



State Records Office

Glossary of Terms

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PREFACE

The Glossary of Terms * (this document) provides basic definitions of words, phrases, initialisations and acronyms relevant to records management in Western Australia. It contains:

- terms within the scope of the Western Australian *State Records Act 2000* ('the Act')
- terms from the Standards and Principles provided by the State Records Commission in accordance with the Act
- some general information and communications technology terms.

This is not an exhaustive or exclusively definitive list of terms relevant to records management in Western Australia – it aims instead to be a useful and handy guide for records management practitioners and those with a general interest: in this regard, no references to technical definitions and / or specifications (as may be set out in Australian, International or other Standards or Technical Reports) are provided. Records management practitioners are, however, encouraged to consult relevant Standards including, but not limited to:

- AS ISO 15489:1:2017 Information and Documentation - Records Management
- ISO 16175-1:2020 Information and documentation - Processes and functional requirements for software for managing records - Part 1: Functional requirements and associated guidance for any applications that manage digital records
- ISO 16175-1:2020 Information and documentation - Processes and functional requirements for software for managing records - Part 2: Guidance for selecting, designing, implementing and maintaining software for managing records
- SA/SNZ TR ISO 21946:2020 Information and Documentation - Appraisal for Managing Records
- ISO 9000:2015 Quality management systems — Fundamentals and vocabulary

Note: legal terms defined in the Act are included here for convenience and are marked with the icon . These terms reflect the version of the legislation published at 15 Nov 2023. The current version of the Act may be found at the Western Australian Legislation site - <https://www.legislation.wa.gov.au/legislation/statutes.nsf/home.html>.

This document will be updated as new versions of the Act are published. References to *section*, *schedules* and *clauses* are references to the Act.

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GLOSSARY

Access	The right, opportunity, or means of finding, using or retrieving information.
Accountability	The duty of an individual or organisation to be responsible for its actions and activities, be able to explain why certain actions have been taken and to disclose the results in a transparent manner. Accountability is strengthened and supported by the recording of evidence.
Appraisal	Appraisal is the process of evaluating business activities to determine which records need to be created and captured and how long the records need to be kept.
Archive or State Archive	<p>A record that is to be kept permanently (i.e. never to be destroyed) because of its continuing value (e.g. historical, evidential).</p> <p>The use of the term “archive” in a records management context means permanent retention and differs from the use of “archive” in information technology to indicate a folder or electronic container (such as an electronic archive or vault technology) where older records (such as emails) are moved after a time.</p>
Audit policy (Information Systems)	<p>Determines the events that will be logged within an information system.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The user/s who have accessed and / or modified a record and when• The records that have been downloaded or transferred to another system• The records that have been shared outside the organisation
Authentic record	<p>A record that can be trusted to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be what it claims to be• Have been created or transmitted by a person that is claimed to have created or transmitted it• Have been created or transmitted at the time it says it was created or transmitted
Authentication controls	Any process by which a system verifies the identity of a user who wishes to access the system. Authentication technology provides access control for systems by checking whether users’ identifications match the credentials stored in a database of authorised users or in a user authentication service.
Authorised applicant 	In relation to an application to the Commission, means a person authorised under section 4 to make the application.
Backups	Systems and processes that create identical copies of digital information in a storage system, usually for disaster recovery or business continuity purposes.
Born digital	Information that is created in a digital format, as opposed to information that is created in a physical format and later digitised.



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Business activity	Processes, activities and transactions of an organisation and its employees, performed with the purpose of realising the organisation's core and auxiliary business function/s.
Business classification	Identification and arrangement of core and auxiliary business functions and business activities into categories using a set of controlled language, methods and procedures ('scheme') – not to be conflated with 'information classification' as an outcome of information security and protection policy. See also Information Classification .
Business Continuity Plan (BCP)	A plan to identify and prepare for events that may interrupt business activities in the event of major failures or disasters. These events may include natural disasters, accidents, equipment failures and deliberate actions. See also Disaster Management Plan – a component of the BCP.
Business function (auxiliary)	Goal/s or purpose/s which an organisation must realise in support of realising its core business function/s.
Business function (core)	Goal/s or purpose/s for which an organisation was established and operates.
Business Information	Means any information, in any format, that is used by an organisation to conduct its business, whether it is ephemeral or has longer term evidentiary value. In the State of Western Australia, all instances of business information are <i>Records</i> .
Business Information System (BIS)	<p>A set of interrelated or interacting elements. Business systems create and/or manage information about an organisation's functions and activities.</p> <p>Business information systems record information about business activities to support the goals and purpose (functions) of the organisation - such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Financial management and fiduciary responsibility• Human resource management• Claims management• Customer service requests• Project management• Business transactions and e-commerce• Client relationship management• Records management
Business Information System Owner	The identified role within the organisation responsible for the approval of changes to a Business Information System.
Cloud storage	Networked online storage where data is stored on multiple physical and / or virtual servers (or across servers) that are generally hosted by a third party, which may be within Australia or overseas. See also Data Sovereignty
Commission 	Means the State Records Commission established by section 57.
Compliance monitoring	Activities (such as an official audit) performed by the organisation or by an external party to ensure it is complying with the <i>mandatory requirements</i> .



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Compliant system	Means any Business Information System that that keeps records of activity in a manner that is consistent with the <i>State Records Act 2000</i> .
Continuing value	The ongoing usefulness or significance of records that justifies their permanent retention, based on their evidential, administrative, financial, legal, informational and/or historical value.
Control 	In relation to a record, means the responsibility for keeping it but does not include the responsibility for creating it.
Conversion	<p>A method of reproducing records, by changing them from one format to another.</p> <p>This may be from one physical format to another physical format, from a physical format to a digital format, or from one digital format to another digital format.</p> <p>Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• scanning paper documents to create digital images (TIFF, JPEG)• converting word processing documents to a PDF, or a text file on one operating system to another, or upgrading word processor documents• digitising or microfilming a paper original• digitising a microfilm• converting a database to a set of PDF files and a spreadsheet.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ rendering a 3D image of a model <p>Also known as reformatting.</p>
Create and capture	To make a record and save it in a business information system and attaching relevant metadata to ensure its management over time.
Custody	The responsibility for the care of information usually based on its possession. Custody does not include legal ownership, or the right to control access to the records.
Data offshoring	Means the transmission to and from, and hosting of data within a legal jurisdiction outside of the State or nation that is the responsible custodian and controller of the data. In Western Australia, public entities may employ offshoring as part of their cloud services, subject to the policies of the Office of Digital Government and relevant legislation such as the State Records Act 2000 (see https://www.wa.gov.au/government/publications/western-australiar-government-data-offshoring-position-and-guidance-0)
Data sovereignty /	Means the strict retention of data within the legal jurisdiction of a State or nation (see also Data offshoring)
Destroy 	In relation to a record, means to deal with the record — <ol style="list-style-type: none">(a) so that any or all of the information recorded or stored on it is obliterated or rendered illegible or irrecoverable; or(b) so that it cannot convey a meaning in a visible, audible or recoverable form.



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Digital Information	Any electronic data generated by, transmitted through and stored in computing systems, including transient, non-persistent information.
Digital record	Any recording of information existing in digital form, requiring combinations of computer hardware and software to be read and understood. Digital records include word processed files, electronic spreadsheets, databases, email, voice mail, internet and intranet systems, text messages, online chats and scanned documents. They may be held in cloud storage, local hard drives, network drives, or external storage media such as thumb drives.
Digitisation	The process of converting information in a physical format to a digital format, including by means of scanning paper-based and other physical material. It includes more broadly the uptake of manual information processes into an entirely digital format.
Director 	Means the Director of State Records referred to in section 70. Also known as the State Archivist and Executive Director, State Records Office.
Disaster Management Plan	A Disaster Management Plan is a key component of an organisation's Business Continuity Plan. A Disaster Management Plan sets out: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• approaches to specifically safeguard and protect the organisation's information (in any format) and• the organisation's response to salvage that information if it damaged in an emergency or a disaster situation.
Discovery	Ensuring information can be found/retrieved when searching a file, database, website, an EDRMS or other business information system.
Disposal	The ultimate action affecting records once they have reached their designated retention period. Disposal can either take the form of <ul style="list-style-type: none">• destruction (physically destroying information that is no longer of value, ensuring that no information is retrievable)• archiving (permanently retaining records with continuing value).
Disposal authority	See Retention and disposal authority
Document	A discrete unit of recorded information, such as an email, word processed document, or spreadsheet.
Electronic Document and Records Management System (EDRMS)	A software program used to manage the creation, use, storage, control and disposal of physical and electronic documents as records. The system maintains appropriate contextual information (metadata) and the links between the records to support their value as evidence
Employee 	See Government organization employee
Ephemeral record	Information that has very short-term value and typically does not need to be captured into a business information system for the purposes of retention.



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Exempt record 	a record — (a) control of which is given by a State organization to another person in the course of the organization's operations; (b) that is part of publicly available library material held by a State organization for reference purposes; (c) that was not created by a State organization and that is part of the collection of a State collecting institution
File	A unit of documents (physical or digital) specifically identified as relating to a particular matter or activity.
FOI Act 	Means the <i>Freedom of Information Act 1992</i> .
General Retention and Disposal Authority	Means a Retention and Disposal Authority applicable to a broad government sector, e.g. all State government entities, all local government entities, or both. A general retention and disposal authority gives standing authority to organisations within its scope to conduct lawful disposal of records.
Government organization 	Means an organization in Schedule 1 but does not include an organization in Schedule 2.
Government organization employee 	Means — (a) a person who, whether or not an employee, alone or with others governs, controls or manages a government organization; or (b) a person who, under the Public Sector Management Act 1994, is a public service officer of a government organization; or (c) a person who is engaged by a government organization, whether under a contract for services or otherwise, and includes, in the case of a government organization referred to in item 5 or 6 of Schedule 1, a ministerial officer (as defined in the <i>Public Sector Management Act 1994</i>) assisting the organization.
Government record 	Means a record created or received by — (a) a government organization; or (b) a government organization employee in the course of the employee's work for the organization, but does not include an exempt record See also State Record .
Information architecture	The whole-of-organisation view of information assets, arranged according to an industry accepted methodology, such as an information architecture framework.
Information classification	The categorisation of information into classes pertaining to its status as official information as well as its level of confidentiality and sensitivity. Information Classification Policy is realised through protective security practices, such as protective markings, and privilege and access management.
Information Management Framework	The set of laws, regulations, policies, procedures, guidelines, plans and any other tools or systems identified by an organisation that govern the creation, control, recording, use, management and disposal of its business information. (See also Record)



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Information security	The protection of all information, regardless of format (hardcopy or digital), from unauthorised access, use, misuse, deletion or modification, by applying security controls to prevent loss, threats and incidents. Security controls aim to ensure confidentiality, availability and integrity of stored information.
Interoperability	Refers to the basic ability of different computerized products or systems to readily connect and exchange information with one another
Metadata	A set of data that describes and gives information about other data: it describes and defines the context, content and structure. This data enables the record to be usable as authentic evidence and supports its management and use through time.
Migration	Moving records from one information system or format media to another, as necessary, while maintaining the information's authenticity, integrity, reliability and usability. A migration strategy involves a set of organised tasks designed to periodically transfer digital information from one hardware or software configuration to another, or from one generation of technology to another.
Naming control scheme	A tool to ensure effective, consistent, meaningful and descriptive naming of discrete records of information, and/or collections of such records (such as a 'container' and a 'document').
Online Recordkeeping and Disposal Application (ORDA)	A web-enabled system that allows government organisations to draft and submit retention and disposal authorities to the State Records Office.
Organisation	Organisations subject to the <i>State Records Act 2000</i> include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• State government organisations• Local governments• Parliamentary departments
Parliamentary department 	Means a department that is deemed to have been constituted in relation to the administration of Parliament for the purposes of the <i>Financial Management Act 2006</i> by regulations made for the purposes of section 5(1) of that Act.
Parliamentary record 	a record created or received by — <ul style="list-style-type: none">(a) a parliamentary department; or(b) a person in the course of the person's work for the department, whether the person is employed under a contract of service or is engaged under a contract for services or otherwise, but does not include an exempt record.
Physical format records ('hard copy')	A record that exists in a physical form and can be read and understood without the aid of computer hardware or software (but may require other specialised equipment for the purposes of retrieving the recorded information). Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• books• cassette tapes• hand written ledgers/registers• paper• parchment film• magnetic tapes



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- models (mock-ups of proposed structures/buildings)
- video cassettes

Record

Means any record of information however recorded and includes —

- (a) any thing on which there is writing or Braille; and
- (b) a map, plan, diagram or graph; and
- (c) a drawing, pictorial or graphic work, or photograph; and
- (d) any thing on which there are figures, marks, perforations, or symbols, having a meaning for persons qualified to interpret them; and
- (e) anything from which images, sounds or writings can be reproduced with or without the aid of anything else; and
- (f) any thing on which information has been stored or recorded, either mechanically, magnetically, or electronically.

A Note from the State Archivist and Executive Director. State Records Office:

For the purposes of the Act, a *record* is any recorded information, in any format, created or received by a government organisation in the course of its business or conduct of its affairs. A record provides evidence of activities. Records may be in any format that can be read and understood, such as: any document, emails, spreadsheets, relational databases, photographs, handwritten notes and diaries, maps, audio and video recordings, messages on any messaging application on mobile devices, and social media posts.

Recordkeeping Plan

The document required under Parts 2 and 3 of the *State Records Act 2000* which sets out the matters about which State records are to be created by each State organisation, and how they are to be kept. The Plan and associated documentation provides an accurate account of the organisation's record keeping program.

[Note: the Act prescribes the content of a record keeping plan under s11 (for Parliamentary departments) and s16 (for government organizations).]

Records management

Activities, strategies and procedures undertaken for the collection, capture, distribution, storage, access, use, retention and disposal of information to support organisational business processes.

Records Management Advice

Publications developed by the State Records Office of Western Australia to assist and guide organisations with various aspects of creating, managing and disposing of information.

Relevant Minister

In relation to a Schedule 3 organization, means the Minister to whom the administration of the Act under which the organization is established or continued is for the time being committed by the Governor.



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Reproduce 	A reference to reproducing a record in another form includes a reference to reproducing the information in the record by another means.
Reproduction / Reproduced Records	Records may be reproduced by either Digitisation, Conversion or Migration .
Restricted access archive 	a State archive that is a government record and to which access is restricted until it is of a certain age. [The restriction is placed on the information by the relevant State organisation and / or can be requested by the State Records Office or State Records Commission.]
Retention and disposal authority	A document authorising how records are to be kept or legally destroyed. Retention and disposal authorities include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• General Retention and Disposal Authorities• Sector Disposal Authorities• Retention and Disposal Authorities (formerly Retention and Disposal Schedules)• Ad Hoc Disposal Authorities• Disposal Lists
Retention and Disposal Program	A scheduled and managed set of activities required for the regular sentencing and disposal of records.
Retention period 	In relation to a record, means the period for which the record must be kept before it may be destroyed.
Sanitisation	The process of destroying data on a memory device by digital means, such as erasing or overwriting, or by physical destruction, to make it permanently unrecoverable.
Schedule 3 Organization 	a government organization in Schedule 3 of the <i>State Records Act 2000</i> .
Sector Disposal Authority	A retention and disposal authority that authorises the disposal of records created by a group of organisations that perform the same, or similar, functions.
Security	See Information Security
Source record	A record that has been copied, converted (such as by digitisation) or migrated from one system or format to another.
State archive 	A State record that is to be retained permanently.
State archives collection 	The collection of State archives referred to in section 35.
State Archivist and Executive Director, State Records Office	Means the Director of State Records referred to in section 70.
State collecting institution 	Means — <ol style="list-style-type: none">(a) the Art Gallery of Western Australia preserved and continued by the <i>Art Gallery Act 1959</i>; and(b) the State Reference Library (as defined in the <i>Library Board of Western Australia Act 1951</i>); and(c) the Western Australian Museum constituted under the <i>Museum Act 1969</i>.



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State organization 	Means — (a) a parliamentary department; or (b) a government organization.
State record 	Means — (a) a parliamentary record; or (b) a government record. [Note: Any form of information created, received or maintained by a government organisation or parliamentary department in the course of conducting its business activities.]
State Records Commission	An independent body established under the <i>State Records Act 2000</i> (the Act). The State Records Commission's functions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• monitoring the operation of, and compliance with, the Act;• monitoring compliance by government organisations with recordkeeping plans;• inquiring into breaches or possible breaches of the Act; and• reporting to Parliament.
State Records Office 	The entity referred to in section 72.
Structured Content	Information that is arranged as interrelated columns and rows of data ('tables') within a relational database. Structured data usually includes storage of unstructured or semi-structured content within its tables, such as documents, photographs and the like ('attachments').
Successor 	In relation to a government organization that is abolished or that ceases to be a government organization, means the government organization (if any) that takes over that organization's functions.
System of Record	An information storage system (commonly implemented on a computer system) that is the authoritative data source for a given data element, class or piece of information.
Third party provider	A person or company that undertakes a contract or arrangement to perform a service or function on behalf of an organisation.
Unauthorised access	When a person gains access without permission to information, information and computer storage areas, a network system, applications, messages, records, data, or other information.
Unauthorised possession 	In relation to a government record, means possession that is not authorised by any of the following — (a) the record keeping plan of the government organization that last had possession of, or that has the control of, the record; (b) the government organization that last had possession of, or that has the control of, the record; (c) the archives keeping plan; (d) the Director; (e) a written law;



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(f) an order or determination of a court or tribunal.

Unstructured Content

Information that is not arranged as interrelated columns and rows of data within a relational database (structured data). Examples of unstructured content are Microsoft Office documents, Adobe Acrobat documents, video and image files.

Vital records

Records that are required to operate the organisation during a disaster and/or required to re-establish the organisation after a disaster situation.

Z vs S

For clarity, “organization” with a “z” is used in State Records Office and State Records Commission publications when using a direct quote from the State Records Act 2000.

