

*[Removed from Wash. (State) Dept. of  
General Administration, 1<sup>st</sup> biennial report]*

# Department of General Administration

H. D. VAN EATON, DIRECTOR

MEMBER

WASHINGTON TOLL BRIDGE AUTHORITY  
STATE BUILDING FINANCE AUTHORITY

P. O. BOX 1164

Olympia, Washington

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## DIVISIONS

BANKING  
SAVINGS AND LOAN ASSOCIATIONS  
PURCHASING  
ENGINEERING  
CAPITOL BUILDING AND GROUNDS  
ARCHIVES



ARTHUR B. LANGLEIE  
GOVERNOR

Mr. Click Relander  
City Editor  
Yakima Herald  
Yakima, Washington

Dear Mr. Relander:

For your information, I enclose a copy of the State Department of General Administration biennial report just out. The last section deals with the State Archives and our requirements.

We have a bill, also enclosed, to implement a more useful archival program. I think it is a pretty fair bill and legislation in this area certainly is called for but, as with most bills of this character, the problem is to create some interest.

The Historical Society has appointed an Archives Committee just recently but it is rather late to achieve much by committee action--especially since no meeting has been called as yet. I am sending my propaganda around in the hope that it will creat some interest in this particular problem which may help to generate legislative action on the measure.

The statute is borrowed largely from Michigan's where they have a successful program. There is much in it also from our present statutes and needs peculiar to our state.

I know that you will appreciate the need for a records inventory and a program to centralize our archives or, at least, build a central catalogue of them.

Very truly yours,

*Robert C. Nesbit*  
Robert C. Nesbit  
State Archivist



# ON RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A RECORDS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM FOR THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

Prior to the passage of Chapter 145, Laws of 1951, nothing had been done about the problem of classifying records as to their relative importance and setting retention schedules accordingly. With the adoption of this statute, we were able to move upon the mountains of record material which had accumulated in the state archives and in other offices over the years. But the 1951 law has been cumbersome in its operation as it requires the personal attention of five busy officials who cannot delegate this function. Also, the law makes no provision for the necessary preparation of recommendations which logically should fall upon a professional archivist and designated record officers.

Because of the mass of record material to be classified and because of the constantly swelling flood of records to be handled, entirely too much emphasis necessarily has been placed upon record destruction or reduction under our present program. We have not developed controls or techniques for continuous review of records marked for destruction or methods for selecting documents which merit preservation from general files marked for disposition.

Our state archives operate still under a 1909 law which makes the use of archival facilities purely optional and leaves little or no discretion to the archivist. Even the 1951 law on records classification and obsolescence has been used largely at the convenience of administrators only when record storage became an office problem calling for action. Only if the office commonly makes use of the archives--as many do not--have we an opportunity to make a general review of their records.

Most states have started records management programs with a statutory inventory of all record holdings. So long as we have no such inventory, we will be operating half in the dark. An inventory on a voluntary basis will fall far short of completeness, experience has shown. Many offices recognize no problems in the administration of their records so long as storage space of some description is available--regardless of the cost or usefulness of what they save.

As long as we do not have the necessary statutory provisions or the physical facilities for an adequate records management program, the emphasis will continue to be upon the destruction of records as they become a burden upon storage or file space. The only review provided will be the initial consideration of the request to destroy which is the basis for a continuing authority to dispose of future records. Our state archives will be unable to carry out primary functions: the centralizing of surviving historical records of our state and the preserving of a running record of administrative policies, procedures, and activities. Therefore, the Department of General Administration and the Records Committee recommend the following.

(2) To centralize the archives of the state of Washington, to make them available for reference and scholarship, and to insure their proper preservation;

(3) To inspect, inventory, catalog, and arrange retention and transfer schedules on all record files of all state departments and other agencies of state government;

(4) To insure the maintenance and security of all state public records and to establish safeguards against unauthorized removal or destruction.

(5) To establish and operate such state record centers as may from time to time be authorized by appropriation, for the purpose of preserving, servicing, screening and protecting all state public records which must be preserved temporarily or permanently, but which need not be retained in office space and equipment.



AN ACT Relating to public records; providing for the management, control and disposition thereof delimiting the duties of the division of archives and records management; providing for the transfer of noncurrent records to this division creating a records committee to supervise disposition of public records; and repealing sections 2 through 6, chapter 38, Laws of 1909, section 1, chapter 160, Laws of 1929, sections 2, 6, 7, 9 and 10, Laws of 1951, and RCW 40.08.010 through 40.08.040 and RCW 40.12.010 through 40.12.110.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

Section 1. As used in this act, the term "public records" shall include any paper, correspondence, form, book, photograph, film, sound recording, map drawing, or other document, regardless of physical form or characteristics, and including all copies thereof, that have been made by any agency of the state of Washington or received by it in connection with the transaction of public business. For the purposes of this act, public records shall be classified as follows:

(1) Official public records shall include all original vouchers, receipts and other documents necessary to isolate and prove the validity of every transaction relating to the receipt, use and disposition of all public property and public income from all sources whatsoever; all agreements and contracts to which the state of Washington or any agency thereof may be a party; all fidelity, surety and performance bonds; all claims filed against the state of Washington or any agency thereof; all records or documents required by law to be filed with or kept by any agency of the state of Washington; and all other documents or records determined by the records committee, hereinafter created, to be official public records.

(2) Office files and memoranda shall include all records, correspondence, exhibits, books, booklets, drawings, maps, blank forms, or documents not above defined and classified as official public records; all duplicate copies of official public records filed with any agency of the state of Washington; all documents and reports made for the internal administration of the office to which they pertain but not required by law to be filed or kept with such agency; and all other documents or records, determined by the records committee, hereinafter created, to be office files and memoranda.

Sec. 2. All public records shall be and remain the property of the state of Washington. They shall be delivered by outgoing officials and employees to their successors and shall be preserved, stored, transferred, destroyed, or disposed of, and otherwise managed, only in accordance with the provisions of this act. In order to insure the proper management and safeguarding of public records, the division of archives of the department of general administration is designated as the division of archives and records management, and, under the administration of the state archivist, who shall have reasonable access to all public records, wherever kept, for purposes of information, surveying, or cataloguing, shall undertake the following functions, duties, and responsibilities:

(1) To manage the archives of the state of Washington;

(2) To centralize the archives of the state of Washington, to make them available for reference and scholarship, and to insure their proper preservation;

(3) To inspect, inventory, catalog, and arrange retention and transfer schedules on all record files of all state departments and other agencies of state government;

(4) To insure the maintenance and security of all state public records and to establish safeguards against unauthorized removal or destruction.

(5) To establish and operate such state record centers as may from time to time be authorized by appropriation, for the purpose of preserving, servicing, screening and protecting all state public records which must be preserved temporarily or permanently, but which need not be retained in office space and equipment.



(6) To gather and disseminate to interested agencies information on all phases of records management and current practices, methods, procedures and devices for efficient and economical management of records.

(7) To operate a central microfilming bureau which will microfilm, at cost, records approved for filming by the head of the office of origin and the archivist; to approve microfilming projects undertaken by state departments and all other agencies of state government; and to maintain proper standards for this work.

(8) To maintain necessary facilities for the review of records approved for destruction and for their economical disposition by sale or burning; directly to supervise such destruction of public records as shall be authorized by the terms of this act.

Sec. 3. All public records, not required in the current operation of the office where they are made or kept, and all records of every agency, commission, committee, or any other activity of state government which may be abolished or discontinued, shall be transferred to the state archives so that the valuable historical records of the state may be centralized, made more widely available, and insured permanent preservation: PROVIDED, That this section shall have no application to public records approved for destruction under the subsequent provisions of this act.

When so transferred, copies of the public records concerned shall be made and certified by the archivist, which certification shall have the same force and effect as though made by the officer originally in charge of them. Fees may be charged to cover the cost of reproduction. In turning over the archives of his office, the officer in charge thereof, or his successor, thereby loses none of his rights of access to them, without charge, whenever necessary.

Sec. 4. Each department or other agency of the state government shall designate a records officer to supervise its records program and to represent the office in all contacts with the records committee, hereinafter created, and the division of archives and records management. The records officer and the archivist shall prepare transfer schedules for the transfer of public records to the records centers or to the archives. Transfer shall be made by requisition from the archivist upon the basis of such agreed transfer schedules. If a particular agency or department does not wish to transfer the requisitioned records at the time scheduled, the records officer shall, within thirty days, notify the archivist and request a change in the schedule, including his reasons therefor.

Sec. 5. There is created a committee, to be known as the records committee, composed of the archivist, an appointee of the state auditor, and an appointee of the attorney general. Committee members shall serve without additional salary, but shall be entitled to traveling expenses incurred incident to committee records. Such expenses shall be paid from the appropriations made for operation of their respective departments or offices.

The records committee shall meet at least once every quarter or oftener as business dictates. Action by the committee shall be by majority vote and records shall be kept of all committee business.

It shall be the duty of the records committee to approve, modify or disapprove the recommendations on retention schedules of all files of public records and to act upon requests to destroy any public records; PROVIDED, That any modification of a request or recommendation must be approved by the head of the agency originating the request or recommendation.

The division of archives and records management shall provide forms, approved by the records committee, upon which it shall prepare recommendations to the committee in cooperation with the records officer of the department or other agency whose records are involved.

Sec. 6. Official public records shall not be destroyed until they are either photographed, microphotographed, photostated, or reproduced on film, or until they are ten years old, except on a



showing of the department of origin, as approved by the records committee, that the retention of such records for a minimum of ten years is both unnecessary and uneconomical: PROVIDED, That any lesser term of retention than ten years must have the additional approval of the director of the budget, the state auditor and the attorney general.

Recommendations for the destruction or disposition of office files and memoranda shall be submitted to the records committee upon approved forms prepared by the records officer of the agency concerned and the archivist. The committee shall determine the period of time that any office file or memorandum shall be preserved and may authorize the division of archives and records management to arrange for its destruction or disposition.

Sec. 7. County, municipal and other local government agencies may request authority to destroy noncurrent public records having no further administrative or legal value by submitting to the division of archives and records management, lists of such records, in triplicate, on forms prepared by the division. The archivist and the chief examiner of the division of municipal audits of the office of the state auditor shall review such lists, and either may veto the destruction of any or all items contained therein. No official public record of any local governmental unit shall be destroyed until it is either photographed, microphotographed, photostated, or reproduced on film, or until it is ten years old.

Records of county, municipal or other governmental agencies, designated by the archivist as of primarily historical interest, may be transferred to a recognized depository agency, selected by the archivist, in order to relieve local offices of the burden of housing them, to insure their preservation, and to make them available for reference or study.

Sec. 8. The provisions of this chapter shall not be construed as repealing or modifying any other acts or parts of acts authorizing the destruction of public records save for those specifically named in Sec. 9 of this act; nor shall this act affect the provisions of RCW 40.04.020 requiring the deposit of all state publications in the state library.

Sec. 9. Sections 2 through 6, chapter 38, Laws of 1909, section 1, chapter 160, Laws of 1929, sections 2, 6, 7, 9 and 10, chapter 109, Laws of 1941, sections 1 through 6, chapter 145, Laws of 1951, and RCW 40.08.010 through 40.08.040, and RCW 40.12.010 through 40.12.110 are each repealed.