cannot locate a record series (type of record) in an approved department or general retention schedule, please contact the [Records Information Specialist](#) for assistance. Provide information about the records, including the name/type, use, and whether your office is the official keeper of this record. The Records Information Specialist will either direct you to the correct record series for the records in question or they may begin the process of creating a supplement to officially add your record to the appropriate retention schedule.

## Do I need to keep all versions of a record or only the final version?

Officially, once a final version of a document is completed, the drafts become non-records that don't have to be retained for the same length of time as the final version. That being said, it is sometimes important to keep drafts for future reference so departments should establish best practices for retention of drafts and copies of documents and records.

## Where should I store inactive physical records?

Inactive records need to be stored in an environment that is appropriate to their format and organized in a way to aid retrieval. For example, paper records need a stable temperature, and should be stored in a secure area. To prevent damage they should be stored in sturdy records boxes and on shelving. The boxes used should be the standard 10" x 12" x 15" Bankers boxes (these can be ordered from [Office Depot - Item#: 198802](#)) and should be given a unique number and label for quick identification.

Boxes should also have their contents listed on an attached box list. A central inventory (or register) of inactive records should be maintained to track which items are stored in which boxes and in which storage areas to enable easy retrieval and appropriate disposal. Access to the records should be monitored and properly controlled. The ***LCC Paper Records Storage Guidelines***, on the [RIM website](#), provides more detailed information about storing physical records.

## What is the disposal process for records?

Each records series listed in the retention schedules has specific disposition instructions that indicate how long those records must be kept. This is known as their retention period. When the retention period for your records has passed they are eligible to be disposed of according to the disposition instructions.

Some records have a disposition of "permanent," which means they can be transferred to the LCC Archives after they are no longer needed. The disposition instructions for other records are to "destroy" after a specified period of time. These records should be disposed of in the proper manner, keeping in mind that records containing private or confidential information should be disposed of securely. For details, see the ***LCC Information Disposal Guide***, on the [RIM website](#).

Non-records should be either transferred to the LCC Archives, destroyed, or purged from electronic data environments according to the internal policy set by your department. If your department does not have an internal policy for the retention and disposal of non-record materials, consult with the [Records Information Specialist](#) to create one.

## How do I dispose of records?

The *LCC Information Disposal Guide* (which can be found on the [RIM website](#)) was created to help departments with their disposal decisions. It includes best practices for disposal of records with different levels of security including information about LCC's recycling program and tips for disposing of digital or magnetic media.

## Are email messages records?

Email is a communication tool we all use on a daily basis. Some of us conduct most of our standard work processes from our Inbox. Because of this, some email messages, or information contained within them, are considered records and need to be identifiable as such. **Email messages may be considered records if they verify, authenticate or otherwise support other significant documents or transactions.**

Attachments sent with email messages are generally assumed to be duplicate or working drafts of documents and therefore not considered records. This assumption also assumes each person sending attachments has stored the authoritative version of the attachment in their designated electronic storage area.

Because email systems are not acceptable primary storage systems for College records, email messages considered to be College records must be identified and stored in a separate system such as a shared workspace folder on the N:\ drive.

## What is the exact length of time for retention of an email?

There is no exact length of time for the retention of an e-mail. Retention depends on the purpose of the email and the information it contains. The format itself, in this case, electronic, is not a decisive factor in the length of retention.

If the email is a record, the retention will follow the period set down in the applicable records retention and disposal schedule. If the email is a non-record it should follow the non-record guidelines that recommend that it should be disposed of as soon as possible after its primary usefulness has expired.

## Why and how do we need to organize our email?

Email should be organized in order to reduce unnecessary storage of email messages, to enable efficient retrieval of email messages and to reduce the costs and burdens of managing and storing email messages. Email is also organized so it is easy for you to use and easy for you to identify messages that should be retained as College records.

Email messages that are working documents and reference materials should be managed much like other electronic documents using directory structures to help arrange and organize documents. Best practice involves setting up subfolders within the Inbox to arrange the messages into logical groupings, making them easier to locate and manage. The Inbox should be used in a way similar to a postal mailbox as a location to receive messages but not a location to store them.

Messages should be read, appropriately acted upon (immediately if possible), flagged for future follow-up if immediate action is not possible, and moved from the Inbox into an appropriate subfolder or departmental system or deleted. Subfolders should ideally have an assigned retention period so that non-record messages which have limited continuing usefulness are automatically purged when that retention is exceeded. Folders containing deleted messages should be regularly emptied.

While an email system, such as Outlook or Gmail, is an easy method to transmit records, it is an unacceptable place to store email messages that are records. Since records must be kept for legal and financial reasons beyond their usefulness to the day to day operations of the college, they should be stored with other records that are associated with the business function that they accomplish. This means that emails identified as records should be exported from the email system and stored in a departmentally approved electronic storage space such as a shared workspace folder on the N:\ drive.

## Can I destroy records that have been scanned?

Records that have been scanned can be destroyed provided that your department has a digitization process that is in compliance with the State of Michigan [Standards for Capturing Digital Images from Paper or Microfilm \(effective August 15, 2005\)](#). Compliance with these standards ensures an acceptable reproduction of the original that can be used in a court of law as evidence. For details, contact the [Records Information Specialist](#).

## If I scan a document and keep an electronic copy, should I keep the original hard copy?

Your department must have a digitization process that is in compliance with the State of Michigan [Standards for Capturing Digital Images from Paper or Microfilm \(effective August 15, 2005\)](#) prior to destroying original hard copies.

**CREDIT:** [University of Illinois – Records and Information Management Services - FAQs](#)