

Natural History Museum Archives and Records Management Policy

Introduction

The Natural History Museum is committed to ensuring that its information is managed to the highest standards and in accordance with legislative and regulatory requirements such as the Public Records Act 1958, Data Protection Act 1998 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000; central government policies such as the Cabinet Office Security Policy Framework and HMG Information Assurance Standard Number 6; and best practice guidance from organisations such as the National Archives and the Information Commissioner's Office.

The Museum has policies that should enable its information to be stored in such a way that **confidentiality, integrity and availability** are maintained. The three tenets of information governance and records management can be summarised as "*making the right information available to the right people at the right time.*"

Records need to be authentic, reliable, unalterable and useable and must be subject to certain controls that ensure these features are maintained. Records management is about applying the necessary controls to the Museum's records to ensure authenticity, reliability, integrity and usability.

Scope

The Archives and Records Management Policy aims to extract and expand on the archives and records management roles and responsibilities within the Museum. It sets out the regulatory framework that staff operate in, and embeds good records management practice at the heart of all Museum activities.

This policy directly supports the requirements and implementation of the Information Assurance Framework and its associated policies and procedures.

It is complementary to the Museum's IT policies and procedures.

Why is Records Management important?

The Natural History Museum recognises the importance of records management, and embedding good record keeping practice because:

1. All data, information and records created by Museum staff in the course of their employment are a corporate information asset
2. Good record keeping:
 - Improves operational efficiency and supports easy retrieval of records
 - Improves access to information allowing for more rapid response to issues
 - Supports and provides evidence of Museum activity
 - Controls the growth of paper taking up valuable office space
 - Protects the Museum in cases of litigation, investigations, audit etc. by providing complete and accurate information
 - Meets legislative and other statutory requirements
3. An unmanaged records system can make the performance of duties more difficult, costs time, money and resources, and makes the Museum vulnerable to security breaches and litigation

Definition

For the purposes of this report a record is defined as '*information created, received, and maintained as evidence and information by an organisation or person in pursuance of legal obligations or in the transaction of business*'¹.

Records can be in any physical format, such as paper, photographs, video, microfilm or electronic format such as an email or Word document, or contained in databases or business systems. A record could either be a single document or make up of a series of documents (physical and/or electronic formats).

What is the difference between a document and record?

A document is a single entity that provides information. It can be a letter, report, memo, database or email message. Not all documents are records. Some documents will be of short-term value and will not need to be captured in any filing system. A document is a record when it provides evidence of your work at the Museum in a wider context and has been captured into a filing system, for example in the form of a project file. A blank form is a document. However, when this form has been filled out it may become a record if it is used to initiate some action.

Word-processed documents, email, spreadsheets and other electronic items held on your computer may fall within the definition of records. As an employee, contractor or consultant at the Natural History Museum it is your responsibility to maintain good records of your work-related activities.

Some records will need to be retained permanently in the Archives.

Objectives of NHM Archives and Records Management

The principal objective of NHM Archives and Records Management (ARM) is to enable the NHM to manage effectively its records, including paper, electronic and other media, so as to ensure the selection and retention of items to be retained as a permanent record of its activities and to enable the efficient identification and destruction of records with no long term administrative, legal or historical value. It provides a service to the NHM to enable it to comply with its statutory obligations (i.e. the terms of the Public Records Act and other relevant legislation such as the Freedom of Information Act and Data Protection Act) whilst carrying out its business efficiently and effectively. It aims to do this by:

- Promoting and facilitating efficient records management throughout the NHM, including the management and control of records within creating Departments
- Working with creating Departments within the NHM to select for permanent retention those records that have a significant bearing on the history of the NHM and its activities
- Working with creating Departments within the NHM to select for destruction those records which are no longer required for administrative and legislative purposes, ensuring that records are not retained longer than necessary
- Identifying vital records required for business continuity, and records of permanent value, which can then be stored, managed and preserved
- Arranging and listing the records selected for permanent retention as archives, to international standards, so that the information they contain is retrievable
- Encouraging use of the archive collection both by NHM staff and external researchers

¹ International Standard ISO 15489, *Records Management*, Part 3: Terms and definitions

Roles and Responsibilities

All employees of the Natural History Museum, contractors and consultants are responsible for managing and maintaining good records of their work related activities.

- Responsibilities of the NHM Archivist and Records Manager:
 - The NHM Archivist and Records Manager has the authority for, and is accountable for the NHM Archives and Records Management Team, within the Department of Library and Information Services.
 - They act as the NHM's Departmental Record Officer and liaise with National Archives on the management of public records.
 - They provide guidance, awareness raising activities, and compliance procedures for legislation relating to record retention and disclosure, and act as the NHM's Data Protection Co-ordinator and Freedom of Information Co-ordinator.
 - They work with creating departments to survey records and develop retention schedules for the management of records within departments.
 - They manage the transfer of records into the Modern Records Store, and the transfer of data relating to the records on to the records management database.
 - They hold records on behalf of creating departments, and will review and appraise records according to established criteria and timescales in collaboration with creating departments; they will transfer records into the NHM Archives at the appropriate time, or securely destroy them according to retention schedules approved by the creating departments.
 - They ensure that records are securely stored and intellectually managed; they do not make records available to members of other departments without permission, and only make information available from the records when required to do so in discussion with creating departments i.e. under the Freedom of Information Act.
 - They manage services relating to the NHM Archives, including access, enquiry services, cataloguing and outreach.
 - They have the authority for, and are accountable for the Modern Records Store and the Archives store.
- Responsibilities of Creating Departments:
 - Creating departments should ensure that all staff are aware that they are accountable for their record keeping responsibilities, and follow the guidelines set out by the Archives and Records Management Team.
 - Creating departments will be required to fund records management activities, including off-site storage if required.
 - Creating departments will appoint a Records Liaison Officer to work proactively with Archives and Records Management staff.
 - Departments will assist in record audits; they will be required to implement retention schedules and participate in their review and continued development.
 - Departments will actively engage with and participate in the records management process, and enter into discussions with Archives and Records Management staff regarding best practice for records.
 - Records will remain the responsibility of creating departments until their final disposal i.e. destruction or transfer to NHM Archives; Departments are required

to make decisions relating to current and semi-current records stored in the Modern Records Store e.g. the release of records under the Freedom of Information Act.

- Creating departments are required to sign off transfers of current and semi-current records, and authorise the destruction of identified records by means of agreed retention schedules.
- Departments will ensure records over 30 years old are transferred to the custody of the NHM Archives, as required by the Public Records Act; they will liaise with the NHM Archivist if records over 30 years old are still required within Departments, so that alternative arrangements can be made – for example, permission will be sought for extended retention from the Lord Chancellor, or Departments will be provided with surrogate/facsimile copies of records where practicable.
- Responsibilities of Liaison Officers
 - Liaison Officers will be required to become familiar with the work of the Archives and Records Management Team, and to be the point of contact between creating departments and Archives and Records Management staff. Their responsibilities include:
 - Promotion of Archives and Records Management to staff within their departments.
 - Understanding the statutory requirements of the NHM in relation to record keeping, such as the Public Records Act, Freedom of Information Act, and Environmental Information Regulations.
 - Working with Archives and Records Management staff to implement retention schedules, and assist in the review and development of schedules 'on the ground'.
 - Work with Archives and Records Management staff to ensure that created records are appraised, transferred or destroyed at the appropriate time, and encourage the timely deposit of archives and modern records.
 - Report on archives and records management matters at departmental or sectional meetings.
 - Alert the NHM Archivist to any situation where archives or records may be at risk i.e. when staff are leaving or retiring.
 - The HR Liaison Officer will be responsible for informing the NHM Archivist of all retiring staff at least 12 months before their retirement date.
 - The HR Liaison Officer will be responsible for informing the NHM Archivist of all staff leavers, as soon as this information becomes available.
- Responsibilities of Staff
 - All NHM staff are responsible for managing records they create.
 - Staff should follow the guidelines set out by Archives and Records Management to ensure the rapid destruction of duplicate, reference, or valueless material and the careful retention of the remainder.
 - Staff should follow departmental retention schedules to manage their records, and work with Record Liaison Officers and Archives and Records Management staff to develop those schedules.
 - Staff should work with Record Liaison Officers and Archives and Records Management staff to set retention decisions for the records they create, and to appraise records as required.

- Unlisted records will not be accepted into the Modern Records Store; staff are required to complete a Modern Records Transfer List, and to pack records for transfer in record transfer boxes, to the specification of the Modern Records Service. Records not listed or packed to specification will be returned to creating departments for repacking and re-listing.
- Staff should attend training sessions on issues relating to records, including sessions on records management and Freedom of Information.
- All retiring staff should meet with the NHM Archivist at least 12 months before they are due to leave to identify and make provisions for the documents the NHM Archives may require.
- Staff that resign from the Museum must make an appointment with the NHM Archivist as soon as their resignation is submitted to identify and make provisions for the documents the NHM Archives may require.
- Staff may not take any original documents created during their employment at the NHM. Copies of these documents may be permitted to be taken but only after a formal request has been approved by their Head of Department/Keeper (above this level Director and Trustee approval must be sought).

Records Life Cycle

The Museum is committed to managing information and records throughout their lifecycle, from “birth to death”. The procedures and guidance for managing information and records supports and in turn is supported by the Information Assurance Framework..

Creation

We are currently operating a mixed / hybrid system of records and document management. This means that all records and documents created or received in electronic format should be stored and maintained in the approved Museum electronic systems.

Records and documents available in paper format only are stored in paper files, for example lever arch or sprung files. These files are stored securely in the team areas.

Policies and procedures that support the creation of records include:

- Asset Management and Information Asset Register
- Protective Marking
- Records Management Handbook

Maintenance, Using and Sharing

All Museum staff are required to ensure their team’s records, including emails, are identified and maintained in the approved filing system which will allow them to be properly stored and protected, and to ensure they can be easily located and retrieved.

Policies and procedures that support the maintenance of information include:

- Email Policy
- Retention Schedule
- Archives Acquisition Policy
- Data Protection
- Freedom of Information
- Information Asset Management

- Protective Marking
- Removable Media Acceptable Use

Disposal

Destruction

We have legal and regulatory obligations to ensure we only keep records for an agreed time. The Retention Schedules have been developed to ensure the correct retention period is applied.

The destruction guidelines in the Disposal Procedure provide the complete destruction process for staff to follow.

Modern Records Store

When records are no longer current, but still need to be retained, they should be transferred to the Modern Records Store. This should be done in accordance with the records transfer procedure.

Deposit with the Archives

Records worthy of permanent preservation that are more than 30 years old and fall within the Archives Acquisition Policy should be transferred to the Museum's Archives. This should be done in accordance with the records transfer procedure.

Policies and procedures that support the disposal of information include:

- Retention Schedule
- Archives Acquisition Policy
- Destruction Procedure
- Records Management Handbook