Records Management Guidance
Glossary of Terms

This document provides some explanation of commonly used terms in King County that relate to records management, Content Manager (the county's records management system), and the programs and people that support records management throughout King County. Note that many of these concepts are explained in more detail in other documents, training material, and policies available on the Records Management Program website.

Records Management - Basic Concepts and Terminology:

Term	Definition
Active vs. Inactive	**Active** records are still used for the reason they were created or received and have **not** met their **cutoff date**. **Inactive** records are no longer used or accessed frequently and have met their **cutoff date**.
Archival	Archival records have enduring historical value. At the end of their retention period, they are transferred to the **King County Archives** rather than destroyed. The archival value for each **category** is defined on a retention **schedule;** or is determined based on an **appraisal** from an archivist. The verb "archive" (archiving, archived) should only be used for the transfer of records to the King County Archives *after* the end of their retention period.
Custody	Custody refers to possession and control as well as the legal responsibility to preserve and produce records according to state law and other legal requirements. This includes responsibility to produce records in response to discovery in litigation or public records requests. Generally, most records remain in the custody of the original/initiating agency even if they are in an inactive storage location – such as the **Records Center** or **Content Manager (CM)**. Records change custody when they go through **Disposition**.

Cutoff Date	The date a record becomes **inactive**. This is the date that starts or triggers the beginning of the **retention period** countdown as described on the retention schedule. The cutoff date to use depends on their retention **category** and is defined on a **retention schedule**.
Disposition	Disposition is what happens to records at the end of their **retention period**. There are two options: 1) destruction (usually through deletion or shredding) (for records in non-archival categories) or 2) transfer of custody to the **King County Archives** (for records in potentially archival or archival categories))
Destruction After Digitization (DAD)	The name for the authorization to scan/digitize paper records and retain them only in an **electronic/digital** format. More information about Destruction After Digitization (including the blank application form and examples of approved applications) is provided online.
Electronic/Digital	The terms **electronic** and **digital** are used interchangeably and refer to any files that exist in an electronic or digital format and require a computer or application to view them (i.e. the opposite of paper/physical/analog records).
File Plan	This document provides guidance on how to manage records in accordance with a **retention schedule**. Can include recommended folder structures and naming conventions.

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Hold	Process by which records that are needed for legal or legitimate business reasons are preserved and protected from destruction even if they have met their **retention requirements**. A **legal hold** is a particular type of hold for records that are responsive to discovery in litigation.
Metadata	Details or information about electronic records. Generally, metadata does not refer to the content of the record itself but instead to *details* about the record that are retained behind-the-scenes, including but not limited to: date created, name of the person that created it, details about where the file is stored, size of the document, etc.
Native Format	Native format refers to the format (including physical vs. electronic) or file type that the record was in when it was originally created or received. Generally, records should remain in their native format for the duration of their retention period. However records can potentially have their format changed if they are listed on a Disposition After Digitization (DAD) approval.
Record	Any information, regardless of format, that is created, received, or maintained, and which supports, sustains, or provides evidence of county business.
Records Lifecycle	The entire process a record goes through from the point it is created until it is destroyed or removed from agency **custody**. Stages of the lifecycle include: **Creation, Active, Inactive (Retention), Disposition**.

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Records Management vs. Document Management	Records Management and Document Management are two closely related concepts that both relate to how public records in King County are managed (including how they are named, organized, restricted, searched for, and stored) **Document management** generally refers to how we maintain records in the **active** stage of their lifecycle, including those in draft format or that are being collaborated on. They have not yet met their **cutoff date** and their **retention** period has not yet started. Whereas **records management** generally refers to how we maintain records in the **inactive** stage of their lifecycle, especially after they are finalized. They have met their **cutoff date** and their **retention period** is being calculated. All public records, regardless of their status or **lifecycle** stage must be protected and preserved in accordance with their retention schedule
Retention Period	The amount of time a record is required to be retained after it has met its **cutoff date**. Retention periods for different types of records are provided on **retention schedules**.
Retention Schedule	Legal documents that provide **retention periods** and other guidance on managing records, including the names of **categories**, how to determine their **cutoff dates**, and whether records are **archival** or not. All retention schedules are provided online.
Transitory	Records that do not have any legal retention requirements and can and should be routinely destroyed. Some common examples include: non-work related communications, many duplicate copies, spam, auto-generated meeting notices, out-of-office replies, most non-substantiative drafts, etc. More guidance about transitory records is provided online.

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Content Manager (CM) Terminology:

Term	Definition
Category	The names of different types/buckets of records that an agency has responsibility for. They generally correspond to specific business functions with unique retention requirements. In Content Manager, each **container** (folder or box) must be assigned to a category, and all records within that container inherit the category details.
Consignment	The process by which records are legally **dispositioned** (destroyed or transferred) from Content Manager. The consignment is the grouping of records that are eligible for disposition and are dispositioned in a batch.
Container vs. Folder	Container is a generic term for a virtual or physical space for holding records. A folder is a type of container. In Content Manager, these terms are often used interchangeably – especially for electronic records. All electronic records must be filed inside of a Folder and a Folder is a type of Container. Other types of containers include boxes and different types of folders. Types of folders include: Digital Folder, Digital Subfolder and Physical Folder.
Content Manager (CM)	Content Manager is the name of the county's enterprise records management system, which has been in place since 2019 and is the successor to the old system called KC ERMS.
Document Queue	Document Queue is one of the options to file electronic records into Content Manager. The process creates a link between a folder in OneDrive and a folder in Content Manager and allows for semi-automated filing of records between those linked folders.

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Dropzone	Dropzone is the default option for filing electronic records into Content Manager. Dropzone is a small window that is enabled by minimizing Content Manager. Users can drag-and-drop records into folders in their Dropzone. Folders in Dropzone are also referred to as **Recent Containers**.
Location	General term used to describe any object in Content Manager that is not a record and is either a **person (user/staff)**, a **group of people**, or an **organization**.
Owner (Organization)	This refers to the originator of records or the records custodian responsible for the records. In the context of Content Manager, it is the term that describes the portion of the county's hierarchical organizational structure used to provide user access to records within the system. It usually corresponds to a section, but that depends on the department/agency (sometimes it is set up broadly for an entire department or division, and other times more granularly for a particular work unit). In the old system, these were called DDS (Department-Division-Section).
Recent Containers	This is the term used for **Folders** in Content Manager that appear in the user's **Dropzone**. By default, this includes all folders that the user has created, and also all existing folders that the user manually adds to their Recent Containers. Contains a maximum of 50 folders at a time.
Record Type	This is a term in the system used to distinguish between different high-level formats of records in the system, options include: Digital Folder (DF) Digital Subfolder (SF) ERecord or EDocument Box (B) Physical Folder (PF)

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Request	Terminology used to submit requests to the King County Records Center for pickup or retrieval of physical records. Options include: - pick up new records - retrieve records in storage and deliver back to them (Temporary and Permanent) - return records that were previously requested
Schedule	The legal retention requirements that are assigned to each Category and inherited by all records in the system. They correspond to individual categories/series on Retention Schedules.
Supercopy	The terminology by which *copies* of records in Content Manager can be exported and saved to a location of the user's choice.

People and Groups/Programs that Are Involved in Records Management:

Term	Definition
Agency Records Officer (ARO)	Person at the department or agency level that is responsible for establishing and maintaining records management best practices throughout their agency; role is established per Executive Policy INF-15-4-1-EP. Names of all agency records officers are provided online.
Archives	The King County Archives (in DES-RALS) is the repository where **archival** records are transferred after they have met their legal **retention periods**. The Archives takes legal and physical **custody** of the records for their ongoing preservation when they are designated archival, or accessioned to the archives collection after archival review if designated potentially archival. More information about the King County Archives is provided on their website.

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DES-RALS	The Department of Executive Services (DES), Records and Licensing Services Division (RALS) is the organization in the county that oversees the programs of the **Records Management Program**, **Records Center,** and **Archives**.
Disposition Authority (DA)	Person at the organization level that is responsible for approving **disposition** of records that have met their **retention periods**. Their primary responsibility is to ensure that the records are not subject to any **legal holds**, public records requests, or other legal action that the Records Management Program would not know about. Names of all disposition authorities are provided online.
Public Records Committee (PRC)	The King County Public Records Committee (PRC) is an advisory body that was created by King County Council action to advises the King County Council and the King County Executive on policy recommendations regarding public records. It includes representatives from each department/agency in King County. The PRC meets periodically, and its meeting agendas and minutes are posted online.
Records Center	The King County Records Center is the warehouse where **inactive** physical records are retained. While in storage, the records are still in agency **custody** and are still within their **retention period**.

Records Center staff (in DES-RALS) provide services including protecting records in their physical custody, picking up records for storage (some limitations apply), delivering records upon request, dispositioning records past retention and performing direct destruction requests. |
| **Records Management Lead (RML)** | A Records Management Lead serves as a liaison between their workgroup and the King County Records Management Program. Records Management Leads play a significant role in implementing successful records management practices and the deployment of Content Manager (CM) in their offices. They are key to ensuring their coworkers have the information and on-site support needed to manage their records and information. It is important that this individual, appointed by the Agency Records Officer, have the bandwidth to fulfill this role. Names of all records management leads are provided online. |

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Records Management Network	The countywide group that includes agency staff in different roles, including Agency Records Officers, Disposition Authorities and Records Management Leads.
Records Management Program (RMP)	The centralized program in DES-RALS that provides various services to King County employees, including: trainings, retention schedule development, consultations, developing guidance and advice documents, supporting Content Manager, and more.

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