

PRESERVATION AND PROTECTION OF RECORDS

Records appraised as requiring permanent or long term retention need to be retained in a more stable environment than records requiring only short-medium term retention.

Storage conditions and handling processes should ensure as far as possible that records are protected from unauthorised access, loss, destruction, and from theft and disaster.

Major causes of deterioration of physical records in their various formats are light, heat and humidity, handling, mold and pest infestation. Most of these factors can be avoided by controlling the environment in which physical records are stored:

- Storage areas are to be kept free of dust by regular cleaning.
- Conduct regular inspections for pest infestation and fumigate as required.
- Paper records should ideally be stored in areas that do not have great fluctuations of temperature or humidity. An acceptable temperature range for paper is 18-20 °C with a relative humidity between 45-50%. The recommended temperature for Magnetic media such as tape, floppy or hard disks is the same as for paper but the recommended relative humidity is 35-45%. Photographs require a temperature range between 18-22 °C with a relative humidity of 45- 55%.
- Records should not be placed in direct sunlight.
- Metal clips/fasteners are not recommended, as they have a tendency to rust over time.
- Care should be taken at all times when dealing with records.
- Storage areas should be selected that have plenty of ventilation and no damp.
- Damage to the immediate area, such as cracks in walls, floors or ceilings, should be repaired promptly.
- The paper quality of records of a permanent value should be considered. Cheaper papers tend to contain a higher acid content, which reduces the life expectancy of the paper. Recycled paper has a life expectancy of approximately 10 years. Archival quality acid-free paper is available and is recommended for records requiring permanent retention.
- Master Sets of Maps and Drawings should ideally be stored in purpose built Hanging Cabinets.

A4 Ring Binders are not suitable for long term retention; records can be easily transferred from ring binders by using the Liftboy system or mediclips.

The USP Records Management policy outlines the responsibilities and accountabilities for record keeping and can be viewed at www.usp.ac.fj/records

For further information or for advice please do not hesitate to contact the Records Management office.