Introduction
Not all files, documents, e-mail, databases, spreadsheets, newspapers, or other created piece of information is a record, but some are. What follows is some advice to help identify records from non-records.

Identifying a Record
If you answer “yes” to any of the questions below you might have a record:
- Was it created in the course of project business? (i.e., correspondence, agreements, contracts)
- Does it document project activities and actions? (i.e., change orders, purchase requests, approval memos)
- Is it mandated by statute or regulation? (i.e., waste manifests, asbestos abatement, HR files)
- Does it support financial obligations or legal claims? (i.e. invoicing, funding agreements)
- Does it communicate project requirements? (i.e., policies, procedures, drawings, specifications)

Defining a Record:
A public record in Oregon is defined by Oregon Revised Statutes (ORS) 192.005(5) which is comprised of three statements basically asking you whether the information meets all of the following criteria:
- Is the information prepared, owned, used or retained by you, your division or program?
- Does the information relate to an activity, transaction or function performed by you, your division or program; and
- Is the information necessary to satisfy the fiscal, legal, administrative or historical policies, requirements or needs of your division or program?
If you can answer yes to all three of these questions, then the information is a public record.

This definition applies to any information regardless of format meaning that it doesn’t matter whether it’s a bound report, an email, a database, or a napkin - if it is capable of satisfying all of the three requirements it is a public record and must be saved according to the OUS retention schedule.

ORS 192.005(5) also specifies the following exemptions to the definition of a public record.
Public records are not:
- Duplicates;
- Listserv messages, advertisements, junk/spam;
- Reference materials such as articles, magazines and books;
- Non-recorded conversations; and
- Messages on voicemail or other telephone message storage and retrieval systems.

So, just because something was created, received, or kept at work does not automatically make it a public record. Records must satisfy all three of the 192.005(5) requirements to be considered a public record. This disqualifies items such as catalogs, personal or non-work related e-mail, and generally anything not related to pursuing the business or interests of PSU.
Vital Records

Vital records are records, regardless of medium, which are essential to the organization in order to continue with its business-crucial functions both during and after a disaster. They need not be permanent, might be active or inactive, originals or copies.

What constitutes a vital record for one department may differ from another; so while Operations and Maintenance Manuals may be vital for FPM they are likely not vital for CAPS or FAST, which would likely be more focused on legal documents and contracts, financial records, and other documents establishing PSU’s rights and obligations.

Identifying a Vital Record

Step 1: Identify the key functions or responsibilities of your office based on the following criteria:

- Operational - Any functions which are vital to the operation and continuation of your office or the University as a whole.
- Legal - Any functions which provide proof of the University's legal stand on an issue.
- Emergency - Any functions which are needed during an emergency, i.e., telecommunications or emergency rooms.
- Fiscal - Any functions which prove the University's financial standings, i.e. accounts receivable or general ledgers.

Step 2: Once you have identified the key functions/responsibilities of your office, answering the following questions will help you to identify your Vital Records. Once you have done this, use the Vital Records Checklist (below) to help you answer the following questions.

- What function will we be unable to do if this record is destroyed (i.e., can the work be carried out or continued if this record is gone)?
- How critical is our inability to perform this function?
- What will be the consequences to the University if these records are lost? Will any client, employee, or student of the University suffer loss of rights or be severely inconvenienced if these records are lost?
- If these records have to be reconstructed, what will the cost be in terms of time, money and labor? Will the information in these records have to be reconstructed or retrieved in a matter of hours, days, or weeks?
- Can these records be replaced from another source?
- Are these records on computer, disc, microfilm?
- Are these records duplicated in a different format?
- Is the format easily accessible after an emergency?

Other considerations to determine if records are vital:

- Uniqueness of the record.
- Relationship of one record to another.
- The type of information needed during and following an emergency.
**Vital Records Checklist**

Record Title: ____________________________________________________________

Description of Function: __________________________________________________

Location: _______________________________________________________________

Retention: ______________________

Format: _______Paper _______Tape _______Disk _______Photo

Answer the following questions for each record series you are evaluating:

What would we be unable to do if these records were destroyed? _______________

Can the work be carried forward without the record?

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<th>4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>low</td>
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How high would the consequences to the University be?

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How much of an impact would losing the records have on students and UW employees?

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How high would reconstruction costs be? (Time and money)

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How quickly would the information need to be reproduced?

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Why? ________________________________________________________________

Can the records be replaced from another source(s)?

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>possible</td>
<td>no</td>
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Where? _______________________________________________________________

Add all the circled numbers together for a TOTAL: _______________

Key: 1-9 Nonessential 10-19 Useful 20-29 Important 30-35 Vital

FOR VITAL RECORDS ONLY:

Protection Method: ____________________ Completed by: ____________ Location of other copies: _______________ Date ____________

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