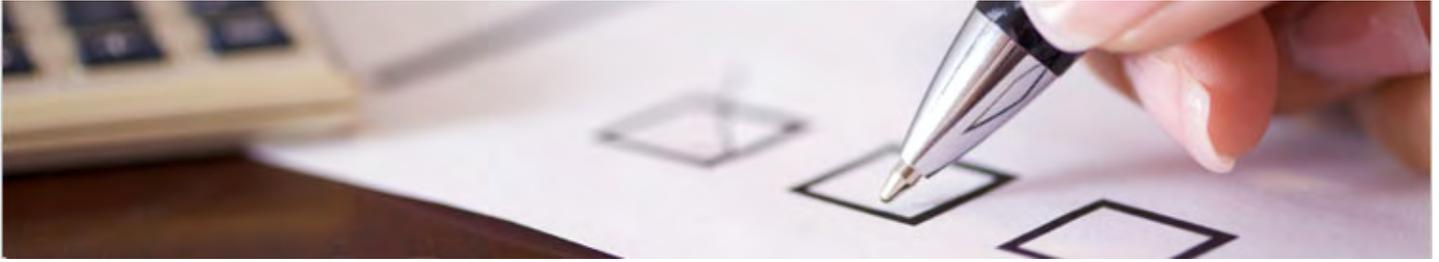# The Nine Lives of Records

Despite encouraging innovation, technology has not removed the need for practical and effective record keeping practices. It's been found that modern information goes through an average of nine distinct stages from the time it's created to the point where it's ready to be destroyed; while not all data goes through each of these processes, examining the potential path it can take is always recommended:

Creation

ARMA International defines records as "information in any form or medium that is within the organization's control and relates to staff activity or business." This includes both hard copy and digital data, with it's purpose largely dictated by the reason it was created. Records are created for a wide variety of uses, and properly identifying them is key.

Transportation

Once records are created, they need to be placed in suitable storage until they are needed. Some information can stay in the office permanently as frequent usage deems appropriate, but most archives need secure and reliable transportation to an offsite location. This transit should always take place via secure internet lines or highly controlled vehicular logistics.

Storage

Whether it's digital data backed up to a server or paper files heading to a physical facility, the location of your information is a critically important detail. In a modern era of increased vulnerability, organizations need to ensure the security of sensitive information before an incident can occur. Become familiar with the safeguards in place around your storage site.

Scanning

While most records still begin their lifecycle as physical paper, more organizations are opting to digitize them as needed to increase efficiency of staff. Scanning hardware can produce higher quality images quicker than ever before, so the option has been incorporated in industries such as healthcare that were holdouts in the past.

Backup

Backups frequently occur at the same time as the scanning stage; creating redundant digital copies so that progress won't be lost in case of an accident. Properly planned backups include multiple copies stored in more than one location, with set recovery time objectives and prioritization. Several different forms of media may be used for storage.

Access

Records are created to serve a purpose, and when that time comes, accessibility is crucial. Digital transfers and remote viewing have expedited the process considerably, while delivery of stored information to offices is still a viable option. Having designated access procedures ensures that staff members can get the data they need, when they need it.

Archiving

This stage in the records lifecycle often occurs after the immediate usefulness of the information has passed; but restrictions like corporate retention policies, governmental regulations or legal requirements prevent it's destruction. Long term archiving is typically a lower cost, more permanent option that is less accessible but more reasonable considering the reduced priority.

Disposal

With the digital copies in archive mode, it's time to consider the disposal of the original paper files. While some industries lack this option due to legal barriers, properly shredding of information can guarantee long term security and safeguarding of information. Setting retention guidelines can help determine when it's appropriate to destroy both paper and electronic records.
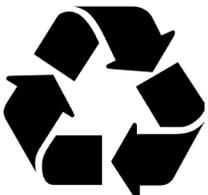
Recycling

Nobody enjoys creating extra waste material, and the final stage of the records lifecycle is no different. Recycling of paper and electronic storage media can help reduce the impact on the environment while granting finality to the process, ensuring that information can never be recovered.

About The Data Vault

The Data Vault is a service-driven information management provider that has been partnering with clients in the Louisville community to offer secure, accessible, and reliable solutions since 1984. Membership in NRC (National Records Centers) and PRISM (Professional Records & Information Services Management) presents our customers with the best of both worlds; the quality of comprehensive local service combined with national coverage and resources.