

FORT SASKATCHEWAN PUBLIC LIBRARY

POLICY

REFERENCE # 99/08

DATE APPROVED: December 8, 1999

Electronic Mail Policy

OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that e-mail systems, used by Public Library staff, support the business functions of the Public Library. This policy advises staff and management of their responsibilities and provides guidance in managing information communicated by e-mail.

E-mail is one of the Public Library's core internal and external communication methods. By establishing and maintaining compliance with a policy for appropriate use of e-mail, risks and costs to the Public Library can be mitigated.

SCOPE

Electronic mail (e-mail) refers to the electronic transfer of information typically in the form of electronic messages, memoranda, and attached documents from a sending party to one or more receiving parties via an intermediate telecommunications system. Although some e-mail is transitory, an increasing portion of electronic mail must be considered a record for legal & FOIP reasons.

Examples of messages sent by e-mail that typically are considered records include:

- policies and directives,
- correspondence or memoranda related to official business,
- work schedules and assignments,
- agendas and minutes of meetings,
- drafts of documents that are circulated for comment or approval,
- any document that initiates, authorizes, or completes a business transaction,
- final reports or recommendations.

Some examples of messages that typically do not constitute records and fall under the transitory records retention schedule of the Public Library are:

- personal messages and announcements, announcements of social events (non-Library program).
 - copies or extracts of documents distributed for convenience or reference,
 - phone message notifications,
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POLICY STATEMENTS

Privacy and Access

E-mail messages are not personal and private. E-mail messages sent or received in conjunction with agency business may be releasable to the public under the FOIP Act. All e-mail messages "including" personal communications may be subject to discovery proceedings in legal actions.

Computer staff will not routinely monitor individual staff members' e-mail and will take reasonable precautions to protect the privacy of e-mail. However, program managers and technical staff may access an employee's e-mail:

- for a legitimate business purpose (e.g., the need to access information when an employee is absent for an extended period of time);
- to diagnose and resolve technical problems involving system hardware, software, or communications; and/or
- to investigate possible misuse of e-mail when a reasonable suspicion of abuse exists or in conjunction with an approved investigation.

Staff members are prohibited from accessing another user's e-mail without his or her permission.

Appropriate Use of E-Mail

E-mail services, like other means of communication, are to be used to support Public Library business.

- Staff may use e-mail to communicate informally with others in the Library and City so long as the communication meets professional standards of conduct.
- Staff may use e-mail to communicate outside of the Library when such communications are related to legitimate business activities and are within their job assignments or responsibilities.
- Staff may use e-mail for personal messages similar to the current accepted use of telephones.

Staff will not use e-mail for illegal, disruptive, unethical or unprofessional activities, or for personal gain, or for any purpose that would jeopardize the legitimate interests of the Public Library.

Security

E-mail security is a joint responsibility of computer staff and e-mail users. Users must take all reasonable precautions, including safeguarding and changing passwords, to prevent the use of the account by unauthorized individuals.

Management and Retention of E-mail Records

E-mail created in the normal course of official business and retained as evidence of official policies, actions, decisions or transactions are records subject to records management requirements under the Library's records management policy and specific legislation which may affect retention requirements e.g. Limitations Act, Evidence Act, Income Tax Act. Note that originators of e-mail within the Library are responsible for proper filing and retention of those e-mails. Additionally, initial (original) recipients of e-mail from organizations and individuals outside the Public Library are similarly responsible for filing such records.

Records communicated using e-mail need to be identified, managed, protected, and retained as long as they are needed to meet operational, legal, audit, research or other requirements. Records needed to support program functions should be retained, managed, and accessible in existing filing systems outside the e-mail system in accordance with the appropriate Section's standard practices.

Since e-mail is a communications system, messages should not be retained for extended periods of time. Users should remove all e-mail communications in a timely fashion. If a user needs to retain information in an e-mail message for an extended period, he or she should transfer it from the e-mail system to an appropriate electronic or other filing system.

Computer staff are authorized to remove any information retained in an e-mail system that is more than 90 days old.

Records communicated via e-mail will be disposed of within the record keeping system in which they have been filed in accordance with a Records Disposition Authorization (RDA) or similar form approved by the Public Library's records program co-ordinator.

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

All e-mail users should:

- be courteous and follow accepted standards of etiquette.
- protect others' privacy and confidentiality.
- consider organizational access before sending, filing, or destroying e-mail messages.
- protect their passwords.
- remove personal messages, transient records, and reference copies in a timely manner.
- dispose of copies of records in e-mail after they have been filed in a record keeping system; •delete records of transitory or little value that are not normally retained in record keeping systems as evidence of agency activity.

The Library Director will insure that policies are implemented by supervisors and staff.

Supervisory staff will develop and/or publicize record keeping practices in their area of responsibility including the routing, format, and filing of records communicated via e-mail. They will train staff in appropriate use and be responsible for ensuring the security of physical devices, passwords, and proper use.

Computer staff are responsible for e-mail security, backup, and disaster recovery.

Ed Wolak
Board Chair