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## [IARA - County/Local Records Custodians] Monthly Bulletin, May 2024

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As most of you *may* know, May is the last month for my pregnancy! Soon, probably as this bulletin is reaching you, Madison will be taking over my responsibilities while I'm gone so please be kind and patient with her. If you have any records and information management questions or concerns, email [cty@iara.in.gov](mailto:cty@iara.in.gov). Enjoy your month of May, I hope it includes excitement over the Indy 500, BBQ's over Memorial Day weekend, and much sunshine and outdoor festivities. See you at the end of summer!

### Last Month's Bulletin

In the April 2024 bulletin, discussion topics included No Travel, No May 29th Chat, & My Soon to be Leave, April is Records & Information Management Month!, Congrats St. Joseph County/South Bend on Award!, and the topic of the month was Departed Staff Members' E-mailbox.

To view past bulletins and chats, go to our [RM Bulletins and Chat Archive](#) webpage.

### News You Can Use: Amy is OUT (on leave), Madison is (filling) IN!

Just doing another reminder that Amy Christiansen will be out on maternity leave from May to August so direct all records & information management questions to [cty@iara.in.gov](mailto:cty@iara.in.gov). Madison Young and the rest of the RIM division will do an excellent job taking care of your concerns. **\*Again, do not email [achristiansen@iara.in.gov](mailto:achristiansen@iara.in.gov) or call (812) 929-3882 because neither will be monitored for about 3 months, from mid-May to August.\*** Reach out to [cty@iara.in.gov](mailto:cty@iara.in.gov) instead!

## Exciting News: Baby Edwin is here!

Congratulations to Amy and Robert!



## More News You Can Use: \*\* No May Chat \*\*

Reminder! There will be NO May monthly chat on May 29th, it was cancelled because both Amy and Madison will be out of office that day.

Look forward to June though when the monthly email bulletin and chat will return! The bulletin should be sent out around the middle of June like normal and the monthly chat is scheduled for Wednesday, June 26th at 11 a.m. eastern.

## Even More News You Can Use: Preventing Damage to Records

If you look at [IARA's Publications page](#), you will find a relatively new publication added to the page called, "[Preventing Damage to Records.](#)" This guide is for any County/Local office or State agency that has paper, microfilm, or electronic records and who wants to ensure they are storing them in the best way possible. When it comes to records storage the adage, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" could not be truer. The more steps you take to prevent damage, the better off your records will be in the long run and the better you can fulfill your public records responsibilities.

## News from Dept. of Education: Updated Record Retention Fact Sheet!

For those of you who work for public schools, the Department of Education with the help of IARA updated their record retention fact sheet found on their website [here](#).

## RM Topic of the Month: Records & Data

Data and records are terms that are often used interchangeably. It can be hard to separate them and understand our responsibilities as creators and managers of public records. So today we will focus on defining these, explaining where they overlap and where they differ, and how to manage your data as responsible records custodians.

### Data

Data is defined by ARMA International as, "symbols or characters that represent raw facts or figures and form the basis of information." Data must be organized in order to be usable. Raw data on its own is devoid of context and has no meaning.

## Records

As you may have heard us say many times, records are any recorded information, regardless of medium or format. *Public* records are any recorded information, regardless of medium or format, created in the course of government business and which belong to the public.

## Data and Records Management

Managing data from a records management perspective can seem daunting at first. Many times, the first instinct is to save an entire database forever, or to want to transfer the entire contents of a database to the State Archives. However, if you look at data as the building blocks that create records, it becomes much simpler.

When we look at data as building blocks, there are essentially three questions we need to ask ourselves:

1. How long will this data be needed for business use?
2. Does the data fall under a record series on a retention schedule your office or agency follows?
3. Is there historic value to the data?

Some common business uses of data are reporting, decision making, program development, KPI reporting, APRA requests, and information or research requests. If you determine, for example, that you will need to build reports from your database for as long as your office exists then you will want to plan to manage your database permanently. While you may not need to maintain all of the data within the database permanently, you will want to ensure that you can always access the data you do need in the format in which you need it.

To determine if data may fall under a record series, check all retention schedules that your office follows. This may include your office specific schedule and/or the County/Local General Retention Schedule. If you find that the data your office creates does fall under a record series, but the retention period or description are not accurate because of changes to how you are generating or using the data, please reach out to [cty@iara.in.gov](mailto:cty@iara.in.gov)!

Not all data, or databases, are historically significant. Some data may not need to be retained permanently, while some data may contain what we refer to as a "historic sub-set" that should be retained permanently. Some data may be historically significant, but may also be aggregated at the State level which can affect your responsibilities. For example, marriage data is reported by County Clerks to the State's aggregated database which is called INcite and is managed and maintained by the Indiana Supreme Court. In this example, the Indiana Supreme Court has responsibility for the aggregated data they maintain for all 92 counties, and County Clerks have responsibility for any data or records that fall under record series [CL 13-01: Marriage Records](#).

We hope this brief dive into data and records was helpful. If you have questions about how data and records intersect, please don't hesitate to reach out: [cty@iara.in.gov](mailto:cty@iara.in.gov).

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