Appendix F
Workshop Two Curriculum Notebooks
The New Hampshire Local Records Education Project

Dartmouth College
Hanover, N.H.
Records Management and Archives for Local Governments

The New Hampshire Local Records Education Project

Exeter Historical Society
Exeter, NH
December 9, 2002

http://www.dartmouth.edu/~nhlrep
local.records@dartmouth.edu
Table of Contents

Introduction

Part 1 What is a records management program? The fundamentals 1-8

Part 2 Keeping only what you and the community need and value Developing a records retention schedule 9-14

Part 3 Finding the records you and the community need and value Files management 14-21

Part 4 Serving the future by preserving the past Appraisal, preservation, arrangement and description of historical records 22-27

Appendices
Introduction
The guide complements Records Management and Archives for Local Governments in New Hampshire, Workshop Two of the New Hampshire Local Records Education Project series. It consists of:

Part 1 What is a records management program?  
The fundamentals

Part 2 Keeping only what you and the community need and value  
Developing a records retention schedule

Part 3 Finding the records you and the community need and value  
Files management

Part 4 Serving the future by preserving the past  
Appraisal, preservation, arrangement and description of historical records

Appendices
A: Definitions of some of terms used in records management

B: Online Resources/Bibliography

C: Hard Copy Resources/Bibliography

D: International Institute of Municipal Clerks (IIMC) and National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators (NAGARA) 
Records Management Technical Bulletins for Municipal Clerks and Records Managers

The New Hampshire Local Records Education Project developed this guide with New Hampshire municipal staff and officers in mind. State and municipal officers, citizens, librarians, and archivists in New Hampshire have shared their perspectives on what information local government records keepers will find most useful. Perhaps most importantly, this guide focuses on the implementation of records management and archives management practices when full-scale records management and archives program is out of reach.

Historically, clerks have served as the “keeper of the records” for New Hampshire towns and cities. Throughout the twentieth century, as municipal government expanded, the variety and volume of town and city records burgeoned beyond what any clerk could manage single-handedly. In effect, all staff and officers are local government records keepers and this guide is not for clerks only. The principles apply to all areas of local government record keeping.
Records Management and Archives for Local Governments

Part 1, *What is records management? The Fundamentals*

What is Records Management?

**ISO 15489 defines it as:**
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 and information about business activities and transactions in the form of records.

Thinking about the Life Cycle of Records
What are the benefits of a Records Management program?

A records management program can save space, time, and money through:

1) Fewer and better records kept in the office; there is an orderly disposition of inactive records; and those records that must be retained are preserved.

2) Retention of those records that must be kept; and timely, documented destruction of records when they no longer are required to be kept.

3) Reduction of duplicate copies; more efficient use of space and equipment.

4) Improved access to needed records.

A Records Management Program will:

- Enable public officials and staff to know what records to keep and what can be destroyed.
- Identify who or what department is responsible for the proper maintenance of the “record” copy.
- Preserve permanent records.
- Encourage the use of digital and microform technologies for information storage and preservation when they make sense and are economically feasible.
- Optimize use of space for the filing and storage of records.
- Ensure that public records are accessible and the Right to Know law applied equitably.
- Reduce the “reinventing the wheel” syndrome.
- Help protect the municipality in case of litigation.

What are the first steps in developing a records management program or simply “getting a handle on records”?

1) A mandate –

   • authorizing the establishment of a records management program,
• assigning a person or department responsibility over the records management effort, and
• encouraging the active participation and cooperation of all functional areas.

2) A records inventory to learn —
• what records have been or are now being created or received and used,
• their format,
• which department has the “record” copy and is responsible for keeping the record,
• whether there are duplicates, and
• current record keeping practices.

3) An approved records retention schedule listing —
• the functional area,
• record series,
• description,
• format,
• retention period in office and in storage, and
• final disposition.

After obtaining a mandate, surveying current and inactive records, and establishing a records retention schedule, you will be better prepared to:
• Determine your short-term and long-term goals and objectives.
• Undertake any of the following records management efforts, depending upon your immediate objectives.
• Organize a documented records storage and disposal effort.
• Develop adequate records storage space for non-current records that must be kept for a set length of time.
• Develop an adequate climate-controlled storage area for non-current permanent records.
• Create policies for storage, retrieval, and disposition of inactive records; voice
mail and email disposition; and access and copying rules and fees.

- Improve files management, whether paper or electronic.
- Establish a vital records program to ensure that documents identified as essential for resuming operations, if disaster strikes, are protected.
- Create a disaster preparedness plan for all records.
- Plan scanning and/or microfilming projects for certain record series.
- Undertake specific preservation or conservation efforts for permanent records.
- Begin specific arrangement and description efforts for some permanent records that have historical value.

The rest of this guide will focus upon doing an inventory, creating and implementing a specific records retention schedule, improving active files management, and appraising and managing historical records. NHLREP Workshop 1, Essentials of Preserving Historical Records, covered preservation planning and disaster preparedness and this guide will touch on these efforts as well.

What is a Local Government Record?

The New Hampshire Revised Statutes Annotated (RSA) 33-A:1
<http://www.state.nh.us/nhsl/liblaw/033-a.htm> defines municipal records as —

“...reports, minutes, tax records, ledgers, journals, checks, bills, receipts, warrants, payrolls, deeds and any other written or computerized material that may be designated by the board [NH State Municipal Records Board].”

The State Municipal Records Board (MUR 301.03)
<http://www.genecourt.state.nh.us/rules/mur300.html> describes them as —

“information required by statute, regulation, or administrative rule, in any format, created by or on behalf of a municipality within the state of New Hampshire.”

Other states have similar definitions for government records –
A record is information on any media that can be retrieved at a later time that relates to the transaction of public business or government functions. It is evidence of the organization, policies, decisions, procedures, operation or other activities of the municipality, and that the documentation has been created, received, retained, maintained, or filed by the governmental unit.
The documents are recorded information produced, received, owned, or used by a municipality or any other local governmental unit, regardless of physical form or characteristics, as evidence of its activities.

Not every sheet of paper or file in your computer is a record. Examples of non-records include:
Stocks of publications.
Junk mail or commercial publications received by the municipality.
Extra copies of documents kept for convenience or reference purposes.
Temporary drafts prepared for the originator’s personal use.

Nor is every piece of paper or computer document equal:
A requisition form for computer diskettes has a different value than a property record card.

Why are Local Government Records important? They:

- Establish and protect the rights, responsibilities, and interests of the government and its citizens.
- Ensure accountability through the documentation of decisions and actions by public officials conducting public business.
- Document fiscal accountability.
- Serve as a resource for policy and decision-making.
- Provide evidence of the interests of the government and the individual during litigation.
- Offer historical documentation of a community’s past and heritage.

Records are a resource that, if managed well:

- Protect a local government during litigation.
- Prevent “re-inventing the wheel!” during decision and policy making processes.
- Foster good public relations, through timely and accurate retrieval of information.
- Ensure local government adherence to the Right to Know law.

Local government records are a public trust in the care of select boards and city councils, county registrars and commissions, city and town clerks, city and town managers, staff, and citizen boards.
Getting Started

1) Obtain a Formal Mandate
Ideally, an ordinance or rule should establish the records management program.

Someone must be in charge. Likely candidates are the:

Municipal Records Committee (RSA 33-A:3 Disposition of municipal records)

Municipal Clerk (RSA 41:58 Preservation of public records - deposit with Clerk)

Town Manager (RSA 37:6 Town budget, purchase supplies, supervise departments under his/her control, other duties as required by select board)
http://gencourt.state.nh.us/rsa/html/iii/37/37-6.htm

The mandate should:

• Include an Authority and Purpose statement.
• Outline Responsibilities and Program Management, and
• Designate a functional Position or Department to implement and run daily operations.

Describe scope of program. The scope may include any or all of the following:

• Records inventory.
• Up-to-date records retention and disposition schedules.
• Adequate storage space(s) for inactive scheduled and inactive permanent records.
• Preservation of and access to historical records.
• Vital records program.
• Disaster preparedness program
• Ongoing staff training.
• Annual funding for supplies and equipment, permanent paper, digital conversion, microfilming, and maintenance of storage space.

2) **Conduct a Records Inventory.** You need to know who has what, estimate the volume, and determine current record keeping practices.

There are three methods of conducting an inventory.
- Send a survey form to all offices/individuals in the organization.
- Interview all the people who create or maintain records and complete a form using the information provided.
- Do a physical, hands-on survey yourself.

Determine which method(s) will work best in your organization. For instance, combine survey form and interview methods for records in office; then tackle records in storage or in people’s homes by doing a physical survey.

**What you will need for the inventory:**

- **Authority** from a town or city manager, select board, or city council.
- **Directive** from an administrative officer that establishes the objectives and the expectation that all staff will cooperate.
- **A plan** that defines the scope of the inventory, who will conduct the inventory, and when the inventory will occur.
- **Time to do the work.** This is one reason why the authority to conduct the inventory is necessary.

**The Records Inventory Form**

Try out the survey form with the records in your own office!

There are many sample forms available that you can modify for your organization.

- IMC form: Appendix D of this guide
A database, although optional, can be a great time saver.

- You might use an electronic inventory form for data entry or once the inventory
  forms are completed, enter the information into a database.
- Some of the fields can then become the location and tracking system for records
  in storage and the basis for the records retention schedule.

**Basic Information for Inventory Form**

The form may be electronic or paper or both. Include directions.

Department (name of department & sub-unit of department, if any)

Record Series Name (what does the department call the documents)

Record Contents (if several types of records are within the specific record series)

Format(s) (paper in folders; bound volume; post-hole binder; three ring binder; computer
  printout; microfilm, fiche, aperture cards; electronic)

Volume (# of drawers, # of volumes, binders, estimated cubic feet, etc.)

Beginning date (may be fiscal year, calendar year, or portion of year)

Ending date (may be fiscal year, calendar year, or portion of year)

How long retained? (May be # of years, until a certain action occurs, indefinite, permanent)

Any legal retention requirement? (Y)es, (N)o, Do Not Know (DNK)

Is it the official copy? (Y)es, (N)o, DNK

Other departments keeping the same information (Name department or No or DNK)

Notes (anything deemed relevant to condition, crowding, gaps, changes that have
  occurred, expect to occur, etc)

For records in storage:

- Use the same form but some of the questions cannot be answered initially.
- Give location, and number boxes, drawers, or bound volumes (use strip of paper w/
  number and insert in volume)
Part 2, Keeping Only What You and the Community Need and Value: Developing a Records Retention Schedule

What is a Records Retention Schedule?
A “general” records retention schedule provides --

- the title of each record series,
- a brief description, and
- the minimum length of time it is to be maintained.

The State’s Municipal Records Schedule MUR303.02 is an example. http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/rules/mur300.html

A “specific” or “special” records retention schedule is --

- developed by a particular entity, a municipality, or a department or agency within the municipality, and
- lists the actual record series it creates or uses.

The schedule may include --

- a description of the record series,
- format(s),
- whether designated a “vital” record,
- name of the department responsible for maintaining the record,
- name of department(s) with convenience or use copies,
- length of time it must be retained, and
- its final disposition.

It is helpful if the schedule maintained by the person in charge of the records management program indicates the legal record keeping requirement, if any, and provides the legal citation.

### Department Name

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Record name</th>
<th>Record contents</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Record Copy?</th>
<th>Time in Office</th>
<th>Time in Storage</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Dartmouth College   New Hampshire Local Records Education Project
How do you decide how long to keep a record?

1) Find out if there is a LEGAL minimum record keeping requirement.

   *This effort will take research time. Enlist a volunteer or part-time temp to help; a student training to be a paralegal or lawyer; a retiree who has such training.*

**SOURCES**

*The New Hampshire Municipal Records Board’s MUR303.02 provides the minimum record keeping requirements for some city and town records.*

Public safety and school records are not included.

http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/rules/mur300.html

Until there is a more comprehensive, updated schedule, the following sources for legal record keeping requirements will prove useful:

In New Hampshire --

**Administrative Rules.** http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/rules/index.html

...are issued by the various state departments and agencies often indicate what records must be kept and occasionally provide retention periods or refer to Federal record retention periods. Not all agencies, however, have updated their administrative rules to reflect new processes. Try to shorten the research time by calling applicable state agencies and asking to learn if the rules provide retention requirements.

**Revised Statutes Annotated**

http://gencourt.state.nh.us/rsa/html/indexes/default.html

*Labor and Employment in New Hampshire,* published periodically, provides information about federal and state record retention requirements for a wide array of employee records. (See Resources/Bibliography in this guide for a full citation.)

**Federal requirements include:**


...provides record retention requirements for some records. The Code also is available in print.

*Guide to Record Retention Requirements in the Code of Federal Regulations* provides summary information and will speed up search time in checking statutes and regulations. Commerce Clearing House publishes an equivalent guide.

---

Dartmouth College       New Hampshire Local Records Education Project
Other States —
Review the retention schedules created by other states for local government records. There are many comprehensive ones available online (see Online Resources). Noting the range of retention periods noted in other states’ schedules may help you decide upon an appropriate retention period for your records.

Records Appraisal — Deciding how long YOU and your community need to keep the records
What is Appraisal? The process used to —
• assess the importance of records,
• determine how long they retain their value and should be kept, and
• select those to be kept permanently.
Appraisal requires INFORMED analysis of the records to determine their significance to the government AND to the community it serves.
After —
• determining if there are legal retention requirements and
• checking out other states’ retention schedules and seeing the range of time periods that have been assigned,
it is time to use your collective best judgment.
Records have legal, fiscal, administrative and historical value. These values are not mutually exclusive. A record may have all of the four “values” at different stages of its life cycle.

Legal value: The record series that has a legal retention requirement or may be needed in case of litigation or government investigation.

Fiscal value: The record series is required for financial audit or tax purposes.

Administrative value: The record series enables an organization to perform its daily business.

Historical value: The record series has permanent value in documenting the community and its government.

For legal and fiscal value assess the risk of not retaining the record for a given length of time. The time often will be based on the government’s experience with litigants, auditors, and state agencies.
For administrative value, keep in mind that:

- 85-90% of the records that are filed are never referred to again.
- 95% of references are for records less than three years old.
- They may be convenience copies rather than the “official” record.

When one has a good filing system, it will be easier to identify and discard such records on a regular basis. See Part 3.

For historical value, keep in mind that:

- Only 3-5% of all records that are created or received will have historical value.
- Not all permanent records are historical, but if a record is deemed to have historical value, it becomes a permanent record! These permanent records will require some special handling and storage, and perhaps even description. See Part 4.

I have drafted a records retention schedule. Now what do I do?

Approval Process

1. Municipal Records Committee
2. Municipality’s legal counsel
3. Municipality’s governing board

Because you will probably be including records that are not identified in the State’s current municipal records schedule, you will need to involve the State Municipal Records Board.

According to MUR302.03 —

- any new record not addressed by the State’s retention schedule is to be kept until the State Board determines its minimum retention period;

MUR302.04 calls for —

- the person responsible for municipal records to notify the State Board of any public record which is not included in the retention schedule.
Distribution: Add the approved records retention schedule to the municipality's policies and procedures manual. Make sure new employees and officers (including board and commission members) receive a copy of either the entire schedule or the portion of the schedule relating to the records s/he might create or receive. Whenever someone is cleaning out their files or transferring files to a new chair provide them with a copy of the schedule.

-No one in municipal government should be able to say “I didn’t know.”

Implementation

In order to implement a records retention schedule, you must have suitable storage areas for inactive scheduled records and for inactive permanent records! See guidelines from Workshop 1, Essentials of Preserving Historical Records (Sections 1 & 2).

- Designate a clean-up day(s) for each department or board. Good times to get cooperation in such an effort include an office move or renovation, change in leadership of a board, completion of financial audit, end of fiscal or calendar year, or a new storage area or record keeping equipment.

- If it is a one day major effort (there will lots still to do in subsequent days) tell the people involved that they can wear old clothes, provide lunch and snacks, make sure the “bosses” participate, have trash barrels and storage supplies (boxes, folders, markers, labels) on hand, and distribute retention schedule AND written policies and procedures for storing inactive scheduled and inactive permanent records, and for discarding records.

Basic Procedures for the Storing Records

1) Make sure the storage areas and equipment are ready for the addition of boxed records.

- Install metal shelving.
- Number the shelves.
- Make sure shelves are clean.
- Keep aisles clear.
- Have ladder or step-up stool available for higher shelves.
Have book cart or hand cart available for moving multiple boxes.

2) Establish numbering system, labeling system for boxed records.

3) Create manual or automated system for the storage of boxes so that there is a master list of what records are stored where.

   • Every box has a transfer form, either paper or electronic.
     
     If paper, make sure the form is completed correctly.
     
     If electronic, have one person do all the data entry to ensure consistency.

4) Enforce the records storage procedures.

   • Check each box to make sure materials are properly boxed and foldered - with three ring binders, rubber bands, paper clips removed - and archival quality folders used if permanent records, etc.

5) Have available the inventory of current records.

   • If some scheduled records have reached their destruction date, it can be noted in the inventory what year(s) have been discarded as of the clean-up date.

For this first-time all-out effort, it is crucial that the person designated “records manager” be available to --

   • answer questions,
   
   • make decisions about whether records or non-records have historical value,
   
   • assist wherever needed.

Part 3, Finding the records you and the community need and value: Files Management

Files management is the records management practice that leads to accurate and fast information retrieval by the most economical and efficient means possible. Although when one says “files”, paper files may come to mind, files management principles often hold true for other formats of records from microfilm to electronic.
Can you find the records you and the public need? What is the usual result when you look for information?

Former President of the Association of Records Managers and Administrators (ARMA) International, David Stephens, identifies precise retrieval and timely retrieval as the hallmarks of an effective files management system.

Stephens identifies five possibilities for a system when you or anybody else is looking for information. From good to poor, here are possibilities:

1. The filing system delivers all the information (documents) requested by any user.
2. The system delivers all the requested information and other irrelevant information.
3. The system delivers some of the requested information, but not all.
4. The system delivers some information, but all of it is irrelevant.
5. The system delivers no information.

What can you do to improve the system? Many of you will have experienced at least some of the following common problems:

- File drawers not labeled.
- File drawers too full.
- Folders too full.
- Folders not labeled in a consistent manner.
- Folder labels handwritten.
- No cross-reference sheets.
- No file guides.
- No out cards.
- No list of file headings.
- No list of cross-references.
- More than one person creating and adding files.
- NO FILING GUIDELINES!

Start with your own files
Which ones are the most frustrating to use, where retrieval results have been spotty and misfiles are unacceptably high? Your time and effort will produce instant improvements.

Ask yourself and everyone else who accesses the files --
Does the filing arrangement make sense?
What filing arrangement would work best?

If you decide upon a different filing arrangement —
Do existing files get rearranged (converted)?

OR

Do just new records get arranged in the new filing scheme?

In deciding, consider:
When do the files become inactive?
Can I remove some of them now?
How long will I keep them in the office in the future?

Typical filing arrangements in local governments are:

- Alphabetic
- Numeric
- Chronologic

Alphabetic —
Classification in alphabetic order by name, place (geographic), or subject.

Alphabetic order can be dictionary or encyclopedic order.

**Dictionary** — every name, place or subject has its own folder arranged alphabetically.
Example: Board of Selectmen subject files go from AAA Paint Company to ZBA decisions.

**Encyclopedic** — major headings by subject with individual folders filed in alpha order behind each heading.
Example: Board of Selectmen subject files place AAA Paint Company under the heading Building Maintenance: Vendors: AAA Paint Company.

Numeric —
Classification by number that is inherent to the record series, e.g. tax map plot number.

Chronologic —
Classification by date of creation or receipt of correspondence, or by date of meeting.
For electronic files, create directories and folders based upon the same filing scheme used for paper files. If the records are on a network more information may be required, including name of the creator or department.

Example: An electronic record relating to a building inspection might be described as CE = Code Enforcement
Prop = Property file
[Street name] = street name
[Street number] = street number

Common file name elements that might be put into a file naming policy are:
- Version number e.g. version 1 [v1, vers1]
- Date of creation e.g. March 14, 2003 [031403, 03_14_03]
- Name of creator e.g. Shaw Knouss [sknouss, sk]
- Project number e.g. project number 03-03-09 [PN03-03-09]
- Department name e.g. Code Enforcement [CE]
- Record series e.g. Property Files [Prop]

When to INDEX

Most local government filing systems are natural order systems.

- Records have a name or number or date associated with them and that name number or date is the logical way to file and access the records.

They also may be direct files systems.

- Files are directly accessed without an index.

Example: Alphabetic vendor files where the vendor name is always known.

Sometimes, there is more than one logical way to file the same record.

Examples:

Property files in Code

By alphabetic street name, then number, OR
By Tax Map Plot [TMP] number.

Vendor files

Alphabetic by vendor name, OR.
Numeric by vendor number.
An index provides the alternative method of locating a record and will make filing and retrieval easier.

Examples:

For Property Files, an index by alphabetic street name and by TMP number.

For Vendor Files, an index by name and by number.

A cross-reference index also makes retrieval much easier and sometimes is essential.

Example:

If a vendor becomes part of another company and its name changes, you need to know to look under two different names or under which name everything is filed.

A cross-reference index will say “see also” or “see” to direct you to the other name.

Cross-reference indexes are no longer difficult to create.

- List all file headings in a word processing or database program,
- add see also or see to the electronic document,
- print out the list, and
- place in the front of the record series or,
- if a large record series, print out a drawer list with cross-references, and place in the front of the drawer.

Some Good Filing Practices & Procedures

- Write down the filing arrangement schemes.
- Have only one person create new files for a record series.
- Make sure labels are consistent, e.g. naming, date, font & type size, placement.
- If a document should be added to an existing folder, file it in the front.
- When necessary, use the pre-scored lines to “corner” the folder.
- When there are about fifty sheets of paper in a folder, start a new folder.

Create two new labels, each with the same folder heading as the first folder and add 1 of 2 and 2 of 2 to the appropriate folder, and for the original folder add the end date.
- If you need information from a folder and expect to walk more than two steps away from the file cabinet, take out the entire folder and insert an out card, giving the date and your initials.

For the bane of one's existence, subject files:
- Review annually.
- Control unnecessary growth of subject files by:
  Designating when a subject file becomes inactive e.g., no additions to the file in the last three years or keep only last two years of budgets.
  Maintaining no more than two copies of a document in a file.
  Knowing who maintains the "record copy" or official copy of the document.
  Retaining convenience copies no longer than the "record copy" and probably for much less time.
  Tracking how often the file is used.

Filing Supplies
Be consistent within a record series. Decide what will work best and be the most economical for each record series.

Folders
Manila 14 point [pt]
  Average office folder suitable for most scheduled records.
Press board 24 pt
  If highly active record series or if fasteners are required.
Archival quality
  If permanent records.
Hanging folders
  If a highly active record series (hanging folders can take up as much as 1/3 of the available drawer space so avoid if possible).

Tab cuts
Full cut, half cut, third cut.
To make retrieval easier by having labels all in a row within a drawer,
  Get half or third cuts all in one position, or
  Place the folder label in the same position on full cut folders.
The only time to use staggered cuts is for an encyclopedic order filing arrangement where there are primary, secondary, and tertiary categories.

Labels
Buy and use self-adhesive labels for a laser or ink jet printer.

Color coding
Color coded folders or labels can speed up filing and retrieval because the eye sees colors and patterns more rapidly than numbers or letters. The “average” office has 1 - 5% of its records misfiled.

- Use for large, active record series, when suitable.

Examples:
- Record series where new folders used for each fiscal year, e.g. accounts payable.
- Numeric record series, e.g. property files arranged by tax map plot number.

Out cards
Use if you are about to carry a file more than two steps.

File guides
Press board dividers that are slightly larger than folders, and usually have a heading of one to three letters.

Filing equipment for an office setting
If you are in the market for new filing equipment, you should know that:

Vertical file cabinets
Most inefficient of all filing equipment because:
- Require more floor space for their capacity than any other equipment.

Lateral file cabinets
Provide some space savings and retrieval efficiency, if closed cabinets are required:
- Take up less space for their capacity.
- Consider three and four drawers, 42 inch wide laterals.
  Three rows of letter size files will fit in each drawer. If three drawers high, the top can be used as counter space. Four drawers are still low enough that most people can use the top drawer without difficulty. Or the top might be a shelf with a retractable door and used to store the binders of records most people create and use.
Open shelves

- Provide high density storage, fast retrieval, and take up less floor space.
- Shelves adaptable to hold magnetic media and computer printouts as well as folders.
- Weaknesses:
  Lack of security for confidential, vital records, or permanent records.
  Switching to open shelves means converting existing files from top tab to end tab and possibly heavier folders.

A more expensive alternative to open shelves are shelves with roller doors that can be closed and locked or rotating files (a trade name is Times2) that consists of two rows of shelves that pivot. They can be closed and locked.

Oversized records

Permanent oversized records (including Mylars, whether permanent or not).

- Store flat in metal flat file (map file) cabinets.
- Use archival quality folders, the size of the drawers.
- Alternatives are:
  Roll and store in archival quality tubes or rolled plan storage boxes.
  Roll around an archival quality tube, wrap in paper or Mylar, and tie with cotton tying tape or Velcro strips.
  Stored rolled records horizontally, not vertically, on shelves, fully supported.

In an inactive storage area

- Commercial steel shelving units (including the shelves). If permanent records are being stored, powder coated is preferred to baked enamel.

- 42 inches wide, 15-16 inches deep, as high as the ceiling and the building inspector allows.

Three one cubic foot records storage boxes (12 x 15 x 10) will fit on each shelf.

Back to back shelving units can hold boxed oversized materials.

Dartmouth College       New Hampshire Local Records Education Project
Part 4, Serving the future by preserving the past:  
Appraisal, Preservation, Arrangement & Description on Historical Records

In developing a records retention schedule, the municipality's staff and officers should consider the historical value of records in addition to their legal, fiscal, and administrative values. As part of that process, you may wish to apply the following appraisal methodology developed by New York State Archives and Records Administration.


1) When were the records created?  
Are they from an important period? Are the records scarce? Do the records cover a long or short period of time?

2) Why were the records created?  
Which office? Do these records represent the principal functions of that office?

3) What is in the records?  
Are the records the only source of information, or the best source of information? Do the records cover important activities?

4) Who created the records?  
Do they reflect routine transactions or an individual's point of view? Are they the official position of the person or office? Was the creator personally involved in the events?

Enlist the help of others to research the history of the municipality and its government.

- Ask the town historian, local historical society, high school social studies department, or person working for an Eagle Scout badge to develop a time line giving a synopsis of the community's and government's past.

Such a time line may already exist, but you will probably need additional information about how your government functions now—and how it worked in the past:

- When were certain boards, departments, and commissions created?
- What were their functions?
- What did they replace?
- What were notable achievements, crises since their inception?
Sources will include:

- Annual town reports, board minutes, ordinances, resolutions, administrative policies and procedures.
- For an understanding of municipal governments in the past and older records that are no longer created, see *Town Government in New Hampshire* (Manchester: NH Historical Resources Survey Project, 1940), listed in Hard Copy Resources/Bibliography.

With the information supplied through the time line, and perhaps with recommendations from the person who did the work, decide whether the specific records should be considered of historical value.

**Keeping Permanent, including Historical Records**

"An hour of preservation may save several days worth of conservation"

If records are permanent or historical,

Store in a fire-resistant vault or facility with, ideally, --

- environmental controls i.e. steady temperature and humidity 24/7/365,
- air filtration and circulation,
- protection from ultraviolet light.

Store on metal shelving --

- that fully supports the records,
- placed 3-4 inches from any outside wall,
- with the lowest shelf 4 inches off the floor,
- and the top of the top shelf never used.

An adequate storage environment is the first order of business in preserving permanent, including historical, records. See guidelines from Workshop 1, *Essentials of Preserving Historical Records.*

**Housing the original records** – more than just finding room for them "as is."

- If loose papers, place them in buffered, archival-quality folders and boxes.
- If leather, buckram, or other hard-cover bound volumes, larger than 9 x 12, store flat on metal shelves, no more than one on top of another.
- If pamphlets or volumes with paper wrappers e.g. recent annual reports, store in archival quality folders and boxes.
- If oversize maps or plans, use archival quality folders that are the same size as the interior dimension of metal map/flat file cabinets.

Dartmouth College       New Hampshire Local Records Education Project
What difference do buffered, archival quality folders and boxes make? They slow down the inherent tendency of paper to self-destruct.

Why go to the trouble?

- You find out what you have - and what you might be able to get rid of.
- You "rehouse" original records in their own more benign "mini-environments" protected from dust and atmospheric pollutants - and from unnecessary handling.
- You probably cannot afford conservation and restoration treatment of all of your holdings.

Other preservation options can reduce use of the original, ensure the information survives a disaster, and allow wider use through dissemination of copies. They include:

- Photocopying
- Microfilming
- Scanning

These options are discussed in Workshop 1 materials.

Some originals, however, have INTRINSIC value because of some unique factor --

- Significant event in community's history,
- Circumstances of its creation,
- Importance of the signature(s), or
- Its age.

Examples: Original charter, first perambulations, petition that put a major conservation bond issue on town warrant.

The WOW factor.

Would people say "ooh!" and "aah" or "neat stuff" if the record were put on display?

These records may require conservation treatment.

Typical conservation procedures are:

- Surface cleaning,
- Washing,
- Deacidification,
- Physical reinforcement such as mending and lining.

- Have preservation microfilming done during professional conservation measures.
- Ensures that the information survives
- Reduces use of the original
- Permits greater and easier access by placing copy in library or elsewhere

- Obtain a conservation treatment report (future conservators need to know what was done) and make sure all work is reversible.

Arrangement & Description Permanent or Historical Records

"Macro" arranging — method of storing records on the shelves. There are two ways:

1) Store in appropriate containers on/in appropriate equipment as created, maintaining a location guide to find the records. You fill a shelf rather than leaving space for later additions from the same record series.

Advantages: Efficient use of space and equipment.

Disadvantages: Location guide or database necessary; records in same record series may be widely separated.

Example: All bound volumes, whether early town records, vitals, highway, tax warrants, are located on suitable shelving, no matter what series to which they belong.

2) Store individual record series together, maintaining a location guide for disaster preparedness purposes and for records used infrequently. Generally staff will know where to look for a particular record.

Advantages: For those series where a wide date range of records are used frequently, ease of retrieval.

Disadvantages: Individual record series may be in different formats over the years so storage containers and equipment will vary, wasting space.

Example: All vitals, whether in early town records, bound volumes, post-hole binders, or folders are kept next to one another on the same shelves with space left for growth.
“Micro” arranging – a more detailed arrangement within a record series to improve accessibility.

Example: Capital projects that have permanent value. Decide what records within the files have permanent value; decide subgrouping within each project e.g. contract, specs, final report, costs.

Keep in mind two archival principles: Provenance and Original Order.

Provenance: Records are kept together by originating office or creator. Do not coin-mingle the records from the Town Manager’s Office with records from Finance even if the records relate to the same subject.

Original Order: Always assume that there is a mind behind the filing system for the records you receive; and maintain that order. If someone dumped records in a box without

‖ Do not accept records unless they are properly identified, filed, and the retention/disposal date provided. If records are permanent, do not accept unless creator/originating department staff put them in archival-quality file folders, properly identified and filed.

folders and there is no discernable order, you may have to develop a filing arrangement.

“Macro” describing – provide a guide for use by staff, officers, and the public that lists the major, significant record series maintained by the municipality. It is a good way to raise the profile and reinforce the recordkeeping responsibilities of the Clerk.

- Sort the record retention schedule, if in database form, by series, or by creator and then by series.
- Using the inventory, determine the date range of a particular series and its format, and whether there are gaps in the record series.
- Use the time line of the history of the community and its government to assess the potential significance of particular records.

Enlist the help of the person who worked on the time line or another volunteer, and get funding as part of the annual municipal report budget or for a special occasion.

As part of the regular records management operation,

- List all stored records and their locations in a database. This database should be “passworded” and available internally only.
- List all folder headings of office records in a word processing document or database so that you or someone else can do a computer search for records before heading for the file drawers or shelves.
"Micro" describing -- more detailed effort to improve access to the information in current records of particular interest to internal users and to the public; and to the information in historical records. Examples:

- If officers and public complain about difficulty in determining when, why, and what decisions were made, or litigation results in a discovery "crisis," obtain funding to index meeting minutes, starting with recent ones and going back in time.

- If local residents are interested in the community's past, promote a volunteer project by the local historical society, town historian, school, or Eagle Scout to gather information from the records e.g. cemetery records, open vital statistics, school registers, tax rolls, militia lists, enter it into a database, and perhaps mount it on the municipality’s or library’s website.
Appendix A: Some Definitions of words used in records management

Active Records – records needed and used frequently in the conduct of municipal business that must be readily available and kept in office space.

Appraisal – process of determining the values of records in order to assign retention periods and their final disposition (whether destruction, migration to another format such as microfilm, or permanent retention as archival records).

Archival Records – records kept permanently for legal, fiscal, administrative, intrinsic, evidential, and/or informational purposes. Sometimes “archival” is limited to those permanent records that have intrinsic and historical value.

Archives – (1) the records kept permanently because of their continuing value; (2) the department or program responsible for selecting, preserving, and making available records determined to have continuing value; (3) the physical location where non-current archival records are stored and preserved.

Disposition – range of processes associated with implementing records retention, destruction or transfer decisions. These actions include retention for a finite period of time, permanent retention at a designated location, reformatting to microfilm or other media, and destruction; and are documented in the records retention schedule or other policies and procedures.

Document – smallest complete unit of recorded information e.g. a letter, photograph, spreadsheet.

File – An organized unit of documents, accumulated during current use and kept together because they deal with the same subject, activity, or transaction.

Inactive Records – Records no longer needed frequently in the conduct of current business, but which, for administrative, fiscal, legal, intrinsic, evidential, or informational purposes, must still be retained for either a set time or permanently. The general rule is that any record series (or possibly portion thereof) not consulted more than once per month per file drawer (or other file unit—such as a volume or case file) is inactive, and should be transferred, if possible, from active office files to storage.

Local Government Records – Recorded information produced, received, owned, or used by a municipality, regardless of physical form or characteristics, as evidence of its activities.

Record Copy (Official Copy) – A copy of a document received or created by a board, office, or department during the transaction of official business, which shall be retained for a length of time set by the records retention schedule. All other copies of the same document are convenience or use copies and may be destroyed when no longer needed, and kept no longer than the retention period of the record copy. For electronic records and even computer printouts, designating a record copy may be difficult, if not impossible.
Record Series – A group of similar or related records that are normally used, indexed and filed together and pertain to a particular function or administrative activity, and are managed as a unit for disposition purposes. Examples: Time sheets, street files.

Records Inventory – Process of identifying all record series, and indicating which department or entity has the record copy and whether there are convenience copies elsewhere, function, contents, format, arrangement, volume, date range, current retention practice, access restrictions, if any, and whether considered a vital record. Also called a records survey.

Records Management – 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 and information about business activities and transactions in the form of records.

Records Retention Schedule – Typically, a “general” records retention schedule provides the title of each record series, a brief description, and the minimum length of time it is to be maintained. The State’s Municipal Records Schedule MUR303.02 is an example.

A “specific” or “special” records retention schedule is developed by a particular entity and lists the actual records series it creates or uses. The schedule may include a description, format(s), name of the department responsible for the maintenance of the record, length of time it must be retained, and its final disposition. It is helpful if the schedule indicates the legal recordkeeping requirement, if any, and provides the legal citation.

Repository – A library, archives agency, or historical society that receives or accepts archival materials, and ensures their preservation, arrangement and description, and mediated use.

Retention Period – Length of time for which a record series should be kept in an office and in storage areas before its ultimate disposition. The retention period is usually given in months or years, but is sometimes expressed as contingent upon an event, such as audit or expiration of a contract.

Vital records – A record series containing information essential to re-establish or continue operations after a disaster e.g. those records that determine the rights and obligations of citizens and employees, and enable the municipality to collect monies owed.
Hard Copy Resources/Bibliography

This list includes sources used in preparing the workshop guidelines.

Prices in brackets are non-member prices from ARMA International, Society of American Archivists [SAA], and American Association for State and Local History [AASLH].

Many of these publications are available in New Hampshire via interlibrary loan [ILL]. Check the NH State Library’s online catalog <http://webster.state.nh.us/nhsl/nhupac.html> if your browser has a telnet connection to learn what is available or just give a list of books you would like to see to your local library.

ARMA International and Society of American Archivists. Sample Forms for Archival and Records Management Programs, 2002. [$40]

ARMA International. Subject Filing - A Guideline, 1988. [$38]


*Town Government in New Hampshire* (Manchester: NH Historical Resources Survey Project), 1940. [out of print]

Online Resources/Bibliography

These online sources were also used in developing in the workshop guidelines.

General

http://www.coshrc.org/arc/index.htm

The Archives Resource Center (ARC) is a web-based information clearinghouse developed by the National Forum on Archival Continuing Education (NFACE), Council of State Historical Records Coordinators (COSHRC), the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH), and the Society of American Archivists (SAA). This site is an excellent resource for technical leaflets and other documents on local government records from a range of sources.

http://www.nagara.org/rmbulletins

The online version of Records Management Technical Bulletins produced by the National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators and International Institute of Municipal Clerks. The NAGARA site also provides two electronic newsletters and has links to all the state archives.


Records Management Self-Evaluation Guide, National Archives and Records Administration Management Guide Series. Aimed at Federal agencies, it is a quick list of records management responsibilities. Site also provides links to other resources within NARA but not to the Code of Federal Regulations. NARA’s Preservation section includes a handy preservation technical leaflet and links to useful preservation sites.

http://infomgmt.homestead.com

Alan Zaben’s Records and Information Management Resources contains links to thousands of sites. Alphabetical index of subjects makes it easy to negotiate. Includes U.S. State and Local Governments, Sample Forms, Records Manuals, email policy, etc.

Legal Requirements for Municipal Recordkeeping in New Hampshire

http://www.state.nh.us/nhsl/liblaw/033-a.htm

Chapter 33-A of the Revised Statutes Annotated is the legal foundation for recordkeeping in local governments.

http://www.state.nh.us/nhsl/liblaw/041.htm

Chapter 41 of the Revised Statutes Annotated outlines the duties of town officers in relation to the preservation of records. Chapter 41 is especially important as it governs the town officers' responsibilities for maintaining records and ensuring that the chain of custody is observed.

Dartmouth College          New Hampshire Local Records Education Project
Records Management and Archives for Local Governments in New Hampshire

Appendix C

http://www.state.nh.us/nhs/liblaw/091-a.htm

Chapter 91-A ensures access to public records and meetings in New Hampshire.

http://www.state.nh.us/nhs/liblaw/126.htm

Chapter 126 of the Revised Statutes Annotated governs the disclosure of vital statistics.

http://gencourt.state.nh.us/rules/mur300.html

Site includes the rules as well as retention and disposition schedule established by the Municipal Records Board.

http://gencourt.state.nh.us/rsa/html/indexes/default.html

For all the RSAs.

http://gencourt.state.nh.us/rules/index.html


Federal Government

http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/index.html

Code of Federal Regulations (searchable for title, keywords, etc.)

Other States' Local Government Records Retention Schedules and records management guidelines/technical leaflets

http://www.cslib.org/opra.htm

Connecticut's Local Government Records site: Includes useful standards and guidelines for fire-resistant vaults and safes, vault size, microfilming Requests For Proposals, imaging, and email, as well as the local government records retention schedule.

www.kshs.org/archives/recform.pdf

Kansas' Local Records Inventory Form is one of the simpler ones.

http://www.state.ma.us/sec/arc/arcrmu/rmuidx.htm

Massachusetts' Records Management Unit includes local government records retention schedules, technical bulletins and guidelines for electronic record keeping.

http://www.state.me.us/sos/arc/records/

Maine’s local government records retention schedules and its guidelines for email.

<http://dmla.clan.lib.nv.us/docs/NSLA/records/manual/man-07.htm>


Dartmouth College New Hampshire Local Records Education Project
http://www.bgs.state.vt.us/gsc/pubrec/infospec/forms_muni.htm

Vermont’s Information Specialist in the Department of Buildings and General Services provides local government records retention schedules and other information.


Wisconsin’s Local Records Manual includes an inventory worksheet.

Other Records Management Manuals

http://www.dartmouth.edu/~recmgmt/


Vital Records Management (“Vital” as in records necessary to resume operations after a disaster)

http://www.archives.state.al.us/ol_pubs/govrec22.html

A brief guide to the need for a vital records program from the Alabama State Archives. The list of potential “vital records” is broad.

http://www.washington.edu/admin/recmgt/vital_records2.html

How-to manual covering identification, protecting, storing, and recovery of vital records.

Files Management

http://www.state.in.us/icpr/webfile/publicat/filecontents.html

A files management manual; includes alphabetic filing rules.

http://www.filemate.com/alphabetic5.htm

18 Filing Rules For Proper Alphabetizing.

http://www.washington.edu/admin/recmgt/filesmgmt.html

University of Washington. Files Management (last modified 18 Dec 2000).

Historical Records


Records Management and Archives for Local Governments in New Hampshire
Appendix C


http://www.sara.nysed.gov/pubs/publist.htm

New York’s other publications run the gamut of records management and archives management for local governments. The state’s municipal records schedule is also online.

**Electronic records**

http://www.mnhs.org/preserve/records/electronicrecords/

erguidelinestoc.html

The State Archives Department, Minnesota Historical Society 2001 publication covers electronic records management strategy, file naming, file formats, storage facilities and procedures, digital media, electronic document management systems, email management, web content management, and electronic and digital signatures. It includes lots of links to other resources.
Records Management and Archives for Local Governments

Appendix D

International Institute of Municipal Clerks (IMC) and National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators (NAGARA)

Records Management Technical Bulletins for Municipal Clerks and Records Managers
Records Management and Archives for Local Governments

Records Management Case Study

The North Hertford town government is moving into a new facility in six months. All departments, except Police and Fire, as well as boards and commissions will have space in the new building. You as Town Clerk will have a climate-controlled vault and on the basement level there will be a records center, a studio for the community cable TV operation, and a computer room for the servers.

You see the move as an opportunity to get the town’s records together in one location. The Select Board agrees that something must be done so that the town can respond to public requests for information. Several citizens have been vocal about the slowness or inability of the town’s staff to produce records. Even you had a problem in trying to locate records about a particular street acceptance. The Select Board members, despite trying to research a topic, find that citizens with long memories know more than they or the Town Administrator do.

Departments and boards admit that there probably are lots of redundant copies but argue that they do not know who is responsible for what records or how long the records are being kept so it is better to hold onto the copies they have. The file cabinets are full and some departments are using boxes to hold the overflow. In addition, in the attic of the current town offices are boxes of old records that none of the current officers or staff know anything about.

Some of the boards and commissions keep records in their homes or barns as there never was space in town offices for their files. Some had used old file cabinets stored in the basement of town offices but it flooded regularly. In fact, Zoning Board of Appeals lost some of its records because of severe water damage and had to photocopy others because the originals were so moldy.

Electronic records are creating new problems. The Public Works department head was particularly upset when the Town Administrator deleted all the department’s email messages that were older than six months. Included in the deletion were spreadsheets relating to on-going projects that had been sent as attachments in email messages.

The Select Board agrees that you as Town Clerk and per RSA 41:58 should come up with a plan for cleaning up the records mess before the move. What are your recommendations?
Records Management and Archives for Local Governments

Some historical appraisal examples:

1) In 1905 the Municipal Clerk asked citizens on a volunteer basis to complete a form providing information about their family history -- births, marriages, and deaths -- for as far back as they could. The Clerk compiled the vital statistics information from his records, church records, newspaper notices, and the forms he received, verifying as much as he could. The municipality subsequently published a book containing the information from the 1700s to 1880s; that book has now been scanned by the Public Library and is available on the Library’s website. What would you do with the original correspondence and forms you found during the records inventory?

How would you answer the “When, why, what, who” questions?

2) The Clerk has correspondence from residents serving in the armed forces during World War II as well as a scrapbook of news clippings relating to some of them. What would you do with them?

How would you answer the “When, why, what, who” questions?

3) The Clerk organized the municipality’s two hundred fiftieth anniversary celebration. It was so successful that an Old Home Days weekend has been held each year since, and she has chaired or co-chaired the event. There are videos, photographs, programs, as well as financial records and other correspondence, including email between the co-chairs, relating to the planning of each year’s event. What should be kept? By the municipality?

How would you answer the “When, why, what, who” questions?

4) While doing the inventory of stored records, you find twelve boxes of subject files that belonged to the former city manager dating from the 1970s. They are well organized and cover a range of activities; in some cases, he was copied and there is no indication of any action or decision he made. In other cases, there is correspondence back and forth, and he has annotated documents and reports he received. What do you do with the boxes?

How would you answer the “When, why, what, who” questions?
NH Local Records Project Participant Survey

If you have implemented any of the techniques listed below, please check:

20. Monitoring temperature or humidity in your repository
31. Exhibit copies of historical records rather than originals
18. Printed new permanent documents on acid free paper
13. Rotated items on exhibit more frequently
3. Installed UV filters in display cases
26. Created a list of preservation priorities

If you have implemented any of the steps listed below, please check:

21. Reviewed your organization’s collection policy
32. Conducted a records inventory
20. Arranged & described a photo collection, papers, or documents using techniques described in Workshop 2
13. Revisited your organization’s collection policy
34. Evaluated your organization’s filing practices

Is your organization planning on implementing any outreach ideas presented at the workshop? 18. Yes 6. No

Which of the following workshops have you attended (check all that apply):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workshop 1</th>
<th>Workshop 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 Keene Nov '01</td>
<td>15 Concord Mar '02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Conway Nov '01</td>
<td>3 Berlin Apr '02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Plymouth Nov '01</td>
<td>6 Portsmouth Apr '02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Hanover Nov '01</td>
<td>7 Manchester Apr '02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Nashua Dec '01</td>
<td>1 Littleton Apr '02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Concord Nov '02</td>
<td>2 Berlin Nov '02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Plymouth May '02</td>
<td>5 Portsmouth Oct '02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Hanover May '02</td>
<td>5 Manchester Nov '02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Nashua May '02</td>
<td>1 Littleton Nov '02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Exeter Dec '02</td>
<td>2 Exeter Dec '02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Have you requested a Preservation Assessment? 37. Yes 25. No

If so, have you begun to implement the Consultant’s recommendations? 29. Yes 5. No

If you haven’t or don’t plan to implement the recommendations, why not?
16. Budget constraints 17. Time constraints 10. Space constraints
15. Staff constraints 6. Other priorities 7. Lack of managerial or board support

Have you taken any steps (for example: preserve historical material, organize material, write a description of a collection, index material, catalog material, undertake new outreach initiatives, etc.), as a result of attending the workshop that you otherwise would not have taken? 42. Yes 10. No

If so, please tell us what steps you have taken:

Will apply for NHSL Conservation Grant. Organized vertical files.
Cataloging our books. Preservation photocopying. Installed a dehumidifier. (2)
Taking paper plans out of envelopes and placing in Mylar. Shutt doors and windows.
Transferring photos [from library] to historical society. Developing finding aids.
Using acid-free boxes to store materials. Recording temp. and humidity daily.
Got an air conditioner. Purchasing preservation supplies. Reviewing disaster plan.
Engaged a contractor to make storage room more environmentally safe.
Building a vault with the historical society [for storing town records and historical society materials].
Writing a disaster recovery plan. (3) Planning outreach initiative.
Writing a mission statement and collection development policy. Drafted a collection development policy.
Developed accessioning, deaccessioning forms. Cemetery tour.
Copied military roster to acid-free paper. Photos from donor kept together.
Formed a Historical Documents Committee. Took records off wooden shelves.
Reorganizing and rehousing photographs. Took records out of plastic sleeves.