

NARA Records Management Key Terms and Acronyms

The following is a list of key terms and acronyms used in NARA’s core records management training. These are not formal definitions, but rather an explanation of the terms as generally used in NARA training material. The list is not exhaustive.

Table 1: Key Terms and Definitions

KEY TERM	DEFINITION
Access	The availability of, or permission to consult, records.
Accession	The act and procedures involved in a transfer of legal title and the taking of records into the physical custody of the National Archives (adapted from the Society of American Archivists Glossary).
Active records	Records that continue to be used with sufficient frequency to justify keeping them in the office of creation; current records.
Administrative Records	Documents that are preserved because they facilitate the operations and management of an agency, but do not relate directly to programs that help the agency achieve its mission. These include such documents as the agency budget, personnel, supplies, travel, and training. They are found in every agency, and often (but not always) their dispositions are covered by the General Records Schedules (GRS).
Agency Mission	The agency mission addresses the following questions: Why does the agency exist? What is the agency’s purpose? What business functions does it perform?
Agency Records Officer (ARO)	Serves as the official responsible for overseeing the agency’s records management program.
Agency Records Schedule	See Records Schedule .
Alienated Records	Records in the possession of an individual or organization not legally entitled to them.
Archives Records Center Information System (ARCIS)	ARCIS is the IT system for NARA’s Federal Records Centers Program and its customers. ARCIS automates and streamlines Federal Records Centers (FRC) workflow processes and is the online portal through which NARA’s customer agencies transact business with the FRC.
Asset	Anything of value or perceived value.
Asset Management	The process of documenting and controlling all assets, either in use or under development by an agency. Asset management involves identifying an agency’s assets and the steps taken to protect and take care of them.

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Big Bucket/Large Aggregation Schedule	A type of flexible schedule in which disposition instructions are applied against a body of records that are grouped at a level of aggregation greater than the traditional file series/electronic system and that can be organized along a specific program area, functional line, or business process. The goal of this type of flexible scheduling is to provide for the disposition of records at a level of aggregation that best supports the business needs of agencies, while ensuring the documentation necessary to protect legal rights and guarantee government accountability.
Blocking	Grouping files within a series so that they are bounded by cutoff points and are treated as a unit for disposition purposes. The cutoff instructions should specify if transfer or disposal is done in blocks. For example, during the transfer of permanent records to the National Archives, records may be transferred in 5-year blocks. This means that the block would include all files in the series that were cut off between January 1, 2000, and December 31, 2004.
Business Analysis	An evaluation of an agency's business to determine what information it needs to create or receive and maintain to support specific programs.
Business Process Analysis (BPA)	Examines an organization's business processes in order to find out how business is conducted in the organization.
Case management/electronic case filing system (CM/ECF)	Case management/electronic case filing system (CM/ECF) refers to the electronic submission of documents used by the U.S. federal courts including the bankruptcy courts. The CM/ECF allows bankruptcy courts to maintain all of their documents related to bankruptcy cases in electronic form, which cuts down on the costs of paperwork and saves precious trees from destruction in order to file the paperwork.
Comprehensive Schedule	Printed agency manual or directive containing descriptions of and disposition instructions for all documentary materials, record and nonrecord, created by a Federal agency or major component of an Executive department. Unless taken from the General Records Schedules (GRS) issued by NARA, the disposition instructions for agency records must be approved by NARA on one or more Standard Form(s) 115, Request for Records Disposition Authority, prior to issuance by the agency. The disposition instructions for the nonrecord materials are established by the agency and do not require NARA approval.
Cloud Computing	NIST defines cloud computing as "a model for enabling convenient, on-demand network access to a shared pool of configurable computing resources (e.g., networks, servers, storage, applications, and services) that can be rapidly provisioned and released with minimal management effort or service provider interaction.
CODEC-A	Encodes a data stream or signal for transmission, storage or encryption, or decodes it for playback or editing. Codecs are used in videoconferencing streaming media and video editing applications.

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Contingent Records	Records scheduled for final disposition at some unspecified future time after the occurrence of a particular event, such as the decommissioning of a vessel, the sale of property, or the destruction of a building.
Crosswalk	A table created to show the original series-by-series disposal authorities and where each one fits into the new subject categories or buckets.
Custody	Care and control of records, including both physical possession (physical custody) and legal responsibility (legal custody), unless one or the other is specified.
Cutoff (a.k.a. File Break)	The breaking or ending of files at regular intervals, usually at the close of a fiscal or calendar year, to permit their disposal or transfer in complete blocks and, for correspondence, to permit the establishment of new files.
Data Migration	The process of transferring data between storage types, formats, or computer systems.
Degaussing	Minimizing the magnetic field in magnetic media so the information is obliterated and cannot be returned.
Deletion	The removal or erasure of information from electronic devices and storage media.
Destruction (destroy/delete/salvage/sell)	The disposal of documents of no further value by incineration, maceration, pulping, or shredding.
Digital	Of or relating to computers or the information age.
Direct Offer	Records accessioned by NARA directly from agency space (including non-NARA records centers), rather than from a NARA records center (Federal Records Center).
Disposal	The action taken regarding temporary records after their retention periods expire, and consisting usually of destruction/deletion. On rare occasions, with permission, records may be donated (36 CFR 1226.26).
Disposition	<p>Instructions for what is to be done with a record that is no longer needed to support agency business. There are two types of dispositions for records:</p> <p>Temporary – Records with a temporary disposition that will eventually be destroyed or deleted when all relevant business needs have expired.</p> <p>Permanent – Permanent records that contain historically significant materials, provide evidence of agency accomplishments, or document important events in national history, and as a result will be preserved by NARA.</p>

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Disposition Authority	The legal approval empowering an agency to transfer permanent records to the National Archives or to carry out the disposal of temporary records. Note: “Legal approval” comes at the point at which an authority (the SF-115) is signed by the Archivist of the United States, not when it is first submitted to NARA.
Disposition Authority Agency	The DAA prefix indicates a “born-in-ERA” records schedule created by an agency.
Disposition Authority Legacy	The DAL prefix indicates a previously approved SF 115, Request for Records Disposition Authority.
Disposition Instructions	Directions for cutting off records and carrying out their disposition in compliance with NARA’s regulations. Includes directions for screening out nonrecord materials and carrying out their disposal when no longer needed by the agency.
Disposition Schedule	See Records Schedule .
Document Management Application (DMA)	A system used for managing documents that allows users to store, retrieve, and share documents with security and version control. A word processor can integrate DMA support so that you can create, edit, and manage your documents through the word processor. DMAs are sometimes called Electronic Document Management Systems (EDMSs).
DoD 5015.2	Department of Defense (DoD) standard provides a generic set of requirements for electronic records management applications. The standard sets design criteria standards for Records Management Application (RMA) software.
Donation	The transfer of temporary records to an eligible person or organization after the authorized retention period has expired. A donation is a very rare occurrence.
e-Government	Short for electronic government is digital interactions between a government and citizens, government and businesses/Commerce, government and employees, and also between government and governments/agencies.
Electronic Case Files	See Case management/electronic case filing system (CM/ECF).
Electronic Document Management System (EDMS)	A computer system (or set of computer programs) used to track and store electronic documents.
Electronic Information System (EIS)	A system that contains and provides access to computerized Federal records and other information. (36 CFR 1236.2) An EIS includes the inputs and outputs that are generated, as well as the master files. The system may contain budgetary, fiscal, social, economic, scientific, technical, or program-related data and information, operated in support of agency programs and management responsibilities.

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Electronic Mail (email)	A document created or received on an electronic mail system including brief notes, more formal or substantive narrative documents, and any attachments, such as word-processing and other electronic documents, which may be transmitted with the message. (Defined in the CFR as an electronic mail message.)
Electronic Records/ e-Records	Records stored in a form that only a computer can process. Records can be numeric, graphic, and text information; media can include, but are not limited to, magnetic media, such as tapes and disks, and optical disks.
Electronic Recordkeeping (ERK)	A subset of electronic records management (ERM) is simply the development of automated techniques to facilitate the management of electronic records.
Electronic Recordkeeping System (ERKS)	An electronic system that captures, organizes, and categorizes records to facilitate their preservation, retrieval, use, and disposition.
Electronic Records Archives (ERA)	NARA's system that allows Federal agencies to perform critical records management transactions with NARA online for the first time. Agency records management staff use ERA to draft online ERA Records Schedules and Transfer Requests for records in any format, officially submit those schedules for approval by NARA, request the transfer of records in any format to the National Archives for accessioning or pre-accessioning, and submit electronic records for storage. (See Records Schedule, Legacy Standard Form 115, and Legacy Records Schedule and Legacy Standard Form 258).
Electronic Records Management System (ERMS)	Management of records in electronic form.
Electronically Stored Information	Information stored in a digital format.
Emulation	A strategy where the functionality of one system is recreated by a new system, so that the second system behaves like the first.
Essential Records Management	Essential Records Management is the identification, protection, and ready availability of electronic and hardcopy documents, references, records, information systems, and data management software and equipment (including classified and other sensitive data) needed to support essential functions during a continuity activation. Access to and use of these records and systems enable the performance of essential functions and reconstitution to normal operations. To ensure performance of essential functions, organizations pre-position and regularly update these essential records. (See Vital Records).
Evaluation	The term evaluation refers to an internal audit by agency staff. You may hear the term "self-evaluation," since the agency is conducting an internal evaluation.

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Federal Enterprise Architecture (FEA)	The enterprise architecture of a Federal Government. It provides a common approach for the integration of strategic, business, and technology management as part of organization design and performance improvement.
Federal Records Act (FRA)	See Record and H.R. 1233, The Presidential and Federal Records Act Amendment of 2014. http://www.archives.gov/press/press-releases/2015/nr15-23.html
Federal Records Center (FRC)	The NARA managed building or location where Federal Agency records are stored.
Federal Records Center Program (FRCP)	This NARA program safeguards the nation's records, providing high-quality, cost-effective storage and services for Federal agencies.
File Break (a.k.a. Cutoff)	See Cutoff .
File Plan	A plan designating the physical location(s) at which an agency's files are to be maintained, the specific types of files to be maintained there, and the organizational element(s) having custodial responsibility. Also: A document containing the identifying number, title or description, and disposition authority of files held in an office. See also Filing System .
Filing System	A set of policies and procedures for organizing and identifying files or documents to speed their retrieval, use, and disposition. Sometimes called a Recordkeeping System .
Flexible Retention	An arrangement and disposition method that can be applied to individual or groups of record series/electronic systems to establish consistent retention periods. This allows for series/electronic systems within work process functions to have the same stated minimum and/or maximum retention periods. Flexible retention is a flexible scheduling tool that can be used as a component of a "Big Bucket"/large aggregation schedule or in a traditional series-based schedule, and gives agencies the retention flexibility they need to manage their records.
Flexible Schedule	A document providing disposition instructions that allow flexibility in the way information or categories of information are grouped or that provide a minimum and/or maximum, rather than a fixed retention period.
Frozen Records	Temporary records held for litigation, investigation, or audit purposes. Frozen records can be destroyed only after completion of litigation, audit, or investigation and notification from the appropriate authority.
Functional Arrangement	A method of arranging a records schedule by record series or systems that share the same purpose or function, regardless of where they are created and maintained. For example, many of the General Records Schedules are arranged by function.

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General Records Schedules (GRS)	GRS are issued by the Archivist of the United States under the authority of 44 U.S.C 3303a (d) to provide disposition authority for records common to several or all Federal agencies. The GRS cover records documenting administrative functions rather than program functions. Agencies must apply the GRS to the greatest extent possible.
Inactive records	Records that are no longer used in the day-to-day course of business, but that may be preserved and occasionally used for legal, historical, or operational purposes.
Information System	An organized set of procedures and techniques designed to store, retrieve, manipulate, analyze, and display information. If automated, information system also includes hardware and software.
Inspection	Inspection refers to reviews or audits performed by external personnel or agencies. NARA conducts inspections and records management program reviews of agencies.
InterPARES	The International Research on Permanent Authentic Records in Electronic Systems aims at developing the knowledge essential to the long-term preservation of authentic records created and/or maintained in digital form and providing the basis for standards, policies, strategies, and plans of action capable of ensuring the longevity of such material and the ability of its users to trust its authenticity.
Inventory	A survey of agency records and nonrecord materials conducted primarily to develop records schedules and to identify various records management problems.
Legacy Schedules (LS)	Paper SF 115s that have valid disposition authorities. See Electronic Records Schedule (ERA) Legacy Standard Form 115 and Records Schedule. Request for Records Disposition Authority that was created by an agency and approved by NARA prior to the mandatory implementation of ERA. A Legacy Records Schedule containing Legacy Records Schedule Items, describes Federal records, establishes a period for their retention by the agency, and provides mandatory instructions for what to do with Federal records that are no longer needed for current government business.
Legacy Schedule Item (LSI)	The specific item described on the Records Schedule or Legacy Records Schedule that defines a record series and its disposition.
Legal Transfer Instrument (LTI)	Formally conveys the legal custody of a records transfer to the NARA. This business object is created automatically by the ERA system when a Transfer Request moves into Physical Custody Accepted status. There is one Legal Transfer Instrument created per Transfer Request.
Lifecycle	The management concept that records pass through three stages: creation, maintenance and use, and disposition.
Maceration	The process of reducing materials to fine particles

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Maturity model	The Maturity Model aims to give an accurate, reliable and honest summary of the current level of maturity of the records management measures within your institution.
Metadata	Data describing stored data: that is, data describing the structure, data elements, interrelationships, and other characteristics of electronic records.
Migration	A set of organized tasks designed to achieve periodic transfer of digital materials from one hardware/software configuration to another, or from one generation of computer technology to a subsequent generation.
NA 13000, Agency Review for Contingent Disposal	A NARA form used to obtain agency concurrence to dispose of records whose disposal is contingent upon completion of some action or event.
NA 13001, Notice of Eligibility for Disposal	A NARA form used to obtain agency concurrence to dispose of records eligible for destruction.
National Records Management Program (NRMP)	Information to help assist Federal customers, to keep updated on NARA records management initiatives, records management resources, and teach agency staff about records management policies and procedures.
Near-line storage	Near-line storage is the on-site storage of data on removable media. There are three major categories of near-line storage: magnetic disk, magnetic tape, and compact disc (CD).
Nonrecord Materials	Nonrecord materials are documentary materials excluded from the legal definition of records. The United States Code defines "nonrecord materials" to include material such as unofficial copies of documents kept only for convenience or reference, stocks of publications and near-print documents, and library or museum material intended solely for reference or exhibition.
OF 11, Reference Request – Federal Records Center	Form used by Federal agencies to request records or information stored in a Federal Records Center. Use of this form is optional.
Online Public Access Catalog	Archives Library Information Center Online Public Access Catalog contains over 89,000 bibliographic records, with more records being added on a daily basis. The collection's strengths include archival administration, administrative history, American history and government, biography, information management, and government documents.
Online Public Access Tool	See Online Public Access Catalog .
Organizational Arrangement	A method of arranging a schedule in a structure consistent with the hierarchical arrangement of an agency, such as by bureau or other major unit, and thereunder by its subordinate units, such as divisions or offices.

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Performance Work Statement (PWS)	The PWS describes completely the work required to be performed including the standards, specifications, and controls. It lists individual requirements that are too long to be written into the contract schedule as contract line items. It serves as a clear statement of contract requirements for defining and achieving the technical program goals or services needed.
Permanent Record	Record appraised by NARA as having sufficient historical or other value to warrant continued preservation by the Federal Government beyond the time it is needed for administrative, legal, or fiscal purposes.
Personal Papers	Documentary materials of a private or nonpublic character that do not relate to, or have an effect on, the conduct of agency business.
Pre-accessioning	Occurs when NARA fully processes permanently valuable electronic records in order to assume physical custody before the records are scheduled to become part of the National Archives of the United States. The agency maintains legal custody and responsibility for access.
Program Records	Those records created by each Federal agency in performing the unique functions that stem from the distinctive mission of the agency. The agency's mission is defined in enabling legislation and further delineated in formal regulations.
Pulping	Process of reducing paper to its constituent fibers
Reconstitution	Taking the actions necessary to bring working conditions back to normal and being able to resume business operations.
Record	Includes all recorded information, regardless of form or characteristics, made or received by a Federal agency under Federal law or in connection with the transaction of public business and preserved or appropriate for preservation by that agency or its legitimate successor as evidence of the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities of the United States Government or because of the informational value of data in them." (44 U.S.C. 3301)
Record Series	A group of records arranged according to a filing system or kept together because they relate to a particular subject or function, result from the same activity, document a specific type of transaction, exist in the same media format, or have some other type of relationship.
Record Values	The value of a record encompasses its value for current business – i.e., its administrative, fiscal, legal/accountability value – as well as its historical value.
Recorded Information	Includes all traditional forms of records, regardless of physical form or characteristics, including information created, manipulated, communicated, or stored in digital or electronic form.
Recordkeeping Requirements	Statements in statutes, regulations, or agency directives providing general and specific guidance on particular records to be created and maintained by an agency.

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Recordkeeping System	See Filing System .
Records Analysis	A process used to determine records retention and disposition requirements based on how the records are used to support the business needs of an organization, and to ensure Government accountability and protect the rights of citizens.
Records Control Schedule/ Records Disposition Schedule/ Records Retention Schedule/ ERA Records Schedule/SF 115	See Electronic Records Archives (ERA) , Records Schedule and Legacy Standard Form 115 .
Records Inventory	See Inventory .
Records Maintenance	Any action involving the storage, retrieval, and handling of records kept in offices by, or for, a Federal agency.
Records Management	The planning, controlling, directing, organizing, training, promoting, and other managerial activities related to the creation, maintenance and use, and disposition of records, carried out in such a way as to achieve adequate and proper documentation of Federal policies and transactions and effective and economical management of agency operations.
Records Management Application (RMA)	Software used by an organization to manage its records. An RMA's primary management functions are categorizing and locating records and identifying records that are due for disposition. RMA software also stores, retrieves, and disposes of the electronic records that are stored in its repository.
Records Retention	See Retention .
Records Schedule	A records schedule or schedule is: (a) An SF-115, Request for Records Disposition Authority, that has been approved by NARA to authorize the disposition of Federal records (b) A General Records Schedule (GRS) issued by NARA (c) A printed agency manual or directive containing the records descriptions and disposition instructions approved by NARA on one or more SF-115s or issued by NARA in the GRS. (See also Comprehensive Schedule .)
Records Schedule Item	The specific item described on the Records Schedule or Legacy Records Schedule that defines a record series and its disposition. (See also Legacy Records Schedule Item .)
Replication	A strategy of creating duplicate copies of data.

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Retention	The length of time a record must be kept (either in the office or in off-site storage) because it is needed for ongoing business, to document an action, or for statutory reasons. Note: This is also referred to as a “retention period.”
Retirement	The transfer of records to agency storage facilities, a Federal Records Center, or a commercial records center.
Risk	The potential harm that may arise from some present process or some future event.
Risk Acceptability/Tolerance Matrix	Represents your agency’s tolerance level for acceptable and unacceptable risks.
Risk Analysis	The systematic use of available information to determine how often specified events may occur and the magnitude of the consequences if they do occur. In terms of records management, risk analysis is used to evaluate the probability of the risks identified in the risk assessment and the impact those risks would have on your records and information.
Risk Assessment	An examination of the potential harm that may result from exposure to certain hazards. In terms of records management, risk assessment is used to identify the risks to your records and information. It includes two main components: Risk Identification, and Risk Analysis and Prioritization.
Risk Factor	An overall rating of the seriousness of a single risk. To determine the <i>risk factor</i> of the risk event, you multiply the probability rating by the impact rating.
Risk Management	The process of identifying (risk assessment) and evaluating (risk analysis) risk and then developing strategies to manage the risk
Senior Agency Official (SAO)	Responsible for ensuring that the department or agency efficiently and appropriately complies with all applicable records management statutes, regulations, and NARA policy.
Scheduled Records	Records whose final disposition has been approved by NARA.
Scheduling	The process of determining and recording in a records schedule the appropriate retention period and ultimate disposition of a series. The records thus provided for are called scheduled records.
Series	See Record Series .
Shared Drives	Shared drives, also known as network drives, are typically used to store and share content. Agencies have also used shared drives to group and store content by function, project, committee, or other logical category. The use of shared drives poses recordkeeping challenges because agencies may store content that includes Federal records and nonrecord materials.

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Social Media	Social media tools use Internet and web-based technologies (often called Web 2.0 technologies) to integrate technology, social interaction, and content creation. Social media use the “wisdom of crowds” to connect information in a collaborative manner online. Through social media, individuals or collaborations of individuals create web content, organize content, edit or comment on content, combine content, and share content.
Special Records/Special Media	Types of records maintained separately from textual/paper records because their physical form or characteristics require unusual care and/or because they are of nonstandard size. These include electronic, audiovisual, microform, cartographic and remote-sensing imagery, architectural and engineering, printed, and card records.
Stakeholder	Can be broadly defined as people and or organizations who may affect, be affected by, or perceive themselves to be affected by a decision or activity.
Standard Form (SF) 115, Request for Records Disposition Authority	Standard form used by Federal agencies for capturing record information for scheduling and requesting disposition authority from NARA.
Standard Form (SF) 135, Records Transmittal and Receipt	The form to be submitted by agencies to a Federal Records Center before transferring records there.
Standard Form (SF) 258, Agreement to Transfer Records to NARA	Standard form used by Federal agencies to transfer legal custody of permanent records to NARA.
Statement Of Work (SOW)	See Performance Work Statement .
Sustainable Format	The ability to access an electronic record throughout its lifecycle, regardless of the technology used when it was originally created.
Systems Development Life Cycle (SDLC)	The SDLC process provides a structured and standardized process for all phases of any system development effort.
Temporary Record	Record approved by NARA for disposal after a specified retention period.
Transfer	The process of moving records from one location to another, especially from office space to off-site storage facilities, from one agency to another, or from an agency office to a Federal Records Center or to NARA.
Unauthorized Disposal	The improper removal of records without NARA approval or the willful or accidental destruction of records without regard to a NARA approved records schedule. Unauthorized disposition of Federal records is against the law and punishable by up to \$250,000 in fines and imprisonment. (44 U.S.C. 3106 and 18 U.S.C. 2071)
Unscheduled Records	Records whose final disposition has not been approved by NARA. Unscheduled records may not be destroyed or deleted.

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Vital Records	Essential agency records that are needed to meet operational responsibilities under national security emergencies or other emergency or disaster conditions (“emergency operating records”), or to protect the legal and financial rights of the government and those affected by government activities (“legal and financial rights records”). Vital records are also known as essential information.
Witness Disposal	Disposal of certain classes of records, such as the case of classified records or records covered by the Privacy Act, that requires an authorized representative to verify the destruction.
Working Files	Documents such as rough notes, calculations, or drafts assembled or created and used to prepare or analyze other documents. Also called working papers.

ACRONYMS

Table 2: Acronyms and Terms

ACRONYM	TERM
ARCIS	Archives Records Center Information System*
ARO	Agency Records Officer
BIA	Business Impact Analysis
BPA	Business Process Analysis
CIO	Chief Information Officer
CBA	Cost Benefit Analysis
CPIC	Capital Planning and Investment Control
DAA	Disposition Authority Agency
DAL	Disposition Authority Legacy
DMA	Document Management Application
eFRC	Electronic Federal Records Center*
EDMS	Electronic Document Management System
EIS	Electronic Information System*
EMS	Electronic Media Storage
ERA	Electronic Records Archives
ERKS	Electronic Recordkeeping System
ERM	Electronic Records Management
ERMS	Electronic Records Management System
ERPWG	Electronic Records Policy Working Group
FEA	Federal Enterprise Architecture
FRC	Federal Records Center
FRCP	Federal Records Center Program
GRS	General Records Schedule
InterPARES	The International Research on Permanent Authentic Records in Electronic Systems
IRM	Information Resource Management
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
IT	Information Technology
LSI	Legacy Schedule Item
LS	Legacy Schedule
LTI	Legal Transfer Instrument
NIST	National Institute of Standards and Technology
NRMP	National Records Management Program
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
PDA	Personal Digital Assistant
PM	Program Manager
RC	Records Custodian
RM	Records Management
RMA	Records Management Application

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ACRONYM	TERM
SAO	Senior Agency Official
SDLC	Systems Development Life Cycle
SF	Standard Form