

# Managing Business Records and Archives at the Getty Center

How four separate program areas worked together to develop an integrated records management and archives program

**David Farneth, CRM, and Barbara E. Nye, CRM**

**F**ounded in 1981, the J. Paul Getty Trust is composed of four distinct program areas that came together at one location for the first time in 1997 when the Getty Center (the “Getty”) opened in Los Angeles on a dramatic hilltop site. With its stunning views of the city, public gardens, and free admission, the Getty has become one of the area’s premiere tourist attractions while maintaining its international reputation for fostering conservation and research in the visual arts.

The four program areas are:

1. *The J. Paul Getty Museum*, which offers a full program of permanent and changing exhibitions, conservation services, educational programs, and publications;
2. *The Getty Research Institute*, which offers public programs, a residential program for international scholars, and a research library that includes extensive archives and manuscript collections. It also creates a range of online research tools such as the Art and Architecture Thesaurus and the

Bibliography of the History of Art;

3. *The Getty Conservation Institute*, which works internationally to advance conservation in the visual arts through scientific research, education, training, field projects, and the dissemination of information; and
4. *The Getty Grant Program*, which provides financial support for history of

visual arts and cultural heritage projects, and oversees professional development opportunities to museums and individuals through the Getty Leadership Institute.

The management of the Getty Trust was concerned with preserving its institutional memory and managing its records more efficiently when it decided in 2001 to establish an integrated archives and records management program managed by a new department located administratively in the research library. The department has a dual reporting structure to the chief librarian for archival functions and to the executive vice president/general counsel for records management functions.

## Organizational Analysis

The project began with an analysis of the Getty’s nature and mission, potential clients of the program, regulatory environment, and risk management factors. Various discussions and analyses of mission statements and strategic plans determined that the organization’s values

### At the Core

This article

- ▶ describes the process of integrating the records management and archives functions in an academic, nonprofit, and corporate environment
- ▶ discusses the benefits, challenges, and lessons learned during the process
- ▶ presents initiatives to complete the records and archives integration and incorporate best practices into the records management program

included education, service to the profession, excellence, efficiency, change, and collaboration. Staff members recognized the value of standards and best practices, and many of them actively managed information on a daily basis. The overall educational, scholarly, and research mission of the organization fit naturally with archival goals.

Taking all this information into consideration, management made three key strategic decisions: (1) give priority to developing the records management program to ensure proper retention and transfer of records to the archives; (2) use a project team of staff and consultants to ensure quick start-up; and (3) recruit professional staff members knowledgeable in new standards and sympathetic to an integrated approach.

With clearly articulated goals and a better understanding of the organizational environment, management and a newly appointed institutional archivist were ready to take the next steps required to launch the program. They established a Records and Archives Advisory Committee, hired records management consultants, and began education sessions for managers across the institution.

### Initial Planning and Analysis

The first meetings between staff and consultants focused on planning the records management program development. They agreed to develop one functionally based retention schedule and to introduce the records management program gradually to increase the likelihood of success. Initially, the proposed project phases called for the project team to:

- conduct sample interviews and survey several departments
- undertake a complete and detailed physical records inventory
- develop a retention schedule based on the inventory data
- review and obtain approval of the retention schedule
- implement the retention schedule

Five departments, representing the

largest Getty divisions and a cross-section of the Getty Trust activities, were selected to test the proposed methodology: (1) Research Library: Collection Development; (2) Conservation Institute: Field Projects; (3) Museum: Manuscripts; (4) Operations; and (5) Security.

Based on the analysis of the information received from the five-department survey, the team decided to rethink its strategy and rely upon a high-level records survey rather than a detailed physical inventory. Because so many Getty staff managed information as an inherent part

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of their work, they would be able to conduct surveys themselves, with minimal training and in a relatively short period of time. The strategy was therefore revised to recruit, train, and rely on a team of departmental records coordinators to do most of the survey work.

Each departmental records coordinator completed a department profile rather than participate in the more standard interview process. The project team trained the coordinators, assisted in completing the surveys where necessary, coordinated the survey, analyzed the data, prepared the initial draft of the retention schedule, and began to develop the Records and Archives Department staff by recruiting an assistant archivist and a records analyst. A records manager and

processing archivist were added further along in the process.

The team also developed an electronic records questionnaire to collect data about which software applications were being used and which records might potentially be created or retained by these applications. To ensure that the records coordinators had a central information resource during the survey process, the team developed a Web site to make available all training materials, survey forms, a FAQ page, and contact information.

### Developing the Records Management Program

During the initial survey phase, the coordinators collected information about approximately 2,500 record titles, a term used to describe sets of records, such as a group of folders on a specific topic; a set of unified files, such as personnel folders or correspondence files; or a set of engineering drawings. The consultants entered the survey data into a records retention schedule development database, a tool used to assist in sorting, classifying, and reporting the survey information. Each record title was first classified into the major functions initially identified. Then, within the major functions, the record titles were classified into 142 records series.

Several existing departmental retention schedules were incorporated where possible. In assigning retention periods to each records series, the team considered both the operating or business need to retain the records and legal requirements. The team also met with the general counsel's office to establish the statutory or regulatory recordkeeping requirements and to understand priorities for confidentiality.

The project team also conducted a gap analysis to identify obvious missing records categories. In comparing the initial version of the Getty retention schedule to retention schedules from other similar institutions, the team noted several significant functional areas that were underrepresented in the survey data. Additionally, the functional classification scheme was modified and refined to more closely reflect the major Getty functions. The

functions used to classify the records titles and begin developing the records series are shown in Figure 1 below. Core mission functions are listed on the left; administrative, operations, and support functions are listed on the right.

During the process of surveying and developing the draft retention schedule, the team began to create records management program documentation and resources. These included:

- an institutional records policy
- a records management procedures manual
- records management training materials
- an intranet site featuring a dynamically generated retention schedule with interactive features including a database back end, program documentation, and forms

### Developing the Archival Program

Concurrent with developing the records management program, the staff studied organizational histories, annual reports, and strategic planning documents, from which they developed orga-

nizational timelines and histories for each major program area. The staff also created inventories of all of the historical records that had been identified over time as “archival” and created EAD (Encoded Archival Description) finding aids for those collections having immediate reference value to the organization. The Records and Archives Advisory Committee discussed what kinds of documentation should constitute the core archival collection and recommended access policies for both staff and the public. From these discussions the staff developed appraisal methodologies, specific access policies, and a processing manual. New workflow and procedures were implemented for transferring records from offices to the archives. Allied departments within the research library provided storage space, reformatting services, and assistance with accessioning, collections management, and reference inquiries. The archives staff reviewed the draft retention schedules and determined which series should be characterized as “archival.” Efforts have been made to acquire important documentation from external collaborators and contractors,

and the staff administers an oral history project to supplement the written record.

### Benefits, Challenges, and Lessons Learned

Throughout the process, the project team investigated ways to integrate the disciplines of archives management and records management, because this integration would provide stronger and unified information management services to the Getty. Records management activities ensure the identification and protection of records that will eventually become part of the institutional archives, and archival requirements inform the development of the retention schedule. The team identified a number of benefits, challenges, and lessons learned, both for the process of developing the records management program and for attempting to integrate archival and records management functions.

#### Benefits

- An effective records management program improves the quality of archival documentation by promoting the creation and maintenance of records that have appropriate context and structure as well as reliable content.
- A functional analysis assists in developing systematic archival appraisal criteria that can be uniformly applied across the institution, if appropriate.
- Integrated functions provide for the timely and orderly transfer of records to the archives, allowing them to be available for research more quickly.
- Functional classification can form the basis of a business classification scheme, or a functions thesaurus, or provide tools for managing and preserving electronic records.
- Linking archival awareness to records management functions builds a better understanding of the archival program – its mission, its services, and its value to ongoing operations.
- All staff members begin to understand that they have a role in developing the archives.

**Figure 1: Getty Trust Core Mission and Support Functions**

Core Functions	Support Functions
Collection Management	Accounting
Exhibitions	Administration
External Collaboration	Client Service
Field and Science Projects	Communications
Philanthropy	Engineering
Public Programming	Environmental Compliance
Publishing	Executive Management
Research Activities & Support	Finance
	Human Resources
	Legal
	Operations
	Sales
	Security
	Tax

- The records and archives staff develop natural liaisons with communications, publishing, and other departments that will be key users of the archives.
- Functional and contextual metadata captured in archival finding aids provides additional access points and informs the user about not only what is in the collection, but also what is not, and the reasons why certain records were not preserved.
- An established network of records coordinators provides an opportunity to experiment with training them to do first-level archival appraisal.

### Challenges

- Developing an organization-wide, functional retention schedule, implementing it, and developing the other components of a comprehensive records management and archives program is a time- and labor-intensive effort. An effective communication plan is required to sustain momentum and ensure buy-in.
- The process is an iterative one that must be well managed to ensure that the program will adequately support the organization. Strong executive-level support is needed to sustain interest and cooperation throughout the project.
- The chosen survey methodology, while seemingly more efficient, had some drawbacks for creating an organization-wide retention schedule. It was conducted at a less-detailed level than the consultants normally use to gather data. The consultants were one step removed from the records and had to rely on the survey skills of the records coordinators. As a result, they spent considerable time talking to and meeting with coordinators to better understand the survey data and the records collections. Also, about 600 records titles were overlooked by the coordinators in the initial survey and had to be added during the retention schedule review process.

- The major functions on the retention schedule will not necessarily correlate to the physical arrangement of records in the archives, nor will they reflect existing office file plans. Using a functional approach requires the records program staff to provide operational departments with guidance on designing file plans and locating their records titles on the retention schedule.
- The functional approach results in a smaller number of records series on

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- the retention schedule and a larger number of records classified under each series. Consequently, more series must be assigned to “archival review” to ensure that valuable evidential information is not being discarded.
- Some types of records – such as unified files of correspondence, or project, case, and subject files – naturally resist functional analysis.
- Many types of documents of interest to the archives, such as publications, personal papers, records of external collaborators, photo collections, documentation of employee social activities, and information about the organization from external sources, may not fall within the scope of the records management program.

### Lessons Learned

- Be sure to take enough time at the beginning of the project to analyze the institution’s major functions without reference to the organizational structure.
- Functional analysis for archival appraisal is a top-down process, while functional analysis for records management tends to be bottom-up, starting with business process analysis. In the Getty case it was necessary to undertake both processes and then resolve differences.
- Consult standards (e.g., ISO 15489, DoD 5015.2, the Australian Government DIRKS methodology, the European Commission “Model Requirements for Electronic Records Management” (MoReq)) and best practices early and often; use them as a guide as well as program benchmarks.
- Identify key partners; involve them in the process.
- Develop a staff that has strong people skills and expertise in both archives and records management.
- Tailor the message to the audience:
  - Develop different presentations for upper management, middle management, and records creators that address the needs and concerns of each group.
  - Write instructional materials in the users’ language.
- Use a consistent methodology but be creative when things do not fit.
- Be prepared to respond to frequent staff and organizational changes.
- Have frequent and readily available training sessions.
- Be prepared to discuss current or future strategies for managing electronic records.
- Select willing and enthusiastic departments in which to start the program.
- Choose natural allies within the organization:
  - legal department (improving regu-

- latory compliance, litigation support)
- risk management (limiting liability)
- internal audit (documenting compliance with internal procedures)
- facilities/operations (improving records storage and transfer)
- long-term employees (knowledge of organizational history)
- executives and staff working on mission-central activities (who have a personal and professional stake in the archives)
- Develop procedures for accepting records into the institutional archives early in the process.
- Develop archival access policies in tandem with the records management policies. Users need to have faith in access policies before they will willingly transfer records to the archives.

### Integrated Program Development

How much progress has the Getty made toward achieving its goal of integrating archives and records management functions? The following is a summary of progress to date and future initiatives:

#### Progress to Date

- Overall program development is guided by an Institutional Records and Archives Committee.
- Records management policies and procedures are in place.
- Archival access policies, collection policies, and processing procedures are in place.
- The staff is recruited, cross-trained, and working collaboratively.
- A network of records coordinators has been trained in records management procedures and archival concepts.
- Awareness of the value of archives and records management has been raised throughout the institution.
- Partnerships with key departments and individuals have been developed.

- The organization's major functions, activities, and the resulting records have been analyzed.
- A Web site provides policies, procedures, and an interactive retention schedule.
- The retention schedule is developed and approved.
- The records and archives staff are invited to help with incorporating records management functions into

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new and existing software applications.

- All of the records in the archives have been inventoried, and many collections have been described with EAD finding aids.
- The institutional archives staff regularly answers research questions and provides documentation related to institutional history

#### Future Initiatives

- Conduct a small-scale pilot implementation of the retention schedule to

test methodology and training materials.

- Manage a phased implementation of the retention schedule throughout the organization.
- Conduct ongoing training programs.
- Implement the maintenance plan for the retention schedule.
- Establish a vital records program.
- Analyze the need for integrated controlled vocabularies, a functions thesaurus, a metadata directory, and a institution-wide metadata schema for describing records, archives, and digital assets.
- Build a cross-department team to develop a strategy for managing electronic records.
- Initiate program assessment, compliance, and improvement practices.
- Integrate records management functions into enterprise-wide information management, document management, and digital asset management systems.
- Participate in the development of digital preservation and business continuity initiatives.
- Initiate outreach programs (exhibitions, public events, Web sites, etc.) to raise awareness of the archival collections.
- Continue adding interviews to the oral history collection.

Clearly, much work still needs to be done, and many challenges lie ahead. But the project team hopes to have laid the groundwork for an effective, sustainable, and integrated archives and records management program that will provide better access to information and ensure the effective creation, use, and reuse of organizational information over time. ■

*David Farneth, CRM, is Institutional Archivist for the J. Paul Getty Trust. He may be contacted at dfarneth@getty.edu.*

*Barbara E. Nye, CRM, is Owner/President of ICTUS Consulting, LLC. She may be contacted at bnye@ictus.com.*