



BROWN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

IV. Records Management

Records Management

Because 10 Park Lane is being considered for Brown University records storage in addition to Library collections and archives storage, this report includes a brief outline of what records management is, why it is important, and how to get a system in place.

Records Management is the systematic effort to retain the non-current records of a business or organization for two reasons. First is to satisfy the legal and fiduciary responsibilities of the organization for specific periods of time and second is to permanently retain those records, which document the historical record of the institution.

Currently no records management program exists at Brown University. Individual administrative and academic units retain and dispose of records at their own discretion, which in practice means an erratic and uncoordinated transfer of some records to the University Archives; other records are sent to remote storage where they remain in conditions that lead to their contamination by insects and mildew. Also, many records of no permanent historical value are often sent to the University Archives and records that do have such value are relegated to inadequate locations such as Marvel Gym and Tockwotten, where they are in effect “lost” and are at risk of physical destruction, either by the conditions in which they are stored or, eventually, by being discarded.

The benefits of a records management program are:

- A systematic segregation of records that have significant legal or operational value from those that have permanent value to the institution.
- A reduction in duplicated efforts from one administrative unit of the organization to another.
- Alleviating storage space problems throughout the organization.
- Saving money (according to a 1997 estimate by the National Archives of Records Administration, records kept in storage cost \$21.61 less per cubic foot than records kept in office space).

In setting up and maintaining a records management program at Brown, standard practice suggests that a system be developed that meets the needs of both the overall organization and the individual units within the organization. The program will reflect each unit’s current records requirements for retention and disposal (both legal and operational) and, in conjunction with the University Archives, determines which records should be retained permanently. It is envisioned that records that still have a current, or semi-current use for the University will remain in a portion of the off-site campus facility (10 Park Lane) that is separate from that portion of the building dedicated to library storage. Only those records that are deemed to have permanent historical value will be transferred to the University Archives, some of whose materials will also be at 10 Park Lane, though under stricter environmental controls than is required for standard records storage.

It is recommended that such a program be endorsed by the Corporation and operate under the jurisdiction of a senior administrative office, e.g. the Provost’s Office. This is important because it is critical that all units of the University understand the importance of the systematic records retention and recognize the critical role played by the Records Manager. Because of the massive and disorganized accumulation of existing records, the initial phase for establishing a records management program will take at least two years, and requires the hiring of a professional Records Manager with the following responsibilities:

- Conduct survey of records currently held in offices
- Prepare a manual and retention/disposal schedules to distribute to departmental file managers.
- Conduct training sessions in implementation within the departments.
- Arrange for files to be destroyed, to be transferred to storage, or to be transferred to Archives.

After the initial development of a records management program, the program must continue permanently in order to manage the ongoing undiminished production of University records. In addition to the Records Manager, an Assistant and Clerk are required for the ongoing activities. Because of confidentiality concerns, it is not likely that student assistants may be used. Some ongoing responsibilities include:

- Manage the established departmental requirements, update/revise as needed
- Process records for storage
- Inventory records for retrieval purposes
- Physically arrange storage records
- Retrieve records for department use

While every academic department and administrative unit of the University will be involved in the program, an Advisory Committee should be formed that will establish an official policy on the retention and use of the university's records in all formats. This standing committee would be composed of representatives from offices such as General Counsel, University Archives, Academic Planning and Administration, Finance Administration and other appropriate academic and administrative units.

Any of the departments involved in the Advisory Committee could oversee this program, however it may be advantageous to consider a senior administrative office of the University, e.g. the Provost, as the overseer of the newly appointed Records Manager and the development of a program. Significant coordination will be required between the Records Manager and the University Archives. Regardless of the reporting structure, an office will be needed with a central campus location for the Records Manager. The Assistant and Clerk can be located off-site with the records.

Proposed Budget

Start-up (one-time) Costs

1 Professional Staff	\$128,000 (salary/benefits for 2 years)
1 Assistant	\$ 38,500 (salary/benefits for second year only)
Furniture, Equipment, Supplies	\$100,000

Ongoing Annual Costs *

1 Professional Staff	\$ 66,000 (salary/benefits)
1 Assistant	\$ 40,500 (salary/benefits)
1 Clerk	\$ 33,600 (salary/benefits)
Retrieval	\$ 5,000
Furniture, Equipment, Supplies	\$ 10,000

* Does not include costs to clean/fumigate as needed for current records with mold and mildew.