

The Historical Records of the Society for Radiological Protection and their Retention

Introduction

At present the Society's current records, i.e. those going back 3/4 years are kept either at the home of the Administrator or at the home of the Honorary Secretary. These, when they are used for administrative purposes are deemed to have maximum primary value. When these records become semi-current they have reduced primary value and could be moved to more remote storage but should still be easily accessible.

Non-current records have nil primary value but may have secondary value, i.e. research value. Some will have low secondary value; could be classed as ephemera and should be destroyed; others will have high secondary value and should be archived. There will be others awaiting a decision on their fate. These records in the main are kept in the Naval Dockyard at Portsmouth at no cost to the Society. They occupy three four-drawer filing cabinets, and have been indexed. Semi-current records are not separated from non-current.

Retention Schedule

The aims of a retention schedule should be:

- a. The prompt destruction of records of no lasting value on their administrative demise.
- b. The identification of records suitable for economical storage during their lives.
- c. The preservation of items of lasting value.

The primary (i.e. administrative) and secondary (i.e. research) values must be taken into account when making a decision about the fate of records, both at the time of scheduling and at review.

When considering research value it will be helpful to distinguish between records which give an insight into the origin, structure and development of the Society and those which contain information or data collected by the Society in the course of its operation, on people, events and circumstances outside the organisation. Sampling and weeding will be needed for large numbers of records with low insight and high informational content.

Classification Scheme

A suggested time regime for classifying records might be:

Current records - up to six years old

Semi-current - six to ten years old

Non-current - older than ten years

External Factors affecting the retention of records

These may be classified as follows:

- a. Legal - statutory requirements; the Charities Act requires accounting records to be kept for six years following the financial year to which they relate.
- b. Financial - e.g. cost of storage.
- c. Administrative - reference needs; frequency and urgency
- d. Archival - some will have obvious long-term value; e.g. Council minutes and papers; minutes of the AGM; Annual Reports and minutes of Committees and Groups. These should be retained indefinitely. Other records will need review.

Confidentiality and Access to Records

It is recognised that confidentiality issues will need to be considered at a later date. When these issues are addressed, The Data Protection Act and The Human Rights Act may have a bearing on access to the archives to a greater or lesser degree. Rule 58 of the Society's Rules is also relevant to the accessibility of Council minutes.

Recommendations

1. The archives should be set up with the future management of the Society in mind.
2. The Society should arrange for the retention of such records, documents, publications and other media in a secure environment.
3. Only those records of high insight and secondary value and thus of lasting historical value to the Society should be considered for long term retention apart from those with a legal time requirement.
4. Council minutes and papers, minutes of the Annual General Meeting, Annual Reports and minutes of other Committees and Groups should be kept indefinitely. Other records should be subject to review by the Archivist.
6. Access to the archives for research purposes should be for the benefit of members of the Society and other bone fide researchers, should always further the aims of the Society and take account of confidentiality issues.
4. Semi-current records should be separated from non-current records.

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