

Erecords Inventory Data Fields

In an electronic records inventory, as with any inventory, it's important to focus on aggregates of records rather than on individual records or files. Erecords inventories are conducted at the records system level, with a system generally encompassing one or more records series. An erecords system may be a database, a software application, a document management system (or a module of an enterprise management system), or a file directory.

Examples of erecords systems include

- database of information about current and former employees
- computer-aided design files for specific projects
- digital repository of county proceedings
- EDMS module of social services case files
- time and attendance program (e.g., LATS, PeopleSoft)
- pistol permit program

Below are the inventory data fields to complete for each electronic records system.

System title: Name by which the erecords system is known to those who maintain and use it. The title should be as descriptive as possible, indicating the subject, function, and, if necessary, form of the records. Examples include Accounts Payable Data File, Pistol Permit Database, Construction Cost Estimates, and ACS County Clerk System. The purpose of the title is to provide a means to identify the erecords system.

System analyst: Name of the person who provides technical support for the records system. The records analyst is usually a member of an in-house information technology unit or a vendor. The Records Analyst tends to be the person who provides or clarifies information on file type and format, quantity and estimated growth, hardware, software, supporting files, backup procedures, and provisions for migration.

System owner: Name of the person who is the primary user of the records. This is the person most likely to understand the business purpose of the erecords system and its relationship to other records. The Records Owner tends to be the person who will provide data for dates covered, system description, relationship to other records, backup procedures, reference and retrieval, restrictions on use, and vital records status.

Dates covered: Beginning and ending dates of the record system. The beginning date may be the date a system was implemented, records were migrated or converted from another records system (including a paper file system), or a new function or module was added to an existing system. If the records are still actively used, indicate the ending date as “9999,” “ongoing,” or “current.”

For unstructured files (word-processed files in a directory structure), dates covered will be the first and last dates that a file or files were created.

Use “ca.” for circa, meaning “approximately,” when you cannot determine exact dates.

Example:

- The system was implemented in 1989, but information dating back to the 1930s has been manually entered; however, it is not clear whether this data entry has occurred on a systematic or as-needed basis.
- System was implemented in 1989. Inclusive dates of the records vary according to document type.

Dates are important for research and retention purposes, and for understanding the relationship of the electronic records’ to other records.

System description: A summary of the records system’s business purpose, scope, and contents. A useful strategy for describing a system is to list the data fields in that system (especially if the system consists of a database or electronic forms). Indicate the electronic records’ relationship to the department’s mission or business operations.

Examples:

- Contains contents, shelf location, circulation, and disposition information for each box of inactive records currently stored, or disposed of, since 1997 at the Records Center. The database record for each box contains the system number, alternate ID number, originating agency name, agency with current legal custody, and summary contents description. When a box is charged out, the date and name of the requester are entered.
- This database provides a single authoritative source of core identifying information about institutions for which the agency determines compliance with applicable policy, law, and/or regulation. The 94 fields in a record provide contact and administrative information on an institution, including the Legal Name, Physical Address, County of Location, School District of Location, Date Established, Institution Type and Subtype, Name of Chief Executive Officer, Mailing Address, and Parent Organization (if applicable).

- The ACS 20/20 system documents transactions in the county clerk's office from cashiering to recordation. Micrographic and bound paper (from microfilm) copies of the records are still available, but the indexing function and search capability of the ACS 20/20 are uniquely electronic.

The system consists of four modules that represent steps in the process for recording, filing, and making available records in the County Clerk's Office. The records document transactions which do not necessarily involve the payment of fees to Warren County (e.g., oaths of office, resignations). The modules are Cashiering, Scanning, Indexing, and Searching.

Records are accessed via a top level menu that has broad categories, or "Offices," representing records groups: Notary, Officials, Consolidated Liens, Maps, Lis Pendens, Business Names, Miscellaneous, Real Property, Judgments, Courts, Civil Office Book Page, Separation Agreements, Military Discharges. Within the record groups are specific document types (parallel to records series in a paper environment). Some record groups have only one document type; the largest number of document types are filed under Real Property, which includes deeds, mortgages, and other records documenting the exchange of land in Warren County. The range of dates in the system vary, depending on the number of hardcopy records that county staff have converted and entered into the system.

The primary purpose of the system description is to help you identify the system in the future (based on how you describe the system now) and assess the value of the records for retention and research purposes.

File type and format: Basic character of the electronic file, which can include word-processed files, databases, spreadsheets, geographic information system (GIS) records, computer-aided design (CAD) records, and email, among others. Format identifies the specific program that created the file type.

Examples of file type and format: Word processed files in MS Word, Access database, Excel spreadsheets, GroupWise emails

The purpose of documenting file type and format is to collect data to plan preservation and migration needs. For example, you may decide, as a result of the inventory, to retain permanent files in their native format as well as in an open format that will allow you to migrate the data forward into another program as needed

Quantity and estimated growth: Size of the records system in number of media, bytes, records, or a combination of these, and growth over a specified time period by an increase in that number of media, bytes, records, or combination.

Examples:

- 3.288052878 gigabytes, for the box table (the main table), with the database occupying less than 1% of the server's disk array, stored in its own schema. Estimated Annual Growth is 198,431,000 megabytes.
- Total number of permits issued has been declining from a high of 954 permits in 2004 to 686 in 2007. With new permitting requirements now in place for a roofs and fence construction, the number of permits issued is expected to remain in the 600 – 700 per year range for the foreseeable future.

The purpose of collecting data on size and growth is to plan storage and migration needs, after factoring in the number of erecords you can legally destroy during a given time period.

Hardware: Equipment required to retrieve or process the erecords system. Hardware may include mainframe computers, midrange computers, servers, and freestanding personal computers (PCs).

Examples:

- The database is on a UNYSIS mainframe
- The clerk's system is on an AS 20/20, an upgraded version of the AS400, a midrange computer
- The database is on a Sunfire 2400 UNIX enterprise server and the application is on an HP server.

The purpose of collecting data on hardware is to plan for hardware upgrades and data migration as needed, to ensure the erecords are accessible for their full retention periods.

Software: Software program used to create and/or access the records. Provide any information that would be useful for understanding the nature of that software. For example, indicate whether the software is proprietary (and, if so, provide the name of the vendor that supports the software). For example:

- The database server is running Sun Solaris 10 and the application server is running MS Windows 2003 and Internet Information Server to serve out Application Server Pages. Application software on the database server is Oracle 10G. Program name is GAIN 2000 Enterprise Edition and version is

3.010; this prewritten software package was published by Triadd Software Corporation, Bellevue, Washington. Crystal Reports and MS Access are used to create reports.

- The database uses the DMS2 hierarchical database software (UNYSIS proprietary software). Because the system uses proprietary software, unit staffers are unaware of the system's physical file formats and structure outside of the data tables. The programming language used is COBOL, and UNYSIS's proprietary job control system is used to run batch programs.
- The system is a Microsoft Access database with a Microsoft Visual Basic for Applications interface developed by the ITS PC Applications Group.

The purpose of collecting this data during the inventory is to plan for software upgrades, software migration, and data migration as needed to ensure access to the records for their full retention periods.

Media characteristics: If applicable, the type or types of storage media involved (magnetic tapes, optical discs, or other), storage requirements for the media in linear feet, location or locations of the media, and the media's date of manufacture.

You can also use this field to indicate the sequence of the records on electronic media and the arrangement of the media itself. Arrangement can be by year, by project number, alphabetically, a combination of these, or according to some other sequence.

The purpose of collecting information on media is to plan for refreshing of media (copying from old to new version of the same media) or migration to new media (when one type of media becomes obsolete and needs to be replaced by a new media type).

Relationship to other records: Records in another format (microfilm or paper) that the records may duplicate, either wholly or partially.

Examples:

- The New York State Department of Health (DOH) and the town both keep the official copies of the birth, death, and marriage records (a dual system). The DOH records span 1881- present; the town's records span early 1800s-present. The town keeps paper and microfilmed copies of all vital records.
- Paper transfer list reports providing contents, shelf location and disposition information on a group of boxes stored by an agency at the same time are kept on file at the Records Center and provided to each state agency.

The purpose of describing the relationship of erecords to other records is to identify official copy for retention purpose. For example, the inventory may provide data to determine whether you can periodically purge the system (because the records are not e official copies) or whether you need (or want) to copy the erecords to another format (microfilm) as a preservation measure.

Retention requirements: Minimum amount of time you must retain the records according to a State Archives or other retention and disposition schedule. If the series is not in any schedule, write “not scheduled” and propose a reasonable retention period. You may also use this field if you wish to keep the series beyond the set retention period or if retention is determined by system design and not by a records retention schedule.

Examples:

- Building permits and supporting plans must be retained for six years after the building no longer exists (see MU-1, item 5.[60]). As these files essentially duplicate information contained in the hard copy files, the town could apply the retention period for duplicate records to the electronic records (“0 after no longer needed”).
- All records in the system are considered permanent. Much of the financial data and reports generated by fee collections are scheduled as six-year records in the CO-2, but there are no provisions for extricating the financial from property ownership data.

The purpose of noting the retention period is to ensure records are destroyed or preserved as legally required.

Supporting files: Records that support the creation, maintenance, or use of the electronic records or records system. These can include indexes, data entry manuals, data dictionaries, system documentation, and others.

Examples:

- There is no documentation presently on the Museum Charter database. Some codes used in the database are unknown to current employees. An updated list of fields would be helpful. Additional databases are also stored on the X drive from this office: Charter Tracking database, Charter Annual Reports database and an Historians database. Plans are in the works for a fifth database of People.

- Supporting files for the clerk's birth, death, and marriage records include an index in paper format and copies of application and correction/amendment forms.

The purpose of collecting data on supporting files is to ensure consistent creation of, access to, and full use of records for at least as long as their retention periods.

Backup procedures: Frequency of backups, media used, and other backup procedures.

Examples:

- This system is backed up daily with a full system tape back up monthly. The tapes are stored approximately two miles away at Elm Park.
- Records in the town clerk's software package are backed up everyday at 4:15pm. This is a "mother to peer" backup. This same information is manually backed up on CD periodically and stored off site.
- The server is equipped with an eight-tape cartridge tape drive. Tapes 1-4 are for daily incremental back-ups, Monday through Thursday. These tapes are recycled every four weeks. The fifth tape is for a full back-up every Friday which is sent to IT for offsite storage. Tape 6 is used for a full monthly back-up. This tape is sent to the vendor, which downloads the data into their system. Once downloaded, the vendor identifies all images added to the system since the last download and outputs them to silver halide microfilm. The tapes are then stored in National Underground.

The purpose of collecting data on backups is to ensure vital records protection. For example, the inventory can help you identify when you don't back up often enough or when your backups are located too close to the system itself.

Provisions for migration: Any information relevant to the migration or other maintenance needs of the records.

Examples:

- The original database was created in FoxPro. It was migrated to Microsoft Access in 1998; the oldest records date from 1998. The IT department is in the process of migrating the database to Oracle. The migration should be completed in the spring of this year.

- System was upgraded in 2006. The vendor, ACS, has no plans for future migrations.

The purpose of collecting data on migration is to ensure ongoing access to and use of records. Data about migration can help you schedule migration at a frequency that ensures access but minimizes data loss (because every data migration involves some level of data loss).

Reference and retrieval: How and how often the records are used over a given period of time. For example:

- Staff consult the database about 2000 times a month through Internet Explorer to determine the shelf location for items requested by state agencies or to update information. Only supervisors and data entry staff can change the information. As reference requests come from 52 different state agencies, they do not vary much in frequency and show no signs of decreasing.

The purpose of collecting data about reference and retrieval is to ensure or enhance access as needed. For example, the inventory can help you evaluate whether you need to provide access to the public via the Internet to records that are used frequently for research. The inventory can also highlight records that need to be filed centrally to enhance internal access to information, or identify records that are subject to frequent searches for FOIL, audits, and legal inquiries.

Restrictions on use: Who has access to the records and the reasons for restrictions, if any. For example, indicate whether use of the records is limited by law, and cite the law or regulation that mandates the restriction.

Examples:

- Access is limited to members of the public who visit the Warren County Clerk; there is currently no provision for remote access. Viewing access to the indexes is open, but there is a per-page charge for printing from the system. Some records are closed to the public because they contain personal information (records filed under Notary, Courts, Civil Office Book Page, Separation Agreements, and Military Discharges).
- Many of the records stored in the Records Center are confidential. Records Center staff members provide access only to employees who have received authorization from the agency records management officer.

The purpose for collecting data on use restrictions is to ensure appropriate security for records that are restricted and adequate access to those records that aren't.

Vital records status: Whether the records are vital. Vital records are those that, if destroyed, must be recreated to resume essential business operations. They provide evidence of your assets and the rights of your constituency. Vital records tend to be active, documenting the status of ongoing, current transactions and relationship.

The purpose of identifying vital records as part of an records inventory is to identify records that require additional protection. For example, you may decide as a result of the inventory to increase the frequency and number of backups for a particular system, or back up that system to a site in another state.