

# What are Archives?

Archives can be defined in many different ways. The term Archives (with a capital A) can mean the building where archives are kept, or the institution that cares for archives, like for example the National Archives. For the purpose of this particular advice sheet archives are the small subset of the records we create that are selected for permanent preservation from the larger group of University records created throughout the University.

## Why do we need to keep archives?

Records are selected as archives for a variety of reasons:

- They hold essential information for the continuation of business activities
- They represent significant decisions made in the course of University business
- They hold legal information that proves entitlements
- They document the culture and achievements of University staff and students

In general, records are selected as archives because of their continuing value to the creators of the records, to the University as well as to society as a whole. Archives provide the means by which the University can provide for continuity and accountability for its actions, support better planning and decision making, facilitate access to the expertise and knowledge of past actions and activities, and provide, over time, a historical perspective of the University and its achievements.

## Types of archival records

As records can be in any format, so too can archival records. Increasingly archives will be in electronic format as we move away from working with mainly paper records to working with electronic documents & media. Listed are examples of archival record formats.

### Traditional record types

- Audio recordings - cassettes, vinyl records, gramophone discs
- Typed and handwritten letters and documents
- Photographs, negatives and transparencies
- Maps and architectural plans
- Prints and posters
- Certificates and awards
- Motion picture film and video

### Modern record types

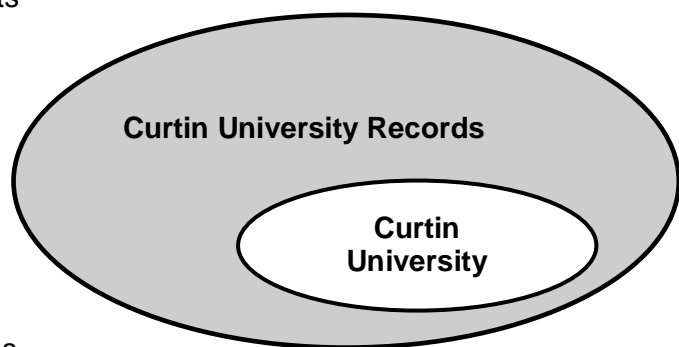
- Digital images and video
- Spreadsheets and databases
- Electronic word documents and presentations

### Other archival items

- Common seals, plaques, regalia

This list is not exhaustive. As our record formats change over time more types of archives will emerge. It is important however to identify archival records early in their life cycle, while they are still active, so that care can be taken to ensure they are preserved during their active life and safely transferred to the Archives once they are no longer needed. In the case of electronic documents they may need to be migrated to different formats over time to ensure that they are still able to be read or viewed after the software is no longer available.

When determining whether you are creating and keeping archival records it is also advisable to consult the [Disposal Authorities](#) and/or contact the University Archivist, who can assist to identify and preserve your archival records.



## Need assistance?

Please see the following related advice:

- [Care and preservation of records](#)
- [What are Disposal Authorities](#)

For more information please visit our website at [rim.curtin.edu.au](http://rim.curtin.edu.au)

If you need assistance, please contact us by email at [rim@curtin.edu.au](mailto:rim@curtin.edu.au)