

# London Museums Hub Records Management Toolkit

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## Tools and Guidance Module Acknowledgments

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# About the Records Management Toolkit

## What's in the Records Management Toolkit?

The **Records Management Toolkit** contains a **Tools and Guidance Module** and a **Training Module** to enable you to develop and implement a records management programme in your museum. The tools provided will help you put in place an ongoing programme to address your records management needs over time and to link this into your corporate strategy and planning processes. The toolkit provides the necessary organisational and management approaches to sustain the activities that you will need to carry out.

## The Records Management Toolkit contains the following elements:

### Tools and Guidance Module

- 1 **Why do you need a records management programme?**  
**Getting your mandate:** How to develop and agree a proper **policy document**, including agreeing responsibilities for records management. Links to a [sample policy](#).
- 2 **Where should you start?**  
**Planning** is key to the way that you use the toolkit: How to draft an **implementation plan**. Links to a [sample plan](#).
- 3 **Do you know what records are held in your museum?**  
 How to carry out a records survey or information audit. Links to a [sample survey](#).
- 4 **How should you organise your records?**  
 How to understand, develop and agree a **file plan** for your museum. Links to a [sample file plan](#).
- 5 **How long should you keep your records?**  
 How to understand, develop and agree a **records retention schedule** for your museum. Links to a [sample schedule](#).

### Training Module

- A **Training Plan and Presentation**  
 How to deliver records management training to your staff. Links to a [sample plan and presentation](#).
- B **E-learning tool on Museum Records Management**  
 How to raise awareness about records management across your museum.
- C **E-learning tool on the Data Protection Act in Museums**  
 How to raise awareness about the Data Protection Act and your museum records.
- D **Glossary**  
 The toolkit defines records management terms throughout the guidance, and also includes a [glossary](#) for quick reference.

## What is the Records Management Toolkit?

The toolkit was developed from the work the London Museums Hub Information and **Records Management Project** has done to increase capacity in records management in the Hub museums (Geffrye Museum, Horniman Museum, London Transport Museum and the Museum of London) in Phases One and Two of the project over 2007–2009.

Phase Three (2009–2011) focuses on rolling out the lessons learned, tools and guidance to the wider region. The toolkit was peer-reviewed by a panel made up of representatives from national and non-national museums in both information/records and other museum capacities.

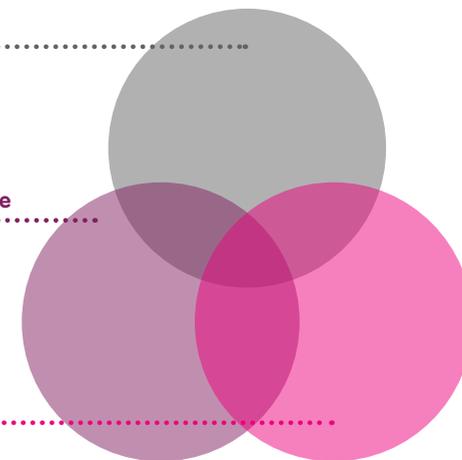
Guidance materials in the toolkit are delivered as a downloadable PDF. Other elements, such as sample documents, exist as separate Word® files so that you can re-use the text. The tools and documents are online links from the main PDF. All materials are free and fully downloadable for use in your museum.

## The Records Management Toolkit:

### Implementation Plan

Tools and Guidance Module  
 Policy  
 Records Survey  
 File Plan  
 Retention Schedule

Training Module  
 Training Plan  
 Training Presentation  
 E-Learning Tools  
 Glossary



## How to use the Records Management Toolkit

### Step one

For absolute beginners, or if you want a refresher, the [e-learning tool on Records Management for Museums](#) is the best place to start. Once you have completed the tool, including its quizzes, you will have a basic understanding of what records management is and what you want to achieve in your museum.

### Step two

Go to the section [Why do you need a records management programme](#) for help on making a business case and developing an appropriate policy. The policy contains the elements of a records management programme and will outline the next steps you need to take in order to move forward.

### Step three

Once you have started on your policy, review the [training presentation](#) and complete the [e-learning tool on the Data Protection Act in Museums](#), so that you are aware of any issues you may come across in your museum's records.

### Step four

After familiarising yourself with the material covered in the training module, the next step is to draft your [implementation plan](#). See the [Where should you start](#) section of the toolkit in order to take records management activities forward in a way that integrates with the rest of the museum's work and any projects or initiatives it is currently undertaking. Revise your plan after you have read the next three sections of the [Tools and Guidance Module](#), so that you can tailor and prioritise the activities in the plan.

### Step five

Once you have drafted a plan, go to the section [Do you know what records are held in your museum](#). Before you start developing the tools, you need to know what records your museum holds. This section describes how to conduct a simple records survey. Once you know what you have, you can start to develop the tools you need to implement good records management.

### Step six

Share the materials in the [Training Module](#) with your staff so that everyone understands why proper records keeping is important and what they can expect from a records management programme. The training materials contain exercises that you and your museum can use to start developing one of the key records management tools—the [file plan](#).

### Step seven

Go to the [How should you organise your records](#) section for guidance on developing a file plan and then to the section [How long should you keep your records](#) for help drafting a retention schedule, which will contain the key reference criteria that your staff can use to make records retention and disposal decisions.

#### Disclaimer:

The toolkit is intended for information and awareness-raising training and does not constitute legal advice. You should consult your museum's own legal counsel where appropriate in relation to policy and procedure.

Whilst we endeavour to ensure that the information in the toolkit is correct, we do not warrant its completeness or accuracy. To the maximum extent permitted by applicable law we exclude all representations, warranties and conditions relating to this schedule and its use (including without limitation, and warranties implied by law of satisfactory quality, fitness for purpose and/or the use of reasonable care and skill). Nothing herein will discharge your obligation to obtain independent legal advice on any references to legislation contained herein.

## Why do you need a records management programme?

### Aim

Ad hoc records keeping is just that; good records management requires a systematic approach that will allow your museum to have control over the records it produces and holds in order to:

- Have evidence of its business transactions
- Comply with legislation such as the Freedom of Information and Data Protection Acts
- Protect its documentary heritage.

### Records are as important a museum asset as its object collections.

The aim of a records management policy is to support records management as a core museum function. The policy identifies and defines the purpose, framework and objectives of records management and should allow you to own this function. Once it is signed off, it underpins all further records management work and indicates support of records management by senior management. An approved records management policy demonstrates the museum's commitment to properly managing its records and adds weight when asking staff to change their working practices.

The toolkit contains a [sample policy document](#) to establish a records management programme in a museum. It provides a template that you can use to develop a policy specific to your organisation so that you can gain control over your museum's records.

### How to use the sample policy

Adapt the sample policy to the individual circumstances in your museum. It should take account of where you are in the process of establishing records management and identify the scope as well as the responsibilities for the task. This policy can be an interim policy to be revised once more elements of your programme are in place.

The policy doesn't have to be long or involved. A simple and brief document is often best, as it acts as your foundation for taking records management forward. The following elements should comprise your records management policy:

- Define records management and related terms
- Define responsibilities (what posts are responsible for implementing the policy and procedures?)
- Define ownership of records (who has intellectual and physical custody of records?)
- Outline any relationships with other related policies
- Outline any relationships with other related procedures and guidelines
- Include expected outcomes and benefits.

### Communicating Records Management

In order to encourage everyone to properly manage the museum's records it is important to gain support across the organisation. When communicating the benefits of your policy and programme to senior management, it is often useful to emphasise the expected resource savings and increased efficiency, and the fact that records management helps to preserve the corporate memory of the museum. When communicating the benefits of records management to members of staff, underline the ways it will help to lighten workloads and stress the high value of the records that they create and use everyday to the museum.

### Community of Practice

Further help on developing your records management policy and programme can come from your peers in the museum community. A community of practice and skills-sharing forum exists at:

[www.jiscmail.ac.uk/museuminfo-records](http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/museuminfo-records)

**Tip: Getting the records management policy signed off is critical to taking records management forward. It is the first step towards recognition of the importance of the work involved.**

**Tip: Raising awareness of records management is an ongoing activity. Tools such as the Records Management e-learning tool can be used as part of induction to ensure that new members of staff are aware of basic records management concepts.**

## Where should you start?

### Implementation Plan

#### Aim

In order to systematically implement a records management programme in your museum, you need to create a plan that will allow you to identify what you want to achieve and to set priorities.

Records management is useful and 'doable' for all museums, no matter how large or small. Whether or not you have many full-time staff, depend on volunteers or have a small part-time staff, it is essential to ensure that everyone can access the information they need efficiently in order to fulfil their jobs.

#### Purpose

Your **implementation plan** should be a working document that will help you to set objectives and to prioritise the tasks to achieve them. Depending on your museum's wider needs, the plan will change over time. It is a useful tool that allows you to link your records management objectives with organisational priorities and to keep the implementation manageable.

#### How to use the sample plan

The **sample implementation plan** outlines some broad activities that are part of a records management programme. Activities are colour-coded to distinguish between activities that are minimum requirements, good practice and best practice in records management. Depending on the size of your museum, available resources and organisational objectives, you can specify the key tasks that you need to undertake in order to implement each of the outputs. It is useful to break out each output into specific actions to achieve your objectives. You will also need to set realistic timeframes for each action to be completed.

**Tip:** Your records management implementation plan should take into account any other existing museum initiative, such as a planned IT clean-up of a shared drive, an office move, or large capital projects, so as not to conflict with or duplicate efforts.

**Tip:** Remember that the plan is a working document that is flexible and reflects the organisational change and objectives in your planning cycle.

### Broad objectives

#### 1 — Get a mandate and authority

In order to take records management forward in your organisation you will need to gain mandate from senior management or your Board. This is usually done by agreeing a records management policy that clearly communicates the benefits of records management and an understanding of records as corporate assets. You can adapt the **sample policy** for this purpose. Once it is agreed, your policy gives you the authority to develop and implement procedures. The policy is an essential requirement in establishing a records management programme.

#### 2 — Determine what records are created, used and held across the museum

From the outset, it is essential to know what records your museum holds. The outcome of your records survey will inform the better part of your action plan, as it will identify the current state of records keeping. Depending on the size of your organisation and your resources, you may choose to what degree you can undertake a records survey.

#### 3 — Put records management systems and procedures in place and in use

Following on from your records survey, with your mandate, you can set out to agree procedures to manage the records in your museum. Good practice is for these procedures to include a file plan and a retention schedule.

In order for these procedures to be accepted within your museum, it is important to develop them with their users (museum staff). When adapting the sample file plan, ensure that you consult with those who create and use the records to ensure that the organisation of files is workable for everyone involved. Once you have an agreed file plan, adapt the sample retention schedule to reflect the file plan structure and to detail the retention periods for each of your records series. When the procedures are agreed and approved by senior management it is vital to pro-actively communicate them across the museum to ensure that they are used. It is highly desirable to monitor and maintain these systems as part of your long-term records management strategy.

**Tip:** A records survey can often help you to make the business case for establishing records management in your museum, as it flags up issues and results in a report that communicates possible solutions. You may find that it's easier to conduct your records survey before drafting and agreeing the policy.

#### 4 — Deliver staff training

During the process of developing and agreeing your programme, all members of staff should be made aware of the benefits of records management, what it entails and who is taking responsibility for it.

For the purpose of initial awareness raising and to ensure that basic concepts of records management are understood, you can use the [Museum Records Management e-learning tool](#) as a teaching aid.

Once you have developed and agreed procedures, you will need to train everyone in your museum to ensure they are aware of what is required of them. The training can be delivered in a variety of different ways. The [Training Module](#) of this toolkit includes a PowerPoint® [presentation](#) for a day long session that can be adapted to your needs.

In order to ensure that members of staff understand their individual responsibilities in the long-term it will be desirable to make records management part of your induction policy and exit strategy. This ensures not only that everyone working for the museum knows about their responsibilities but also that records and information are captured and retained if a member of staff leaves the organisation.

#### 5 — Establish a Records Store/Archive

Most museums have some form of record 'backlogs', where records that have been identified as having archival value have not yet been organised or catalogued in a way that makes them accessible. This is often an initial reason for considering records management, as it is untenable to keep adding archival materials to the backlog (if indeed, you are able to properly identify archival materials without records management in place). Therefore it is useful to identify the backlog, add it as discrete tasks to your plan and so that it then can be tackled consistently as part of your overall strategy.

Use your retention schedule to identify the records you want to keep permanently so that you can ensure adequate storage. When deciding on a space to store your archival paper records, it is important to make sure the room has an adequate climate (a consistently dry and low temperature in a space free from pests), ideally conforming to British Standard 5454. As well, the space should be secure from unauthorised access. This space can also be used as a records store for inactive records that will eventually be disposed once there are no longer business or legal requirements for retention. A records store can free up valuable office space.

Similarly for your electronic archive, it is important to define a migration strategy to ensure the long-term usability of your electronic records and their security from unauthorised access. Your archive should be separate from your 'reference copies' of these files, so as to best preserve the data and original files.

Ideally, catalogue your archival records to a professionally recognised standard such as ISAD(G), which allows you to pro-actively publicise information about your materials. Good cataloguing facilitates access to internal and external users.

## Do you know what records are held in your museum?

### Aim

A records survey is a tool to help you establish an inventory of the museum records. An inventory can record varying levels of detail. Ideally, the survey will capture records at the folder or 'record series' level. However if that is not possible, even an inventory by room or filing cabinet will help you to identify:

- The types of records your museum holds
- Where records are
- How the records are used
- The relationship between records in the museum
- What range of recordkeeping systems are in place
- Your museum's vital records (see also Section five).

### How to use the sample records survey

The **sample records survey** provides an example that can be used to undertake a survey specific to your museum so that you can start to gain control over your museum's records. The outcome of the records survey is a preliminary inventory and an understanding of how records are created, used and stored. It is important that museum staff are briefed about your survey and understand the reasons for it (and the demand on their time) and what the outcome will be.

You can use the questions in the sample records survey to build a questionnaire to use when reviewing records with staff. Interviews with key people across the organisation are more effective than distributing the questionnaire. This allows you to get a more complete understanding of the records. You can also use this opportunity to further advocate for the benefits of records management on a one-to-one basis. The sample records survey provides you with some questions to tailor for your interviews.

The sample records survey form provides a basic template for you to collect your information. When your survey is complete, you should summarise your findings in a report that can then inform your implementation plan and further actions.

**Tip: Some of the questions may be more useful for you to keep in mind as you ask the others – it's up to you to decide what your colleagues will find most comfortable.**

**Tip: The survey may help you to discover discrete 'quick-win' tasks that will help you to raise the profile of records management in the museum.**

## Sample Records Survey Questions

### What records people keep

- The types of records your museum holds
- Where records are
- How the records are used
- The relationship between records in the museum
- What range of recordkeeping systems are in place
- Your museum's vital records.

### How and why people keep their records

- Are the records arranged and organised alphabetically, chronologically or numerically (or in another way)?
- When do the records become inactive?
- Do you store records that you no longer use separately from your active records?
- Are the records duplicated; can the information contained in them be found elsewhere?
- Do you keep any databases that are stand-alone (not on a network)?
- Is there an index or register of the records?
- Do the records provide evidence of key policies, decisions, plans, procedures and transactions of the museum and its core functions? If yes, then they will have archival value
- Are the records required for the museum to be financially accountable?
- Are they required for audit purposes?
- Are the records created because of a legislative requirement or are they mentioned in any legislation or regulations?

### Where and in what conditions people keep their records

- Where do you store your records?
- Have any records in the office been damaged by any of the following: wildlife (e.g. insects, mice), water, mould, direct sunlight, other hazards (please list)?
- Do all records storage areas, including offices, have fire prevention equipment? If yes, when was the equipment last inspected?
- Is there a mechanism for transferring electronic records to off-line storage (e.g. disk or tape back-up)?

## How should you organise your records?

### Aim

A **file plan** is the key tool that documents how to organise your records. It should reflect a file structure organised according to museum business functions, so that all records relating to a specific activity are kept together intellectually (this means that the file plan applies to all formats of records). The reason for this functional approach is that departmental structures and terminologies tend to change over time in most museums, but their functions (such as managing collections or facilitating access and learning) are more stable.

The file plan provides the structure for the museum's records and also consistently names the series in which they are grouped, which is essential to proper records management. In the past, file plans were the primary tool for organising paper records. Now your shared drive structures may serve as your file plan and therefore it's important to put some thought into how to make them work effectively for you. In records management, the folders (or sometimes groups of folders) on your shared drives, stand-alone computers or those for your paper files are referred to as records series. A file plan allows you to have control over the number and type of records series used by staff so that everyone can locate files quickly and easily.

### How to use the sample file plan

In order to use the **sample file plan**, you should adapt it to your museum's needs. While it is useful to aim for a file plan largely determined by business functions, most museum file plans will also include some categories determined by organisational structure. In order to avoid confusion between activities and organisational units or divisions, the sample file plan organises file categories by museum function rather than, for example, by departments.

A file plan is the framework for the intellectual organisation of all records, which means that you may group some records across different functions.

**Example:** Freelancer agreements or contracts are often found in the department that facilitates access and learning although they are part of the larger administering (human) resources function. Therefore, these materials may show up under both functions in the file plan, or better yet, under the primary function, cross-referenced to the other.

### Adapting the sample file plan

- Choose terms for your records series (folder names) that are simple and clear
- Avoid abbreviations — they often become meaningless over time
- Where possible, use language that already exists in the museum — such as trustee report headings or terms that you usually use to describe museum functions in your strategic plans or objectives
- Consult with staff in the file plan development to avoid imposing what might seem like an arbitrary system.

### Records duplication in the file plan

Duplication of records should be avoided, but in some circumstances it is inevitable for operational reasons. In that case, it is important that the reference or working copy is clearly understood as such and is not confused with the official record. The file plan should reflect where the original document is filed and does not have to take working copies into account.

**Example:** Although invoices are dealt with under the finance function, staff in the curatorial function may need to keep copies of invoices for reference. In this case, it is important to establish which function holds the official record – so the file plan would list original invoices under the finance function (administering resources), rather than under managing collections.

**Tip:** To consult with staff about the file plan and to make the consultation an effective exercise, use the file plan training exercises in the Training Module. The way that your museum communicates its functions, which will inform your file plan, can also be explored via an exercise in the Training Module.

## How long should you keep your records?

### Aim

A **retention schedule** is a control document that identifies all the record series created by your museum and sets out how each should be managed throughout its 'lifecycle.' It is informed by your **file plan** that details how to organise records across the museum. The retention schedule should give clear guidance on what kinds of records are created, what functions of the museum create them, how long they should be kept, what should be done with them once they are no longer used in offices, and on what authority these decisions are made.

### How to use the schedule

The **sample records retention schedule** can be used as the starting point to develop the schedule for your museum. It covers most museum records series as well as the 'generic' types of records created by all organisations, and can be used to schedule all the records in the museum.

### Retention periods

A retention period defines how long records series are kept by the museum for administrative, legal or historical reasons. The suggested retention periods are the minimum period and they are determined by their values (see below). While some retention periods are very well defined, because they are based on legal requirements (e.g. financial records have to be kept for six years due to the Limitation Act 1980), other record series require each museum to use their own judgement. This is particularly the case for records that have operational or historical value. For instance, although the law may require a retention period of six years for contractual records, if they are considered historically significant to your museum, they can then be kept permanently as part of the museum's archive.

**Tip:** Depending on the size of your museum, you may find that some categories in the schedule should be further sub-divided and/or some categories might work best if merged together. The sample schedule is very detailed, in order to include as many records series as possible. You may wish to group some records series together so there are fewer categories for those records with the same retention periods (resulting in a shorter document).

**Tip:** It's helpful to schedule by series rather than by document, so that you can make faster decisions without having to work at the document level. See also weeding below.

### Records storage

If you don't wish to use offices to store inactive records that need to be kept for legal or other requirements, and which are not consulted on a regular basis, it can be useful to designate an interim record store for these records. This can free up valuable office space. Your schedule should then reflect both the period in which those records are kept for operational use in staff offices and the period in which the records are kept in the interim store.

It is important to ensure that the environmental conditions are adequate to ensure that the records in the interim store are accessible until their destruction. Considerations should include:

- Temperature and relative humidity
- Threats from pests
- Security against unauthorised access
- Consistent, legible and meaningful labelling
- Adequate storage equipment (boxes and folders, rather than Lever Arch or ring binders)
- Health and safety issues.

### Records retention review

Some records require a retention review after a set period of time or even immediately after their creation. The purpose of the review is to establish what type of value the record series has and how long it ought to be preserved. Often a review happens after legal retention requirements are fulfilled in order to establish whether the operational or historical values of the records mean they need to be retained for a longer period.

Considerations to take into account when reviewing include:

- How often are these records used?
- By whom are they used and why?
- Are these records evidence of historically significant transactions?
- Are these records unique to the museum or can the same documents be found elsewhere?

**Tip:** When records can be moved to the interim store depends largely on your operational requirements and should be recorded in your retention schedule to ensure consistency. See also the storage section in the implementation plan.

**Tip:** The outcome of a retention review may result in a further interim period after which another review is carried out, in order to make the right decision at the most appropriate time.

## Weeding

'Weeding' is the selection process at either the item level or at the record series level (so sometimes whole groups of records can be weeded). Materials that are 'weeded out' are usually destroyed or can be transferred to another series if appropriate (e.g. in the instance that the originals were misfiled). Weeding is useful when records have been filed together with ephemera or with records with different retention requirements. For instance, it is generally useful to weed files before transferring them to the museum archive so as to ensure that only those records with long-term value are kept permanently.

## Vital Records

The schedule should identify vital records. Vital records are those records needed to re-establish the business of the museum in the event of a disaster, without which it could not operate (and prove that it is a legitimate organisation). As such, they should be subject to appropriate management (such as regular back-up, copied to microfilm and stored securely).

## Schedule Implementation

Once the retention schedule has been adapted to your museum needs, it should be approved by senior management. This can be done by one person for all of the functional areas, or by your relevant Heads for each function. The retention schedules should be reviewed regularly for optimal operational use and any amendments should also be made to reflect any changes in legislative requirements. All changes should be documented.

### Tip: Ephemeral materials include —

Drafts of contracts, agreements or policies (unless they document major changes from the original to the approved version).

Routine correspondence including email, such as meeting arrangements or calendars; correspondence originating in other functions that have been distributed for your information; copies of original records that are created or kept by other functions (such as copies of invoices if the original records are kept by Finance).

Obsolete supply catalogues, manuals and warranties, blank forms and templates.

Tip: In the absence of a schedule (for instance, while a schedule is in development), all disposals should be documented and signed off.

## Records Disposal

Before disposing of any records, it is crucial to ensure that they are not subject to an open enquiry under the Freedom of Information Act or the Data Protection Act. Depending on their content, the records may have to be destroyed securely to ensure that neither personal data nor sensitive business information is accidentally released. Secure disposal is important whether the records are in electronic or paper formats. All disposals should be documented and signed off to prove compliance with the retention schedule.

## Where to go for further guidance

Model retention schedules for a range of non-museum specific functions can be found on [The National Archives](#) website.

For more information on the impact of the Freedom of Information Act and the Data Protection Act on record keeping, see the [Information Commissioner's Office](#) website.

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Whilst we endeavour to ensure that the information in the schedule is correct, we do not warrant its completeness or accuracy. To the maximum extent permitted by applicable law we exclude all representations, warranties and conditions relating to this schedule and its use (including without limitation, and warranties implied by law of satisfactory quality, fitness for purpose and/or the use of reasonable care and skill). Nothing herein will discharge your obligation to obtain independent legal advice on any references to legislation contained herein.

## Records Management Training Guidance

The London Museums Hub Information and Records Management Project is working to increase capacity in information and records management across London museums. One of the needs identified by the Hub was the provision of basic training on records management in the region. The project successfully provides free quarterly workshops to the region under the title 'Nuts and Bolts of Museum Records Management: A Practical Workshop on Getting Started.' The **training materials** developed for this day-long workshop are available to download here for museums who want to run their own in-house training.

The training can last a full day but may be adapted to shorter timeframes if you want to concentrate on specific elements of a records management programme. It is designed to raise awareness and an understanding of key concepts in museum records management. The sessions are designed to be as participative as possible and to meet the needs of people with a range of different learning styles.

### How do I use the Records Management Training?

The workshop has an **Activities Training Plan** comprising an outline of the activities, and a list of exercises with explanations of the training outcomes for each exercise and timings for each exercise.

In addition, the workshop has an accompanying PowerPoint® **presentation with trainer notes**. The presentation can be downloaded or printed on to acetate to use on an overhead projector.

There are a number of ways the Records Management Training and accompanying materials can be used. The workshops can be delivered as full day sessions for your staff, or individual sessions and exercises can be used for shorter training sessions.

### E-learning tools

E-learning tools on **Museum Records Management** and the **Data Protection Act for Museums** have been developed by the project. Both e-tools have been developed to offer a simple way to raise awareness about the importance of records management and the implications of the Data Protection Act within museums. The tools can be easily customised by your museum and used for induction, or as refresher sessions for existing staff.

**Tip: The information can also be adapted for your staff newsletter, or used as a starting point to develop your own sessions, or to workshop some of the tools (such as the policies, file plans or records retention schedules).**

### Support for trainers

The Records Management Training provides the basic resources to run a session, but we are interested to hear how you use and develop the training. If you would also like to:

- Talk to people who have already run the training
- Share new exercises or adaptations to exercises
- Discuss parts of the training which went particularly well, or maybe parts which didn't work so well
- Share tips, or ask for help
- Discuss some of the practicalities of training i.e. getting staff to take part, finding a training space

you can email the Hub Records Management Advisor at: [renaissancelondon@museumoflondon.org.uk](mailto:renaissancelondon@museumoflondon.org.uk)

**Active records**

Records created and used on a regular basis by staff.

**Archival records**

Records in any format that are identified and managed for permanent retention.

**Business requirement**

The operational need for keeping the records in order to conduct normal museum business; this requirement impacts how long you need to keep records.

**BS 5454**

British Standard on Recommendations for the Storage and Exhibition of Archival Documents that sets out environmental conditions.

**BS/ISO 15489**

British Standard/International Standard outlining how to create, maintain, store and dispose of records.

**Data Protection Act 1998**

UK law protecting the personal information of living individuals; for more detailed information see the [Data Protection Act e-learning tool](#).

**Disposal**

When records are no longer needed for business purposes, they must be disposed – either destroyed according to an approved schedule or transferred to the archive for long-term preservation.

**File plan**

Tool reflecting the way your museum organises its records according to its business functions and activities.

**Freedom of Information Act 2000  
(Freedom of Information 2002 Scotland)**

Laws giving the public the right to access recorded information created by public institutions. For further information, see the [e-learning tool on Museum Records Management](#).

**Historical requirement**

Records that are identified as having long term or archival value to the museum and external research; records with an historical requirement for retention are usually kept permanently.

**Implementation plan**

A step-by-step plan identifying discrete tasks that will lead to the desired outcomes that comprise a records management programme.

**Inactive records**

Those records that are no longer used for business purposes on a regular basis, but which must be kept for legal or other requirements.

**Information legislation**

All legislation that governs information and record keeping, such as the Data Protection Act and the Freedom of Information Act.

**ISAD(G)**

International Standard for Archival Description (General) used to catalogue archival records in a database system to enable easy retrieval for use.

**Legal requirement**

Statute, legal or regulatory compliance in relation to how long some records should be kept; usually applies to contractual, finance, health and safety, and human resource records as well as some other types; cited in the records retention schedule against retention periods.

**Lifecycle (of records)**

The process during which a record is created, used, maintained, stored, accessed and disposed.

**Limitation Act 1980**

Law that regulates contractual and financial transactions and limits any legal query or action to six years after the completion of the transaction or contract; impacts retention periods for certain records as set out in the schedule.

**Policy**

The records management policy is the framework for a records management programme in your museum; it defines the scope of the programme, responsibilities and the commitment of the museum to good record keeping.

**Record**

Captured information in any format that documents the museum's business transactions. As such they are a corporate asset and contribute to the museum's documentary heritage.

**Record series**

A group of related records normally created, used and filed as a unit. They are usually appended with a qualifier such as files, records, receipts, forms, registers, or reports.

**Records management**

The core museum function carried out as a systematic approach to enable that the right person is able to find the right record at the right time with the least amount of effort. Based on the BS/ISO 15489 standard.

**Records management programme**

The policies and procedures set out to govern effective and efficient records keeping, including the use of a variety of tools (policy, file plan, retention schedule and training) to do so.

**Survey**

A systematic exercise to locate and identify all the records held by a particular business area or across the museum.

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**Retention**

The period of time particular records should be kept for operational, legal or historical requirements.

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**Retention schedule**

A control document that sets out the varying periods of time that all types of records should be maintained by the museum. These are determined by business requirements; statute, legal or regulatory compliance; historical/ research requirements; or where these do not apply, by best assessment of the risks involved in destruction against the cost of retention.

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**Review**

The selection process in which a record series is appraised, either directly after creation or after set period, to determine whether the series has further value past its business or legal retention period.

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**Transfer**

The movement of records that have been found to have permanent value from offices to the archive, where they can be preserved for the long-term.

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**Vital Records**

Those records needed to re-establish the business of the museum in the event of a disaster, without which it could not operate (and prove that it is a legitimate organisation). As such, they should be subject to appropriate management (such as regular back-up, copied to microfilm and stored securely).

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**Weeding**

Selection process at either the item level or at the record series level (so sometimes whole groups of records can be weeded). Materials that are 'weeded out' are usually destroyed, but sometimes transferred to another series.