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Managing administrative records of the Evangelical Covenant Church and North Park University

What is a *record*? A document created in the course of activity that is recorded evidence of that activity. Formats are varied and include paper sources (letter, memorandum, report), audiovisual (photograph, recording, video tape, film), digital or electronic (database, website, e-mail, photographs) or any other medium on which information is recorded or stored.

The administrative records of the Evangelical Covenant Church and North Park University are everyone's responsibility. Information retained in records is necessary for our own work, for larger administrative reasons including fiscal and legal reasons, and to people in the future. Records (whether hard copy or electronic) produced and retained while in the service and employment of the ECC or North Park University are the property of the ECC. Records are not the property of staff members to use, remove, or destroy at will.

Records management is the system by which we manage records through their creation, use, and disposal. This is based on the idea of a life-cycle:

Four levels in a record's "life":

- 1. Creation: the time at which a record is created or received, and is of immediate use to the office.
- 2. Active: used in the office.
- 3. Inactive: records have ongoing value and use but are no longer referred to on a regular basis. (These are usually stored where they would be readily accessible as needed).
- 4. Final disposition: the last phase is the point at which records have no further operational value to the office, and are disposed of either by destroying them, or transferring them to the Archives.

All of the above can be managed by setting up "records schedules" which identify each type of record and guide you in what to do with them. The ECC and North Park University do not have official records management policies or institution-wide records retention schedules at this time, but hope to work on this in the future.

Before we have these in place, in many ways we are relying on your good sense and discretion to ensure that the records of value will be available in the future.

What you can do:

Communicate with each other, department to department, to determine who is keeping
what type of records in their files. Usually, the best rule to follow is that the office
producing a particular type of record maintains the "master run" of that record. For

- example, the Human Resources department should be the only one maintaining personnel records of employees.
- Label and date all documents which you/your office produce/s.
- Be consistent in the way you keep your own office files. If you file your correspondence alphabetically one year, continue the same pattern next year. If your predecessor had a system in place which you think is still workable, continue that system.
- Label all file folders clearly and accurately.
- Keep the records/files/folders in the order in which you (or someone else) created them.
- Keep only the master or earliest-generation copy of any record. *Weed duplicates,* if you know you do not need them.

Files generally of "continuing" or archival value, and to be transferred to the Archives:

- "Office Files": correspondence and memoranda (incoming and outgoing) and subject files concerning projects, activities and functions.
- Meeting minutes.
- Reports.
- Files documenting policies, decisions, committees and task forces.
- Publications: one copy of all newsletters, journals, brochures, programs, posters, and announcements produced by your office.
- Audio-visuals: photographs, films, and sound and video recordings, if clearly identified with dates and names.

Records generally not of continuing value, and thus not for transfer:

- Records of financial transactions.
- Routine letters of transmittal and acknowledgment.
- Non-personally addressed correspondence.
- All unused printed or duplicated materials.
- Papers, reports, and data which have been published or appear in final form elsewhere.

When in doubt, KEEP, rather than toss!

Transfers of administrative records to the Archives:

Offices and departments of the ECC and North Park University will find it necessary to transfer administrative records to the Archives from time to time.

- When you are ready to move materials from your office, contact the Archives.
- The director will consult with you to help determine which material should be transferred.
- Schedule an appointment to transfer the records.
- Fill out a **Transfer of Records Form** (available on the Archives website) to accompany all records sent to the Archives.

Guidelines recommended by the F.M. Johnson Archives and Special Collections, North Park University, May 2009