



VIRGINIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Records Retention & Disposal Policy

Updated November 18, 2009

The Virginia Historical Society Records Retention & Disposal Policy is designed to provide parameters for the retention of records generated by the various departments and officers of the Virginia Historical Society, as well as guidelines for the determination of what records may be destroyed at what times and in what manner. In creating this policy, the structure and content of these parameters and guidelines have been developed with the intent to abide fully by record-keeping standards set for educational not-for-profit institutions by federal and state laws and regulations, as well as to ensure an adequate documentation of the governance, policies, and activities of the historical society since its inception in 1831 through the maintenance of historical and operational records.

Responsible Parties

The Vice President, or head of each staff division, under the overall supervision of the President & CEO as head of the institution, is responsible for the ultimate maintenance of the records generated in or acquired by that department, for decisions made in regard to disposal of records in accordance with the guidelines set in this policy, and for the transfer of records to the historical society archives for permanent preservation or for limited maintenance prior to scheduled disposal.

The Sr. Archivist, under the supervision of the Vice President for Collections, institution's archivist. The archivist is charged with receiving records transferred from the various departments, maintaining those designated for long-term or permanent preservation, providing service to historical society trustees, officers, and staff authorized to review appropriate records or to researchers allowed to research in the historical society records and overseeing the destruction of records designated for disposal.

Application and Management

Records Management within historical society Departments

Records created within or acquired by each department of the historical society in the pursuit of that department's programmatic, managerial, and/or curatorial responsibilities are normally retained within that office for two to three years as "current operational records." Beyond that point, they may be categorized as either essential or non-essential in terms of permanent preservation. Examples of essential records may be substantive correspondence of staff (including hardcopies of pertinent email messages) created or maintained in fulfillment of regularly assigned duties, project files (which may include agreements, contracts, and other legal documentation), financial records (unless redundant, i.e., copies of invoices, receipts, checks, etc., the originals of which are maintained by the historical society Finance Dept.), personnel records, and collections management records (including deeds of gift, deposit agreements, loan agreements, and associated materials). Examples of non-essential records might be notes of meetings, project development materials, daily or

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monthly record-keeping the summaries of which are retained in annual reports, or any materials duplicative of originals maintained in that or other offices of the historical society. A brief but detailed listing of essential and non-essential categories of records should be prepared and maintained by each department director, with the approval of the historical society President & CEO. Copies of each departmental schedule of essential and nonessential records (including amended and updated versions) shall be made a part of this document by inclusion in an appropriate appendix.

At the beginning of each calendar year, department directors will oversee or assign staff to cull non-essential records from files with an age of two years or more, designate materials that should be retained within the department for a longer period because of expected additional routine usefulness, and transfer to the Manuscripts and Archives Department those records that should be retained by the institution for an additional, limited set of years before destruction or that are to be accepted into the historical society archives for permanent or long-term preservation. The assigned staff person is to secure signed documentation from the historical society archivist of what has been received in both of those last stated categories, with an indication of when destruction of designated materials may take place. The department director is to review and maintain that documentation in the departmental office for future reference. Additional authorization for future destruction of designated records is not then required by the archivist.

Records deemed non-essential per the parameters of this policy may be destroyed by department staff using approved shredding equipment, or they may also be transferred to the historical society archivist for destruction with other records scheduled for disposal. In almost all cases, records should be destroyed by this method rather than simply thrown away or recycled in order to protect privacy and confidentiality. Documentation of categories of records so destroyed must also be maintained by each department director.

Records Management by the Archivist of the Virginia Historical Society

The archivist is charged with receiving essential records from each of the historical society departments, arranging and describing those records (in an appropriate finding aid), maintaining the records designated for permanent preservation, providing access to appropriate (i.e., non-restricted) records to members of the Board of Trustees, officers, and staff of the historical society and to qualified researchers (for records created more than 30 years before the date of the request to view and not otherwise restricted), and overseeing the destruction of designated records per the schedule defined in this policy. Destruction of records may be undertaken by the archivist and designated archival staff members under his/her supervision with approved equipment, but most often it will be undertaken by approved vendors who will be required to provide certification of their secure procedures and documentation of the destruction that has taken place. Preferably, such destruction will be undertaken on the grounds of the historical society (by mobile document destruction services). Documentation of such destruction, whether by historical society staff or by

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contract vendors, will be maintained by the archivist as part of the historical society archives.

Revision

Adjustments to the record-keeping guidelines of the historical society and to the designations “essential” and “non-essential” may be made within each department or institutionally, as circumstances require or permit, but such revisions may only be made when in conformity with record-keeping standards set for educational not-for-profit organizations in the Commonwealth of Virginia by state and federal laws and regulations. Such adjustments will ordinarily be documented in one of several appendices to this policy, and the updated appendices will be attached to and will replace appendices previously made a part of this document. However, an archival copy of each version of this document prior to revision will be retained by the historical society archivist.

Suspension of Record Disposal

In the event the Virginia Historical Society is ever served with any subpoena or request for documents or learns of a governmental investigation or audit concerning the organization, or of the commencement of any litigation against or concerning the historical society, any destruction of documents shall be immediately suspended at the direction of the President & CEO until such time as the President & CEO, with advice of counsel, determines otherwise. The President & CEO shall be responsible for informing all staff of such a suspension and for ensuring that any destruction ceases during the period in which this suspension order is in effect.

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