Public Service of Belize

Records and Information
Management
Procedures Manual

Belize Archives Department
March 2006

RECORDS AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES MANUAL

BELIZE ARCHIVES DEPARTMENT

*Records and Information Management aims to ensure that
information is efficiently and systematically
created, processed, maintained and disposed for easier
access when required.*

Procedures Manual

March 2006

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FOREWORD

One common definition of records management is "the field of management responsible for the systematic control of the creation, maintenance, use, and disposition of records."

In 1997, a Records and Information Management Programme was introduced to restructure the Records Management Section within the Public Service of Belize in order to provide a systematic approach to the proper management of records. Thus, allowing the provision of a higher level of service to officers who define and implement policies.

The records management function protects the vital resource of any organization. In the context of the Public Service, the keeping of proper records is of national importance.

The Belize Archives Department has revised and updated this manual. It provide guidelines to a range of topics relating to effective records and information management procedures. These guidelines aim to equip records officers towards the improvement of Record Management Sections within the Public Service.

We therefore urge everyone to make full use of this manual and look forward to the steady improvement of records and information management systems.

Chief Archivist
Belize Archives Department
March 2006

Section One

Introduction

1.1   NEED FOR SOUND RECORDS PROCEDURES

No government could survive without written records. Without them, all organized administration would quickly come to a halt. Because they are so important, records must be effectively managed at all stages of their existence, from their creation to their eventual disposal. Responsibility for this rests primarily with the Belize Archives Department, working closely with its clients - the users of the records. The effectiveness of this partnership will depend upon the degree of understanding and co-operation between them.

The Records and Information Management Procedures Manual seeks to avoid laying down hard and fast rules for every eventuality, but where detailed procedures are specified, they should be followed closely by all records staff and users.

1.2   FUNCTIONS OF A RECORDS MANAGEMENT SECTION

The essential functions of a Records Management Section are to:

- receive, record, classify and distribute incoming and internally created mail of all kinds (e.g. letters, memoranda, faxes), to attach relevant reference papers and to pass the correspondence to action officers;

- open, index, build up and control files upon which users depend on information to conduct government affairs;

- know the location of all officially registered files in their care and to be able to produce them quickly, by means of effective indexing, classification and tracking procedures;

- provide storage, reference and retrieval services for all officially registered files and other documentation in their care;

- record and arrange for the efficient and timely dispatch of all correspondence produced by the officers they serve;

- close files at the appropriate time and ensure that all closed files can be retrieved when required;

- prepare a list of closed files for transfer to the Belize Archives Department;

- review and dispose of all non-current records as agreed between the Belize Archives Department, the ministry or department concerned and other relevant officials.

1.3 ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES FOR RECORDS MANAGEMENT SECTIONS

Responsibility for the **proper management of Records Management Sections** is shared primarily with the Ministries and Departments with support from the Belize Archives Department. The Belize Archives Department is responsible for all professional and technical matters relating to the delivery of effective and efficient records services. Ministries and Departments are responsible for all matters regarding the welfare, discipline and non-specialist training of Records Management Section staff. The line manager should be at least at the level of Administrative Officer, but this is left to the ministry or department to determine. The separate responsibilities of these two management chains must be closely coordinated.

The Belize Archives Department is responsible for developing records policy and for introducing it in consultation with senior management in each of the ministries and departments served. This technical and professional management responsibility includes:

- ensuring line managers select records staff that are adequately trained in records management duties;

- giving advice and direction to all records staff on their duties; disciplinary matters will be referred to local line managers;

- conduct regular inspections of Records Management Sections and submit reports to local line managers;

- providing a source of advice and guidance on all aspects of the management of current records to records management staff and records users.

Administrative Officers are responsible for the following aspects of the management of their individual Records Management Sections:

- provide all necessary technical and professional training for records staff;

- monitoring the good discipline and standards of attendance by records staff and ensuring that absences are fully covered by suitable substitutes;

- making provision for the welfare, career development and annual leave arrangements for all records staff;

- dealing with all non-specialist general administrative matters pertaining to local Records Management Sections.

The Head of the Records Management Section has immediate responsibility for the day-to-day control of the section. That officer must manage the staff, monitor and control the

work flow of records systems to ensure an efficient service. The supervisor for the Records Management Section reports to the Administrative Officer responsible for the Records Management Section on its performance and on any problems where support is required.

It is important that the supervisor of the Records Management Section liaise with the Belize Archives Department on any technical records management or procedural matters.

1.4   RESPONSIBILITIES OF RECORDS STAFF TOWARDS USERS

Records Management Sections exist in order to provide a service to the officers who need to use the records. Users are always shown the maximum possible courtesy and cooperation, and efficient records staff will take every opportunity to learn the particular needs and requirements of their ministry or department. The records staff will react promptly to complaints by users, giving reasoned replies and explanations. Suggestions for improvements from users are warmly received and actively encouraged. These are implemented wherever possible.

1.5   RESPONSIBILITIES OF USERS

Properly managed Records Management Sections depend upon an active partnership between records staff and users. Records staff rely upon users to:

- process files immediately and return to the records management section promtly;

- keep files free of extraneous material such as ephemeral, duplicates, drafts, rough notes, etc;

- include the relevant file reference on all outgoing correspondence;

- where necessary, give clear guidance on how they wish their papers to be filed and indexed;

- inform the Records Management Section, verbally whenever they pass a file to another officer or elsewhere other than through the Records Management Section;

- co-operate fully with all necessary record checks, including censuses and searches conducted by the Records Management Section.

1.6   THE RECORDS MANAGEMENT SECTION AND THE LIFE CYCLE OF RECORDS

Records Management Sections are, for the most part, concerned with files which are in active use. However, files usually go through a number of phases between their creation and their eventual disposal or transfer to the Records Centre/Belize Archives Department.

The life cycle approach to records management is based on the idea that each file may be regarded as having a 'life', beginning with its creation (or 'birth') and ending with its disposal (or 'death'). The relatively small number of files that are selected for permanent preservation in the Belize Archives Department may be regarded as having achieved a kind of 'immortality' (life after death).

The Belize Archives Department manages all phases of the life cycle of a record in order to ensure that Belize's information requirements are met efficiently. In addition, its responsibility is to manage the Records Management Section throughout the entire Public Service. The Records Centre provides a central storage and retrieval service for semi-current records. These are records which are no longer needed for day-to-day use, but must be kept because they are used occasionally and continue to retain legal, financial or other value. These records are not available to the public or to agencies other than the specific ministry or department that created them, or in cases where the ministry or department no longer exists, its successor agency. There is a vital link between the Records Management Section and the Records Centre/ Belize Archives Department.

The Belize Archives Department preserves records which are of permanent historical value to the nation. Once these records become 30 years old they are accessible to the public for research or reference purpose.

1.7 ACCESS TO THE RECORDS MANAGEMENT SECTION

Access to the Records Management Section must be strictly controlled and no officer other than staff of the section should be permitted to remove a file from storage. Ensure that file cabinets are locked at all times. Confidential and personnel files should not be left unattended and should be stored in an area where access is limited to only authorized personnel.

1.3 PROPER MANAGEMENT OF RECORDS MANAGEMENT SECTIONS

SECTION TWO

Implementation of Records and Information Management System

2.1 Importance of a Records and Information Management System

All government organization produces records and information. Information is one of the world's most important resources. It is needed daily to solve problems and make decisions affecting the future. What individuals accomplish in ministries and departments depends largely upon the information they possess. The degree of success enjoyed depends on how well they manage their information resources.

This section will guide you with step-by-step procedures for the implementation of a Records and Information Management System.

2.2 Objectives of a Records and Information Management System

- To furnish accurate, timely and complete information for efficient decision making in the management and operation of the ministry or department;

- To process recorded information as efficiently as possible;

- To provide information and records at the lowest possible cost;

- To render maximum service to the user of the records;

- To dispose of records no longer needed.

2.3 Procedures for the Implementation of a Records and Information Management System

- Understanding the portfolio and function of Ministries and Departments or agencies;

- Appraisal of current filing system: Records in its active stage has primary value because these values are in the interest of the creating agency or organization;

  Primary Values are divided into categories, which are:
  ➢ Administrative Value: these records are necessary for the day-to-day operations of your office. Is the information necessary to conduct current or future business transactions? Does it establish policy or document operations? Examples: correspondence, memos and reports.

  ➢ Legal Value: these records have mandated retention by statute or regulation, may be needed as evidence in litigation, or document the rights of citizens or obligations of government. Determine the legal value

> of records with assistance from legal counsel. Examples: leases, deeds, land title, contracts, franchises and court case files.

> ➢ Financial Value- these records documents your office's fiscal responsibilities, such as the receipt, payment, transfer, adjustment or encumbrance of public funds. These records usually lose their value once the audit has been approved. Examples: canceled checks, deposit slips, invoices, receipts and purchase orders.

- List and store semi- current files for referral;

- List files for disposal;

- List files to be transferred to the Records Centre/Belize Archives Department;

- Create a file list for the new filing system;

- Write index cards for personal and subject files;

- Open new files;

- Implement control mechanisms such as: (incoming and outgoing correspondence register, transit sheet, minute sheet, office assistant delivery book etc.);

- Train staff;

- Monitor newly implemented Records Management System regularly.

2.4   Benefits of a Records and Information Management Systems

- Reduces cost for office equipments, supplies, and human resources;

- Reduces the volume of records stored;

- Identify and protect vital records;

- Improves customer service;

- Improves accountability of public funds;

- Improves storage and retrieval systems.

Section Three

Control Mechanisms for a Records and Information Management System

3.1 ESTABLISHING CONTROL OVER NEW FILES

Once a new file has been created, it is essential that its existence be comprehensively recorded. This will enable that the Records Management Section manages and produces the file when needed.

There are two control mechanisms that apply to every file:

- File list

- File index

If any one of these control mechanisms is omitted, the Records Management Section will not be able to keep track of the growth of the filing system and action officers will be prevented from carrying out their work efficiently.

3.2 FILE LIST (SEE FIGURE 1)

The file list is a complete record of all current files, arranged alpha-numerically according to file series, sub-series and sequential file number.

A file list must contain the following information:

- reference number;

- complete file title;

- previous file number;

- date file was opened.

It is very important that a file list be accurate and up-to-date, otherwise it will be impossible to determine correctly the reference number to be used for another file and the total amount of files already opened in the system.

The file list could be done manually or on a database. Details of new files may be added by hand to the manual file list and updated periodically to the computer-held version. The automated file list must also be updated as soon as a new file is opened. The Head of the Records Management Section is responsible for ensuring that the computer-held, printed version and automated database of the file list are maintained correctly, kept up to date and circulated. Copies of file list should be given to all senior officers and/or action officers. When a file is closed, it should be deleted from the file list and added to the semi-current file list.

FILE LIST

GEN: GENERAL, POLICY AND PROCEDURES FILE			
FILE NUMBER	**DATE OPENED**	**FILE TITLE**	**PREVIOUS FILE NUMBER**
GEN/1/01	8/9/97	Ministry of the Public Service, General	131/1 and 90/1/11
GEN/2/01	8/9/97	Ministry of the Public Service, Staff General	90/1/1
GEN/3/01	8/9/97	Public Service Staff List	73/1
GEN/4/01	8/9/97	Public Service Regulations - General	71/1
GEN/4/02	8/9/97	Revision of Government Workers' Regulations	71/4
GEN/5/01	8/9/97	Quarterly Distribution List	93/3
GEN/6/01	8/9/97	Ministry of the Public Service: Circulars	123/4
GEN/6/02	8/9/97	Ministry of Finance: Circulars	123/1
GEN/6/03	8/9/97	Treasury: Circulars	123/3
GEN/7/01	8/9/97	Job Classification Project	142/8/2
GEN/8/01	8/9/91	Upgrading of Posts	70/3/2/2
GEN/9/01	8/9/97	Performance Appraisal	T5/41
GEN/10/01	8/9/97	National Development Plan	T5-38
GEN/11/01	8/9/97	Joint Staff Relations Council	52/1/4
GEN/12/01	8/9/97	Public Sector Investment Project (PSIP)	68/3/3/1 and 151/40
GEN/13/01	8/9/97	Public Sector Reform: Financial Management Reform Project	151/32
GEN/14/01	8/9/97	Secondment of Officers	70/6/9
GEN/15/01	8/9/97	Retirement Benefits: General	77/1/2

FIGURE 1

3.3 FILE INDEX (SEE FIGURES 2-3)

The file index is the key to rapid retrieval of files and to the efficiency of the Records Management Section. Great care must be taken in preparing, maintaining and using it.

There are no hard and fast rules about the number of index entries for each new file title created. Generally, two index terms are sufficient to a file. In some cases only one term may be necessary and in others three or four terms may be needed. When deciding how many separate terms will be required, it is helpful to think of the different ways in which a user requesting a file may refer to the subject of the file.

Index terms may be divided into two categories:

- names of things (or proper nouns)

- subject terms

Proper nouns relate to: organizations, offices, countries, geographical areas, etc.

Subject terms relate to: specific themes, topics or activities, such as Audit, Legislation, Schools, Allowances, Training, Vehicles, etc. Under no circumstances should any subject terms be created in an ad hoc manner. This will result in the proliferation of different terms to describe the same topics, leading to inconsistency, inaccuracy, increasing confusion and a gradual breakdown of indexing systems.

Each index term should have a separate index card (see figure 2-3). The index cards are filed in alphabetical order, by index term, and within the same index terms alphanumerically by file reference number.

Subject index terms should be updated regularly and any new term created must be reported to the Records Management Unit, Belize Archives Department.

PERSONNEL INDEX CARD

```
NAME:      …………………………………….
………………………………………………….
P.F. NO.:……………………………………….
DEPARTMENT:………………………………
………………………………………………….
POST:………………………………………….
```

FIGURE 2

SUBJECT INDEX CARD

```
INDEX  TERM:…………………………………
…………………………………………………
FILE NO.:……………………………………….
FILE  TITLE:…………………………………
………………………………………………….
………………………………………………….
```

FIGURE 3

When the subject matter of a file is completely closed (eg. End of a project), the word closed is indicated on the index card and the card is removed and placed in the closed files index.

Section Four

Procedures for opening a File

4.1 OPENING A NEW FILE

When a document comes into the Records Management Section, the records staff must decide whether an appropriate file already exists, by checking the file list or file index under each of the index terms that may be relevant. If no appropriate file exists, it will be necessary to create a new file and to give it a number, a title and indicate the date, month and year on the cover. Opening files in the expectation of future correspondence leads to waste of effort, waste of valuable file covers and, most damaging of all, confusion in the file index. No new files should be opened without the approval of the Head of the Records Management Section.

If a new file is required, the records staff will have to think carefully about what it will contain and how it will grow. The important point to remember is that each file should relate to a single subject, a well defined area of business or a particular type of transaction. In other words it should tell its own discrete story or cover a specific type or area of business. As long as a file tells a story or covers an area of business in its own right, and no more, it is immaterial whether the file remains thin or develops into several parts.

If the scope of the file is too narrow and specific, it may only tell part of the story. Too many small files of this sort make it difficult for action officers to understand what is going on, and they cannot be sure that they have the whole story. Files that are too narrow in scope will also cause filing and retrieval problems as uncertainties arise about the correct file on which documents should be placed.

A file that covers too many issues is also hard to use. The user will have to search through a mass of paper to get to the story. Moreover, the file will grow quickly and new volumes will have to be opened frequently making the problem worse. When a file grows very quickly, this is usually a sign that the file title is too broad and that there is a need to break the file down into more specifically titled files. On the other hand, files accumulate documents at different rates and certain files which cover well defined areas of business may expand rapidly. It is essential, therefore, that the records staff take the time to find the right balance.

Not all papers need to be filed. The aim is to keep ephemeral papers off files for destruction. However, it is essential that files destined for early destruction contain only papers that have a short-term life or short-term potential value. Further information about file disposition is included in Section 10.3 .

4.2 PREPARING A FILE JACKET

- First, reinforce the spine of the file jacket with a two inches width transparent tape;

- Fold jacket, being guided by the vertical lines;

- Insert a hole one inch down and one inch in from the top left-hand corner of the file jacket;

- Preferably, a plastic treasury tag should be placed in the hole to secure documents being filed in file jacket;

- In the event a document may tear away from the treasury tag, repair can be done by the use of a "hole re-enforcer" or masking tape.

4.3 ASSIGNING FILE TITLES

It is important to choose a clear and precise title for each file. The title should be as descriptive as possible to provide adequate details of the file's contents. It should be specific on the subject to help limit the scope of the information filed in it.

It is always preferable to link file titles to the names and subject index terms used in the file index. This helps to ensure consistency and accuracy in titling and indexing, thereby assisting file identification and retrieval.

Names of organizations, offices, countries, geographical areas, job titles and all other 'proper nouns' should be given in file titles and recorded in the index in their full and correct form. To abbreviate names or give the same name in a variety of forms in different file titles will cause difficulties of retrieval.

When adding new papers to a file, care must be taken to ensure that the file title continues to reflect accurately the contents. It is better to create new files for new papers and, if necessary, to make cross-references to the files containing earlier related papers. If there is any doubt whatsoever about the title of a file, an appropriate user should be consulted. Users' views on file titles should always be taken seriously.

4.4 ASSIGNING FILE REFERENCE

File references should include a minimum of three and not more than four elements.

The complete reference number with three elements will comprise the following:

- a meaningful letter code for the series to which the file belongs;

- a number representing the file or a group of closely related files;

- a sequential file number preceded by '0', representing an individual file.

For instance, a file in the Ministry of Education, which concerns stationery and supplies will have the reference GEN/6/01 where:
GEN = General Administration files
      6 = A file dealing with Stationery and Supplies
            01 = the first file dealing with this subject

Some file series may be divided into sub-series, resulting in the addition of a further element in the reference number.

For instance, a file in Ministry of Education relating to a particular training programme in Belize will have the reference TRA/2/3/01 where:

TRA = Training files
      2 = Files relating to Training Programmes in Belize
            3 = A file dealing with a particular training programme
                  01 = the first file dealing with this subject

Here, the file series relating to training has been broken down into sub-series relating to different aspects of training, in this example TRA/2 which includes all files relating to training programmes in Belize. The file reference number therefore contains four rather than three elements.

Sub-series are created when all the files in a series can be divided into well-defined activities or areas of work which are discrete aspects of a wider function. In the example quoted, the sub-series TRA/2 includes files about training programmes in Belize, whereas TRA/4 includes files concerning training in the Caribbean Region. However, some series may contain only a small number of files and are very unlikely to grow substantially in the future. In such cases, there is no advantage in sub-dividing the series. Other series, though containing a large number of files, cannot be broken down into clear-cut, self-contained sub-divisions. However, closely related files may still be linked together by their reference numbers. In the following examples, the number 16 is used to link together two files relating to different aspects of the same subject, Allowances:

GEN/16/01 Allowances, General
GEN/16/02 Acting Appointments and Responsibility Allowance

The last 'sequential' number distinguishes the two files. Assigning sequential numbers to related files is dealt with in more detail in Section 4.6. File lists, which provide a complete sequential list of all files arranged by series and sub-series, are helpful not only as a finding tool, but also as an aid to understanding the organizational structure of the filing system. Consulting file lists may often help records staff identify the sub-series into which a new file should be placed.

In exceptional cases more than four(4) elements can be used for assigning file reference. For e.g. a ministry with several portfolios.
GEN/POL/6/01
GEN/IMM/6/01

4.5 IDENTIFYING FILE SERIES

The first step in assigning a file reference is to determine the appropriate file series. In general, there is a file series for each ministry's or department's main functions. If the ministry has been organized into, or includes, self-contained units which clearly support specific broad functions, there will be a file series for each unit. For instance, in the Ministry of the Public Service there are separate file series for the Training Unit and for Labour. In this case, all Training Unit files are prefixed by TRA and Labour files are prefixed by LAB.

However, certain files may relate to the work or business of the whole office, rather than to a specific unit or principal function, for example, a file relating to building repair and maintenance, or a file relating to the ordering and supply of stationery. In the Ministry of the Public Service, such files are classified as GEN (General Administration).

The design of file series requires considerable analytical skills and records management experience. For this reason, the Belize Archives Department must be consulted whenever a new file series is proposed.

Functional files (i.e., files relating to specific persons, organizations, projects, events, incidents, etc) can be incorporated in the file classification scheme and assigned their own series code. Within their series, the simplest method of identifying them is by the characteristic, which defines them; whether it is a name, geographical area, project title, vehicle number, etc. This can be done alphabetically or numerically. For example, personal files can be arranged alphabetically according to the names of individuals; or numbers in sequence can be assigned to the individuals' files and the names indexed.

4.6 ASSIGNING SEQUENTIAL NUMBERS

The last element in the file reference will be a sequential number preceded by the digit '0.' If, for instance, several separate files deal with different aspects of the same subject, it is sensible to link them both intellectually by assigning them a similar reference number, and physically in the filing cabinet by filing them together. For example, two files dealing with Public Service Regulations in the Policies, Procedures

and General series in the Ministry of the Public Service and Labour, are linked by the reference GEN/4 and distinguished from each other by the addition of a number, in sequential   order, preceded by 0, thus:

GEN/4/01 Public Service Regulations: General
GEN/4/02 Revision of Government Workers' Regulations

The growth of sequential numbers needs to be closely monitored. When they exceed 10 for any given group of files this will be an indication that too broad a subject area is being linked together with the same reference number.

4.7 OPENING NEW FILE VOLUME

Open a new volume of an existing file when the current volume has been closed or its content has more than five years.

LAB/2/17/01

LAB/2/17/01 Vol II

LAB/2/17/01 Vol III

Note that the first file in this sequence is not physically numbered Volume I. This is because the first file does not become Volume I until it is closed and Volume II is opened. Files are never renumbered retrospectively.

4.7 OPENING NEW FILE VOLUME

Section Five

Handling Incoming Correspondence

5.1   Maintaining Records

Public Officers have a legal responsibility for creating and maintaining records that document the transactions of government as it conducts business. These records provide the documentary evidence of the operations of government and accountability to its citizens. Public Officers must maintain these information in a meticulous manner.

5.2   Method of Incoming Correspondence

- Hand delivery;
- Postal service;
- Fax;
- Electronic mail.

5.3   Types of Correspondence

- Personal;
- General Correspondence
- Confidential;
- Legal Documents;
- Valuable Documents.

5.4   Opening Mails

- Persons responsible for the records management section sorts incoming mail;
- Any 'Personal' correspondence is given directly to the individual;
- Any 'Urgent' or 'Confidential' mail must be dealt with immediately;
- Mail should be carefully opened ;
- Mail must be written or stamped the date received.

5.5   Incoming Correspondence Register (FIGURE 4)

- Mails are either recorded or automated in the following columns of the Incoming Correspondence Register (i.e. manual or electronic):

  (1)   Date on the letter;
  (2)   Date received;
  (3)   From whom;
  (4)   Reference quoted;
  (5)   Subject;
  (6)   Security classification.

- Correspondence is placed in a circulation file for the Chief Executive Officer or Head of Department to minute to action officers;

- Circulation file is returned to the Records Management Section for filing;

- Column 7 and Column 8 is then completed with the following (7) date the letter was filed and passed to action officer responsible (8) reference number of the file on which the letter was placed;

- File is then passed to the relevant action officer without delay.

INCOMING CORRESPONDENCE REGISTER

(1) Date on letter	(2) Date Received	(3) From whom	(4) Reference No.	(5) Subject	(6) Security Classification	(7) Date Filed & Passed to Action	(8) File No.

FIGURE 4

5.6   Mail Containing Valuables (FIGURE 5)

Mail containing valuable items such as cash, cheques and payable orders must be carefully safeguarded upon receipt.

The Value Book should have the following information:

(1)   Date received;
(2)   From whom received;
(3)   Cheque number;
(4)   Remittance details and purpose;
(5)   Amount;
(6)   Signature of officer opening remittance.

Column 7 through 10 are completed by the Accounts Section with the following information:

(7)   Belize Equivalent;
(8)   Treasury Receipt Number and Date;
(9)   Head & Subhead;
(10)   Signature of Finance Officer authorized to sign cheques.

Value book must be serially numbered.

Erasures and pencil entries must not be made in the register.

Wrong entries are cancelled by ruling it through.

All cheques and other payable instruments are examined to ensure that:

➢ The amount agrees with that on the remittance advice slip or other accompanying document;

➢ The amount in words and figures corresponded;

➢ They are correctly completed as to date and payee signed.

VALUE BOOK

(1) Date Received	(2) From whom	(3) Cheque No.	(4) Remittance Details & Purpose	(5) Amount No.	(6) Signature of Officer Opening Remittance	(7) Belize Equivalent	(8) Treasury Receipt No. and date	(9) Head or Subhead	(10) Signature of Finance Officer authorized to sign cheque

FIGURE 5

NOTE: Entries must not be erased or obliterated. Mistakes must be corrected by ruling through.

5.7 Electronic Mails

Electronic Mails or E-mails is increasingly becoming an integral part of how business is conducted both in the public and private sector. This mode of electronic communication needs to be addressed and policy guidelines need to be stipulated to allow creators and recipients on how to properly manage electronic mails as public records.

Electronic mails/E-mails: is the electronic transfer of messages or information namely; memos, drafts, circulars, attachments etc, from one creating agency to one or numerous receiving agency using an email system.

- E-mails have life - cycle just like paper based records;

- Electronic mails are created, distributed, used, stored, disposed and preserved;

- Once an e-mail is created, received and used in the current official business transaction and its content indicate the roles, function, business activities i.e. administrative, financial and legal decision are taken, these are considered records and must be properly managed;

- The contents within an e-mail will determine to which file series it should be filed;

- The contents will also decide how long it should be retained as a record;

- E- mails should be printed and filed away accordingly in its appropriate file;

- Any e-mail messages that does not need to be kept as a record such as; brochures, personal messages, extra copies, published materials such as newsletter etc. must be deleted on a regular basis.

Advantages of e-mail

- Communication can be carried out quickly, informally and easily;

- Cheap means of communication;

- Reports and documents can be disseminated immediately to recipients;

- Same message can be sent by one person to a number of recipients simultaneously, which will save time;

- Messages can be sent directly to a person compared to letters that have to go to the registry room before circulation.

Disadvantages of e-mail

- The same mail can exist in multiple locations, which can lead to storage problems;

- There is no formality in sending mails. Even the format is not specified;

- Publishing via the Internet can be conducted without the approval from supervisors;

- Information in the mail can be easily edited or altered;

- Lack in systematic management of the mail.

Section Six

Filing Correspondence

6.1   IDENTIFYING THE SUBJECT OF A CORRESPONDENCE

- After mail is returned from circulation to the Records Management Section, officer(s) responsible for filing must **read** the letter **carefully** and note any **key words** or **passages**, which concern the main subject of the correspondence;

- Once the subject of the correspondence is identified the Records Officer(s) will refer to the **file list (database)** or **file index** for relevant file title;

- If appropriate file title is not identified in file list or file index, consult Head of Records Management Section to determine whether a new file needs to be opened.

6.2   THE SPLIT FILE JACKET

- This system is the standard method of maintaining registered papers. Papers are divided into two main sections in the file;

- On the right-hand side of the file, incoming letters; copies of outgoing letters; notes of meetings; memoranda; financial and statistical data are secured by a treasury tag;

- On the left-hand side of the file, attached to the treasury tags are **minute sheets.** Minute sheets are used to record correspondence placed on the file.

6.3   FUNCTIONS OF A MINUTE SHEET (FIGURE 6)

- Minute sheets are used to record **incoming** and **outgoing** correspondence. Comments relating to correspondence in the file may also be recorded on the minute sheet. This is given a folio number;

- **Incoming correspondence** should be entered on the minute sheet in red ink. **Outgoing correspondence** should be entered on the minute sheet in black or blue ink;

- **Minute sheet** should record the **subject** of a document and the **date** on the document;

- The **reference number** of the file is written on the top left-hand corner of each minute sheet. Also, on the right-hand corner each sheet is numbered consecutively;

• The subject of the correspondence is entered on the minute sheet. Each **document** is numbered consecutively at the top right-hand corner; the number is called a "folio number" and should be circled.

Common abbreviations used on minute sheets are:

BU   -   Bring Up
FNA   -   For Necessary Action
NFAN   -   No Further Action Necessary
PA   -   Put Away
PB   -   Put By
R   -   Registry
KIV   -   Keep In View
FYI   -   For Your Information
PS   -   Please Speak
ENC   -   Enclosures
ATCH   -   Attachments

MINUTE SHEET

File No. ………………..   **Sheet No. ………..**

FIGURE 6

6.4   CROSS-REFERENCING

- If a single letter or other item of correspondence relates to more than one subject it is placed on the file for which it has more relevance;

- A copy of the same letter should be placed on other relevant files, but this should only occur when **strictly** necessary;

- This process must not delay urgent mail.

6.5   TRANSFER SLIP (FIGURE 7)

- A transfer slip serves as a replacement of a misfiled document;

- The transfer slip contains information pertaining to the misfiled document such as the reference of the correspondence; the subject of the correspondence; the file reference the correspondence is being transferred to; the date the correspondence was transferred and the signature of the officer who transferred the correspondence;

- The transfer slip also carries the same folio number of the misfiled document.

TRANSFER SLIP

REFERENCE OF CORRESPONDENCE: _____

FROM: _____

SUBJECT: _____

FILE TRANSFERRED TO: _____

DATE TRANSFERRED: _____

SIGNATURE OF PERSON: _____

FIGURE 7

6.6   TYPES OF HOUSEKEEPING AND FUNCTIONAL FILES

Housekeeping Files

- Housekeeping files are files that are similar in content but relate to individual persons, organizations, projects, places, events, actions, items of equipment or some other common characteristic;

- The most common type of Housekeeping files found in government is the personal files containing official personnel papers relating to a individual public officer;

- Other types of housekeeping files are contract files, vehicle files, accident files and audit queries and losses to name a few;

- Because particular series of housekeeping files contain similar records and only differ from each other by being specific to a particular person, institution, geographical area, etc., they are easy to identify and should be assigned their own series codes.

Functional Files

- Functional files are files that relates to the functions, portfolio or responsibilities of individual ministries or departments;

- Examples of functional files are: Land Applications file; Land Grants file and Land Taxes file to name a few. These files relates specifically to the function of Lands Department;

- Another example of Functional files are: Passport Applications file, Work Permits file and Application for Citizenship file. These files relates specifically to the functions of the Immigration Department.

6.7   CONFIDENTIAL FILES

- Some files contain documents, which are sensitive and may be seen only by certain members of staff. Such files are often referred to as "classified" and may be marked, **"SECRET"** or **"CONFIDENTIAL"**;

- Personnel files relating to individual members of staff are also treated as confidential because of the personal information contained in the file. **Access must be strictly limited**;

- Procedures relating to the management, handling and storage of classified files and documents will vary between ministries. While all registered files should be stored securely and their movements and disposition systemically recorded, confidential files will need to be even more carefully managed;

- Access to confidential files may need to be approved solely by the Chief Executive Officer. Storage arrangement for confidential files will also need to be strictly regulated;

- The same file cover design is suitable for both regular and classified files. Confidential or classified files must be clearly marked with the appropriate classification. All ministries and departments should maintain handling instructions for classified files.

6.8   DO'S AND DON'TS FOR FILING

- Do read document carefully and thoroughly to be able to identify the **"subject"**;

- Do ensure that files selected relate to the **"subject"** of the document;

- Don't file duplicate copies of correspondence;

- Don't file ephemeral materials such as announcement of parties, greeting cards, brochures and published materials.

Section Seven

Controlling File Movement

7.1 RECORDING FILE MOVEMENTS

Access to files must be **strictly controlled** (see Section 1 for more information about access to the Records Management Section). Staff of the Records Management Section is **responsible** for keeping track of all files and only they are permitted to remove files from storage.

Files are issued to action officers in at least three circumstances:

- A document has been filed, usually following circulation, and the file is passed to an officer for action;

- A file has a 'bring-up' date on it and is passed to the officer on the appropriate day;

- The officer requests the file in person or by telephone.

In order to be effective, the Records Management Section must know the location at all times of every file for which it is responsible. Thus, each time a file moves, this fact must be recorded on the transit ladder and transit sheet. (See figure 8 and 9)

7.2 USING THE FILE TRANSIT SHEET (SEE FIGURE 8)

A file transit sheet assists with the control movement of a file. Each time a file is issued to a user, for whatever reason and for however short a period, its issue must be noted in the columns provided on the transit sheet.

A transit sheet must contain the following information:

- File reference number;

- Complete file title;

- File issued to;

- Date and signature of receiving officer;

- Date and signature of lending officer;

- Date file returned to registry.

These sheets can be printed and arranged in booklet form in the same order as the filing system, i.e. Gen, Accts, Org etc.

FILE TRANSIT SHEET

FILE NAME:

FILE NO.:

DATE AND SIGNATURE OF RECEIVING OFFICER	SIGNATURE AND DATE FILE RETURNED	DATE AND SIGNATURE OF RECEIVING OFFICER	SIGNATURE AND DATE FILE RETURNED

FIGURE 8

7.3 FILE TRANSIT LADDER (SEE FIGURE 9)

Each file movement **must** be recorded on the transit ladder that is printed on the front of the file jacket. In this way, a record will be created of all officers who have handled any particular file. Officers who pass files directly to another officer, having informed the Records Management Section, must make the appropriate entries in the 'Sent to' and 'Date' columns on the transit ladder.

For example:

➢ The first entry in the *'Date'* column records the date the file was opened (16 August 1997);
➢ The first entry in the '*Sent to*' column indicates that the file was located first in the Records Management Section;
➢ The date the file was sent to the FO was 20 August 1997 this should be entered on the second line in the *'Date'* column;
➢ The first entry in the *'Item'* column (second line) should indicate what enclosure the FO should take action on;
➢ The second entry in the *'Sent to'* column records that the file was sent to 'FO',.
➢ In the *'Action Taken'* column the FO should sign and indicate what date action was taken.

Security prefix slip
To be affixed here
(if necessary)

ARCHIVES

FILE NO. #	FILE PERIOD
PART	**TITLE**
CONNECTED FILES	
Previous:	
Subsequent:	

INDEX HEADING

DATE	ITEM	SENT TO	ACTION TAKEN	DATE	ITEM	SENT TO	ACTION TAKEN
16/8/97		RMS					
20/8/97	(1)	'FO'	20/8/97				

FIGURE 9

7.4 FILE CENSUS (SEE FIGURE 10)

A file census is used to confirm the location of all files that are not in the Records Management Section. It is required that a regular census be taken in order to see if the users who requested a particular file corresponds with what the transit ladder and transit sheet is stating. The records staff must visit every user at least once a month and list all the files held by that officer. The person carrying out the census must sign the bottom of each census form, and the relevant user or action officer should also initial the form.

A file census sheet must contain the following information:

- File reference number;

- File title;

- Location/officer;

- Date census is being carried out.

FILE CENSUS FORM

DATE:_____

File Ref. Number	File Title	Location/Officer

SIGNED: _____ INITIALLED: _____

FIGURE 10

7.5 RECORDING THE MOVEMENT OF FILES OUTSIDE THE MINISTRY OR DEPARTMENT

Occasionally, it may be necessary to transfer a file temporarily to another ministry or department.

For example, certain files from the Ministry of the Education are required to be taken to meetings at the Office of the Services Commission. The movement of a file outside the office must be recorded on the file transit sheet and transit ladder.

Any officer who, in exceptional circumstances, is required to take a file home for work outside office hours must be required to sign for the file on the relevant ledger. The file then becomes the officer's personal responsibility until the file is returned to the Records Management Section.

There are instances where files or (a file series) must be transferred to another Ministry which assumes responsibility for the subject matter. For example, when a public officer is transferred to another Ministry or Department, the officer is expected to be transferred along with their personal file. In this cases the files must be clearly marked "transferred to" and dated e.g. Ministry of Health, 18/7/00.

7.6 CLEARING 'DIPS'

Office Assistants are instructed to clear the 'dips' in the Records Management Section and in the users' offices, so that necessary actions indicated on the file transit ladder are dealt with promptly. Dips must be cleared at least two (2) times daily, in the morning and the afternoon.

7.7 REQUESTS FOR FILES

The Head of the Records Management Section is **responsible** for ensuring that file movements are **fully recorded** before files leave the Section. In the case of a request for a file that is in use elsewhere, the records staff will consult the file transit sheet, locate the file and ask the current user for the file.

7.8 TRACING LOST FILES AND OPENING TEMPORARY FILES

If a file is lost, the Records Management Section must proceed as follows:

- The Head of the Records Management Section must maintain a list of lost files;

- If it is necessary to continue action on a topic covered by a lost file, a temporary file may be opened but only if this is **<u>absolutely</u>** necessary. When opening a

temporary file the same procedure is applied as opening a new file. It is given the same number as the "lost" file, and its existence is recorded. However, the file jacket, and file list entries, must be boldly marked with the word **'TEMPORARY'**;

- **A 'temporary file'** should only be kept as temporary for a period of at least 3 months. Once the original is not located within this time frame, the temporary file can then be opened as the original file and as the second volume. If the file is found after the temporary file becomes the original, the lost file must be closed immediately;

- If the original file is found within the prescribed time frame, all papers on the temporary file **must be** transferred to the original file (in proper date sequence) and must be renumbered in folio order.

7.6 "OUT" DIP WAITING TO BE CLEARED.

7.7 REQUEST FOR FILES

Section Eight

Handling Files and Outgoing Correspondence

8.1 RETURNING FILES TO THE RECORDS MANAGEMENT SECTION

- Users should return files to the Records Management Section as soon as they are finished with them;

- When a file is returned, records staff must check to see whether the file contains mail to be dispatched. If so, the file copy must be filed immediately;

- Letters for dispatch are removed, recorded and dealt with. (Outgoing correspondences see Section 8.4.);

- It must be noted on the transit ladder that the file has been returned to the Records Management Section;

- Ensure that all correspondences are in the file and that it corresponds with the minute sheet;

- The minute sheet must be checked, and if 'bring-up' (BU) action is required, this must be recorded in the bring-up diary.

8.2 BRING-UP SYSTEM

B.U. refers to the "Bring-Up" System, which allows the Records Management Section to hold a file for a particular date when the file would be needed for action. The action officer would enter on the minute sheet at the extreme right the letters B.U., his/her name and the date on which he/she wants the file returned.

Its successful and efficient use prevents many of the problems encountered by records staff, such as prolonged retention of files by users and the consequent difficulties in locating files or the need to spend excessive amount of time carrying out censuses.

8.3 PREPARING MAILS FOR DISPATCH

- The Records Management Section is responsible for checking outgoing mail and ensuring that names, addresses and references are correct and that all attachments and enclosures are included;

- Security classifications such as private, confidential, secret and urgent should be typed at the top and bottom of each sheet and envelope;

- Once a letter has been signed and dated by an action officer it must be returned to the Records Management Section for dispatch.;

- The records staff is responsible for sorting outgoing mail into the appropriate categories, and maintaining a record of all items dispatched in the appropriate outgoing registers. These include the outgoing correspondence register, the delivery book for mail delivered locally, and the mail schedule for registered items;

- Three copies of outgoing letters are produced: the original for dispatch to the addressee; a copy for the file; and a third copy for circulation to staff for information purposes, this is referred to as 'spare' copy;

- 'Spare' copies are placed in a folder and circulated weekly. After it returns to the Records Management Section, spares are kept for a maximum of one year before being destroyed.

8.4 OUTGOING CORRESPONDENCE REGISTER (SEE FIGURE 11)

The outgoing correspondence register is used to record details of all items dispatched. Records staff must enter the following information;

(1)   Date letter received for dispatch;

(2)   Date dispatched;

(3)   Security classification;

(4)   File reference;

(5)   To whom;

(6)   Signature of receiving officer;

(7)   Date

OUTGOING CORRESPONDENCE REGISTER

(1) Date Received for Dispatch	(2) Date Dispatched	(3) Security Classification	(4) File Reference	(5) To whom	(6) Signature of Receiving Officer	(7) Date

FIGURE 11

8.5 OFFICE ASSISTANT'S DELIVERY BOOK

The delivery book records outgoing correspondence and other material to be dispatched and delivered locally by hand. The following information is included for each item:

(1)   Date letter dispatched;
(2)   File reference;
(3)   Name of ministry/department to whom the letter is sent;
(4)   Signature and date of receiving officer .

The Office Assistant is responsible for ensuring the safe delivery of each item. The Office Assistant takes the delivery book with him/her on the delivery round and must ensure that the officer in the relevant ministry/department who receives the mail signs for it in the delivery book, and also enters the date it is received.

The Head of the Records Management Section must ensure that the Office Assistant's Delivery Book and the outgoing correspondence register are checked weekly.

OFFICE ASSISTANT'S DELIVERY BOOK			
(1) Date Dispatched	(2) File Reference	(3) Name of Ministry/Department	(4) Signature and Date of Receiving Officer

FIGURE 12

8.6 MAIL SCHEDULE (SEE FIGURE 13)

All mails to be registered at the Post Office are entered in the mail schedule. A separate schedule is completed for each consignment of registered mail taken to the Post Office. Each schedule is given a number in sequence. The Office Assistant is responsible for taking registered mail to the Post Office.

The name of the ministry or department sending the mail, the schedule number and the date of the form is completed and entered at the top of the mail schedule. The following details are then written in the columns:

(1)   Number of item on form;

(2)   Name and address of addressee, and reference;

(3)   Registered number;

(4)   Weight of item in grams;

(5)   Postage registration fee.

The Office Assistant who delivers the registered mails to the Post Office signs the form and enters the date and time. The officer receiving the mail at the Post Office also signs the form.

Columns four and five are completed by the Post Office.

The mail schedule is completed in triplicate. The third copy is kept by the Office Assistant and is brought back to the Records Management Section for filing. The Post Office retains the first and second copy, having completed columns four and five with the weight and charge for each item to be registered. The first copy of the schedule is then returned to the ministry, which sent the mail. The Post Office retains the second copy stamped by them.

MAIL SCHEDULE

NAME OF MINISTRY/DEPARTMENT:_____

SCHEDULE NO: _____

DATE: _____

No. #	Name and address of addressee, and reference No #.	Reg. No	Weight in Grams	Postage Reg. Fee

I certify that the items listed above were posted by me

_____
OFFICER IN CHARGE

_____
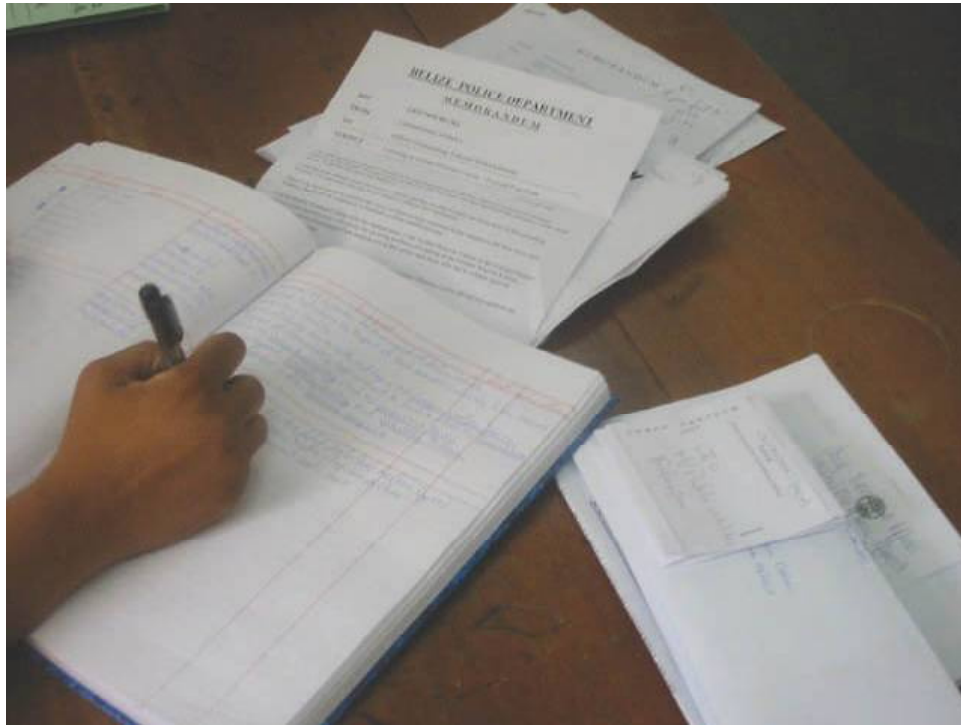DATE   TIME

The items above have been received at the Post Office

_____   _____
POSTMASTER GENERAL   DATE

FIGURE 13

8.3 PREPARING LETTERS FOR DISPATCH

Section Nine

Storing Records

9.1   CLOSING FILES

❖   The records staff must ensure that files are closed as soon as they become **one inch thick** or accumulates **100 enclosures**, whichever happens first. This is necessary because files that are thick are difficult to manage physically;

❖   The method of closing a file is to write the word **'CLOSED'** and the date of closure (eg 26/9/97) diagonally in bold letters across the front cover, thus canceling it;

❖   The last (most recent) minute sheet on the left-hand side of the file must also be **cancelled** in the same fashion;

❖   The Records Management Section must ensure that closed files should then be placed in the semi-current system.

Some types of **housekeeping** and **functional** files may differ in that they must remain open for long periods. Accident files may need to be kept open for many years until, for example, a vehicle has been written off or the case brought to a conclusion. However, care must be taken to ensure that such files put away in the current filing system are not forgotten. If the business, of which they form a record, has been concluded or become closed, the files should be removed from the current system.

Personnel files, for example, will not be closed for the duration of an individual's employment unless the file becomes one inch thick, in which case a second volume will need to be opened.

9.2 STORING CURRENT RECORDS

There are two basic ways of storing files: the **vertical** and **latera**l methods.

<u>**Vertical filing**</u> in filing cabinets requires either hanging folders into which individual files may be placed, or rigid drawer dividers to hold files upright and prevent them from sliding down.

<u>**Lateral filing**</u> on open racking, where files are laid flat, in most circumstances is the most cost-effective method of storage. It is often referred to as horizontal filing or open sided cabinets. It allows files to be accessed **horizontally** instead of vertically. If racking is used and files are stored on the open shelf, it will be essential to dust the shelves and the files regularly.

Many Records Management Sections within the public service use four-drawer cabinets. Records staff and their line managers should therefore give careful consideration to the method of storing files to avoid overcrowding of files and hence prevent damaging them.

9.3 STORING SEMI-CURRENT RECORDS

Closed files that are required infrequently in the conduct of current business of an organization are considered semi – current records and may be stored in a separate area of the Records Management Section. These files should be clearly **labeled "closed"** and the reference numbers clearly visible on the filing cabinet.

Appraisal is the review and assessment of records to determine **the value** of records for further use for whatever purpose and the length of time the value will continue.

Appraisal must be conducted with awareness of the function that the records were intended to serve and of their context in relation to other records.

Appraisal must also give consideration to the records' value for a variety of continuing and potential uses, both internal and external and to the wider public and society.

Records are appraised:

   (a)   To decide on the need **to keep** and how long in order to allow the organization to continue its work.

   (b)   What records merit **permanent preservation** as archives because of its value or disposal.

Records have lost all its **primary value** for the institution and it starts to keep its **secondary value** and therefore becomes **valuable** to the **Belize Archives Department.**

Non-active files are no longer referred to and have no use to the creating institution or agency. They now become social and serve as **historical and research materials.** These files are transferred to the Records Center/Belize Archives Department for preservation.

Secondary values are divided into categories, which are:

   (a)   Evidential value – provides information on the origin, structure, function, procedure and significant transaction of the organization that created the record.

   (b)   Informational value – provides the reference and research deriving from information contained in them and often incidental to their original purpose.

   (c)   Intrinsic value – be reason of age, historical association, physical form or features, aesthetic or artistic value.

9.4 ANNUAL REVIEW OF FILES

An annual review should be conducted by the records staff to identify when files are due for closure. If files are kept open for long periods, the whole process of applying retention dates is delayed, causing files to be stored for unnecessarily long periods.

The review should be arranged to take place during a relatively quiet period of the year, (for example, during the Christmas Holiday) when many action officers are on leave. If the business, of which they form a record, has been concluded or become closed, the files should be removed from the current system.

9.2 STORING CURRENT RECORDS

Section Ten

Handling Non-Current Records

10.1 NON-CURRENT RECORDS

Non-current records that are no longer needed for the conduct of the day-to-day business, and are therefore destroyed unless they have a continuing value for other purposes, which merits their preservation as Archives in an archival institution

10.2 USING RETENTION SCHEDULES (FIGURE 14)

A Retention Schedule lists records series and provides instructions and special guidelines for their care: how long to retain them, how to maintain them, and procedures for disposing of them. Retention schedules reflect the length of time that records have administrative, legal, fiscal or historical value.

There are two types of schedules, which are **Housekeeping and Functional**. **Housekeeping schedules**, applies to records relating to common functions e.g., fiscal, administrative and personnel records) and **functional schedules** identify records from individual ministries and departments that produces, collects, receives or retains in carrying out its special functions.

In most cases, the schedules will indicate that the closed files are transferred to the Records Centre/Belize Archives Department after a stated period of time. Unless otherwise specified, subject files should be transferred five years after closure. However, certain types of closed housekeeping and functional files, for example personnel files, may need to be retained by the office, which created or used them for a much longer period.

Records already stored at the Records Center/Belize Archives Department are guided by Retention Schedules. The Chief Archivist makes decisions to destroy closed files, or to transfer them to the Records Centre/Belize Archives Department, in consultation with each Records Management Section within the Ministries and Departments guided by their specific retention schedules of their records.   The Records Centre/Belize Archives Department will then forward a Records Centre Destruction Form to the Records Management Section of the Ministry/Department for verification.
(See Figure 15).

SPECIMEN RETENTION/DISPOSITION SCHEDULE

PERSONNEL RECORDS

Personnel files relate to the management and service of individual Public Service employees. For the most part they are pursuant to regulations issued by the Public Service Commission, the agency charged with the administration of the Public Service Act, and to related regulations, orders and legislation. This schedule covers all personnel files of Public Service employees exclusive of copies of investigative files. Records needed in litigation or appeal cases may be held beyond the required period.

ITEM NO.	DESCRIPTION OF RECORDS	TRANSFER TO THE RECORDS CENTRE/	REVIEW
1	Personnel files of pensionable officers	Transfer master files to the Records Centre/Belize Archives Department two (2) years after termination of employment. Transfer working files to the Office of the Services Commission when a pensionable officer is transferred to another ministry or leaves the Public Service for any reason.	Review 75 years after birth of employee or 65 years after date of earliest document in the file if date of birth cannot be ascertained and every 5 years thereafter. No personnel file may be destroyed until 10 years after date of cessation of payment of pensionable benefit.

FIGURE 14

RECORDS CENTRE DESTRUCTION FORM

To: Head of the Records Management Section

          Ministry/Department _____

From: Officer in Charge, Records Centre/Belize Archives Department

Date: _____ 20 _____

The boxes of files listed below are now due for review to determine whether or not hey have permanent values as archives. These files may be destroyed on _____ (date) unless you advise us that you will still require them.

 I hereby authorize the destruction of the following boxes of files if it is found that they do not have archival value:

Please retain the following boxes of files which are still required for official business:

Reason:

New Review date: _____

Signed: _____   Position :_____

Ministry/Department:_____

FIGURE 15

10.3 FILE DISPOSITION

Designated records, which are scheduled for destruction in five years or less, should **not be** transferred to the Records Centre/Belize Archives Department. These records include original fax copies, mail schedules, spare copies and any other publications.
Every six months the Records Management Section completes a 'Proposal to Destroy Scheduled Records' form (Figure 16), listing the record series or files due for destruction which it retains. The Records Centre/Belize Archives Department will return the form after reviewing and authorizing destruction by shredding for recycling or incineration or, if there is any query, will inspect the records.

PROPOSAL TO DESTROY SCHEDULED RECORDS

To: Officer in Charge, Belize Archives Department

From: Head of the Records Management Section,
            Ministry/Department

Date: _____20_____

Please may we have your permission to destroy the record series listed below which are now scheduled for destruction?

Schedule Number	Title of Series	Covering Dates	Number of files

Destruction is hereby authorised.

Signed _____ Date _____
            Officer in Charge, Records Centre/Belize Archives Department

---

FIGURE 16

10.3 FILE DISPOSITION

10.4 TRANSFERRING FILES TO THE RECORDS CENTRE/ BELIZE ARCHIVES DEPARTMENT

When records are due for transfer, the Records Management Section staff contacts the Records Centre/Belize Archives Department to request recyclable boxes and Records Centre Deposit Forms (see Figure 17).

The files to be transferred are arranged in the order in which they were originally created. This will involve sorting them into series and sub-series or groups of similar records that were created and maintained as units *(see Appendix 1 for the definition of a series).* Within each series or sub-series, the records are arranged in the order of their original reference numbers.

Carefully arrange boxes so files and materials can be easily removed and replaced - leave about 1" inch of space. Files should be placed in the box in neat, logical order as if they were in a filing cabinet. Bulky lever-arch files and ring binders, which will not fit comfortably into the boxes, are removed, and the records are placed in file jackets, tied-up and labeled.

The records are placed in recyclable boxes. It should not be overloaded and the lid should always fit snugly. If possible, the boxes should contain files closed at around the same time.

Boxes are numbered and files in each box are listed on a Records Centre Deposit Form (see Figure 17), leaving the columns for the review date and box number blank. Three copies of the form should be prepared.

Accession forms (see figure 18) are filled out when boxes are transferred to the Records Centre/Belize Archives Department specifying the date of transfer and, a general description of content in the boxes.

RECORDS CENTRE DEPOSIT FORM				
Agency _____				
Unit _____				
File Ref.	File Title	Dates	Box No.	Destroy/ Review Date

Signature of Recipient: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Donor:_____ Date: _____

FIGURE 17

RECORDS CENTRE
ACCESSION FORM

Accession No.

Source: _____

_____

Address: _____

_____

_____

Terms governing access: _____

_____

Authorized users: _____

_____

Summary/Description of the collection: _____

_____

Action: _____

_____

Type: Private: (   )   Public (   )

(* delete what is applicable)

We agree that the materials deposited/donated shall become the property of the Belize Archives Department and will be handled according to the procedures established by this Department.

_____   _____
      Date   Signature of Donor

Accepted on behalf of the Belize Archives Department.

_____   _____
      Date   Signature of Recipient

FIGURE 18

10.5 RETRIEVING FILES FROM THE RECORDS CENTRE/BELIZE ARCHIVES DEPARTMENT

Authorized records staff may only retrieve files that have been closed and deposited at the Records Centre/Belize Archives Department. In the case of confidential material, the Records Centre/Belize Archives Department will not accept requests for files from anyone except the Chief Executive Officer or the Head of the Department.

Records issued by the Records Centre/Belize Archives Department must be returned within **two weeks** unless the Records Centre/ Belize Archives Department staff grants an extension.

When a user requests a file which is held at the Records Centre/Belize Archives Department, the Archives staff consults the Belize Archives Department Accession Forms and Database Program to search the exact title, reference number and box number. Two copies of the Records Centre Loan Form (see Figure 19) is filled out. As soon as the file is no longer required or before the expiry date signed on the Loan Form, it should be returned to the Records Centre/Belize Archives Department.

RECORDS CENTRE LOAN FORM

Box Number _____ Location _____

Ministry/Department _____ File Number _____

File Title _____

Date Loaned _____

Signature of Issuing Officer _____

Signature of Receiving Officer _____

Date Returned _____ Signature of Receiving Officer _____

Remarks: _____

FIGURE 19

Section Eleven

Maintaining the System

11.1 RE-JACKETING FILES

When a file transit ladder is full or when a file cover has been badly damaged, it may be necessary to provide a new cover. When this is done, the front of the old file cover (with the transit ladder) is not destroyed or thrown away but is pasted on the inside of the file cover.

11.2 MONITORING RECORDS MANAGEMENT SECTION PERFORMANCE

Heads of Records Management Sections should regularly survey users' satisfaction with the services provided by the Section, and should take immediate action when problems are reported. Regular reports regarding the performance of the Records Management Section should be submitted to the Administrative Officer responsible, with a copy sent to the Chief Archivist. These reports should include details of:

- Number of files opened;

- New subject index terms created;

- Number of letters received;

- Length of time it takes to clear mail circulation files;

- Any problems encountered in managing the Records Management Section.

11.3 SYMPTOMS OF A RECORDS MANAGEMENT SECTION NOT FUNCTIONING PROPERLY

The Records Management Section and its procedures need attention when:

- Mail circulation files take too long to circulate;

- Correspondence are put on the wrong files;

- The file index is unreliable;

- There is lack of user trust because correspondence are not readily available;

- Users keep files and documents in their own rooms, thus making information unavailable to others;

- Users send files to the Records Management Section in big stacks only when they need space in their rooms;

- Records Management Section has a filing or indexing backlog;

- File list is not kept up-to-date;

- Files become so thick that information is lost;

- Records staff become discouraged, hide files or blame other for lost of information;

- There is a backlog of inactive papers in the Records Management Section which should have been transferred elsewhere;

- The Records Management Section becomes untidy.

11.4 OVERHAULING   RECORDS   MANAGEMENT   SECTION PROCEDURES

There are several reasons why the Records Management Section or its procedures may need overhauling:

- Activities have increased and expansion is therefore required;

- New functions have been assigned to the ministry or department;

- Functions have been withdrawn from the ministry or department;

- There is a reorganization of the area served by the Records Management Section;

- The present system is ineffective through neglect or faulty design;

- Continuous changes of staff causing system breakdown.

Where a Head of a Records Management Section or supervisor feels that the Section is in need of attention, they should consult the Chief Archivist and request a review.

Appendix 1

DEFINITIONS

ACTION OFFICER	Official engaged in the administration of an agency or in the implementation of its functions and activities.
AGENCY	The generic title for any particular institution or office forming part of the government, business or organization.
APPRAISAL	The determination of the eventual disposal of records based upon their continuing value. Also referred to as evaluation, review or selection.
ARCHIVE REPOSITORY	A building or part of a building in which archives are preserved and made available for consultation.
ARCHIVES	Records, usually but not necessarily non-current records, of continuing value selected for permanent preservation.
ARCHIVIST	A person professionally occupied in the administration and/or management of archives.
CASE FILES/PAPERS	Records, the subject matter of which is the same, though each individual record relates to a different person, institution, place, project, event, etc. Also known as particular instance papers.
CIRCULATION FILE	A temporary file containing correspondence and documents circulated for action, prior to their placement on a permanent file.
CLASSIFICATION	The process of assigning a file (1) to its proper physical and intellectual place within a file classification scheme.
CLASSIFIED RECORDS	Records that are restricted in their circulation and access because they bear a security marking, eg, Confidential, Secret.

CLOSED FILE

A file relating to matters on which action has been completed and to which further documents will not be added.

CONTINUATION FILE

A new file (1) opened when the old file has reached its cutoff date within the file cycle.

CONTROL DOCUMENTATION

Records created within an organization to control its own record-keeping processes.

CORRESPONDENCE

Any form of addressed communication sent and received including letters, postcards, memoranda, notes, facsimile transmissions and electronic mail.

CURRENT RECORDS

Records regularly used for the conduct of the current business of an agency, institution or organization and which, therefore, continue to be maintained in or near their place of origin.

DISPOSAL (DISPOSITION)

The actions taken with regard to non-current records following their appraisal. Disposal is frequently but incorrectly used to mean destruction.

DISPOSAL DATE

The date on which disposal should take place. Also known as action date.

DISPOSAL SCHEDULE

The control document which records appraisal decisions for series or categories of records and prescribes disposal action.

DOCUMENT

A unit of recorded information.

ELECTRONIC MAIL (e-mail)

Correspondence or documents transmitted in electronic form from computer to computer via internal or external telecommunications links.

ELECTRONIC RECORDS

In electronic code, which are accessible only by a computer.

EPHEMERAL TRANSMISSION

Informal documents of transitory value, usually retained only for a short period but sometimes preserved as samples or specimens.

FAX/FACSIMILE   A reproduction of a document transmitted via telecommunications links.

FILE (1)   An organized assembly (usually within a folder) of documents grouped together for current use.

FILE (2)   A logical assembly of data stored within a computer system. In word-processing systems it is the intellectual representation of a physical document.

FILE CENSUS   The regular (usually annual) check on the location of the files (1) of an agency or one of its divisions or branches. Also known as a records census.

FILE CLASSIFICATION SCHEME   A predetermined logical system for the physical and intellectual arrangement, storage and retrieval of files.

FILE CYCLE   A specified period during which documents are added to files (1), at the end of which new files are opened if the subjects with which they deal continue to generate documents.

FILE LIST   A detailed inventory of the individual files within a file classification scheme.

FILE STORAGE   An area administered by a records management unit in which current records are maintained when not in use.

INFORMATION   Knowledge which is given meaning by its context.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT   The planning, control and exploitation of the information resources of an organization in support of its business.

INTERMEDIATE STORAGE   The storage of semi-current records in a records centre or other storage area pending their ultimate disposal.

KEYWORD   A word or group of words related to the title or content of a file, characterizing its subject matter and facilitating its retrieval.

LIFE CYCLE (OF A RECORD)   The full span of a record's existence, from its creation to its ultimate disposal.

MINUTE(S)   A note or memorandum, specifically a record of what was said or done at a meeting or conference. Written comment on the proposed action to be taken on a document, noted on an instruction sheet by officials to whom the document or file is circulated.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES   The archive repository to which archives emanating from agencies of the national government are transferred.

NON-CURRENT RECORDS   Records no longer needed for current business.

OPEN FILE   A file to which documents are being added. Also sometimes used to refer to an unclassified (i.e., non-confidential) file.

ORIGINAL ORDER   The principle that records of a single provenance should retain the arrangement established at their creation or in which they originally accumulated, in order to preserve existing relationships.

PERSONNEL FILE   A file maintained by an organization for each of its employees giving personal details and information relating to their service. Also called personal file.

PUBLIC RECORDS   Records created, received and maintained in any agency of government.

RECORDS   Documents regardless of form or medium, created, received and maintained by an agency, private, organization or individual in pursuance of its legal obligations or in the transaction of business.

RECORDS CENTRE   A building specially designed or adapted for the low-cost storage and maintenance of semi-current records pending their ultimate destruction or transfer to an archive repository.

RECORDS MANAGEMENT　　　　　That area of general administrative management concerned with achieving economy and efficiency in the creation, maintenance, use and disposal of records of an organization, and in making the information contained in records available in support of the business of that organization.

RECORDS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM　System for controlling the creation and maintenance of current files/records and/or semi-current records through the use of formal registers, lists, indexes and/or filing plans/systems.

RECORDS MANAGEMNT SECTION　The administrative section of an agency responsible for the life cycle management of that agency's records. Also known as a records office. Formally known as a registry.

RECORDS MANAGER　　　　　A person professionally engaged in records management or a records management programme.

RECORDS SURVEY　　　　　A survey involving the gathering of basic information regarding the quantity, physical form and type, location, physical condition, storage facilities, rate of accumulation, uses and similar data about the records of an organization for the purpose of planning, acquisition and disposal programmes, microfilming operations, new facilities and related records activities.

REGISTER　　　　　A document, usually a volume, in which regular entry is made of data of any kind by statutory authority or because the data are considered of sufficient importance to be exactly and formally recorded.

REGISTRY　　　　　An office or sub-unit responsible for the receipt, registration, circulation, filing and dispatch of correspondence and other documents.

RETENTION　　　　　The function of preserving and maintaining records for continuing use.

RETENTION PERIOD   The length of time, as provided for by legislation, regulation or administrative procedure, that semi-current records should be retained before they are transferred to an archive or otherwise disposed of.

SEMI-CURRENT RECORDS   Records required only infrequently in the conduct of current business. Also known as semi-active records SERIES The level of arrangement of the files and other records of an agency or individual which brings together those which related to the same function or activity or have a common form or have some other relationship arising from their creation, receipt or use. Also known as a file series or records series.

SUBFILE   A separate file dealing with a discrete aspect of the subject of a more general file.

SUBJECT FILE   A file in which the documents relate to a specific subject matter.

TRANSFER   The act involved in a change of physical custody of records/archives with or without change of legal title. Records so transferred.

VITAL RECORDS   Records vital to the survival and continuity of an organization in the event of an emergency or disaster. Also known as essential records.

VOLUME   One of a number of physical units into which a file (1) has been subdivided chronologically as it has increased in size. Also known as a part.

Appendix 2

The Link between Financial Management and Records Management

The breakdown of financial systems is often related to the breakdown in records management. People rarely make the link between problems in financial management and poor practices in the way records are kept and managed; yet records are the source of all information used in financial management systems. Poor records management means that countries are less able to manage public sector spending and less able to introduce measures to enhance accountability and transparency.

If financial records are not well managed, it becomes increasingly difficult to achieve good financial management. Good financial management is critical to the success of any organization. In the public sector, the preparation of accounts is the key to an accountable government. But accurate accounts cannot be prepared if records are not kept properly. Nor can audit be carried out. Records management underpins financial management, and financial management in turn makes a vital contribution to good government.

The arguments are as follows:

Accountability - weaknesses in financial accountability are generally linked to weaknesses in public accounting, expenditure control, cash management, auditing and the management of financial records

Efficiency - value for money - is the public getting an economic, efficient and effective service - is the government making best use of resources - it cannot say unless records are available

Ensuring money is spent according to government priorities, policies and programmes are matched to objectives. This is achieved by controlling the budget approved by government and is reinforced by the publication of audited accounts, again dependent on the existence of well-kept records

Economic stability - public sector borrowing and expenditure have an impact on the stability of the overall economy - financial management, underpinned by records management, is also critical here.

DISPOSAL SCHEDULE

REF NO.	DESCRIPTION OF RECORDS	CUSTODY	DISPOSAL ACTION
1 1.1	**BANKING** (where applicable) **Applications, Approvals and signatories for Government Bank Account Bank Account** Correspondence	Retain in Ministry/Depart. (Registry Accounts file)	Destroy 3 years after closure of file or after audit later
1.2 1.2.1	**Government Bank Accounts** Bank statements and bank reconciliation statements Cancelled cheques	Retain in Ministry/Depart.	Destroy 2 years after audit
1.2.2 1.2.3	Correspondence (other than applications and approvals)	Retain in Ministry/Depart. Retain in Ministry/Depart. (Registry Accounts file)	Destroy 2 years after audit Destroy 3 years after closure of file
1.3	**Bank Deposit Slips** (original)	Retain in Ministry/Depart.	Destroy after 2 years or after audit if later
1.4	**Cash book (departmental bank accounts)**	Retain in Ministry/Depart.	Destroy after 7 years or after audit if later
2	**CONTRACTS AND TENDERS**		
2.1	**Tender Boards** Minutes, decisions, details of approved tenders	Retain in Ministry/Depart. (registry Accounts file)	Destroy 5 years after closure of file
2.2 2.3	**Award of Contract** Correspondence with Contract holder Register of Contracts	Retain in Ministry/Depart. (Registry Accounts file) Retain in Ministry/Depart. Accounts section	Review 1 year after completion of contract Destroy 10 years after last entry or after audit if later
3	**DEPOSIT ACCOUNT**		
3.1	**Deposit Account Reconciliation** Monthly and annual statements	Retain in Ministry/Depart Accounts section	Destroy after 7 years or after audit if later
3.2	**Deposit Ledger**	Retain in Ministry /Depart. Accounts section	Destroy individual accounts with nil balance after 7 years or after audit if later
4	**ESTABLISHMENT AND SALARIES**		
4.1	**Salaries Register**	Retain in Ministry/Depart. Accounts section with personnel Records	Transfer to Belize Archives Department 10 years after last entry; BAD to destroy 45 years after last entry
4.2	**Duplicate pay sheets**	Retain in Ministry/Depart. Accounts section	Destroy after 7 years or after audit if later

REF NO.	DESCRIPTION OF RECORDS	CUSTODY	DISPOSAL ACTION
4.3	**Time Pay Sheets** (may be attached to voucher) Duplicate and triplicate forms	Retain in Ministry/Depart. Accounts section	Destroy after 7 years or after audit if later
4.4	**Unestablished Staff Register**	Retain in Ministry/Depart. Accounts Section	Transfer to Belize Archives department 10 years after last entry; BAD to destroy 45 years after last entry
5	**ESTIMATES**		
5.1	**Draft Estimates**	Retain in Ministry/Depart. (Registry Accounts file)	Destroy 5 years after end of financial year
5.2	**Approved Estimates** Printed	Retain in Ministry/Depart. Accounts Section	Destroy at discretion of individual Ministry/ Department
6	**EXPENDITURE AND PAYMENTS**		
6.1	**Vote Control Book**	Retain in Ministry/Depart. Accounts Section	Destroy 7 years after last entry or after audit if later
6.2	**Dereservation approvals (recurrent and capital)**	Retain in Ministry/Depart. (Registry Accounts file)	Destroy after 7 years or after audit if later
6.3	**Imprest Applications and Approvals**	Retain in Ministry/Depart. (registry Accounts file)	Destroy 2 years after closure or after audit if later. Destroy 10 years after closure of file
6.4	**Advances to Public Officers and Approvals**	Retain in Ministry/Depart. (Registry Accounts file)	
6.5	**Advances Ledger**	Retain in Ministry/Depart. Accounts Section	Destroy individual accounts with nil balance after 7 years or after audit if later
6.6	**Monthly Abstract of Accounts and Reconciliation** Computer printout	Retain in Ministry/Depart. Accounts section	Destroy after 2 years (copies kept in Treasury)
6.7	**Specimen Signatures**	Retain in Ministry/Depart. (registry Accounts file)	Destroy 2 years after closure of file
6.8	**Applications and Approvals for Supplementary/Special Provision**	Retain in Ministry /Depart. (Registry Accounts file)	Destroy 7 years after closure of file
6.9	**Departmental Warrants** Warrants, correspondence	Retain in Ministry/Depart. (Registry Accounts file)	Destroy after 7 years or after audit if later

REF NO.	DESCRIPTION OF RECORDS	CUSTODY	DISPOSAL ACTION
6.10	**Payment Vouchers** Triplicates	Retain in Ministry/Depart.	Destroy after 7 years or after audit if later
6.11	**Transfer Vouchers**	Retain in Ministry/Depart.	Destroy after 7 years or after audit if later
6.12	**Local Purchase orders** Triplicates	Retain in Ministry/Depart.	Destroy 2 years after audit
6.13	**Delivery Book** Voucher movement record	Retain in Ministry/Depart. Accounts Section	Destroy 2 years after last entry or after audit if later
6.14	**Imprest Vouchers**	Retain in Ministry/Depart.	Destroy after 7 years or after audit if later
7	**LOSSES**		
7.1	**Loss Reports** Losses of public money, stores and other assets	(Registry Accounts file) Retain in Ministry/Depart. Accounts Section	Destroy 2 years after case officially closed
8	**PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT**		
8.1	**Assets Register** Lands and building	Retain in Ministry/Depart.	Retain permanently
8.2	**Inventories of Equipment and Furniture** Vehicles, plant, working equipment, loose tools, machinery, furniture and moveable fittings	Retain in Ministry/Depart. (Registry Accounts file)	Maintain and update
8.3	**Board of Condemnation Reports**	Retain in Ministry/Depart. (Registry Accounts file)	Destroy 3 years after closure of file or after audit if later
9	**Reports**		
9.1	**Auditor's General Report** Printed Report and correspondence relating to investigations	Retain in Ministry/Depart. (Registry Accounts file)	Destroy 1 year after Finance and Public Accounts Committee has issued report
9.2	**Accountant General's Report and Final Accounts** Printed	Retain in Ministry/Depart.	Destroy after 7 years
10	**REVENUE AND RECEIPTS**		
10.1	**Cash book**	Retain in Ministry/Depart.	Destroy after 7 years after last entry or after audit if later

REF NO.	DESCRIPTION OF RECORDS	CUSTODY	DISPOSAL ACTION
10.2	**Paying in Slips (& Receipts)** Pasted into Cash Book or kept separately	Retain in Ministry/Depart.	Destroy 7 years after last entry or after audit if later
10.3	**Receipt Book** Triplicates	Retain in Ministry/Depart.	Destroy 7 years after last entry or after audit if later
10.4	**Cash Survey (Annual and Surprise)**	Retain in Ministry/Depart. (Registry Accounts file)	Destroy 3 years after closure of file or after audit if later
10.5	**Transfer Vouchers** (same as 6.11)	Retain in Ministry/Depart.	Destroy after 7 years or after audit if later
10.6	**Revenue Register**	Retain in Ministry/Depart. Accounts section	Destroy individual accounts with nil balance after 7 years or after audit if later
10.7	**Arrears of Revenue**	Retain in Ministry/Depart. Accounts section	Maintain and Update
10.8	**Value Book**	Retain in Ministry/Depart. Accounts Section	Destroy 7 years after last entry or after audit if later
11	**STORES AND SUPPLIES**		
11.1	**Handing over Notes**	Retain in Ministry/Depart. (registry file)	Destroy 2 years after closure
11.2	**Stores Issue Vouchers**	Retain in Ministry/Depart.	Destroy after 7 years or after audit if later
11.3	**Requisition Book** Requisition of allocated stores	Retain in Ministry/Depart.	Destroy 2 years after last entry or after audit if later
11.4	**Stores Ledger**	Retain in Ministry/Depart.	Maintain and update
11.5	**Fuel Order Books**	Retain in Ministry/Depart.	Destroy after 7 years or after audit if later