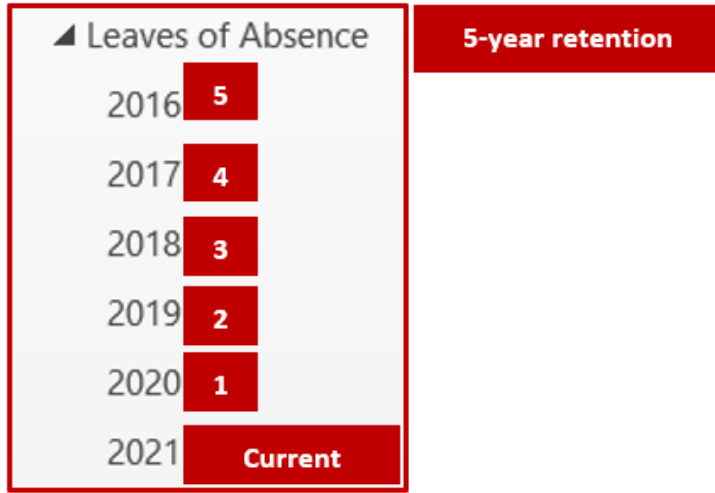# The Ohio State University
## University Libraries

# Organizing Your Files
## Best Practices for Records Retention and Disposition

- *Why implement a file structure?* Creating a consistent file structure for your department/unit will:
    - Reduce time spent looking for records
    - Eliminate the unnecessary duplication of records
    - Decrease security issues, risk and liability
    - Enable you to easily dispose of records once retention has been met
- *Who should adhere to the file structure?* Everyone! You are the custodian of OSU's records. Records filing should follow a consistent structure for easy accessibility for:
    - You
    - Your colleagues
    - *Future staff who may inherit your files*
- *When do I implement a file structure?* Now! The problem will only get worse the longer you wait. Don't wait until you or a colleague is ready to retire before you tackle your department's record organization.
- *How do I implement a file structure?* Follow these steps:
    - Create a single set of folders by record series – everyone in a unit should use these same folders
        - Ex. Leave Requests, Invoices, Personnel Evaluations, etc.
    - Create sub-folders by trigger date
        - Ex. Year closed, calendar or fiscal year
    - Create additional sub-folders as needed, for records that are pending completion
        - Ex. Active/Inactive, Closed/Open, etc.
    - **Avoid using employee names as the high level folders.**
    - **Do not name folders "miscellaneous", "general", "stuff", etc.!**
- *How do I learn more?* Every unit is different, which means your filing needs might be different as well. University Records Management can listen to how you process and access records in order to help develop an efficient filing scheme for your business processes.
    - We offer trainings, phone consultations and office visits. We are here to help.
    - University Records Manager: Pari Swift, swift.102@osu.edu, 614-292-4092

*(Examples on the next page)*

*Examples of File Structures:*



**Leaves of Absence** — 5-year retention

- 2016 — 5
- 2017 — 4
- 2018 — 3
- 2019 — 2
- 2020 — 1
- 2021 — Current

**Hint**

Number of folders should be retention period +1

**Advising Files** — 5-year retention

- Active
- Inactive — Event Trigger: 5-year retention begins when student no longer enrolled
  - 2016 — 5
  - 2017 — 4
  - 2018 — 3
  - 2019 — 2
  - 2020 — 1
  - 2021 — Current

**Presentations** — 3-year retention

- Closed — Event Trigger: 3-year retention begins when presentation complete or
  - 2018 — 3
  - 2019 — 2
  - 2020 — 1
  - 2021 — Current
- Open — Additional subfolders to aid in organization, search and retrieval
  - External
  - Internal

**Public Records Requests** — 3-year retention

- Closed — Event Trigger: 3-year retention begins when request is fulfilled
  - 2018 — 3
  - 2019 — 2
  - 2020 — 1
  - 2021 — Current
    - Request ABC
    - Request DEF
- Open — Additional subfolders to aid in organization, search and retrieval
  - Request GHI

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