

Care and Preservation of Paper Records

In the course of doing business at Curtin we all create records that we need to keep to meet our own operational needs and for wider legal, fiscal and/or historical requirements.

The protection of records throughout their active and inactive life will ensure we have access to our records, for as long as required by Records & Information Management, the University, the general community and the State. It is important that we care for all records while they are active, in particular records of continuing or historical value.

Always consult the University Archivist for preservation and storage conditions advice.

What can you do to help?

Pest control

Pests such as insects and rodents can be attracted to records storage areas in search of food and shelter. Moths, ants and spiders are not likely to damage a paper collection but may attract other pests that do. Rats, mice, silverfish and cockroaches are the most common problems. Silverfish and white ants provide the worst threat to paper as they can produce considerable damage in a short period of time and are only noticeable when an item is retrieved or their habitat disturbed.

To reduce the possibility of pest damage:

- Keep your area clean, dust can be a breeding ground for insects and mould
- Do not eat where files are stored, as food scraps can attract pest
- Check file storage areas regularly for outbreaks of insects or rodents. Should an infestation occur, please contact the University Archivist for advice.

Fire hazards

As the many records are still paper based it is imperative to ensure that your storage and work areas are clutter free. An attempt should be made to monitor your environment to reduce the possibility of fire.

Storage

- Records of both archival and temporary value should be stored in a secure, dust free and, if possible, temperature controlled environment.
- Active files should be stored in an upright position in compactuses or filing cabinets, they should also be stored in a secure area either within a locked office or locked cupboard, particularly if they are confidential.
- Alternatively files can be stored in archive boxes supplied through the [Records & Information Management website](#), ready for transfer at a later date to their storage repositories.

Handling

Correct handling will assist in preserving paper records:

- Ensure your hands are clean and that the files are not used in the vicinity of food, drink or other liquids
- Do not use a wet finger to turn pages
- Take care not to tear or damage records
- Any fragile or damaged records should be placed in a good quality plastic sleeve.

Avoid where possible the following:

- The use of highlighters on records of long term value is not recommended as the highlighter will eventually fade.
- Post-it-notes should not be used to convey important information and placed on file. The glue will attract insects and the information will be lost once the note is no longer sticky and falls off.
- Do not use staples for long term or archival records. It is recommended that paper clips or bull dog clips be used so they can be removed easily without damaging the records.
- Never use elastic bands, over time they dry out and break this can lead to broken pieces of the elastic band getting stuck to the paper and damaging the records when trying to remove it.
- Never use any kind of sticky tape to mend or join paper records. This is particularly important for records of long term or archival value. The glue on sticky tape will migrate into the paper leaving yellow stains and the tape will eventually become brittle and fall off.
- Any records on thermal paper should be photocopied because the information on the paper will fade in only a few years making the record unreadable.
- Electronic records should NOT be copied onto removable media such as CD's, DVD's or flash drives and stored in plastic sleeves on a file or in boxes within offices. The media will deteriorate and/or be unsupported in only a few years making the records unreadable. These records should be stored on shared network drives where they are backed up.

Need assistance?

Please see the following related procedures:

- [What are Archives?](#)
- [Disaster Recovery](#)

Records & Information Management also provides practical [training sessions](#).

For more information please visit our website at rim.curtin.edu.au

If you need assistance, please contact us by email at rim@curtin.edu.au