Records Management

Objectives

After completing, you will be able to:

- Describe the need for Data Management
- Explain the importance of information
- Explain the need and relevance of Management information system
- Explain Necessity - Utility and value of Records in the office
- State the Principles of effective record management
- List out the   Principle activities in record management
- Explain the record retrieval system in government
- Describe the procedure of maintenance of Record rooms
- State how   Records are arranged in record room
- List out and describe the Registers to be maintained in record room
- Describe the procedure for Receipt of records and their Issue

Data Management

In every day life we will be hearing that due to in sufficient data certain issue could not be solved. Even in our house information about the schools and colleges and the courses offered by them occupy lot of importance when we intend to join our children in a particular courses. One more example is that when there is a function in the house, we would like to extend invitations to all our friends and relatives etc., Data or information about their addresses etc. are very much necessary to extend the invitation. Isn't it? With the examples given above we are sure that you are able to understand what is data?

Data constitute the raw material, which gets transformed into meaningful information**. Managing and processing data** to get the required output is the crux of the problem facing records management. For data, to become meaningful information will depend on its accuracy, timeliness, coverage and consistency. The level of each of these will vary depending on the situation. **The data** if converted into meaningful information, becomes the key resource of management, as it enables the to plan and control the activities of an organization.

We know that every activity performed by an organization essentially requires data. For example, if we take the activity of operation of pay roll, we find that this activity will require an employee's name or number, designation, basic pay, other allowances. Each is a different attribute and under goes frequently. Each attribute is called a data item or aid. All related fields grouped together form a record. A collection of such record constitutes a data file. Every organization maintains a number of data files. All such files constitute a database. Generally

speaking a database can be defined as an organized collection of operational data used by a system in the organization.

What is information?

Etymologically "information" is derived from the Latin word "informare" means to give form to and has of concrete news intelligence, knowledge, data etc. Information is a critical resource. It has to be managed effectively in order to assist decision makers at all levels in their activities ranging from planning, direction, coordination, supervision etc

Please note that the concept of information is distinguished from data or knowledge. Data is raw material for information. Information is useful in systematic and regular processing. It is collected and preserved after due appraisal. It aims at solution of particular problem or is utilized for that purpose. The value of information increases or decreases with the change in the problem context or even the socio economic realities.

Why is information necessary?

The management needs information in order to reduce the amount or range of uncertainty during decision-making. Information therefore must be fully updated, tested, critically analyzed and comprehensive. It should be properly linked in the system as well as the sub system through articulation and not by more implication. The higher decision-making levels need more accuracy and reliability of information. Accountability of management levels cannot be maintained or expected unless the management system has built up a viable and comprehensive information system within it. The management information system is, thus the nerve center of an efficient and dynamic organization.

Management information system

An extension of the manual paper work procedures and practices is management information system

Management information system has its own network of principles and procedures to operate the total management system in order to achieve its objective of information management. For that it has to determine the magnitude and nature of the information it has to manage.

As per the cycle of retrieval (collecting), processing, communicating, storage is in continuous operation and includes incidental and related activities like classification, sorting, summarizing, coding and monitoring of vast amounts of data through manually operated filling systems including files and cards as well as electro magnetic tapes etc.

As a result of passage of time and change in administrative contexts and priorities, utility of records is diminishing. The most important record today to someone somewhere becomes unnecessary tomorrow.

Necessity -utility and value

The vast complexity and expansion of the organizational functions in a modern welfare administration makes it imperative to retain public records with utmost care. No public organization can afford to skip creation of records where it should be created. Public records are created and maintained because human memory falls to retain or systematically recapitulate the requisite information at the crucial time constraint.

Principles of effective record management:

One of the priorities in developing a records management programme is to clearly lay down the principles. The basic principles are: Appraisal, Weeding, Accessibility, Control, Speedy retrieval, economy and Storage space.
Appraisal: Review at appropriate stages, starting from the stage of last action on a current record

Weeding: This process is synonymous with ordering elimination or destruction of one time record which is now unwanted.

Accessibility: Records should not be scattered/remotely located but should be promptly accessible.

Control: A conscientious control and application of the restraint since creation till final disposal will ensure good and efficient records management

Speedy retrieval: This is the acid test of records management and reflects its efficiency. After all records are created for speedy retrieval!

Economy: Real economy and not illusory economy is a boon to records management for a good equation of expenditure with result to be achieved in records management.

Storage space: records should be housed not in the highly expensive storage space but in moderately expensive space.

Principle activities in record management

The various main activities involved in records management can be grouped in the six categories:

1.	Creation	2.	Classification
3.	Transfer	4.	Maintenance
5.	Preservation	6.	Review and weeding out

Creation: Since this is the first crucial stage of records utmost care should be exercised at this stage. It must be determined whether it is essential or obligatry to create a particular record or whether personal discussion can serve the purpose of communication or exchange of views at different stages of decision making necessitating interdepartmental or intra departmental consultation quickly. Information can also be exchanged over telephone or it can even be incorporated on the original communication or paper and returned to the sender. For processing cases of repetitive type and or routine nature where policy procedures are clear or well-known standard process sheets i.e. Note file in a format without missing any item should be devised instead of resorting to elaborate and conventional noting.

Classification: Records created by different agencies different in different contexts serve different purposes in the organization. Naturally, therefore, the utility, importance also varies from records, which warrant retention for different periods. Depending upon this, different gradation is awarded to the different types of records. as: Permanent, Important, and Decision.

Permanent: Records, which are never to be destroyed, are the permanent records**.** There may be need at a remote point of time to supply some vital information or missing links require to be supplied from these records or in essence these may be called for at an emergency. The R. Disposals come under this category.

Important: These records are to be preserved for a considerable long period because of their usefulness in decision-making. The various registers and returns, which are very important as reference material,   come under this category. The district office manual prescribes time limits for retention of these registers and returns.

Decision: The records remain useful as sources of information for a comparatively short time in future. They are important for some time but need not be retained permanently like the 1st one. The lodged disposals and K. disposals, which are to be retained for one year or as per the requirement of the department, come under this category.

Classification of records on the foregoing lines helps in formulating proper retention schedule, review and weeding those, which have little current utility and no future reference.

Transfer: Records, originate and spend their current stage (file) in the custody of the creating unit i.e., normally a section or an assistant's desk. They are

required for day-to-day correspondence handling or frequent reference even in their semi current stage i.e. the submission for disposing and the date of recording.

Maintenance: You know that the dealing assistant maintains the currents and files in the section. The sections are also responsible for disposing the files and maintenance of the disposals till they are handed over in the record room. Records maintenance should be centralized and entrusted to the departmental record room. Though the record assistant in the record room maintains records, easy accessibility to the records by everyone concerned should be ensured. Every year large number of records are created in offices. Retaining these records require lot of space in the record room. Hence care should be taken to weed out the unwanted records for better utilization of storage space to optimize it and to minimize the storage cost.

Preservation: Like human beings records also breathe and need proper humidification or de humidification. Longevity of records depends on suitable storage environment and care in handling them. You might have observed in some places that rodents and white ants eat away the records.   Proper arrangements for lighting, protection from rodents etc. need to be made to preserve the records safely. The assistance of Archives department can be obtained for this purpose.

Review and weeding out: You have seen that the retention period for each disposal and various records like registers and returns are prescribed. Some of them may require to be retained after the due date of retention. For this purpose a review of records is to be taken up for deciding the future of the past files. In order to ensure proper upkeep, maintenance and preservation of records, it is essential that records are systematically and regularly reviewed and weeded out.

Review of class R Disposals: As already discussed R Disposals are those which are to be retained permanently. However, as per orders of government even R disposals will be reviewed after 50 years with view to see whether they need to be retained further or destroyed. In case they are required the Archives department retains them in the shape of microfilm and the original record destroyed**.**

Review of D. Disposals: Disposals will be reviewed after 10 years from the date of disposal with a view to see whether it can be disposed or required to be retained permanently**.**

Weeding out records other than Disposals:

The records not falling within the category of files (disposals),

Like publications, copies of government orders and other registers etc should also be weeded out periodically by section to ensure that unnecessary accumulation of waste paper through carelessness is avoided.

Keeping cost: Large number of records needs large space, furniture and staff and preservation. This includes cost of storage space, cost of furniture, electricity and other user charges, cost of staff to maintain the record room and record.

Preservation cost: Expenditure on preservation of records is a reasonable necessity and not an avoidable luxury, contrary to the popular belief in some quarters.

Organization for Record management

Presently, only in big offices we have the record rooms and staff for its administration. In smaller offices one of the existing assistant is being asked to look after the work and no proper arrangement is available. There should be a section to look after records management and a records administrator in each office who should report directly to the head of the organization.

Information /record retrieval system in government

Why and how to retrieve? Information is collected, stored and preserved for future use by different levels of decision makers. It is hence necessary that the information should be available whenever required without undue loss of time so that the decision taking function is performed efficiently.

The question of retrieval, therefore assumes importance right from the stage of creation of a file. During its active life, the file has periods of activity as well as rest. When it is active, it may be moving up and down or horizontally within the organization or even moving out of the organization temporarily from time to time. During period of temporary rest, the file is in the custody of the dealing hand, record clerk or the section assistant if it is in suspense. The retrieval at this stage, is facilitated by the movement and Personal registers maintained in the section.

Aids to retrieval

The movement and Personal registers which help in retrieval are aids to retrieval which indicate the latest location of the source records. Other aids, which help in retrieval, are: Index of records, Retention schedules, Microfilm, Jackets, Fiche etc., Let us see the details about them.

Index of records: An index helps an individual in tracing previous papers on a particular subject. The index slips of all R & D disposals are made a list and

circulated among all staff so that it is easy for every dealing hand to locate the disposal when needed.

Retention schedules: One of the pre requisites of a sound records management system is that there should be a reasonable ratio between the creation and destruction of records

Retention schedules for records are of two types first covers the records relating to activities, which by nature are common to all departments/offices of the government. The second type of schedule deals with records pertaining to substantive functions of a department. The R and D and other disposals come under the 2nd type. A schedule of retention is indicated for various items in the District Office manual.

The next major step towards compilation of retention schedule is the analysis of the organization set up of the concerned records creating agency and its existing documentation practices and identification of records groups produced by the agency

The officer responsible for the compilation of retention schedule should be very careful in suggesting the categorization of records.

All records groups, which are required for more than 10 years, should be given classification.

Microfilm: Putting a document on microfilm means photographing it to a fraction of its original size. The most fundamental reason for using microfilm is simply to reduce the need for storing vast amounts of paper, which takes up space, accumulates dust and is expensive to maintain.

Departmental records room

All departments of the government are expected to have their own record rooms.

A separate records room is vital necessity for all government departments. A record room should as far as possible, be located on the ground floor of a building.

Drainage: While selecting the location of the record room, it should be ensured that no water pipes or drains pass near, under the record room building.

Air conditioning: Storage of records in an air-conditioned atmosphere is conductive to is longevity, since it protects from dust, heat and humidity. In the present computer age and the thought of a paper less office, makes it necessary to have air conditioning in all the record rooms.

Non-conditioned area: Keeping in view economy in resources, in many cases it may not be possible to get record rooms air-conditioned. In fact, in most of the government offices availability of a record room itself is an achievement. Hence, air conditioning is not thought till now. But due to the changed circumstances and need of the present day, it may become necessary. However, if not air-conditioned adequate care should be taken to see that the rooms are properly maintained.

Temperature in record room can be kept within reasonable range by choosing such rooms.

Shelving: Shelving in a records room should be functional, durable easy to clean, simple in design and which offers maximum protection to records.

Storage: Collections in records room are in bulk size and commonly consist of bound volumes, loose sheets, files, manuscripts, maps, charts, plans. Shelving arrangement needed for specific material need designing according to the nature shape.

Lighting: Good lighting with either natural or artificial light is necessary for every record room for easy location of the record.

Fire fighting arrangements: To protect against any accidental fire, all electric wiring should be through conduct pipes and the main control switches of lights etc. As far as possible the record room should be made fire resistant. Arrangement for fire alarm, fire fighting equipment etc. should be made available and also proper training to the persons in the record room be provided.

Care and vigilance: To sum up good house keeping, creation of hygienic conditions, proper breathing environment combined with constant staff vigilance alone facilitate maintenance of records in healthy state and prolonging their life.

Arrangement of Records in government offices

You have seen why we need to maintain the record and how a record room is to be arranged. We have seen that the disposals, registers, records, return etc. are sent to the record room. Let us now see how these records are to be arranged in the record room in government offices.

Arrangement of records after disposal: Role of the Record Keeper

'R' AND 'D' Disposals: After disposal, the Superintendent, Fair-copying Section, or the concerned assistant excepting an "N" Disposal will send the file to the record keeper. The record-keeper will acknowledge it in the respective column of the personal register.

(1)　He/she will see that the files are in order, properly arranged with their pages numbered (the current file in red ink, and the note-file in black ink)

(2)　The pages will not be renumbered after disposal in one continuous series for current and note files.

(3)　If they are "R" or "D" disposals, proper marking on the outside of the jackets, and the back and forward numbers marked inside the jackets as required

(4)　He/she will also scrutinize the pages of the files for signs of stamps having been removed.

(5)　He/she will detach the index slips from the R and D. Disposals and file them in his bundles

(6)　He/she will then put the disposals in the shelves or racks in their proper order.

Destroying of 'L' Disposals and other series

1.　At the initial stage of sending disposals in the 'L-Dis' and any
other series with limited periods of retention for less than ten years, it should be examined closely whether a disposal needs to be re-scrutinized after the prescribed period of retention.

2.　It should be certified as fit for destruction or for further retention.

3.　The docket sheet of each such disposal to be sent to the Record Room should carry a certificate thereon as shown hereunder, with the words not applicable to a disposal having been struck-off:

　　　"To be destroyed straightway/sent back for re scrutiny in the year …………after the prescribed retention period"

4.　The disposals carrying the certificate "to be destroyed straightway in the year …… i.e after the prescribed retention period" on their docket sheets should be destroyed by the record assistant soon after completion of prescribed period of retention, without sending them back for review. However, on account of any new development even such records can be called for (any time before destruction) from the Records Room and the certificate revised to require retention for a further period or to be sent for re-scrutiny after a specified period, etc.

Disposal bundles:

1.   There will be separate series of bundles for "R", "D" and "L"
Disposals, respectively, and in these the files, or papers, will be arranged in order of their current numbers. These will of course not form a continuous series in any one bundle, but that is quite immaterial, and will not give rise to any difficulty in finding any particular paper or file if its number is known, and it is in its proper bundle and in the proper place in the bundle.

2.   "X.L. Disposal" papers, which have no numbers, can only be arranged chronologically, their order being determined by the date on which they were disposed of.

3.   The "Filed" papers should be kept loose, arranged according to their own numbers or chronologically.

4.   After he/she has put a disposal in its place, the record-keeper will

put away in their places any papers that were "put-up" with it for reference, marking them as received back in the "Record Issue" Register. He will also remove the dummy slips put in their places on the racks.

5.   Records should be arranged in the order of their current numbers, but put in year-wise bundles based upon the year of disposal, so that by looking at the year-tag of the bundle it can be known whether or not the records therein have completed their prescribed period of retention, Without having to look into each record to know that.

Model arrangement of Records in bundle:

    Bundle of D.Dis 1974
    (All disposed in the year 1974)
    C.Nos of 1970,1971,1972 & 1973

1.   D.Dis   200/73/Estt.I.Dt.10.5.74
2.   D.Dis 206/72/Lr.   Dt.15.6.74
3.   D.Dis. 210/71/Cs   Dt.10.10.74
4.   D.Dis 210/70/Lr,   Dt.20.11.74
5.   D.Dis 212/72/Estt.I.Dt.10.6.74

        The above method of arrangement of records in a bundle should be adopted in respect of records under all series like L. Dis., D.Dis., R' Etc}

Filing of Records

Filing: Papers, which are arranged in records, not in according to their current numbers, but in special bundles according to their subjects, are said to be "filed". They should be kept loose, arranged according to their own numbers or

chronologically between record boards, just as lodged papers were kept. Of these papers there are five classes viz:

1. Government Orders and Proceedings

2. Filed papers not registered – When indexed

3. Periodicals

4. General record files

5. Demi-Official Correspondence

Vertical filing of records:

All records will be filed on the record racks vertically that is, side by side, on edge, not filed on top of one another (or "horizontally") The vertical arrangement makes it much easier to take out records and replace them. Instead of having to take down a heavy pile of records, search for the one required take it out, and then replace the pile on the shelf, one merely has to separate the files lightly to enable one to see their numbers, and can take out the file required without further disturbing the others. This is the obvious way to keep records. It is the way one keeps books in a library. No one would dream of keeping books piled in heaps, one on the top of the other, so that one could not get at one book without moving a few dozen others, and there is no reason why files should be arranged in such an inconvenient way either. Records bundles may be preserved on steel racks in all possible cases.

Issue of records:

1. Assistants are not to enter the record room and take out records for themselves.

2. They must obtain records required for reference by sending the prescribed printed requisition slips properly filled in to the record-keeper. On receipt of the requisition slips in the record room, the record keeper will see that the records are promptly taken out and the slips are put in their places.

3. The records issued are entered in the record issue register.

4. The record, issue register and the records taken out will then be sent to the concerned assistant who will at once acknowledge the receipt of the records in the register and return it to the record keeper.

5. When the record keeper receives the records back, he will see that their receipt is duly entered in the record issue register and that the requisition slips are returned forthwith.

6. In case the record wanted is not found, the requisition slips should be returned to the concerned assistant with an entry to that effect.

7. The assistants must return records that have been taken out for reference directly after they are done with.

8. The record keeper is solely responsible for the proper maintenance of the record issue register and see that the records taken out of the record room are not kept back by assistants unnecessarily.

9. To ensure the regular and systematic return of records to the record room the record keeper should prepare on the first of every month an arrear list for each section for all records which have been absent from the record room for more than three months together with the name and designation of the assistants to whom each record was issued and the date of its issue.

10. He/she should at the same time furnish an extract from the arrear lists separately to each clerk to enable him to check whether the files referred to are still with him and to return them when no longer required for reference.

11. A new requisition slip should be taken wherever a file or book has to be retained for more than three months since the earlier slip was issued.

12. When the record keeper has to get back a document which has been filed in a Civil Court, he/she should note on the requisition slip and in column 10 of the Record Issue Register sent to Civil Court, vide Current No…….. and such slips need not be renewed.

13. Assistants should return their arrear lists promptly to the record keeper after taking necessary action.

14. The record keeper should then compare the consolidated arrear list with the assistant's arrear list, carry out the necessary alterations in the former and submit both the arrear lists to the HOD on the 10th of every month or if that is a holiday or Sunday, on the first working day after the 10th .

15. In order to save the time of the subject assistants involved in returning the records to Record Room and to ensure safety of the Records, each assistant should maintain a Note book in the following form for the return of records to the Record-Rooms.

16. The Record Attender should go round the office once or twice a day and collect the borrowed records from the assistants initialling in this note book maintained by them in token of having received back the records from them. At the same time the Record Attender or the Record Assistant will take with him the Record Issue Register get column 7 filled up and obtain the signature of clerks in column 8 in token of the clerks returning the files.

Custody of the key of the record room:

The record keeper is on no account to take the key of the record room home with him. He will each evening put in a bag, seal it, and hand it over to the police guard or to the night watchman in places where there is no police guard. The office seal should be in the safe custody of the record keeper after the closing of the record room. The next day when the record keeper or his assistant takes over the bag containing the key of the record room, he should verify whether the seal of the bag is intact. The office seal affixed to the bag should be in the custody of the record keeper. On one account the seal of the office should be made available to others. A register in the following Format should be maintained for the purpose.

Register of Handing over and taking back the sealed bag containing the key of the record room

Date	Hour of handing over the sealed bag to the police guard or night watchman	Signature of the record keeper or the assistant in charge handing over the sealed bag	Signature of the head constable or constable with his number or the signature or the thumb impression	Hour of taking back the sealed bag from the police guard or night watchman	Signature of the head constable or constable or the signature or the thumb impression of the night watchman handing over the bag to the record keeper or his assistant	Signature of the record keeper or his assistant acknowledging receipt of the bag.	Remarks, if any.
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)

Destruction of records:

(1)   Records must be destroyed punctually after the periods prescribed for records.

(2)   Permanent Records Classified under "R" series or under any other particular category in use in an office, requiring permanent retention should be subjection to re-scrutiny once after every fifty years after their creation or after a lesser or higher period, as may be determined on review after the lapse of the first spell of 50 years, so that such of them not found them to require further retention could be got destroyed (after retaining a brief record of their particulars such as number, date etc) to realize additional space for the proper preservation of new/other records. Destruction of "R" Records found as on longer needed after such review should not, however, be made straightway except after obtaining specific concurrence of the next higher authority of the office in which

such records were created and after giving intimation to the Director of State Archives.

Particulars of such of the permanent records as are found not requiring further retention on such re-scrutiny should be intimated to the Director of State Archives, so that he could depute his staff within a specific period to examine them and indicate whether any of them would be needed to be preserved further for research purposes from historical cultural and other archival point of view, so that the rest could be destroyed)

Destruction of filed records:

In regard to the general destruction of record files, the record files should be retained for the period noted against each record file as shown in appendix D of the District Office Manual. For your convenience the list is given below: Filed Government orders will be regarded as "R" disposals if they have been indexed.

Destruction of Registers

The Various registers mentioned in unit 3 of module 1 will be destroyed after the periods specified against them in appendix J. The same is given below for your information.

1.	Distribution Register	after 5 years
2.	Personal Register	10 years
3.	New case register	5 ,,
4.	Fair-copy register	3 ,,
5.	Despatch by post and local delivery book	3 ,,
6.	Stamp account	3 ,,
7.	Periodical register	3 ,,
8.	Call book	10 ,,
9.	Security register	10 ..
10.	Copy application register	10 ,,
11.	Records issue register	3 ,,
12.	Government suits register	10 ,,
13.	Pauper suits register	10 ,,
14.	Register showing hour etc. of handing over and taking back the sealed bag containing	1 ,,

the key of the record room

| 15. | Arrear lists maintained | 3 ,, |
| 16. | Running note files to the personal and and other special registers | 3 ,, |