

Records Management

## **Retention Scheduling**

### **8. Press and Public Relations Records**

## **Retention Scheduling - Press and Public Relations Records**

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# 1 Introduction

- 1.1 This guidance is aimed at Departmental Record Officers and staff in press offices or public relations/communications units of government departments and agencies. It covers records in all media generated by press offices and related functional areas, although it points to more specialist advice on electronic records and audiovisual records, both of which are increasingly the products of this particular government function.
- 1.2 The guidance assumes that parliamentary questions and similar issues are dealt with separately, usually by parliamentary units within departments, but recognises that there is a close connection between these and press office/public relations issues. For example the parliamentary question process may be used for particular announcements by the department or agency and there is often close cooperation between the two areas over such matters as timing and response.
- 1.3 The guidance forms part of a series on retention scheduling (see section 4). From this the publication on *Complaints Records* (PRO, 2001) may be particularly relevant in managing press and public relations records.
- 1.4 For general information on the compilation of retention schedules see *Records Management Standards: Disposal Scheduling* (PRO, 1998).
- 1.5 It is very unlikely that any records from press offices or public relations units will be selected for permanent preservation. Selected departmental working records will provide adequate evidence on major issues and events. Guidance on the selection of records for permanent preservation is available in the publication *Acquisition and Disposition Policies* (PRO, 2000). Policy records relating to the use of government press offices and relations between central government and the media will be covered by relevant operational selection policies (OSPs).

## 2 Scope and nature of the records

2.1 Records of press offices and public relations units cover three broad areas:

- dealing with the media on the work of the department or agency
- internal administrative arrangements on media relations
- special events, such as exhibitions, campaigns, etc

The latter might include the issuing of press releases, organisation of interviews and general media access.

2.2 While many of these records are maintained in paper form, they are often created electronically. Even press cuttings are increasingly downloaded from websites or can be easily scanned. The two sets of records should be rationalised and emphasis given to managing records electronically. This will accord with work on achieving the Government's target that *by 2004 all newly created public records will be stored and retrieved electronically*.<sup>1</sup> Guidance on the management of electronic information is available from the Public Record Office; the following publications are particularly relevant to the management of press and public relations records:

- Management, Appraisal and Preservation of Electronic Records (2 vols, 1999)
- Good practice in managing electronic documents using Office 97 on a local area network (2000)
- Managing web resources: management of electronic records on websites and intranets (2002)

See also section 4.

2.3 Many records created by press offices and public relations units, particularly those relating to major issues, are duplicated and placed on registered policy or procedure files. These files will be retained, appraised and reviewed in accordance with normal departmental practice. The papers in the press office and public relations unit can be destroyed after a relatively short time (see model schedule).

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<sup>1</sup> White Paper *Modernising Government* (Cm 4310, 1999, p 49)

- 2.4 Audiovisual records need to be handled carefully in view of their physical format but in general their content should be treated in the same way as that of more conventional material. An added dimension as far as retention is concerned may be the artistic nature of the records. For detailed guidance on records in this medium see the PRO publication *Management of Audiovisual Records* (2002).

### 3 Model retention schedule

- 3.1 The retention of press office records should be considered in the light of business requirements, taking into account the cost of retention and the use to which the records might be put in the future. Few of these records are likely to be selected for permanent preservation.
- 3.2 The schedule below shows recommended maximum periods for the retention of various types of press office records:

Type	Item	Description	Disposal
Dealing with the media and the public	1	Press releases	7 years
	2	Press cuttings	1 month
	3	Operational notes (notices to press about forthcoming events or conferences)	3 months
	4	Press conference reports/previews	3 years
	5	Press reports digests	7 years
Internal records	6	Correspondence with branches of the media	7 years
	7	Policy and administrative records	Second review (25 years)
	8	Handbooks and guides to media/public relations	Destroy when superseded

	9	Reports on media/public relations	7 years
	10	Image library records	When no longer required
Special events	11	Correspondence and papers	7 years
	12	Reports	7 years
	13	Visitor books	3 years
	14	Calendars	3 years
	15	Brochures and guides	3 years

## 4 Other publications and further information

4.1 The Public Record Office produces several sets of records management standards and guidance which aim to promote good practice in the management of public records throughout all stages of their life cycle. Details about the publications can be found in *Records Management: Standards and Guidance: Introduction* (PRO, 2001). The following are likely to be relevant to the management of press office and public relations records:

### 4.1.1 *Records management*

- Management, Appraisal and Preservation of Electronic Records
- Functional requirements for electronic records management systems
- Developing a corporate policy on electronic records
- Good practice in managing electronic documents using Office 97 on a local area network
- Sustainable electronic records: strategies for the maintenance and preservation of electronic records and documents in the transition to 2004
- Managing web resources: management of electronic records on websites and intranets
- RMS 2.2 Documentation of Records Work
- RMS 3.2 Business Recovery Plans

### 4.1.2 *Appraisal and retention*

- Developing an inventory of electronic records collections
- Evaluating information assets: appraising the inventory of electronic records
- Acquisition and Disposition Policies
- RMS 5.1 Disposal Scheduling
- Retention Scheduling: 7. Complaints Records

### 4.1.3 *Access*

- Access to Public Records
- Data Protection Act 1998: A Guide for Records Managers and Archivists

4.1.4 Further information on these and other aspects of the management of public records can be obtained from:

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Public Record Office  
Kew  
Richmond  
Surrey  
TW9 4DU

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fax: 020 8392 5283

e-mail: records-management @pro.gov.uk

website: [www.pro.gov.uk](http://www.pro.gov.uk)