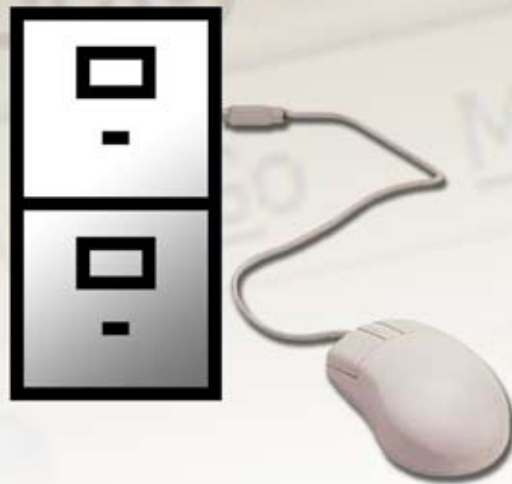




How to
Handle Your
University

E-mail



Box for Bucky@wisc.edu
Edit View Message

How to treat your university e-mail

Think about your computer and e-mail software like a correspondence file in a filing cabinet. You need a standardized filing system (labels, arrangement, order) to store your messages so that you can efficiently retrieve documents. You should have a system in place whereby the deletion or long-term storage of e-mail messages follows the records retention policies of paper correspondence and files.

E-mail may represent a public record

Public records include all materials *regardless of physical form or characteristics* made or received by any state agency in connection with the transaction of public business.

E-mail becomes a public record when sent or received by an agency under state or federal law, or in connection with the transaction of public business.

It should be preserved as a public record when it serves as evidence of university functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities of the university.

Principal categories for preservation

- E-mail about formulating and executing basic policies, decisions, and actions
- E-mail about important meetings
- E-mail that facilitates action by agency officials and their successors
- E-mail that provides accountability to the legislature or to duly authorized agencies of the state or federal government
- E-mail that protects the financial, legal, and other rights of the university and of persons directly affected by the university's actions

Using e-mail for transacting official business

You should first ask "Is e-mail the right tool to use?"

- If the subject of the transaction is sensitive or confidential, a phone call or a face-to-face discussion may prove to be a better vehicle for the transaction.
- If you determine that e-mail is the appropriate means of communication, use professional tone and language in creating the message.
- Remember that e-mail may not be used as a substitute for an open meeting. Votes may be taken via e-mail, but executive committee actions must be documented.

Points to remember about keeping e-mail

- Substance, not format, determines record status of an e-mail message.
- While some personal use of e-mail is permitted within the university, the hardware and software supporting e-mail belongs to the university. For usage guidelines, see: http://www.doit.wisc.edu/security/policies/appropriate_use.asp
- There is NO single retention period for all e-mail.
- Before deleting any e-mail message, the creator or recipient should determine whether it meets the definition of a public record and, if so, retain a copy of the message.
- Printed messages kept as a record should contain essential transmission, receipt data and attachments — if not, print the data or annotate the printed copy.
- Printed messages and essential transmission and receipt data should be filed with related files of the office.
- Delete messages that are not records when no longer needed.
- Delete messages that are records, after they have been placed in a recordkeeping system. Some e-mail clients have limited recordkeeping functionality.
- If an e-mail message is determined to be a record, then it is governed by an approved records retention disposition authorization.
See: http://archives.library.wisc.edu/FAQ/FAQ_process.html.
- DoIT does not automatically backup all e-mail servers.
- Create and implement a consistent file-naming system for folders holding electronic and hard copies of e-mail.
- Once e-mail is downloaded from WiscMail into a client, it no longer exists in WiscMail.

Public records requests and e-mail

If you receive an open records request for records contained in your e-mail, you are obligated to respond to it in the same fashion as you would to a request for paper records. If you are concerned about providing access to your e-mail, please contact Administrative Legal Services.

For more information, please visit the *Guidelines for Responding To Public Record Requests* <http://www.wisc.edu/legal/legalservices/PubRecordsReq.pdf>

UW-Madison e-mail facts

E-mail storage at UW-Madison*

- In April 2001, the WiscWorld Mail system had 23 GB of storage.
- In April 2006, WiscMail has 3,900 GB of storage.

Proportion of accounts (*Spring 2006*)

- WiscMail Student: 62% (49,500)
- WiscMail Staff: 28% (22,400)
- WiscMail Plus: 9% (7,400)

Daily volume by type (*Spring 2006*)

- Spam 45.8%
- Not Spam 20.6%
- Trusted Not Spam 33.4%
- Virus 0.2%

**NOTE: Storage needs are growing steadily at 5% per month.*

University Archives
B134 Memorial Library
728 State Street
Madison, WI 53706
Phone (608) 262-5629
Fax (608) 265-2754
<http://archives.library.wisc.edu>



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