Email as Records

The following information is from the *Idaho State Records Manual*, chapter 7. Electronic mail (e-mail) is an important tool for conducting government business in the State of Idaho.

Since e-mail meets the statutory definition of a public record in the State of Idaho, it is subject to management requirements which may not be obvious. For example, e-mail may be subject to public records requests, yet its users may have inappropriate expectations of privacy and informality. E-mail may be destroyed inappropriately or it may be accumulating in systems when it should more properly be destroyed after it no longer has value to the agency. Case law shows that e-mail certainly is discoverable under actions brought against the government and its inappropriate retention, therefore, brings risk. The *Idaho State Records Manual* provides State agencies with current guidelines and best practices to assist in the management of e-mail records.

**EMAIL DEFINITIONS**

- **TRANSACTIONAL INFORMATION**
  Transactional information is information about the e-mail message (“metadata”). It can include the name of the sender and all recipients, the date and time the message was created and sent, the host application that generated the message, and all of the systems and computers the message was routed through.

- **E-MAIL MESSAGES**
  E-mail messages are any communication supported by e-mail systems for the conduct of official agency business internally, between other state, local and federal agencies, and externally with constituents, voters, vendors, clients, citizens and others. This definition applies equally to the contents of the communication, the transactional information associated with each message, and any attachments to the body of the message.
Value and Retention of E-Mail Records

The information in the e-mail, the reason it was created, and the administrative, fiscal, legal and/or historical value of the e-mail to the agency determines what kind of record the message is. The majority of e-mail messages in most agencies are minor administrative records having only brief convenience or reference value. However, e-mail is used to transmit records having significant administrative, legal, research or other value and may need to be retained long-term while some may need to be retained permanently.

As public records, e-mail messages are subject to the same retention requirements as the same type of record, not the medium or format. This means that e-mail messages must be retained and disposed of in the same manner as the agency’s other records. Retention periods for e-mail records will vary according to the information the messages contain and the functions the messages perform. An agency cannot simply schedule e-mail as a single record series.

Any record, paper or electronic, should not be destroyed if it is the subject of a public records request and/or legal action (e.g., discovery motion, subpoena, court order, etc.).

E-mail messages may have one of three different values depending on the information in and the function of the message to the agency: (Many of these types of records are found in the Records Management Guide.

### Temporary Records
Temporary records have some documentary value to the agency, but do not need to be retained permanently. The retention period is determined by assessing their administrative, fiscal or legal need. This time period may range from a few months to several years and should be defined in the agency’s records schedule or the Records Management Guide. These records must remain accessible for the entire retention period specified in the schedule. E-mail records in this category should be managed and maintained like the rest of the agency’s temporary records.

### Permanent Records
Permanent records are programmatic records of the University that have lasting historical value because they document the functions of the University over time. The majority of these records are eventually transferred to the University Archives for permanent storage.

### Informational and Reference Material
Informational and reference material are transitory in nature, are of no meaningful value to an agency for documenting its policies, establishing guidelines or procedures, or to certify transactions, and may be destroyed as soon as they are no longer needed.

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### E-Mail Record Examples

#### Temporary Records
- **Administrative Series SG0018**  
  *Correspondence (Routine)*  
  Disposition: Retain by University for 3 years and then destroy
- **Fiscal Series SG18131**  
  *Expenditure Vouchers*  
  Disposition: Fiscal year plus 3 additional years then destroy

#### Permanent Records
- **Administrative Series SG0014**  
  *Executive Correspondence*
- **Administrative Series SG1831**  
  *Meeting Notes*
- **Academic Course Management Series SG1803**  
  *Course Outlines and Descriptions*

#### Informational and Reference Material
- **Administrative Series SG0004**  
  *Working Papers*  
  Retain until administrative need ends, then destroy
- **Administrative Series SG0005**  
  *Rulemaking Files*  
  Retain as long as administratively valuable
RESOURCES

National Archives: Searching for Historical Records

The National Archives website provides information on ways to research their records. http://www.archives.gov/research/

IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Created in 1881 and established as a state agency in 1907, the Idaho State Historical Society (ISHS) is an extraordinary system of cultural and historic resources. ISHS Preserves and provides access to irreplaceable state owned historic collections including 250,000 artifacts, 500,000 photos, 40,000 maps and architectural drawings, 60 historic buildings, and 20,000 archeological items.
https://history.idaho.gov

FAST FACTS*

In 1973, NARA lost 18 million military records in the St. Louis, Missouri fire.

545 miles: Distance if all 2.3 million cubic feet of record boxes held by NARA were placed end-to-end (St. Louis, MO to Dallas, TX).

6.2 billion: Number of pages of documents JUST in the military personnel files

80%

In 2010, almost 80% of [government] agencies were at moderate to high risk of improper disposition of records. This was attributed to a lack of training. **

** From Idaho State Records Manual
*From National Archives Records Administration

University Archives

University Archives

The purpose of the University Archives is to collect, preserve, and administer the records which document the history of Idaho State University and its operations. Due to a number of factors, including privacy legislation concerning student records and other related laws, materials housed in the University Archives may require permission from the Head of Special Collections and University Archives in order to be viewed. The Head may, in turn, contact the designated administrator for permission, depending on content. While these records are part of the "public record" of the state, Idaho Code recognizes several exemptions from disclosure.

The Collections included in the University Archives come in a variety of formats from all departments on campus. Some of our major holdings include:

- Albion State School Records
- Annual Budget Reports
- News Releases
- Photographs
- President’s Office Records

All transfers of historic materials should be arranged for in advance by contacting the Head of Special Collections and University Archives by calling (208) 282-3608 with any questions and requests for forms.

If you have questions about ISU Records and Information Management, please contact Monte G. Asche, Records Manager, at (208) 282-3045. The ISU Records and Information Management Program, defined by ISU policy is aligned with the Eli M. Oboler Library due to its connection to the identification of permanent or historic records.

Special Collections

The holdings in our collections are developed in relation to instructional and research interests within the University, all holdings are available for use by visiting scholars and the general public as well as by Idaho State University faculty and students.

Due to the nature of its collections, Special Collections has specific guidelines for access and use of its materials. All of the collections are non-circulating and must be used in the designated reading room located in the lower level of the Oboler Library. Patrons will be required to sign-in upon arrival and adhere to the Reading Room Policies. Photocopies and/or scans of materials may be made by Special Collections staff only when doing so will not damage the item(s).

For additional information contact: Ellen M. Ryan, M.A., M.L.I.S. Head of Special Collections and University Archives
Assistant Professor
Eli M. Oboler Library, Room 36B 850 South 9th Avenue
Campus Box 8089
Pocatello, ID 83209-8089
(208) 282-3608
ryanelle@isu.edu

SILLY BOY, WE NEVER DESTROY PERMANENT RECORDS...

WE ALWAYS ARCHIVE HISTORICAL RECORDS

Photos on page 1 from the Oboler Library webpage and the National Archives Catalog
https://catalog.archives.gov

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