Great Lakes Wave

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NARA Considers Reappraisal of Official Personnel Files

By John Stewart

A work group within NARA is evaluating the current retention period for Civilian Official Personnel Files (OPFs) in order to determine if disposal of the personnel files 65 years after an employee leaves government service should be changed to permanent retention. The work group consists of the appraiser in NARA assigned records from the Office of Personnel Management, an archivist familiar with the reference value of personnel files, and members of the national records management staff.

NARA maintains Civilian Personnel Files for the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) at the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis, Missouri. OPM maintains the Electronic Human Resources Information (EHRI) System and the Central Personnel Data File (CPDF), which is extracted from the EHRI System. OPM is scanning the personnel files of current employees of the Federal Government, and interest has been expressed within NARA and OPM to consider scanning earlier personnel files.

Until after World War II Federal agencies maintained personnel records in their own fashion. In 1947 the Civil Service Commission established standards for the Official Personnel File. OPM has exerted increasing control over how personnel files are maintained; so now the files maintained at the National Personnel Records Center are divided into three general groups. One group of records reflects individual agency management of personnel files; a second group of records reflects the transition from agency control to OPM controlled records; and finally there are current era records administered through the OPM registry system.

The OPF Work Group is concentrating on three issues: 1) facilitating OPM's scanning the Official Personnel Files of current Federal employees, 2) determining the consistency of information in personnel records over time and developing a proposal with OPM to ensure scanning of the personnel files that warrant preservation, and 3) ascertaining the

potential historical and genealogical value of official personnel files maintained at the National Personnel Records Center.

The work group plans to conclude its initial evaluation this spring and make a recommendation to NARA's management. If you are interested in the work group's activities or would like to share your thoughts, please contact John Stewart, NARA Great Lakes Region, Chicago by calling (773) 948-9024 or emailing john.stewart@nara.gov.

Upcoming Training

4/5 Basic Records Operations - Columbus, OH

5/8 KA-1 Records Management Overview - Delavan, WI

5/9-10 KA-3 Records Scheduling - Delavan, WI

5/11-12 KA-5 Asset and Risk Management - Delavan, WI

5/17-18 KA-2 Creating and Maintaining Agency Business Information - Columbus, OH

5/31 Basic Records Operations - Chicago, IL

6/1-2 Disaster Preparedness & Response - Chicago, IL

6/12-13 KA-2 Creating and Maintaining Agency Business Information - Minneapolis, MN

6/14-15 KA-4 Record Schedule Implementation - Minneapolis, MN

6/16 KA-6 Records Management Program Development - Minneapolis, MN

Contact:
Marybelle Yeazel for OH workshops
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Joseph Suster for IL, MN, and WI workshops
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E-Records Solution Looms Closer

By Galen R. Wilson

NARA announced on September 8, 2005 the selection of Lockheed Martin Corporation to build the groundbreaking Electronic Records Archives (ERA) system. This brings ERA one step closer to solving forever the problem of electronic records' (e-records) long-term retention.

Whether or not your agency has a policy managing electronic recordkeeping, you interact with e-records every day. E-records offer many advantages over their paper counterparts. They occupy considerably less space. They are more easily searched, copied, shared, and mailed. But there is trouble in paradise: unlike their sturdy paper counterparts, e-records have proven themselves incredibly fragile.

The culprits in this frailty are what makes e-records "work" in the first place: computer hardware and software. Both become "obsolete" (as the industry counts obsolescence) almost as fast as they are shipped from the factory. Need a disk drive for that eight-inch floppy holding your 1983 files? Good luck. The CD (compact disk)—once the industry darling—is rumored to be nearing the end of its popularity. Will your 2016 computer be able to open records created in Microsoft Word 2003 and stored on a CD? How much risk are you willing to take?

To the rescue is ERA, NARA's strategic response to the e-records challenge. ERA is committed to preserving Federal Government e-records in any format, and to making e-records accessible independent of the hardware and software in which they were designed to function. A tall order? You bet! Can it be done? NARA says "Yes."

The Lockheed-Martin award concluded a year-long design competition. ERA development will stretch over the next six years via several system Increments. System architecture design for Increment 1 is currently underway. You can keep track of progress at NARA's website. Watch the award ceremony at http://www.archives.gov/era/acquisition/option-award.html. Then take this quiz. (1) Is the award ceremony video a record? (2) If so, *whose* record? (3) What is the best format in which to preserve it? (Compare your answers to those on page 3.)

NARA's Targeted Assistance Initiative

By Great Lakes Region Staff

Do you…

> need help managing e-mail or web contents?
>
> have problems locating electronic files created in the course of business?
>
> need records or information management instruction tailored to your agency?
>
> create records not listed in your agency records schedule?   feel
>
> like records are taking over your office? have difficulty deciding what records to dispose of and what to keep?

If you answered "YES" to any of these questions, NARA's Targeted Assistance Initiative may be for you!

Targeted Assistance is a customer-driven and project-oriented partnership between your agency and the National Archives, designed to solve your records management challenges.

How does it work?   You and we together develop a project with a well-defined purpose, tangible products, definite milestones, and a time frame for completion. Projects can last from several days to a year and more.

What does NARA provide in the partnership? We provide a records analyst with years of records management experience. This person reviews the situation, and provides expert guidance and assistance. This could include creating records management tailored training to your needs, help in writing new records schedules, and more.

What does a partner agency contribute? You provide staff time, local experience, and coordination within your offices.

What does it cost? You pay nothing for NARA's staff time! You may be asked to subsidize travel costs for needed onsite NARA presence. You may also be asked to pay for training materials in some instances.

Where can I get more information? Contact:

Galen R. Wilson (Dayton, OH) 937-425-0613   **John Stewart (Chicago, IL) 773-948-9024**
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NARA Makes Plans to Schedule and Appraise More Electronic Records

By Joseph Suster

NARA has recently identified as one of its FY 2006 records management priorities the need to schedule and appraise electronic records, particularly permanent records, created by Federal agencies. Because of the increasing volume of such records being maintained and the automation of work processes in Federal agencies in response to the E-Government agenda, scheduling electronic records is now a strategic issue for NARA.

This will be an enormous undertaking involving substantial NARA personnel resources and the cooperation of many Federal agencies. The number of current electronic records systems and series requiring scheduling and appraising is estimated to be near 9,000 nationally. NARA's immediate goal is far more modest, to schedule and appraise about 10 percent more electronic systems and series

than it did in FY 2005. Ideally after needed internal resources are identified, coordinated, and applied to this effort, more substantial goals can be achieved in following years.

NARA is developing a number of immediate and long-term strategies to assist this scheduling initiative. Included are possible additions and revisions to General Records Schedule 20 - Electronic Records, the creation of self-analysis e-system checklists and instructional brochures, and the potential revision of internal procedures to streamline the scheduling process as it applies to electronic records.

Watch for further updates on NARA's plans to identify, schedule, and appraise Government electronic records. This effort may eventually involve your agency. For additional information, contact NARA

records management staff at either the Chicago or Dayton program offices.

Answers : From Pg. 2 Questions

(1) Yes!

(2) NARA's ERA Program. As host of the press conference, this office counts as the owner of the video record.

(3) When ERA has solved the e-record preservation problem, it might not matter.

Records Management Training Online

By Marybelle Yeazel

The National Archives and Records Administration has developed "Records Management for Everyone", an on-line training course for all Federal employees. This course is available through OPM's USA Learning site and as a standalone CD from the National Archives. All Federal employees are encouraged to take this course as an introduction to the basic concepts of records management.

Records Management for Everyone provides an understanding of basic records management principles and how they affect daily work. This course explores the techniques and protocols that govern the life cycle of a record, including concepts of adequate and proper documentation, dispo-

sition, and where to go for assistance. It discusses how managing records and information supports the work of the Federal Government and improves staff effectiveness. There are no formal prerequisites.

By the end of this course, participants will be able to identify Federal records and the key requirements for managing them; understand records management principles; understand the repercussions of poor records management; and know where to go for records management assistance within an agency.

The target audience includes all Government employees and contractors. This course is designed for all levels of employees - from senior management to file

custodians - or anyone with the responsibility for creating and maintaining Federal records.

To register, visit OPM's USA Learning Site and select "Register Here" from the top menu bar. Once you have registered, OPM will e-mail you a confirmation. Follow the instructions in the e-mail for completing the registration process. Once you have logged in to the system, select Browse Courses from the top menu bar, then choose free courses and search for Records Management.

RACO WEST 2006
By Anthony Beard

RACO West 2006, sponsored by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), will provide a professional development opportunity for Federal records officers, records management professionals, information managers, and information technology professionals. Expert speakers will present the latest updates in the records management field.

Join our colleagues and us for an informative day focusing on records management issues:

Meeting the challenge of managing electronic records presented by speakers from the U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Defense Visual Information Center, and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Lessons of Hurricane Katrina, response and salvage activities, and how an electronic GIS-enabled system was used to help save lives

The latest NARA updates and initiatives, including the role of records management in the Federal Enterprise Architecture, and building the Electronic Records Archives

Cost: $150.00 per person, lunch included

This year RACO West will be at the Laguna Cliffs Marriott Resort and Spa, 25135 Park Lantern, Dana Point, CA 92629. This is a one-day conference, Tuesday, April 18, 2006, from 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Room Reservations: A limited number of government-rate rooms will be available at the hotel.
For further information about the hotel, see www.lagunacliffs.com.

Conference Program, Registration, Hotel and area information is available at:
http://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/training/racowest2006.html.

For further information, contact laguna.workshops@nara.gov or call (949) 360-2642.