

E-mail and Voice Mail Guidelines

All official records as defined by Section 149.011 of the Ohio Revised Code, (paper, microform, electronic, or any other media) will be retained for the minimum periods stated in the Records Retention for Public Colleges and Universities in Ohio: A Manual (Inter-University Council of Ohio, 2000).

The Ohio Revised Code does not provide a specific definition for electronic mail but it does state that: “any document, device, or item, regardless of physical form or characteristic, created or received by or coming under the jurisdiction of any public office of the state or its political subdivisions.”

The above statement clearly qualifies the case of e-mail being a record, just like paper or any other medium is as well. The question then is not if e-mail is a viable record (it is not medium but the content that needs to be analyzed) that should be saved but whether it should be saved because of its content.

There are four categories to consider in appraising e-mail content:

- **Non-record messages** – personal (non-business) communication, such as lunch plans and meeting reminders
- **Transitory messages** – communication with limited significance, such as discussions on scheduling meetings, draft documents, and discussion threads
- **Intermediate Messages** – communication related to business processes or procedures, but are only substantial within given time period of significance, such as contract agreements, invoices, and project plans
- **Permanent messages** – communication related to business processes or procedures that are meaningful beyond an established time period, such as policy announcements and mission statements

Non-record and transitory messages can be immediately deleted. Intermediate Messages must be seen in the context that they were created in. Intermediate e-mail messages and their attachments must be retained for the minimum periods stated in Records Retention for Public Colleges and Universities in Ohio: A Manual (Inter-University Council of Ohio, 2000). If the records are permanent historical messages they must be printed and filed with correspondence or creating documents for eventual transfer to the YSU Archives (please see: [transfer procedures](#)).

It is recommended that voice mail not be used to conduct university business, especially for sending and receiving intermediate and permanent messages.