

*Managing Your Files:
Guidelines for
Faculty*

University Archives
and
Records Management
Services

The University of North Carolina
at Chapel Hill



UNC
UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

A Message From the University Archivist

University Archives is the repository for the historically valuable, official, unpublished records of both the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the major administrative offices of the University of North Carolina System, headquartered in Chapel Hill. Records date from the founding of the university and include the correspondence of the presidents and chancellors, minutes of the boards of trustees, reports of faculty committees, and records of the student government, as well as most of the university's academic departments and administrative offices.

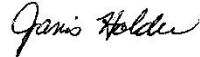
As a faculty member at the nation's oldest operating public university, you probably hold records documenting portions of our institution's history. You may have significant holdings from your time as a department chair or director of a center. Or, you may have the official files of a committee you chaired. Your files probably include unique records that document your teaching career, personal research and contributions to your profession. Like most of us, you probably don't give these records a lot of thought until it is time to clean out your office or study carrel to make way for the next occupant.

Each year I receive phone calls and emails from retiring UNC-Chapel Hill faculty members asking for guidance on what to do with boxes and file cabinets full of records accumulated during their tenures. Some of these records are particularly troublesome because of state and federal laws governing their maintenance and disposal. As an archivist, I am, of course, interested in obtaining any historically valuable administrative records for the University Archives, but I am also here to help you navigate the somewhat murky waters of FERPA, HIPAA, and North Carolina General Statute 132-1 (the Public Records Law).

These guidelines are designed not only to help you in disposing of records that have outlived their usefulness, but also to aid you in properly managing your active files.

More information is available on the University Archives web site at <http://www.lib.unc.edu/mss/uars>. You can also call or email the University Records Manager at 962-6402 or recman@unc.edu with specific records management concerns.

Cordially,



Janis Holder
University Archivist

About These Guidelines

These guidelines are designed to help you manage your files, to enable ready access to information you need during your employment at UNC-CH, and to ensure the proper disposition of your files upon your retirement. The guidelines are based on best practices, federal and state laws and regulations, university records retention policies, and a survey of current methods in use by faculty at Harvard University.¹

Major File Groups

Most faculty members keep files that can be loosely grouped into these two categories:

Personal and/or Professional Files

Autobiographical materials
Consulting files
Professional contact files—"people files"
Professional organization and conference files—"travel files"
Reference files
Research files—Project records
Special media
Speeches and presentations
Student evaluations and recommendations
Teaching files
Writings—published and unpublished

University Records

Conference files: records created while organizing university events, such as conferences or symposia
Department and Committee records: records created in your capacity as a university administrator, department chair, or university committee chair or member
Research files—Administrative records: records created in the course of a sponsored research project

Policy Overview

University records are governed by university policies and by North Carolina General Statute 132-1 (the Public Records Law). In brief, G.S. 132-1 defines public records as "all documents, papers, letters, maps, books, photographs, films, sound recordings, magnetic or other tapes, electronic data-processing records, artifacts, or other documentary material, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received pursuant to law or ordinance in connection with the transaction of public business by any agency of North Carolina government or its subdivisions." The university is a state agency, and therefore, the records created or received in connection with its business are public records.

Personal Files Or University Records?

Sometimes it can be difficult to distinguish between personal/professional files and university records. As a general rule of thumb, if the files in question are included in your school or department's records retention and disposition schedule, they are probably university records and should be maintained and disposed of according to the schedule. Note that the Public Records Law stipulates that it is unlawful to dispose of public records without permission from the Department of Cultural Resources (DCR). This permission is granted when the records schedules created by the University Archives and Records Management Services are approved by DCR. If you are unable to

locate your current records retention and disposition schedule after consulting your administrative assistant or office manager, contact the University Records Manager at 962-6402 or recman@unc.edu.

Privacy and Confidentiality

The university is required by law to protect some categories of information about individuals, including health records, student records, personnel records and records concerning human subject research.

The **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)** requires any school, college, or university receiving federal funds to protect the confidentiality of student information. See <http://regweb.unc.edu/resources/ferpa.php> for more information about FERPA policies at UNC-CH.

The **Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA)** restricts access to medical information about individuals, including medical records and other personal health information. At UNC-CH, some units function as health care providers covered by HIPAA. See <http://www.unc.edu/hipaa/> for more information about HIPAA policies at UNC-CH.

The **Department of Health and Human Services regulations (45 CFR 46)** govern records of research involving human subjects. Ethical and regulatory oversight of all research involving the use of human subjects at UNC-CH is the responsibility of the Office of Human Research Ethics. See <http://research.unc.edu/ohre/> for more information.

In addition to the above, there are certain categories of public records that are subject to privacy and confidentiality regulations. These include, but are not limited to, personnel records, certain categories of legal records, records of criminal investigations, emergency response plans, and sensitive public security information.

Records subject to privacy and confidentiality regulations should be segregated from other records, retained securely, and destroyed confidentially according to the disposition instructions in your approved records retention and disposition schedule. Contact the University Archives and Records Management Services with questions or for information on confidential destruction services.

PERSONAL/PROFESSIONAL FILES

The Library's Southern Historical Collection (SHC) selectively collects the papers of university faculty members whose scholarly activities fall within its collecting parameters (see <http://www.lib.unc.edu/mss/shc/policy/>). Library staff can also help identify more appropriate repositories. Contact the Director of the SHC at 962-1345 to discuss a donation.

The following guidelines may be helpful in setting up and maintaining your personal/professional files:

Autobiographical Materials

Include curricula vitae and bibliographies, honors, awards, degrees, press releases, diaries, oral histories and interviews, genealogies, biographical publications.

Organize autobiographical materials by category or document type, then chronologically by date.

Consulting Files

Include proposals, contracts, reports, correspondence, notes.

Option A—File alphabetically by project/organization name. Recommended for smaller projects.

Option B—Arrange by project, then by topical category. Within each category file material by name, topic, or year as appropriate. Recommended for larger projects.

Records concerning non-university work could be governed by federal/state regulations or contractual agreements. To ensure ready access, contractual agreements should be filed with corresponding project files in clearly marked separate folders.

Professional Contact (“People”) Files

Include letters, printouts of email correspondence, review and promotion records of colleagues, papers and articles, student applications, curriculum vitae, news clippings.

Option A—File alphabetically by personal name.
Option B—File alphabetically in A to Z letter files (e.g. “B” folder, “C” folder, etc. for people represented by too few documents to merit separate personal folders).

Using either option, files may be sub-grouped by category as appropriate (e.g. students, researchers, colleagues).

File evaluations and recommendations about colleagues and other professionals in separate folders to maintain confidentiality.

FERPA regulations may apply to records related to students. See <http://regweb.unc.edu/resources/ferpa.php> for more information about FERPA policies at UNC-CH.

Professional Organization/Conference (“Travel”) Files

Include agendas, meeting minutes, reports, correspondence, notes, presentations.

File alphabetically by organization name, subject, or topic, then by year as appropriate. Transfer chairperson’s records to the incoming chair.

Reference Files

Include subject files, directories, manuals, personal reference libraries of books and journals.

File by subject, or name of author, or type of material as appropriate.

Research Files—Project Records

Include proposals and planning records, research notes, research data, documentation, analyses and reports of findings, correspondence, meeting minutes.

Option A—File alphabetically by project name. Recommended for smaller projects.

Option B—Arrange by project, then by topical category. Within each category file material by name, topic, or year as appropriate. Recommended for larger projects.

Records of research projects conducted under university auspices may be subject to the NC Public Records Law and should be maintained and disposed of according to an approved records retention and disposition schedule. If you are unable to locate your current records retention and disposition schedule after consulting your administrative assistant or office manager, contact the University Records Manager at 962-6402 or recman@unc.edu.

Special Media

Include photographs and negatives, slides, audio and videotapes, specimens and artifacts, compact disks, motion picture films, maps, plans, drawings, three-dimensional objects and models, memorabilia.

Option A—Organize special media in a scheme parallel to corresponding paper or electronic files (e.g. teaching records, research project records).

Option B—Organize special media by medium, then by subject/topic as appropriate, then by date.

Label special media with names, dates, subjects, sources, and any other appropriate identifiers. Annotate media to relate materials to other files.

Speeches and Presentations

Include speech notes, abstracts, slides, transparencies.

Option A—File alphabetically by title.

Option B—File chronologically by date of event.

Option C—File by year or year range, then alphabetically by title.

Student Evaluations and Recommendations

Include letters of recommendation and evaluations for students.

Option A—File alphabetically by personal name.
Option B—File alphabetically in A to Z letter files (e.g. “B” folder, “C” folder, etc. for people represented by too few documents to merit separate personal folders).

Files may be sub-grouped by category as appropriate (e.g. graduates, undergraduates). File evaluations and recommendations separately from other correspondence and keep them secure to maintain confidentiality.

FERPA regulations apply. See <http://regweb.unc.edu/resources/ferpa.php> for more information about FERPA policies at UNC-CH.

Teaching Files—Course Materials

Include lecture or class notes, course syllabi and outlines, assignments and exams, grading guidelines, manuals, notebooks.

Option A—File by course title/number, then by semester or academic year.

Option B—Group by course, then file by lecture title.

Teaching Files—Student Course Work

Include grade reports, attendance records, graded assignments or exams, papers.

File by course title/number, then by semester or academic year. File student course work separately from course materials to maintain confidentiality. Follow your department’s records retention and disposition schedule, and use confidential recycling methods for destruction.

FERPA regulations apply. See <http://regweb.unc.edu/resources/ferpa.php> for more information about FERPA policies at UNC-CH.

Writings, Published and Unpublished—Working Files

Include manuscripts, unpublished papers, drafts or notes, publishers’ contracts and related correspondence, comments, referees’ reports, galley proofs.

Option A—File alphabetically by project name.

Option B—Group records by project name, then file alphabetically by category as appropriate.

To ensure ready access, file publishers’ contracts and related correspondence in a clearly marked separate folder.

Writings, Published—Reprints

Include articles, books, book reviews.

Option A—File alphabetically by title.

Option B—File chronologically by date of publication.

Option C—File by year or range of years, then alphabetically by title.

UNIVERSITY RECORDS

Committee Records

Records of faculty committees and those records generated by committee chairs in the course of committee business are “public records” as defined by the North Carolina Public Records Law (G.S. 132-1). Disposition instructions for faculty committee records are included in the records retention and disposition schedule of the Office of Faculty Governance.

Outgoing faculty committee chairs should: Transfer the previous academic year's records to the incoming chair.

Transfer all remaining records 1 year old or older to the University Archives.

If you chaired a departmental committee, those records should be given to your administrative assistant for incorporation into departmental files designated for eventual transfer to the University Archives, according to the instructions in your school or department's approved records retention and disposition schedule. Contact the University Records Manager at 962-6402 or recman@unc.edu if your administrative assistant is unable to locate your records schedule.

Conference Files

Include records created while organizing university events, such as conferences, workshops or symposia. Records should be given to your administrative assistant for incorporation into departmental files designated for eventual transfer to the University Archives.

Departmental Records

Include records created in your official capacity as an administrator of a university school or department (e.g. department chair, dean, interim chair, etc.). Records should be given to your administrative assistant for incorporation into departmental files designated for eventual transfer to the University Archives.

Research Files—Administrative Records

Include grant applications and contract files, policy and procedure manuals, financial records, search and personnel records, equipment maintenance records, logistics and meeting arrangement records, and reports.

Arrange by project, category or subject as appropriate. File administrative records separately from project records.

Official administrative records for research projects

funded by grants or other external funding sources are maintained by the Office of Sponsored Research (OSR). Your reference copies may be destroyed upon conclusion of the project and when authorized by OSR.

Records of other school/department research projects should be given to your administrative assistant for incorporation into departmental files designated for eventual transfer to the University Archives.

EMAIL AND OTHER ELECTRONIC FILES

At UNC-Chapel Hill, all email messages are considered public records with the exception of personal email. Personal email is not a public record and should be deleted as soon as possible from the user's university email system.

Messages With Short-term Value

Messages with short-term value (only needed for a limited time or purpose) should be deleted and purged once their purpose has concluded. Such messages include:

Those distributed to a number of staff for information only, such as news bulletins, circulars, meeting notices, copies of documents, drafts;

Those created solely as part of preparation for other records;

Personal messages and announcements not work related;

Junk mail.

Messages With Continuing Value

Examples of messages that may have continuing value are those that:

Approve or authorize actions or expenditures;

Are formal communications between staff, such as correspondence or memoranda relating to official business;

Signify a policy change or development;

Create a precedent, such as messages issuing instructions or advice;

Relate to the substantive business of the work unit or the university;

Involve negotiations on behalf of the university; Have value for other people or the work unit as a whole;

If lost, would pose a significant fiscal, legal, or administrative risk to the university.

Email should be managed by its content, not its format. Whether or not you keep an email message depends on its value, subject, and function.

Other Electronic Files

Most records created at the present time are created electronically, and many important documents are transmitted via email as attachments. Until such time as the university provides a secure and trusted repository for its valuable digital assets, the most reliable means of preserving email and other electronic records with continuing value is to print them out. Once a record has been printed out and included in your print filing system, the electronic version may be deleted. At this point, you should follow the disposition instructions in your approved records schedule for guidance on their retention, transfer, or destruction.

If you prefer to keep email and other records in electronic format, your systems staff should be able to advise you on migrating and/or maintaining electronic files with long-term value.

MANAGING EMAIL²

Many people utilize a file structure for their email and other electronic records that mirrors their print file structure. This helps provide context for the records and aids in their appraisal and final disposition. Here are three main approaches to organizing your email that might help:

No Filing Strategy

This strategy consists of creating no folders within your email software and keeping all emails in your inbox. People who choose this strategy often periodically remove emails from their inbox and save them offline in chronological folders in order to reduce the amount of server space they are using.

Advantages

The advantage of such a system is that it requires little effort. As the owner of the email, you may be able to locate things because you know when specific emails were received or can use a search engine to retrieve specific emails. Using the threaded messages feature of your software allows you to see all messages relating to a particular topic.

Disadvantages

The disadvantage is that, over time, it may be more difficult to recall when you received certain messages, and thus difficult to retrieve them without subject related folders. It may also be difficult for your successor, your colleagues, or an archivist to make sense of your emails in the future. You may end up keeping more emails than you need to because you are not reviewing the emails and assigning them to topical folders.

Filing System

The traditional way to organize records is to establish a simple filing scheme based on topical areas in order to bring together all documents on a particular topic. For some people (such as those who deal with large amounts of similar documents) establishing a filing scheme is a successful way to manage electronic records as well as paper documents. This filing structure can also incorporate your office's records retention and disposition schedule.

Advantages

One advantage of a filing system is that it provides a complete view of all the emails on a particular

topic, regardless of subject line or sender. A topical folder provides a context for a set of messages that you would not necessarily see if they were all in your inbox mixed with emails of various topics. A filing system can allow quick retrieval of emails if you know what folder you put something in. Most importantly, it allows those who may access your email later (a successor, colleague or archivist) to find emails and follow threads on subjects easily. Although you may not file every single email message, a folder system can greatly reduce the clutter in your inbox.

Disadvantages

The major disadvantage of a filing system is that it takes time and discipline to maintain. Over time you may find that you need to review your folders and delete old emails, or modify the names of folders that you have created.

Combination of Filing System and Use of Inbox

Research has shown that filing all messages is not an effective management tool for some people. If you receive a large amount of email (over 100 per day), spend a lot of time away from your computer, or just do not have the time to maintain an extensive filing system, you may want to consider a strategy in which you file some messages and leave others in your inbox.

If you choose this strategy, it is a good idea to first delete the emails that you know you do not need or should not keep. If you delete these messages on a daily basis, you will be able to easily identify the messages that you do need to keep without having to weed through too many emails in your inbox.

File any emails that you know you want to keep and that don't require follow-up. These may be emails that you want to keep as evidence of your activities or evidence of a business transaction. Depending on the content, these may be emails that you want to keep for a long time, or for a shorter period of time (such as class assignments that you may only want to keep for the semester).

After deleting and filing, the emails left in your inbox should be emails that you need to act upon or that need to be resolved. Some people find that creating a folder for messages that they need to follow up on works well. Others keep all of the emails that need resolution in their inbox. In some systems you can "flag" emails for follow up. For some emails, you may want to delete the email after the task has been completed; for others, you may want to file the email into your filing system.

You may find that one of these systems works for you, or you may use a combination of strategies to find a method of organizing your email that you are more comfortable with. These simple guidelines are suggested for the individual email user. If email messages are intended to be stored on a network server, organization schemes and folder titles should be set up in consultation with system administrators and others accessing the network.

A note on "Sent-Mail"

Your "sent-mail" folder is the official record of your email correspondence; use caution when deleting messages from this folder. *Never* delete your "sent-mail" folder without first reviewing the messages for their possible long-term value and applying the appropriate email filing strategies discussed above.

¹Guidelines for Managing Faculty Files* – <http://hul.harvard.edu/rmo/downloads/FacultyGuidelines.pdf>

²Managing the Digital University Desktop* – <http://www.ils.unc.edu/digitaldesktop/>

**UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES
AND RECORDS MANAGEMENT SERVICES**
<http://www.lib.unc.edu/mss/uars/>
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