

## CHAPTER-VIII

### RECORDS MANAGEMENT

**8.1 Introduction** — Decision-making is a complex process, which involves a series of procedures. It is sometimes difficult to arrive at an accurate decision without consulting old records or without having thorough knowledge of precedents. Records thus constitute an important part of any office and it is essential that they are to be retained for certain periods and managed properly so as to be quickly retrieved whenever required.

The main objectives of Record Management are to:

- (i) speed up the location of and reference to record for speedy disposal of business;
- (ii) ensure rationality and continuity in decision-making;
- (iii) fulfil legal requirements and provide the requisite evidence in case of disputes;
- (iv) preserve records of historical and research value;
- (v) retain only the necessary and essential records; and
- (vi) effect savings in the cost of creating, locating, using and preserving records.

**8.2 Closing, Recording and Classification of Records** — After action on all the issues under consideration has been completed and no further correspondence is anticipated, a file is closed through an order recorded on the note portion of the file by the Branch Officer. Before taking the order the Section in-Charge will ensure that all part files are merged into the main file and will personally verify that all orders passed on the file have been complied with and no action is pending. He/she will record his/her finding to this effect while taking order for closure of the file. Thereafter the dealing hand will put up the case to the Section in-Charge for approval of the Branch Officer to the file being closed and recorded under one of the following classes:

- Class I* to be retained for one year.  
*Class II* to be retained upto 3 years.  
*Class III* to be retained upto 8 years.  
*Class IV* to be retained upto 15 years.  
*Class V* to be retained permanently.

The Branch Officer will exercise his/her discretion as to the period of retention of the files in any of the categories cited above, according to the importance of the subject dealt within the file and material contained therein.

The following illustration of different classes will provide a guide, as it is difficult to provide an exhaustive list:—

- (i) **Class I:** includes cases such as miscellaneous circulars, applications for copies of papers, petitions of a petty nature, informatory statements, returns of temporary interest, ordinary accident reports, casual leave, files on functions, meetings, conferences etc. files regarding allotment of roster duties, etc.
- (ii) **Class II:** includes cases such as suits, audit and inspection reports finally settled, retention or retirement of officers; result of departmental examination, leave, postings, resignation and transfers of Officers other than those which form part of the personal file of the Officers maintained by the appointing authority.

- (iii) **Class III:** includes cases such as appeals against disciplinary action, corrections and amendments in manuals and service rules, sale of movable property, OTA, TA, contingent Bills, cases, training programmes and annual reports, etc.
- (iv) **Class IV:** includes cases such as alteration in the dates of birth of officers, special reports relating to the conduct and work of Officers and acquisitions of immovable property.
- (v) **Class V:** includes all cases of such importance where permanent preservation of records is considered necessary.

It may include:

- (i) file of historical importance such as papers relating to origin of Secretariat;
- (ii) policy decisions;
- (iii) important aspects of scientific or technical research and development;
- (iv) lasting precedents for important procedures;
- (v) files containing rules and regulations, department instructions or guidelines of general application;
- (vi) litigation files of important nature;
- (vii) rulings/decisions of Chairman or the Secretary-General; and
- (viii) material likely to be required frequently for reference in future.

All files to be included in Class V will require approval of Secretary-General, for further classification as to whether it should be classified as V-A or V-B (preservation only). Files classified as –category V.A. may be micro-filmed if they contain material of historical, administrative or research value, which may be required for reference frequently in future or if they contain material of such importance and value as necessitates micro-filming. As microfilming is a costly option, a decision to micro-film any file should be taken with due caution and only after obtaining the approval of the Secretary-General. Files classified as V-A and not micro-filmed may be optically scanned in two CDs, one of which may be kept for storage and the other CD may be used for reference. Arrangement for micro-filming or scanning of Category V-A files will be made by the Record Room (Sales & Archives Section) in consultation with National Archives of India, New Delhi. The CDs meant for storage and micro-films are to be kept in the Record Room. The CD for reference purpose will be maintained by the concerned Section.

**8.3 Preparing of File for Record** – After a file has been ordered to be closed and marked for record, proper arrangement for recording becomes necessary. This will involve the following action:

- (i) amendment or revision, if necessary, of the title of the file in order to describe adequately its contents;
- (ii) completing references *i.e.* paging of notes and correspondence, removal of alphabetical slips and giving permanent identification marks to the references quoted in the notes and correspondence;
- (iii) incorporating all the papers relevant to the file, including separated part files;
- (iv) removal of routine notes and papers from the file which are to be weeded out;
- (v) marking of numbers of previous and later files; and
- (vi) noting the date of recording, classification and the year of destruction, etc. in the file register.

After action as above is completed, the files classified in categories I, II, III, IV and V shall be entered in the Register of Files for Record and the classification will be recorded on the top left corner of the file cover in bold red ink. The Section Register of Files for Record will be maintained in the proforma with a separate page for each minor

head, as given in **Annexure-V**. To make it easy to locate a file on a given subject sent to the record room, the record room serial no. (written by the record keeper on the copy of the challan of files sent for Record) will be entered in the register on receipt of the challan book.

**8.4 Record Room** — The Rajya Sabha Secretariat will maintain a Record Room and all records which are required to be retained must be consigned to the Record Room. The following instructions must be followed:—

- (i) at the end of each month, all files/records which have been recorded and given classification shall be consigned to the Record Room;
- (ii) records will be accompanied by lists (challan), in duplicate, containing the particulars of record *viz.* Serial number, file numbers under each subject-head, date of disposal and total number of files pertaining to each category;
- (iii) records will be kept subject-wise in order of date of disposal, etc. in the Record Room.

**8.5 Procedure for consigning of Files to Record Room** — The Consigning Section should ensure the following:

- (i) Before sending files to the Record Room they should be sorted out and arranged year and number-wise by the consigning Section. Files of the same year should be arranged and entered in the list (challan) serially and according to the ascending order of their file numbers.
- (ii) Old files and new files should be entered in separate lists, in duplicate. Old files are those which were once requisitioned from the Record Room for reference purpose and new files are those which are being consigned to the Record Room for the first time.
- (iii) Files should be sent to the Record Room only after they have been finally closed and ordered to be recorded.
- (iv) Similar files opened on the same subject in the same year through an over-sight or for dealing urgent papers in the event of main file being under action/submission should be amalgamated into one file before consigning to the Record Room.
- (v) No loose papers etc. will be sent to the Record Room until they are made into files and given a regular file number. Part files will not be sent for consigning.
- (vi) The following papers should be removed from files being prepared for consignment:
  - (a) Unnecessary covers.
  - (b) Reminders and explanations for delay if the required answer has been received or sent, if they do not bear serial numbers.
  - (c) Rough copies of initialled faired drafts.
  - (d) Proofs of finally printed papers.
  - (e) Office Slips.
- (vii) Where the note portion is separate, it should be stitched at the end of the correspondence portion of the file. The order for recording the file should be the last proceeding on the note portion. The Section in-Charge will sign the order for recording the file.
- (viii) Files 'that are to be retained permanently should not be mixed up with other files in the same list nor should the files that are returned from the Record Room for correction be sent back to the Record Room entered in the same list under which new files are being consigned. Such files should be returned

to the Record Room within a week after necessary corrections, through the list under which they were sent by the Record Room.

- (ix) Before files are consigned to the Record room the threads binding the file should be given a double knot and the remaining portions of both the ends of the threads should be clipped so that the recorded files cannot be re-opened.

The files along with the challan list in duplicate (one copy to be returned by Record Room) are then sent to the Record Room. If the files are not received in accordance with the above procedure, the in-charge of the Record Room should not accept them.

**8.6 Transfer and Storage of Records** – Generally records can be segregated into two categories *viz.* ‘active’ and ‘inactive’ records, and transfer of records takes place from active to inactive files and from inactive files to a low cost storage. In each case the transfer may also lead to a decision for the destruction of records should they be considered worthless at that stage.

A Record Room is mainly set up to maintain inactive records. The record maintenance should ensure maximum utilisation of space and easy retrieval at minimum cost. With advancement in technology, for records where the content rather than the need for original copy is important, micro-film and optical disc storage are feasible low cost options.

Longevity of records depends upon the storage environment. Proper storage will require removal of dust, fumigation, anti- rodent action, etc. proper records should be stored on steel racks, and should never be kept on the floor. The record room should be free from seepage of water from the floor, walls and ceiling. Suitable Fire-fighting equipment should be installed and record room staff given periodic training. All records selected for permanent preservation should be transferred to the National Archives 25 years after being closed or recorded.

**8.7 Review and Weeding Out** – In order to ascertain how much of the records that have been stored have lost their relevance or utility, it is essential that records be systematically and regularly reviewed. For this purpose, each year, after the Monsoon Session, records whose retention period has elapsed shall be sent by the Record Room to the originating (consigning) Section for review, and weeding out along with the following form; with entry made in columns 1,2 and 3.

**Form for Review and Weeding out of Records**

Sl. No.	File No.	Class	Instructions of Reviewing Authority
1	2	3	4

Ephemeral records will be weeded out without any further review, while other records will be required to be reviewed before being weeded out. Records already classified, especially, Class II and III will be reviewed after the expiry of the specified retention period and will be:—

- (i) either weeded out; or
- (ii) retained for a further specified period from the year of closing, at the end of which it will be weeded out without any further review; or
- (iii) upgraded to higher class with the approval of the Branch Officer of the consigning Section for reasons to be stated.

While reviewing files, great care should be taken by the consigning Section to ensure that the following type of cases are not destroyed:-

- (i) Important decisions of the Chairman or the Secretary-General.
- (ii) Decisions relating to service conditions of the staff which are not embodied in any Rules etc.
- (iii) Precedents relating to the position of the Secretariat *vis-a-vis* the Executive/Government.
- (iv) Files containing papers which are important or are likely to become important in future, as source of information on any aspect of history, whether political, military, social, economic, etc., or which are, or may in future prove to be of biographical or antiquarian interest.

While reviewing the recorded files for weeding out purposes, the following instructions should be observed:—

- (i) References to earlier and later files should be indicated on the covers of the relevant files, if they are not already there.
- (ii) If the covers of files, which are to be retained, are found to be spoiled or torn they should be replaced by new ones and torn pages should be carefully pasted.
- (iii) Each category should be listed and the lists submitted to the Branch Officer with recommendations for preserving or weeding out, as the case may be.
- (iv) Thereafter, indication whether the file should be ‘retained’ or ‘destroyed’ should be given on the Cover of the file and initialled by the Section in-Charge.
- (v) After marking in the file Register the disposal regarding files to be destroyed, the files should be returned to the Record Room, after making entries in the 4th column of the form given above.

The In-charge of the Record Room will see that the work of checking and weeding of files is done regularly. He/ she should in particular ensure that files along with the form are sent to the originating Section regularly and received back within 15 days. All forms on receipt will be filed in Section-wise folders for easy reference. The following instructions should be observed in weeding out and destruction of files so ordered:—

- (i) The periods prescribed for destruction should be from the date of final order on the file.
- (ii) After a new non-permanent file is accepted in the Record Room an entry in this regard to be made in the Destruction Register (**Annexure-VI**) under the year in which the file is to be weeded out, and columns 1 to 5 filled in. Columns 6 to 9 will be filled at the time of actual destruction. A glance of the Register will thus give an immediate picture of the actual status of a majority of files due for destruction.
- (iii) The weeder will carefully examine the classification marked on the left hand top corner of each file and check that each of the files is due for destruction. He/she will also mark under his/her signatures in the Destruction Register as well as the form for review and weeding, the dates on which the files are physically destroyed.
- (iv) The In-charge of Record Room, will check and authenticate the entries in the Destruction Register, after comparing the entries with the relevant form for review & weeding.
- (v) Files of confidential nature will be burnt after they are weeded out. Other files will be torn into small bits or shredded.
- (vi) File boards, covers and laces etc. should be removed and used again.

**8.8 Retention Period for various types of files** — Retention periods of records connected with Accounts, Stores and Personnel will be as given in Appendix 13 to **General Financial Rules**.

Suggested retention period for Section-specific files and other records are as given in **Annexure-VII**. However in all cases Appendix 13 to General Financial Rules should also be consulted and retention period determined keeping in view the principles given in Appendix 13.

**8.9 Requisition of Records** — No file or paper in file should be removed from the Record Room without a requisition slip signed by the Section in-charge of the Section making the requisition and indicating the purpose for which records are required. Requisition slips will be serially numbered and filed year-wise in folders opened in respect of files of each consigning Section, even though the name of the requisitioning Section may be different.

All requisitions will be entered in the requisition register maintained in the following format:

Regn. No.	Date	Consigning Section Name	Requisitioning Section Name	File No.	Subject	Date of Handing Over of File	(Dated-Signature of receiver)	Date of receipt back

The Sections requisitioning old files from the Record Room shall follow the following instructions:—

- (i) Sections should return the files obtained on requisition to the Record Room immediately after purpose is served, and obtain the signatures of the record clerk on the copy of the forwarding note.
- (ii) Recorded files, requisitioned from the Record Room for reference purpose, should never be reopened to deal with fresh receipts.

Records requisitioned from the Record Room can be kept for 3 months while in case of records obtained from the National Archives should not normally be retained for more than 6 months. The requisition register should be reviewed each week and reminders sent in respect of overdue files. The old files requisitioned and returned to the Record Room in which no alteration in the period of retention is made should be restored to their proper places after these have been thoroughly checked to ensure that they are intact.

**8.10 Retrieval and Indexing of Records** — The utility of records to an organisation depends upon as to how best and how quickly the information could be retrieved from them. For efficient retrieval of information an 'Index' to records is prepared wherein index slips are made in the first instance under the subject *i.e.* standards heads which may serve as catch-word or by name, place, etc. giving cross-references. Thereafter, these index slips have to be arranged alphabetically. The process can also be computerised. Only those records/files which are categorised as III, IV and V will be indexed.

The Index, sometimes called a schedule, abstract or docket, is usually a tabulated statement arranged in chronological order of the documents, briefly showing the important features of each document and mentioning the names of the parties between whom the correspondence has passed.

**8.11 Recommended Practices to ensure Longevity of Records** — The following points may be observed:-

- (i) Good quality paper and ink should be used, especially in files likely to be of value.
- (ii) Documents should be kept flat and not in folded shape.
- (iii) Documents should not be kept loose and use of metal pins and clips should be avoided while keeping it.
- (iv) Steel racks or steel almirahs are preferable to wooden ones for storage of files.
- (v) Indirect diffused lighting is preferable in a record room.

- (vi) Atmospheric pollution, excessive heat, humidity and dryness are harmful to records.
- (vii) Naphthalene bricks or balls (wrapped in tissue paper) should be used to act as an insect repellent; the use of insecticidal sprays directly on the records is to be avoided.
- (viii) Smoking and eating in the stack area should not be allowed.
- (ix) Carbon dioxide type fire extinguishers should be provided in the Record Room.
- (x) Repairs of brittle and damaged manuscript or books should be undertaken under the guidance of experts.
- (xi) Periodic fumigation and use of vacuum cleaner machine.