

## CONDUCTING A RECORDS INVENTORY

As defined by the Society of American Archivists, a records inventory is a detailed listing of the volume, scope and complexity of an organization's records, usually compiled for the purpose of creating a records [retention] schedule. To go about getting this detailed listing, here are steps as set forth by NARA, the National Archives and Records Administration.

- **Define the inventory's goals such as scheduling or preparing for conversion to other media.**
- **Define the scope of the inventory.**
- **Obtain the support of top management.**
- **Decide on the information to be collected (location, description, how it is used).**
- **Prepare an inventory form.**
- **Determine who will do the inventory and train them properly.**
- **Learn where the files are located, both physically and within the organization's structure.**
- **Conduct the inventory.**
- **Verify the results and analyze them as to what they mean in future terms.**

If there is not an existing records inventory form within your organization, here are some ideas to help you create one. Since you will likely be dealing with people who do not do records management full time, it will be useful to sit down and talk with them to determine what kinds of records they create, use and maintain, and how these relate to their daily business functions. This will help you determine the categories or headings for columns on your form.

Another possibility is to look at samples of record inventory forms used by organizations similar to yours. There are several examples available at <http://web.info.com/infocom.us/search/web/%22records+inventory+form%22>. Here are some of the headings used on these samples.

1. **Record name or title.** Description of the type of record (invoices, monthly summaries, payroll records).
2. **Value to the organization.** Such as: operational, needed for daily business; administrative, for planning and



- management decisions; fiscal, for audit or tax purposes; legal, for compliance with regulations or litigation; historical or archival, to document the organization's history.
3. **Office maintaining the records (department, division, administrative area).** If this office uses records that were created by another office, the originating office should be noted on the inventory).
4. **Location.** Where these records currently reside. If some of the records from a particular office or administration area are stored off site, that should be noted.
5. **Origin of records.**
6. **Range of records.** Could be done by dates, file numbers or subject matter such as: January 1, 2004-December 31, 2004; 18400 through 18600; auto leases through auto repairs.
7. **Usage.** Daily, weekly, monthly, semi-annually, annually. Or current/active (used more than once a month); semicurrent/semiactive (used less than once a month); noncurrent/inactive (not used for current operations).
8. **Retention period.**
9. **Authority for disposition.**
10. **Stage of life cycle.** Active, semi-active, obsolete.
11. **Quantity or volume.** Expressed in cubic feet where possible. For paper records, one letter-size filing cabinet drawer equals \_\_\_\_ cubic feet. Or for smaller situations, could be expressed as two four-drawer filing cabinets; 18 records storage boxes; one lateral cabinet.

12. **Storage method.** Cabinets, file boxes, computer files, other.
  13. **Annual accumulation.** Important when planning offsite storage.
  14. **Record type or format.** Paper, microfilm, computer disk or hard drive, etc.
  15. **Vital records status.** Are they needed in case of emergency, and/or are they needed to document legal or financial rights?
  16. **Duplication.** Copies may be here but also elsewhere within the organization. Is similar data available elsewhere in another format?
  17. **Finding aid for a series of records,** especially if they are to be retained permanently.
  18. **Restrictions on use.** Could be used to protect proprietary information or information in personnel records. Could be influenced also by the Privacy Act restrictions or Freedom of Information Act restrictions.
- **Hardware environment**
  - **Volume**
  - **Linear feet**
  - **Number of storage containers**
  - **Number of media**
  - **Estimated growth**
  - **Supporting files**
  - **Reference requirements**
  - **On-line**
  - **Near-line**
  - **Off-line**
  - **Off-site**
  - **Retention requirements**
  - **Relationship to human-readable records**
  - **Vital records status**

## What about inventorying electronic records?

Inventorying records in electronic form is not about a physical collection of materials. Instead, it identifies the functions and activities (administrative, legal, fiscal, other) which produce records, thus creating information asset inventories. Electronic records can change in content and structure, and organizations may need different types of information as situations change. For further exploration, see the on-line workshop week 4, Basic Electronic Records, by the Society of American Archivists: [www.birkey.com/key/saa/mods.mod5.htm](http://www.birkey.com/key/saa/mods.mod5.htm).

Another on-line source stresses that electronic records are growing in volume in most organizations while supporting mission-critical operations, possibly containing information not available elsewhere. Electronic records can be vulnerable because of poor control over creation and maintenance, dependence on specific hardware or software, unstable storage media, or security breached by remote access. This source, <http://xnet.rrc.mb.ca/recmgmt/chapter9c.htm>, offers a good checklist for inventorying electronic record series:

- **Series title**
- **Copy type**
- **Brief description**
- **Dates covered**
- **File type**
- **Media characteristics**
- **Type of medium**
- **Recording material**
- **Brand and model**
- **Physical size**
- **Recording format**
- **Special attributes**
- **Media manufacturing dates**
- **Media recording dates**

## Frequently asked questions about records inventories

In addition to the steps given at the beginning of this newsletter, NARA's website spells out the elements that should be included in an inventory. Most of these are included within points 1-18 above. NARA has further specifics for inventorying electronic records written for the federal government. However, some may apply to your workplace:

- **Legal authority for creation of the system**
- **System control number**
- **Activity supported by the system**
- **Data input and sources**
- **Major outputs**
- **Informational content such as:**
  - **Description of data;**
  - **Persons, places or things that are the subject of the system and the information maintained on them**
- **Geographic coverage**
- **Time span**
- **Update cycle**
- **Date the system was initiated**
- **How data are manipulated**
- **Whether a public-use version is created**
- **Description of indexes, if any**
- **Hardware and software environment**
- **Location and volume of other records containing the same information**

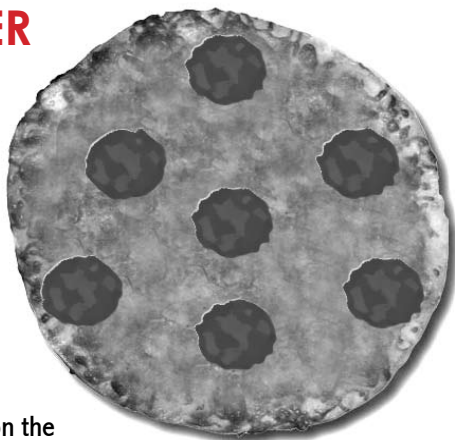
For the complete listing, go to [www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/faqs/inventories.html](http://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/faqs/inventories.html)

Another source of information is Chapter Four within Managing Electronic Records, 2nd Edition, by William Saffady and published by ARMA International ([www.arma.org](http://www.arma.org)). Saffady devotes 19 pages to the inventorying process and the steps and stages within in it.

As stated earlier, one of the results of an inventory is to determine when records are ready to be moved off-site for storage. Your local storage contractor is ready to help you with those records, whether paper or electronic.

## BRAIN TEASER

Seven folks from the information management department have pitched in for a pepperoni pizza as an afternoon snack. When it arrives, everyone wants a piece of pizza with pepperoni on it; unfortunately there are only seven pieces of pepperoni on the pizza which makes cutting the pizza a real challenge. Suddenly one member of the department says she can cut the pizza with three straight lines so that everyone gets a piece of pepperoni on their pizza. How did she do it?



(Answer on last page).

## A FEW BRILLIANT THOUGHTS ON COMPUTERS AND COMPUTING

“A computer lets you make more mistakes faster than any invention in human history - with the possible exceptions of handguns and tequila.”

-Mitch Ratliffe

“The most likely way for the world to be destroyed, most experts agree, is by accident. That’s where we come in; we’re computer professionals. We cause accidents.”

-Nathaniel Borenstein

“I have a spelling checker  
It came with my PC;  
It plainly marks four my revue  
Mistakes I cannot sea.

I’ve run this poem threw it,  
I’m sure your pleased too no,  
Its letter perfect in it’s weigh,  
My checker tolled me sew.”

-Janet Minor

“The computer is a moron.”

-Peter Drucker

## THE “PA ACT” IS IN EFFECT

As you may be aware, the **Breach of Personal Information Notification Act (the “PA Act”)** has become effective as of June 20, 2006. The PA Act was enacted to establish procedures and criteria to govern the disclosure of a security breach of personal information to customers. Failure to comply constitutes an unfair or deceptive trade practice under Pennsylvania’s Unfair Trade Practices and Consumer Protection Law and can result in damages, fines and other penalties.

Any organization that maintains, stores or manages computerized data that includes personal information is required to comply with this act. Personal information is defined as the individual’s first name and last name linked with the following data elements that are “not encrypted or redacted”: 1) the person’s social security number, 2) drivers license number, or 3) the credit or debit card account number in combination with any required access code.

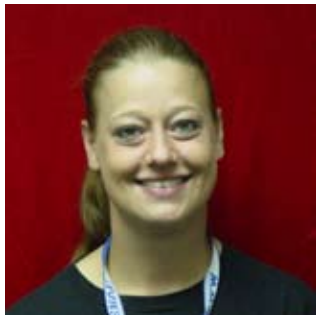
When developing your organization’s information security plan, controlling the amount of customer data held onsite in computerized form can reduce the risk of losing or releasing data to unauthorized parties. BRM’s secure offsite storage and rotation of computer media, as well as certified destruction of outdated material provides protection against fines and penalties associated with the PA Act.

If you would like more information on the PA Act or to learn how BRM can assist your company in avoiding costly litigation and negative public exposure, please call us at (412) 321-0600.

## CONGRATULATIONS ENEWSLETTER 2ND QUARTER WINNER

Congratulations to Ms. Donna Johnson from Hill Barth & King Inc. who received two tickets to the Pittsburgh CLO presentation of Seven Brides for Seven Brothers on Friday July 21, 2006 at 8:00 PM. On behalf of everyone at BRM, thanks again and we hope you have a great time!

## EMPLOYEE PROFILES



**Brandi McGinnis** has been part of the BRM family for seven years, beginning her career in September 1999 in the refile department. Now as refile coordinator, Brandi handles all incoming files for refile, and also volunteers to do rush delivery and pick-up orders on a regular basis. Her versatility to perform tasks in different

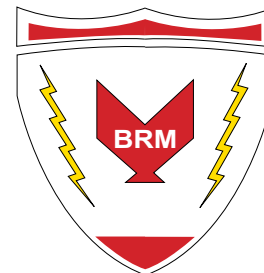
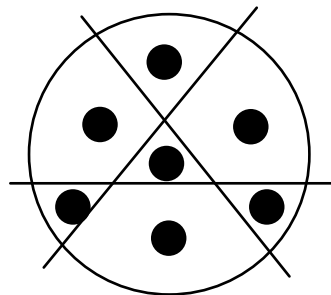
departments and knowledge of BRM is what she feels is her greatest contribution to the company. Brandi's favorite part of working at BRM is the people she works with. When not hard at work, she is hard at play with her eight year old daughter Dakota and boyfriend John, enjoying camping, boating, or vacationing in Summersville or Deep Creek. Relaxing at home with her two cats, Faith and Babygirl, while listening to country music is high on the list as well. Brandi considers her greatest accomplishment in life is juggling work with motherhood.



**Michael Gervas** joined BRM in January 2006 as the director of operations, facilities, and systems. Assuming this role demands the organized coordination of the various departments to meet the needs of our customers, keeping quality of service high in priority. His responsibilities encompass the direction of managers, supervisors, and coordinators from

various departments in matters including, but not limited to, the management of facilities and vehicle repair, building renovations, security, supply purchasing, information and communication systems, IT support, operations, vault operation, disaster recovery, delivery and pickup schedules, and the maintenance and direction of our remote locations. Michael's favorite part of working for BRM is his co-workers. On his time off, Mike enjoys spending time with his wife of 20 years, Janet, 12 year old daughter Kellie, and 8 year old son Aaron. Members of the family also include two goldfish, a frog and a Shih Tzu named Tucker. Kid's activities, golfing and gardening seem to be common activities around the Gervas house, but when they want to get away, a visit Salt Fork State park in Cambridge, Ohio does the trick.

## Brain Teaser Answer



**Business Records Management, Inc.**  
**BRM Disaster Recovery Services, Inc.**

1018 Western Avenue  
 Pittsburgh, PA 15233

Voice: 412.321.0600

Fax: 412.321.5152

Web: [www.businessrecords.com](http://www.businessrecords.com)