

Unit 318 (B&A 57): Principles of business communications and information

Handout 7: Archiving

What is archiving?

Storage of files when they are no longer in regular use.

Archiving of manual data should follow organisational procedure and any legal requirements.



Archiving electronic information

Be sure that the organisational procedures are followed.

You may delete documents if appropriate but if in error it can be retrieved from the Recycle bin.

Organisations are likely to have procedures for archiving that depend on why they need to be archived and the legal requirements for retention.

The options for archiving

- Manual storage
- Microfilming
- Digital archiving systems
- Picture archiving and communication systems (PACS)

Manual storage

Files are boxed and indexed and stored securely.

This may be on-site, but increasingly is off-site in storage managed by specialist companies, owing to the amount of space required.

Microfilming

- An analogue system where documents are photographed and stored in miniature on microfiche, a sheet of film.
- Requires a reader to magnify the documents in order to read them.
- Files are indexed but have to be searched for manually.
- Time consuming having to photograph all the documents.
- Requires very little space as many files can be stored on the sheets of film.
- Allows instant access to files rather than going through a procedure to request and find them.

Digital archiving systems

Allows paper documents to be scanned and stored electronically.

All electronic files can be converted to a format by which all can be centrally indexed, searched, sorted and managed.

There are many organisations offering this service as a business solution to file storage.

Picture archiving and communication systems (PACS)

Largely in use in the medical industry for electronic sharing and storage of images, eg X-rays, scans.

‘Electronic picture archiving and communication systems have been developed in an attempt to provide economical storage, rapid retrieval of images, access to images acquired with multiple modalities, and simultaneous access at multiple sites.’

Choplin, R. (1992). Picture archiving and communication systems: an overview. Radiographics January 1992, 12:127–129.

Document destruction

If files are no longer required, then they may be destroyed, usually by shredding.

There are organisations that specialise in the disposal of bulk confidential material.



File retention policy

This is the policy that states how long files must be retained before they are moved to archive or destroyed.

States the procedures for doing so.

There may be legal restrictions on the length of time files are kept, depending on their content.