

Section 1: **FILES TERMS**

**ACTIVE RECORDS.** *See* CURRENT RECORDS.

**ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS.** *See* HOUSEKEEPING RECORDS.

**ALPHABETIC INDEX.** A filing and finding aid for subject files that alphabetically lists each of the topics included in a subject outline and usually contains many additional subjects under which papers might be looked for. Each entry shows the file designation for papers on that subject. Also called a Relative Index.

**ALPHABETIC NAME INDEX.** A finding aid that permits documents filed by subject to be located also by the name of an individual or organization mentioned in the documents. Usually consists of extra copies of outgoing correspondence, cross-reference forms, or combinations of both.

**ALPHABETIC-SUBJECT FILING SYSTEM.** A subject classification system in which subjects are arranged in alphabetic order regardless of their relationship to one another. For example, the subjects "adobe houses" and "adrenalin" might immediately follow "administration."

**ALPHA-NUMERIC FILING SYSTEM.** A classification system in which letters are assigned to main divisions and numbers to subdivisions. For example, "A" might stand for the main subject "administration" and "A3" for the subdivision "personnel."

**APPRAISAL.** The process of determining the value and thus the disposition of records based upon their administrative and other uses, their evidential and informational or research value, their arrangement, and their relationship to other records.

**ARCHIVES.** (1) The noncurrent records of an organization or institution preserved because of their permanent value; also referred to, in this sense, as archival materials or archival holdings. *See also* PERMANENT RECORDS. (2) The agency responsible for selecting, preserving, and making available archival materials; also referred to as an archival agency. (3) The building or a part of a building where such materials are located; also referred to as an archival repository or depository.

**ARRANGEMENT.** (1) The order in which documents are filed. (2) A logical plan for organizing records, such as numerically or alphabetically by name of subject.

**BREAKDOWN.** (1) The separation of files into such basic types as General Correspondence (Subject) Files, Transitory Correspondence, Case Files, Case Working Papers, Technical Reference Materials,

Convenience Copies, and the like. (2) The internal arrangement of basic file types by such filing features as names, places, numbers, dates, or subject categories. (3) The division or subdivision of subject categories into successively more specific classes.

**CASE FILE.** A folder or other file unit containing material relating to a specific action, transaction, event, person, place, project, or other subject. A case file may cover one or many subjects that relate to the case; for example, a contract file contains records on a specific contract, such as the application, correspondence, addenda, reports, and processing documents. Other types of case files include official personnel folders, surveys, studies, and the like. *See also* PROJECT FILE, TRANSACTION FILE.

**CENTRAL FILES.** The file of several offices or organizational units physically and/or functionally centralized and supervised in one location.

**CHARGEOUT.** The action of recording the removal and loan of papers from a file or the loan of an entire file to indicate its whereabouts, usually done on a specifically designed card, such as Optional Form 23.

**CHRONOLOGICAL FILE.** *See* READING FILE.

**CLASSIFICATION.** The process, normally connected with subject files, of determining the file designation and necessary index references to records to be filed.

**CLASSIFICATION SYSTEMS.** *See* SUBJECT CLASSIFICATION SYSTEMS.

**CODES.** *See* FILE CODES.

**CODING.** The process of implementing the file designation decision made during the classification process; the process of putting file designations on the records themselves. Normally used only for subject classification systems.

**COMPREHENSIVE RECORDS CONTROL SCHEDULE.** A document describing all records of an agency or institution, specifying records to be preserved as having archival value, and authorizing, on a continuing basis, the disposition of specified recurring series of records.

**CONTINUITY REFERENCE FORM.** A form, such as Optional Form 22, used to replace a record that has been moved to another location in the file. In a general correspondence (subject) file, it often indicates that correspondence has been brought forward from a cutoff subject file for attachment to a letter in the current year's file.

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- COPY.** A reproduction of the contents of an original document, prepared simultaneously or separately, usually identified by function or by method of creation. Copies identified by function may include action copy, comeback copy, file or record copy, information or reference copy, official copy, and tickler copy. Copies identified by method of creation include carbon copy, mimeograph copy, ribbon copy, and electrostatic copy.
- CORRESPONDENCE FILES.** See **SUBJECT FILES.**
- CROSS-REFERENCE.** A finding aid, such as Optional Form 21, that directs the user from one place in the file to another when a particular document may be requested by more than one name, number, or subject.
- CURRENT RECORDS.** Records necessary for conducting the current business of an office and therefore generally maintained in office space and equipment. See also **NONCURRENT RECORDS**, **SEMICURRENT RECORDS.**
- CUTOFF.** See **FILE BREAK.**
- DAY FILE.** See **READING FILE.**
- DECENTRALIZED FILES.** Files of an agency or agency component that are maintained at several locations. Physically decentralized files can be made subject to centralized intellectual and administrative controls.
- DECIMAL FILING SYSTEM.** A system for classifying records by subject, developed in units of 10 and coded for arrangement in numerical order. Each of the 10 main subjects (000-900) may be divided into as many as 9 secondary subjects (10-90), which in turn may be divided into 9 tertiary subjects (1-9). The use of a decimal point can accommodate further breakdown by 9's.
- DIRECTIVE.** Any issuance of an organization that guides, instructs, and informs employees in their work. Included are formalized statements of policy and procedure. Directives are issued under many names, such as Notices, Orders, Procedures, Bulletins, Manuals, Handbooks, Regulations, Circulars, Guides, and the like.
- DISPOSAL.** Physical destruction of records. See also **DISPOSITION.**
- DISPOSAL AUTHORITY.** The legal authorization for the disposal of records, obtained from the Archivist of the United States and, for certain series, from the Comptroller General. Initiated by agencies on Standard Form 115, Request for Records Disposition Authority, or granted in the General Records Schedules.
- DISPOSAL LIST.** A document providing one-time authorization for the legal destruction of specified nonrecurring series of records.
- DISPOSAL PERIOD.** See **RETENTION STANDARD.**
- DISPOSITION.** The actions taken with regard to noncurrent records following their appraisal. The actions include transfer to a records center for temporary storage, transfer to an archival agency, donation to an eligible depository, reproduction on microfilm, and destruction.
- DISPOSITION PROGRAM.** A management system resulting in the efficient and economical disposition of records by developing and implementing standards, procedures, and techniques. Includes controlling office filing equipment, scheduling records for disposition and administering their storage, documenting agency benefits accruing from the program, and undertaking surveys and audits of disposition operations.
- DISPOSITION SCHEDULE.** A document governing, on a continuing basis, the mandatory disposition of recurring records series of an organization or agency. Also known as a records schedule, records control schedule, retention schedule, or records retention schedule. See also **COMPREHENSIVE RECORDS CONTROL SCHEDULE**, **GENERAL RECORDS SCHEDULE.**
- DISPOSITION STANDARD.** The time period for the cutoff, transfer to a records center, destruction, or offer to the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) of a records series.
- DOCUMENTATION.** (1) The recording of an agency's legal mission, functions, organization, policies, decisions, procedures, essential transactions, and accomplishments. (2) The body of records that results from such recording.
- DUPLEX-NUMERIC FILING.** The process of arranging records by adding assigned numbers associated with subordinate headings to those associated with main headings; e.g., 2 Communications; 2-1 Mail; and 2-1-1 Postage.
- FACILITATIVE RECORDS.** See **HOUSEKEEPING RECORDS.**
- FILE.** (1) An accumulation of records maintained in a predetermined physical arrangement. (2) Storage equipment, such as a filing cabinet. See also **SERIES.**
- FILE AUDIT.** A systematic evaluation of files operations, including such matters as subject classification, coding, cross-referencing, retrieval time, accuracy of filing, use of cutoffs, and layout. Also called **File Inspection.**
- FILE BREAK.** Termination of a file at regular periodic intervals to facilitate continuous disposal or transfer of the file series. Also called **Cutoff.**

**FILE CODES.** Numbers or symbols used to abbreviate lengthy file designations that would otherwise be expressed as words. Most filing systems take their name from the file code system used; for example, Alpha-Numeric, Decimal, Numeric-Alphabetic, and Subject-Numeric.

**FILE COPY.** The official or record document that is so marked or recognized, complete with enclosures or related papers. Also known as Record Copy. See also OFFICIAL FILES.

**FILE CUSTODIAN.** A person given official responsibility for the control of records at a file station.

**FILE DESIGNATION.** A distinguishing symbol, subject, name, number, or date controlling the placement of a document in a filing system. See also CODING.

**FILE GROUP.** A collection of papers that have similar characteristics and that need to be kept apart from other groups of records at a file location. Also called File Type. See also SERIES.

**FILE STATION.** Any location in the organization at which documents are maintained for current use. A file station may be large, serving an entire division, or it may be small, with only one or two file cabinets, serving a single branch or section.

**FILES.** A collective term usually applied to all records of an office or agency.

**FILES OPERATIONS.** The practical application of filing principles; the performance of the practical work of arranging current records in systematic order for purposes of preservation and reference.

**FILES PLAN.** A plan designating the physical location(s) at which an agency's files are to be maintained, the specific types of files to be maintained there, and the organizational element(s) having custodial responsibilities. Also known as a Files Placement Plan.

**FILING.** The act of putting documents into their place in accordance with an established system.

**FILING FEATURE.** The characteristic by which a document is filed and found, such as a number, date, title, name, or subject.

**FILING MANUAL.** A guide to control and facilitate filing, which prescribes and explains a particular system.

**FILING SYSTEM.** A plan for organizing and identifying records so that they can be found quickly when needed. Most filing systems are based on either an alphabetic or a numeric arrangement.

**FOLLOWUP FILE.** A file used as (1) a means of checking on borrowed records and effecting their return to the files and (2) a reminder to officials of the status of actions, which must be completed by a specific date. Also called Suspense File, Ticker File.

**FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION.** Successively dividing records into classes and subclasses to conform to the programs, activities, and transactions carried out by the organization accumulating the records.

**GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE FILE.** A file consisting of correspondence on a number of subjects, as distinguished from a case file that contains correspondence about specific transactions or projects.

**GENERAL RECORDS SCHEDULE.** A schedule, issued by NARA, governing the disposition of specified recurring series common to several or all agencies. Use of the General Records Schedules is mandatory.

**HOLDING AREA.** Agency space assigned for the temporary storage of current or semicurrent records and for records with relatively short retention periods. Also known as Staging Area.

**HOUSEKEEPING RECORDS.** Records of an organization that relate to budget, accounting, personnel, supply, and similar administrative or facilitative operations normally common to most agencies, as distinguished from program or substantive records that relate to an agency's primary functions. See also PROGRAM RECORDS.

**INACTIVE RECORDS.** See NONCURRENT RECORDS.

**INDEX.** A separate collection of cards, extra copies of documents, cross-reference sheets, or other forms arranged in a different sequence from that of the related main file. An index provides another way of finding a document other than by its file designation. For example, a contract file that is arranged numerically might have an index arranged alphabetically by the name of the contract.

**INFORMATION COPY.** An extra copy other than the official file copy. May be sent to offices with an interest in the subject discussed.

**INVENTORY.** A survey of files prior to the development or revision of disposition schedules. Generally includes such data as series title, inclusive dates, use, volume, arrangement, duplication, and other pertinent information. Use of such forms as GSA Form 3119 "Files Survey Record" facilitates the completion of inventories.

**LOOSE FILING.** Placing papers in folders without attaching them to the folders or to backing sheets.

**MAINTENANCE OF RECORDS.** All operations incidental to the upkeep of an organized filing system, including classifying, indexing, sorting, filing, and reference service.

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- MNEMONIC FILING SYSTEM.** A classification system in which records are coded by symbols that remind the user of the subject; e.g., COM for communications and TEL for telephone. These symbols are usually arranged in alphabetic order.
- NONCURRENT RECORDS.** Records that are no longer required in the conduct of current business and therefore can be accessioned by an archival depository or destroyed. *See also* CURRENT RECORDS, SEMICURRENT RECORDS.
- NONRECORD MATERIAL.** Material excluded from the definition of records, such as unofficial copies of documents that are kept only for convenience or reference, stocks of publications and processed documents, and library or museum material intended solely for reference or exhibition. *See also* RECORDS.
- NUMERIC-ALPHABETIC FILING SYSTEM.** A classification system in which numbers are assigned to main divisions and letters and numbers to succeeding subdivisions. For example, "1" might stand for "administration," "1-C" for the subdivision "personnel," and "1-C-4" for the further subdivision "retirement."
- NUMERIC FILING SYSTEM.** Any classification system in which records are arranged by numbers. May require an alphabetic index to facilitate its use.
- OFFICE OF RECORD.** An office designated as the official custodian of records for specified programs, activities, or transactions of an organization.
- OFFICE SUBJECT OUTLINE.** An outline that is normally based on the topics included in a prescribed agency subject outline and that lists each folder caption, or subject heading, needed for the records arranged by subject at a particular file station. *See also* SUBJECT OUTLINE.
- OFFICIAL FILES.** An accumulation of official records documenting an action or providing valuable information. The official files include the originals of incoming correspondence and the initialed copies of the outgoing and interoffice correspondence, the original or action copies of reports, completed forms, maps, photographs, and other documents.
- PAPERS.** *See* RECORDS.
- PAPERWORK MANAGEMENT.** *See* RECORDS MANAGEMENT.
- PERMANENT RECORDS.** In U.S. Government usage, records appraised by NARA as having enduring value because they document the organization and functions of the agency that created or received them and/or because they contain significant information on persons, things, problems, and conditions with which the agency dealt. *See also* ARCHIVES.
- PRECEDENT INDEX.** A special index used to aid in the rapid retrieval of such important records as orders, legal opinions, policies, decisions, regulations, and resolutions that serve as examples or rules to authorize or justify later actions of a similar kind.
- PROGRAM RECORDS.** Records created or received and maintained by an agency in the conduct of the substantive functions for which it is responsible. The term is used in contrast with housekeeping, or facilitative, records. *See also* HOUSEKEEPING RECORDS.
- PROJECT FILE.** A type of case file that contains records relating to an assigned task or problem. *See also* CASE FILE.
- PUBLIC RECORDS.** (1) In general usage, records accumulated by Government agencies. (2) Records open to public inspection by law or custom.
- READING FILE.** A file containing copies of documents arranged in chronological order. Sometimes known as a Chronological File or a Day File.
- RECORD COPY.** *See also* FILE COPY, RECORDS.
- RECORD SERIES.** *See* SERIES.
- RECORD SET.** Official record copies of published materials, as distinguished from extra copies kept in stock.
- RECORDS.** All books, papers, maps, photographs, machine-readable materials, or other documentary materials, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received by an agency of the U.S. Government under Federal law or in connection with the transaction of public business and preserved or appropriate for preservation by that agency or its legitimate successor as evidence of the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities of the Government or because of the informational value of data in them. Library and museum material made or acquired and preserved solely for reference or exhibition purposes, extra copies of documents preserved only for convenience of reference, and stocks of publications and of processed documents are not included.
- RECORDS CENTER.** A facility for the economical storage and servicing of records pending their ultimate disposition.
- RECORDS CONTROL SCHEDULE.** *See* DISPOSITION SCHEDULE.
- RECORDS DISPOSITION.** *See* DISPOSITION.
- RECORDS DISPOSITION OFFICER.** The agency official responsible for operation of an agencywide records disposition program.

**RECORDS LIAISON OFFICER.** The person officially designated to be responsible for administering the policies, procedures, and standards of the records management program within the office or bureau.

**RECORDS MANAGEMENT.** That area of general administrative management concerned with achieving economy and efficiency in the creation, use and maintenance, and disposition of records. Includes fulfilling archival requirements and ensuring effective documentation. Also called Paperwork Management.

**RECORDS MANAGER.** The person responsible for or engaged in a records management program. Sometimes known as a records officer or records administrator.

**RECORDS RETENTION SCHEDULE.** See DISPOSITION SCHEDULE.

**RECORDS RETIREMENT.** See RETIREMENT, DISPOSITION.

**RECORDS SCHEDULE.** See DISPOSITION SCHEDULE.

**RELATIVE INDEX.** See ALPHABETIC INDEX.

**RETENTION PERIOD.** See DISPOSITION SCHEDULE.

**RETENTION STANDARD.** The time period for particular records (normally a series) to be kept. Also called Retention Period, Disposal Period. See also DISPOSITION STANDARD.

**RETIREMENT.** Transfer of semicurrent and noncurrent records to a records center or some other authorized depository for storage.

**SCREENING.** The examination of records to determine the presence of documents eligible for destruction and the removal of such documents from the files. Also called Weeding.

**SELF-INDEXING FILES.** A collection of records in which requested information can normally be searched for and found without recourse to a separate index.

**SEMICURRENT RECORDS.** Records required so infrequently in the conduct of current business that they should be moved to a holding area or directly to a records center. See also CURRENT RECORDS, NONCURRENT RECORDS.

**SERIES.** File units or documents arranged in accordance with a filing system or maintained as a unit because they relate to a particular subject or function, result from the same activity, have a particular form, or because of some other relationship arising out of their creation, receipt, or use. Sometimes known as a Record Series.

**SORTING.** The process of separating papers into groups for filing according to a classification system. A second and third sorting of individual groups may be required to achieve the necessary final breakdown.

**STAGING AREA.** See HOLDING AREA.

**SUBJECT CLASSIFICATION SYSTEMS.** Various plans used for identifying and coding documents by topic to provide an orderly and accurate way of filing and finding. Examples of such systems include the Subject-Numeric, Alphabetic-Subject, Alpha-Numeric, Dewey Decimal, Duplex-Numeric, and Mnemonic. See also FILING SYSTEM, SUBJECT FILES.

**SUBJECT CORRESPONDENCE FILES.** See SUBJECT FILES.

**SUBJECT FILES.** Records arranged and filed according to their general informational content. Also known as Correspondence Files, General Correspondence Files, or Central Files. Consist mainly of general correspondence but may also include forms, reports, and other material that relate to programs and functions and not to a specific case or a particular person or organization. The purpose of establishing Subject Files is to bring together all papers on the same topic to facilitate information retrieval.

**SUBJECT-NUMERIC FILING SYSTEM.** A subject classification system in which the main topics are arranged in alphabetic order and the subdivisions are coded for numeric arrangement. For example, "PERSONNEL 10" might stand for "Hours of Duty." This system may be modified by combining it with the Mnemonic Filing System so that, for example, "PERSONNEL 10" would become "PER 10."

**SUBJECT OUTLINE.** A written list of topics arranged in a hierarchical manner (i.e., primary, secondary, tertiary, quaternary) and serving as the source for selecting file designations (folder label captions) for arranging, or classifying, the documents of a subject file. File codes are normally included with the subject outline.

**SUSPENSE FILE.** See FOLLOWUP FILE.

**TECHNICAL REFERENCE MATERIAL.** Copies of reports, studies, compilations of data, drawings, periodicals, clippings, etc., that are needed for reference and information but are not made a part of the official files. Such nonrecord material is to be kept only as long as needed and may be periodically replaced with more current material.

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**TICKLER FILE.** See FOLLOWUP FILE.

**TRANSACTION FILE.** A type of case file that documents the conducting of negotiations, business matters, and the like to a particular conclusion or settlement. See also CASE FILE.

**TRANSITORY RECORDS.** A general term for those types of records that lose their value within a short period of time and that should be separated during filing from records requiring longer retention.

**UNSCHEDULED RECORDS.** Records for which no ultimate disposition has been determined.

**VITAL RECORDS.** Records essential for maintaining the continuity of Federal Government activities dur-

ing a national emergency. Consist of two categories: (1) emergency operating records, which outline the essential functions of the Government for the duration of emergency conditions, and (2) rights and interests records, which are required for the preservation of the rights and interests of individual citizens and the Government.

**WEEDING.** See SCREENING.

**WORKING PAPERS.** Documents, such as rough notes, calculations, or drafts, assembled or created and used in the preparation or analysis of other documents.

**SOURCE:** Files Operations, dated 1981. Handbook issued by National Archives and Records Administration.

## GLOSSARY

### APPENDIX 1

#### Section 2: Abbreviations

CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CPD	Office of Community Planning and Development
CY	calendar year
DRMO	Departmental Records Management Officer
FOIA	Freedom of Information Act
FY	fiscal year
GAO	General Accounting Office
GRS	General Records Schedule(s)
GSA	General Services Administration
HUD	Department of Housing and Urban Development
IT	Office of Information Technology
MBO	Management By Objectives
MLO	Micrographics Liaison Officer
NARA	National Archives and Records Administration
OAMS	Office of Administrative and Management Services
OF	Optional Form
OGC	Office of General Counsel
POH	Primary Organization Head
RG	Record Group
RMLO	Records Management Liaison Officer
T & A	time and attendance
U.S.C.	United States Code