

Archives Advice 5

**Security of Archives in the Custody of the
NT Archives Service**

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DEFINITIONS

Appraisal	The process of evaluating business activities to determine which records need to be captured and how long the records need to be kept to meet business needs, to maintain organisational accountability and community expectations.
Archive	A record of permanent value that forms part of the Territory Archives. ¹
Disposal	A range of processes associated with implementing authorised decisions about records retention, destruction, rearrangement, migration or transfer of custody or ownership.
Disposal schedule	A formal policy, authorised jointly by the Chief Executive of an NT Government public sector organisation and the NT Archives Service, that defines the temporary or permanent status, retention period and consequent disposal actions authorised for classes of records.
Open access period	The period during which the public can routinely access government archives held in the custody of the NT Archives Service. The open access period begins after the end of the restricted access period.
Permanent records	Records of permanent value which are in the custody of a public sector organisation. When permanent records are transferred into the custody of the NT Archives Service, they are considered an archive and form part of the Territory Archives (<i>see Archive and Territory Archives</i>).
Public sector organisation	An agency as defined in s.5 of the <i>Information Act</i> .
Record	Recorded information in any form (including data in a computer system) that is required to be kept by a public sector organisation as evidence of the activities or operations of the organisation, and includes part of a record and a copy of a record.
Responsible public sector organisation	Public sector organisation (as defined above) that is responsible for the function to which the record or archive relates.
Restricted access period	The period during which decisions on access to government archives held in the custody of the NT Archives Service are made by the public sector organisation responsible for the archives (s.144 of the <i>Information Act</i>).
Series	Those records or archives having the same provenance which belong together because: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ they are part of a discernible filing system (alphabetical, numerical, chronological, or a combination of these)▪ they have been kept together because they result from the same activity, or▪ they are of similar formats and relate to a particular function. A series may consist of only one item. ²
Territory Archives	Records held on behalf of the Territory by the archives service. ³

¹ . s. 4 *Information Act*

² . Judith Ellis (ed.) *Keeping Archives 2nd Edition*, (Australian Society of Archivists and DW Thorpe, Melbourne 1993), p.479

³ . s. 4 *Information Act*

INTRODUCTION

The Northern Territory Archives Service manages the storage, preservation of and access to over 5,000 shelf metres (5 km) of archives collections from a wide variety of sources and with a range of access restrictions. These archives collections represent the activities of a wide variety of government functions, community organisations and individuals. The archives collections are managed in facilities in Darwin and a temporary facility in Alice Springs. This advice primarily focuses on facilities in Darwin.

STORAGE ENVIRONMENT

The NT Archives Service provides a professional service and ensures the storage environment is kept secure for the archives collections which have a variety of security requirements. Staff are specifically recruited and trained to be fully aware of confidentiality and security issues.

The NT Archives Service building in Darwin is equipped with a 24 hour monitored security alarm system, and is patrolled by security officers several times a day. Building security has been recently upgraded to include the installation of electronic locks, stronger repository doors, and installation of security cameras and monitors.

Archives collections are stored in secure repositories which are climatically controlled and managed to preserve the archives. This includes regular fumigation, monitoring of environmental conditions and maintaining a clean storage environment. Disaster

prevention and recovery procedures are incorporated in the preservation and management of the archives collections.

PHYSICAL ACCESS

The physical security of the archives begins with the placement of the archives in secure repositories which can only be accessed by authorised NT Archives Service staff. Archives collections are assigned unique series and consignment numbers which are recorded on the labels of their storage boxes. No organisation or descriptive information is located on the items or boxes to identify the archives. Repository location information for archives collections is restricted to authorised NT Archives Service staff.

The security of the collections is managed by use of secure storage areas. Unlike library materials, archives cannot be browsed on shelves by researchers. Access to items in the collection is restricted to authorised NT Archives Service staff who manage the archives from the time they are deposited, documented and assigned locations, through to retrieval of items for use by the controlling organisation or by researchers when the items are available on open access.

NT Archives Service staff access archives collections for limited reasons. Staff may retrieve archives for use by researchers (when in the open access period) or for issue to the controlling agency. NT Archives Service staff manage the transfer and documentation of the archives collections, and may also access the archives to ensure preservation of the

collection, eg. Condition inspection, location audits etc.

RESEARCH ARRANGEMENTS

The NT Archives Service complies with strict security procedures when providing access to the archives collections. Archives are only available to the general public when they are in the open access period as determined by access agreement with government agencies (in accordance with Section 142 of the *Information Act*), or determined by donation agreement with private donors.

Researchers view open access archives collections in a secure, supervised Search Room. Archives collections are controlled by a wide range of access arrangements, particularly private archives collections. The NT Archives Service Reference staff follow procedures for checking access arrangements for archives when they are requested in the Search Room. Government lending staff ensure that access to archives is restricted to authorised staff from the responsible controlling organisation.

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- ▶ National Archives of Australia
- ▶ State Records of New South Wales.

