



সত্যমেব জয়তে
অসম চৰকাৰ
Govt of Assam

HANDBOOK ON

Module on Record Management



Assam Administrative Staff College

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ARTPPG Department, GoA

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মুখ্যমন্ত্রী, অসম
Chief Minister, Assam



FOREWORD

The work environment across the globe is undergoing rapid changes, and the utilization of human resources is evolving accordingly, with Assam being no exception. To keep pace with these changes, it is imperative that the Assam government focuses on empowering its human resources with a global outlook while remaining grounded in Indian values.

To achieve this vision, our government is implementing effective changes in work culture and striving to instill new ideas and a broader perspective in the minds of the officials. In line with this effort, the ARTPPG Department of the Government of Assam is introducing a set of training manuals and handbooks. Our Government is ensuring the smooth functioning of the daily administration with the help of these Training Manuals/ Handbooks for the Grade-3 officials. To effectively cater to the requirements of Grade-3 officials, experts have meticulously drafted the training manuals and handbooks, aiming to cover a wide range of relevant topics. Moreover, focused attempts have been made to embed the books with relevant case studies, examples and FAQs on different topics to enable the users to adapt to the procedural yet divergent needs of today's dynamic administration.

True to the objective of our Government in creating a spirited workforce, introduction of multifaceted learning and training programme have been thought of to enable our officials realize their true potential. This would help them to reorient themselves to the day-to-day administrative developments while performing their duties with honesty and transparency.

I believe the Training Manuals / Handbooks will hold immense value as a guiding light on diverse professional trajectories. They will also serve as a roadmap to steer capacity building of the Grade-III officials in a systematic and coherent manner.

(Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma)

Dr. Ravi Kota, IAS
Chief Secretary
Government of Assam



ড° ৰবি কোটা, ভাঃ প্ৰঃ সেঃ
মুখ্য সচিব
অসম চৰকাৰ



Preparation of a Training policy of a State and aligning it with the needs of the variegated workforce which has to constantly prove its relevance in this era of transition towards technology forms the very backbone of the administration in the form of a challenging task. In this due course of action, capacity building of Grade-III officials not only requires them to remain efficient in their daily official duties but also must be able to motivate them to work, learn and evolve in a comprehensive manner.

The present District training manuals for Grade-III officials have been prepared under the aegis of the Administrative Reforms Training Pension and Public Grievances Department (ARTPPG) and the Assam Administrative Staff College (AASC), who were aided by renowned experts and stakeholders from all the concerned fields. The manuals are a product of much detailed and multiple deliberations on the requisite subjects and it also includes valuable inputs from The Institute of Secretariat Training and Management (ISTM), Delhi in certain applicable topics. The Training Needs Assessment (TNA) was diligently conducted by AASC to chalk out an inclusive need based approach suited for a bottom up perspective for the Grade-III officials and also to ensure that no vital subject has been overlooked.

I believe that the Training manuals will help the Trainers and the trainees as well in a holistic manner and I earnestly request all concerned to send us feedback which would be of great help when we take up further revisionary exercises.

(Dr. Ravi Kota)
Chief Secretary, Assam

Shantanu Gotmare, IAS
Commissioner & Secretary
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MESSAGE

The Department of Administrative Reforms, Training, Pension and Public Grievances (ARTPPG) plays a vital role in the formulation of the State Training Policy and training it's civil servants to build capacity for improving 'Ease of Living' for people of Assam.

The content of the district training manuals aims to bolster capacity of the Grade-3 employees in an elaborate and lucid manner. We have worked meticulously to prepare content of the manuals by collaborating with experts and have actively collated through appropriate stakeholders, which objectively present a comprehensive picture for the officials, covering a broad spectrum of their daily official duties.

I express my sincere thanks to the Committee for vetting the full content. ARTPPG acknowledges the contributions of Committee Members in the preparation of the training manuals. Special mention must be made to the Assam Administrative Staff College, Khanapara and my team in ARTPPG Department for relentless work to get the training manuals.

I sincerely hope that that these manuals will be extremely useful to the trainers, trainees and as well as the officials.

(Shantanu Gotmare)



Foreword

The District Training Manuals for Grade-III officials of the Government of Assam have been designed by the Assam Administrative Staff College (AASC) with the help of renowned guest faculty and experts under the able guidance of the Administrative Reforms, Training, Pension and Public Grievances (ARTPPG) Department and inputs from the Institute of Secretariat Training and Management (ISTM), New Delhi.

I hope these manuals will be used extensively by the trainers and trainees and will help the officials become more knowledgeable, competent and productive at their work places.

I would like to convey my gratitude to all the renowned guest faculty and to all the individuals associated with the successful publication of the manuals for their inputs and support throughout the process of designing and printing these manuals.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Riju Gogoi', written in a cursive style.

Riju Gogoi
Director of Training
Assam Administrative Staff College

Module on Record Management

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RECORDS MANAGEMENT

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Records are an inevitable part of any organisation. Records are created as a result of the activities that take place within an organisation. They are also created when the organisation deals with other agencies and organisation. Broadly, speaking we can say that records management includes the stages from the creation of a record to its permanent retention and destruction. Records Management would thus cover such areas as creation, classification-filing system etc.

1.1 CONTEXT

In any organisation, a huge amount of information is generated over the year. In the absence of proper record keeping system, it becomes very difficult to locate and retrieve files, papers, documents etc. as and when the need arises. This will lead to delay in disposal of work and the organisation will suffer. Hence, a proper Records Management System is essential for any organisation.

1.2 OBJECTIVES

After reading through the handout you will be able to:

- Describe the nature and purpose of records
- Explain the record cycle
- List some problems regarding records
- Describe the Principle of Management
- Recall the precautions to be taken for creation of records
- Explain the classification of records
- Describe the Alphabetical Filing System
- Explain the procedure of recording of files
- Discuss about the custody of records
- Review files, documents etc.
- Describe the procedure of destruction of files

1.3 RECORDS MANAGEMENT

In any organisation, a huge amount of information is generated. This information may be generated internally or it may come from external sources. Now what is Records Management? We can say that Records Management is the process of planning, organising, staffing, directing and controlling all the steps involved in the life of a record, namely from the time a record is created until its final destruction or permanent storage.

1.3.1 DEFINITION OF RECORDS

A record is written or oral evidence in information that has been collected for use by people or machine. Records that are most common are:

- Incoming/outgoing communication
- Reports, returns, notes, memorandum
- Maps, documents, photographs, films, books etc.

In other words, we can say that any physical medium which stores information is called records. It may come in the form of papers, cards, tapes, discs, microfilm or computers.

1.3.2 NATURE OF RECORDS

Whenever you think of records, the image that comes to our mind may be that of any written material that appear on paper such as correspondence, books, articles, forms, etc. In addition to records written on paper we can also have records of other nature.

We are all familiar with oral records like cassettes and discs, which capture human voice. Then there are other records that appear on film like movies, photograph, and microfilms. Nowadays, a huge amount of records are in the nature of computer discs. These are records that are produced by computers and other storage device.

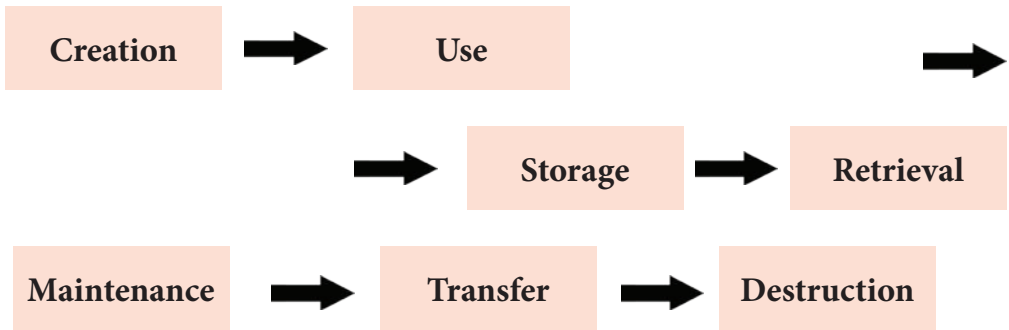
1.3.3. PURPOSE OF RECORDS

The utility of retaining records are listed below:

- a. The human memory cannot retain all the information. Thus it is necessary to have records to provide information for planning and scheduling organisation activities.
- b. Retention of records is a legal requirement i.e. production of papers in a court of law.
- c. To ensure continuity in an organisation. Human memory is short and personnel are changed due to retirement, promotion and transfer.
- d. To make available needed facts, figures, correspondence etc. for future planning. Records contain information, which will sharpen the process of decision-making and problem-solving.
- e. To preserve information about past decisions, precedents and procedures which assist the decision makers in taking rational decisions.
- f. For historical value.

1.3.4 THE RECORD CYCLE

The record cycle is the process from the creation of a record to its final destruction. It may also be called as the life span of a record. The record cycle is shown below:



Now let us explain the terms used in the figures. Whenever we write any letter or memorandum, print some rules and regulations etc. a record is created. This record is then sent to the person responsible for its use. The record is used for the purpose mentioned in Para 1.3.3 above.

After use the record is stored as long as they do not become obsolete. Whenever the need for a record arises, then it is retrieved from storage for use. During the record cycle some steps have to be taken for preparing materials and placing and preserving them in storage. The records also have to be classified. In addition, we have to update the stored information. Weeding of records has to be done for disposing of obsolete records that are no longer useful.

1.3.5 PROBLEM OF RECORDS

Organisations that are dependent on paper records only face problems of records management as there is a tendency for records to increase manifold. The problems associated with this are.

- Cost of creating and storing this paper is high
- It is extremely difficult to locate a file, document etc. in time of need
- It is, therefore, essential to prevent creation of unnecessary documents
- Urgent steps have to be taken to identify papers of lasting value and plan their maintenance and preservation for future use

There are a number of causes of growth of paperwork. All the causes are mostly related to improper or poor record management. With the advent of the photocopier, computer and printer, it has become very easy to duplicate and create more papers. This allows us to create unnecessary records.

Besides functionaries in an organisation are uncertain about the future information needs of the offices. They are also unsure about the classification and retention schedule of records, which leads to the piling up of unnecessary records.

1.3.6 STEPS TO REDUCE RECORDS

- As far as possible and practical reduce noting on files and issue of communication. To achieve this aim greater use of telephone and intercom should be made.
- Files to be opened only when necessary.
- Repetitive noting can be avoided provided up-to-date notes, running summary of facts, guard files etc. are available.
- Make the organisations more flatter, in other words, there should be more delegation of powers so that files can be disposed off at relatively lower levels.
- Avoid delay and difficulty in locating records - by maintaining high accuracy ratio.
- Do not keep records which have outlined their utility — high reference ratio.
- Utilise the available space properly.
- Maintain proper filing equipment with section and record room.
- Maintain safety and security in record room to avoid pilferage of records.

1.3.7 PRINCIPLES OF GOOD RECORD MANAGEMENT

An effective and efficient records management system should ensure the following.

A	Appraisal	Review at an appropriate stage, starting from the stage of last action on a current record; the value of records in terms of its future and requiring its retention should be assessed properly by the record—creating agency. The retention category/period should be specifically and appropriately indicated thereon.
W	Weeding Out	There should be constant weeding and review of records so that the cost of maintenance of records is kept to the minimum.

A	Accessibility	It should provide an easily accessible storehouse of information relevant to the changing needs of the organisation.
C	Control	There should be control on the growth of records, at its inception/creation.
S	Speed in Retrieval	The records should be kept in such a way that they should be capable of being retrieved quickly.
E	Economy	<p>Economy should be observed by ensuring that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • records occupy minimum space • cost of equipment for storing records is low • cost of retrieving records is low
R	Retention Schedule	It should provide for a uniform and systematic schedule for retention and disposal of records,

1.4.0 CREATION OF RECORDS

This is the first important and crucial stage since all other activities in records management flow from this. Whenever you write any letter or memorandum, print some rules etc. a record is created.

An effective and efficient record management would need the imposition of some form of birth control at their creation stage. You have to ponder on the following:

- Whether the creation of a particular record is a must. Files should not be opened at the drop of a hat. Files need to be opened only for important and essential matters.
- The purpose may be served by discussions either personally or through telephone/intercom. In addition, intra and interdepartmental meetings can also be held.
- Can the paper with the required information be not returned to the sender in original?
- Other ways of reducing creation of records could be to maintain

standing notes, guard files etc. so that notings on particularly repetitive matter is avoided.

- Information aids like precedent book, reference folder if any maintained properly will help in reducing the creation of files.
- For processing cases, which are repetitive or routine in nature, standard process sheet should be devised.

1.5.0 CLASSIFICATION OF RECORDS

Different types of records are created for different purposes. The usefulness and importance also varies from record to record. This necessitates retention of records for different periods.

a) Permanent	The records in this category will never be destroyed. This category will be allotted to records/files in which important questions have been discussed or which contain papers establishing important precedents or general instructions or rulings of permanent nature, legal opinions, rules and regulations, legislation, major policy decisions, court cases where the organisation is involved and which are likely to be required in future for reference etc.
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In Government permanent retention means retention for a period of 25 years after which they are reviewed in order to decide the desirability or otherwise of further retention. Other agencies and organisations will determine/follow their own retention period.

b) Important	Records under this category have to be preserved for a considerably longer period because of the usefulness in decision making. Examples are records of administrative importance, which contain orders and instructions etc. not of permanent importance. In Government, records under this category are preserved for 12 years. Other organisations will have their own retention schedule.
(c) Desirable	The records remain useful as a source of information for a comparatively short time in future. These are records of secondary importance having relevance for shorter time span. In Government, such categories of records are preserved for periods not exceeding 5 years.

(d) Ephemeral

Papers like routine notes, annexures, spare copies, temporary reports and returns, which have little current value and no future reference value are called Ephemeral records. They can be destroyed after 1 year.

2.0 FILING SYSTEM

A proper filing system is an essential part of records management. The filing system involves systematically sorting and locating the proper document/paper and arranging and placing the documents/papers in the file. In other words, we can say that a proper filing system is essential for convenient identification, sorting, storage and retrieval of proper documents/papers etc.

A file contains two parts, namely, “notes” and “correspondence”. The former contains notes recorded on a paper under consideration or PUC, as it is commonly known. It may also contain notes, independently on the same subject from time to time. The correspondence part contains all communications received and office copies of all letters issued.

The correspondence part is arranged according to the date of receipt. The earliest correspondence received in the file should be at the top. The paper under correspondence should always be turned, for convenience, and placed at the top of the earlier correspondence kept in the file.

2.1 ALPHABETICAL FILING SYSTEM

The Alphabetical Filing System consists of (a) filing by name, (b) filing by subject and (c) filing by geographical area. Now let us examine each of them in turn.

2.1.1 FILING BY NAME

Most companies and firms file correspondence alphabetically by name or you can say that the filing system is according to the name of the client or supplier, be it a firm or an individual. With this method papers are found by direct reference and no card index is required.

2.1.2 FILING BY SUBJECT

In this system, filing is done subject-wise in place of names of people or organisations. The subject could be administration, accounts, production, marketing, maintenance etc.

- a. Whenever a new file is opened, the creator of the file will make sure that there is no other current file on the matter. He/she will also decide on (the title to be given to the file, All new files will be given a fresh file number).

- b. Each file consists of three parts, namely-
- Abbreviated symbol allotted to the branch of the office dealing with the subject
 - The serial number of the file in the file register of the year in the branch whenever new files are opened they have to be entered in the file register serially, and
 - The year in which the file is opened
- c. The abbreviated symbol, serial number of the file and the year of opening the file will be separated by strokes.

Illustration --- File No. AASC (TC) /21/01/ means that it is a file of Assam Administrative Staff College, (AASC denoting Staff College) in Training Cell (TC denoting training cell and the subject Training). The number 21 denotes that the file is the twenty-first file opened in the year and 01 means that file was opened in the year 2001.

- d. The title of the file should be as brief as possible
- It should at a glance give sufficient indication about the contents of the file.
 - The title of the file should serve as an aid to the identification of a paper on the subject received in a year.
 - The title should be articulated, i.e. broken up into components, each consisting of the minimum possible words.
 - Minor parts of speech will be excluded as far as possible
 - Each component will begin with a capital letter and separated from the preceding component with a bold dash.

A few examples of selecting the titles of files are given below:

Subjects dealt in the file	Title of the file
(a) Propaganda and publicity in the matter of Self Help Groups	Self-help Groups - publicity of
(b) Placing of orders to press for supply of printed of publicity, materials	Printing of publicity materials- supply orders to press.

2.1.3 FILING BY GEOGRAPHICAL AREA

The Geographical filing system is used where records are referred to with reference to territory. It is used in Departments like sales, public utility etc. In the system, alphabetical classifications are broken up with geographical regions.

2.2.0 NON-ALPHABETICAL FILING SYSTEM

Under the non-alphabetical filing system, there are two types of classification viz. numerical filing system and chronological filing system. Now let us describe each of them.

2.2.1 NUMERICAL FILING SYSTEM

In this system, the serial number of files has to be written. Here the numerals, are assigned to subjects and topics. We can say that the numerical filing system is individual, that is to say, that the dealing person must first consult the alphabetical index to determine the code of the record. This system has a number of advantages over the alphabetical filing system.

- They make it possible for quick and sequential identification of records
- They aid in efficient sorting and handling
- They provide unlimited expansion

2.2.2 CHRONOLOGICAL SYSTEM

This system may be called the date filing system. Here the records are filed chronologically. It is used generally for follow-up purposes like land records, library borrowings, court hearings, income tax summons etc. where date is a crucial factor.

3.0 RECORDING OF FILES

Recording is the process of closing a file after action on all the issues under consideration has been completed. Recording constitutes a very important process or stage in the record management process. At the stage, the record ceases to be an active record. But never the less it continues to retain its importance for the organisation. This is due to the fact that it may contain the vital documents, which may have to be used at a later date. Thus the stage of recording can be described as a window between the past and the present.

Great care should be taken at this stage to see that the records are properly identified, classified and index numbered for quick and easy retrieval.

3.1 STAGE OF RECORDING

Files should be recorded after action on the issue considered thereon has

been completed. However, files of a purely ephemeral nature containing papers of little reference or research value may be destroyed after one year without being formally recorded.

3.2 RESPONSIBILITY FOR RECORDING

In Government, files are recorded by the Dealing Assistant under the supervision of the Superintendent, Head Assistant or Supervising Assistant as the case may be. In case of doubt, the order of the branch officers is obtained. In other organisations, the files are to be recorded under the supervision of a responsible officer.

While recording we will have to consider and use a lot of tact, local knowledge and intelligence to prevent the destruction of paper that may be needed for future reference.

Much will depend on careful supervision. No rules can be applicable in all cases. It is not intended that the classification, which had been prescribed, should be followed arbitrarily without the exercise of any individual discretion.

Such discretion will generally be more soundly exercised in the preservation than in the destruction of a record of doubtful importance.

3.3 RECORDING – PROCEDURE OF

When no further action is required to be taken on a file, then it will be recorded under one of the following classes.

- a. Class 'A' or Permanent Records — to be printed and preserved permanently
- b. Class 'B' or Important Records — to be preserved for 12 years
- c. Class 'C' or Desirable Records — to be preserved for 5 years

The recording procedure mentioned above is followed in Government. Other organisations will have their own procedure. Alternatively, the Government system of recording may be followed with variations to suit individual organisations. A register may be maintained wherein a list of all the files recorded under the three categories to be written down. The register may have different columns such as name and number of the file, classification of the file, date of closing etc.

3.3.1 PREPARING A FILE FOR RECORD

After a file has been marked for record, it will be arranged properly for recording. This would involve the following action.

- a. The dealing person will state that all action on the file has been completed and note this fact on the file.
- b. Suggest the appropriate classification of records.

- c. Where necessary revise the title of the file so that it describes adequately the content of the file at that stage.
- d. Indicate on the file cover whether any of the decisions contained in the file is to be noted in the precedent register.
- e. Indicate the changes if any, to be incorporated in the standing guard file. Remove from the main file routine papers such as acknowledgement etc.
- f. Remove from the main file routine papers such as reminder and acknowledgement etc.
- g. Initial all the entries that have been made on the file cover.
- h. Submit the file to supervisory officers for scrutiny.

After satisfying himself that no action is pending on the file, the Supervisor Officer will:

- a. Approve or modify the action proposed in (b) to (f) of para 3.3.1.
- b. Sign on the notes position and initial entries on the file cover.
- c. If the file is to be recorded under class 'A' obtain the approval of the Head of the organisation/office.
- d. Pass on the file to the record keeper/section.

3.3.2 CUSTODY OF RECORDS

Recorded file will be kept in the custody of the record keeper. The record keeper will keep the records in the record room on proper shelves. The record keeper will check to see that the files have been properly recorded. He will also check A, B, C classification of every paper composing the record. He will also ensure that the papers have been distributed to the three files 'A', 'B' & 'C'.

Files A and B will be kept together at the appropriate places of the rack: Files copy should not be placed along with files A and B but on a separate rack set aside for all copy papers.

If a recorded file has to be obtained from the record room then a requisition slip will have to be given to the record keeper. This will be entered in the record room issue register.

3.3.3 THE RECORD ROOM

The record room should be well maintained so that the records can be preserved safely. The record room should be of the following specification.

- a. It should be well-lighted and well-ventilated; Air conditioning of the room ensures longevity of the records.
- b. It should be located preferably on the ground floor.

- c. The floor and bottom parts of the rooms should be damp-proof and seepage-proof.
- d. There should be adequate arrangements for firefighting.

4.0 REVIEW AND WEEDING OF RECORDS

We know that all the files, registers, papers etc. cannot be kept in an office at all times.

Periodical review of records is a must in order to weed out the useless ones.

The purpose of review or approval is to find out how much of the records stored have lost their relevance or usefulness at the end of the retention period. Review should be systematic and regular. By having regular review you can ensure that the amount of records comes down to the essential few. These should be segregated from the trivial papers. Without review it is not possible to weed out unwanted records or to reduce the cost of storing them unnecessarily.

Every organisation should maintain a record retention schedule, as this is essential for a sound record management programme. The retention schedule plans the life of a record from its creation to its final disposal, laying down broad principles for retention of records for specific periods of time.

The record retention schedule is necessary to ensure that files are not prematurely destroyed nor kept for periods longer than necessary. In Government, the retention period is based on the classification A, B and C i.e. permanently, for 12 years and 5 years. Similarly, other organisations may have their own retention schedules, which help in review and weeding of records.

Review helps in determining the current and future administrative, legal and fiscal use of records, as well as their information value. While reviewing records, ephemeral records will be weeded out without any further review, while other records will be required to be reviewed before weeding.

About the Author

Shri Anjan Chakravarty (IAS retd.) retired as the Secretary, Personnel and Administrative Reforms & Training Deptt. He had also worked as the Director of Training in the Assam Administrative Staff College and as a Master Trainer of Govt. of India.

