



Day Batching of Official Records

This recordkeeping advice sheet provides agencies and authorities with assistance regarding the practice of day batching. It provides information relating to the risks of day batching and the recommended approach to managing source records.

What is Day Batching?

Day batching can be defined as storing source records together based on the date the record was received into the agency's custody or the date that the record was scanned into the records management system. Batching involves the scanning of records on arrival and grouping or storing the source records together. Batching records together on a daily basis occurs regardless of the context, business or archival value of each record.

Day batching is used by agencies that receive high quantities of routine records on a daily basis such as finance records or correspondence. While this process enables the management of individual documents, it is neither an effective nor efficient records management practice.

Risks associated with Day Batching

Batching source records sequentially is not consistent with the principles outlined in *AS-ISO 15489-2002 Records Management* that recommend records be classified by business functions. Day batching should only be adopted after a detailed risk/business analysis has been undertaken.

The risks involved with day batching include:

- loss of record context as records are grouped together according to the date they were received as opposed to their function and activity. Records related to the same matter that are maintained in day batches are not linked with associated documentation. The records are therefore seen to be unrelated to other records received by the agency even though this may not be the case. It is also the only source of evidence of the transaction occurring often with little understanding or evidence as to why, how and by whom the transaction occurred;
- inappropriate sentencing and destruction of records that may have had a longer retention period if they had been kept within a structured file;
- investment of time and resources in separating permanent records from temporary records stored in the same box prior to transfer to State Records. Transfer of permanent records is required when records reach 15 years of age or are no longer required for administrative purposes, whichever occurs first;
- inefficient use of storage space as different records are required to be kept for varying lengths of time. Retaining an entire box of records which have been day batched for the longest retention period required means that the agency will need to allocate funds for unnecessary storage; and

- increased costs and difficulties in locating and retrieving original source records held in batches, for example during document discovery, Freedom of Information (FOI) or cases where forensic information is required from the original.

For these reasons, day batching is not recommended for managing all source records.

Preferred Approach

Agencies should consider the most appropriate method for managing source records that are received in large quantities. Agencies are responsible for measuring the risks and benefits of this practice. The table below provides an outline of the preferred approach for the management of permanent and temporary source records.

Type of Source Record	Method of Appropriate Management
Permanent documents	Structured Files
Long term temporary documents	Structured Files
Short term temporary documents	Structured Files / Day Batching
Case Files, eg FOI	Structured Files

Permanent Value Records

Source records of permanent value cannot be destroyed. These records must be retained and transferred to State Records once they reach 15 years of age or are no longer required for current administrative practices, whichever occurs first. State Records will not accept permanent value source records that are in the day batching format as boxes containing day batched records may contain various types of records, with varying retention periods and little business or archival context. Permanent value source records need to be captured into a structured file system and classified using a classification scheme that facilitates disposal, security and access rights, efficient searching and retrieval. Each paper file should reflect the classification, file number and retention period of the relevant electronic or scanned file¹.

Scanned counterparts of permanent records inherit the disposal criteria attributed to the original source record. As such they need to be managed in an appropriate system within structured files.

¹ Queensland State Archives, Public Records Alert No.1/05 Day Batching of Records
22 November 2011

This practice will save on time when records are to be transferred to State Records and ensures that all related documents are managed within the same file.

Temporary Value Records

Short Term Temporary

Batching of source records may be an appropriate method for handling large quantities of short-term temporary source records, provided the agency utilises an appropriate system that is certified under General Disposal Schedule 21.

Batching by day may be sufficient where source records document the same activity and therefore have the same retention period and destruction date, eg invoices. To implement this system, each record received or scanned would need to be sentenced prior to batching. The shelf location and number of the box in which the record is stored will need to be recorded, and related records will need to be linked. This approach may facilitate the destruction process and save on resources required to file and manage a duplicated filing system.

This method excludes records where retention could be affected by another activity. An example of this includes correspondence files that, subject to the nature of correspondence, may consist of differing retention periods. Records such as these should be captured in a structured file and classified accordingly.

Long Term Temporary

Similar to permanent records, State Records recommends records of long term temporary value be captured into a structured file system and classified appropriately. Refer to the section within this document relating to permanent value records.

Case Files

Case files need to be created to capture certain business practices (eg court orders, discovery orders, FOI applications). In these instances day batching should not be used. Where appropriate, records should be managed in structured files that are sentenced at the time of creation. Structured files may be created electronically, in hard copy, or as hybrid files depending on the agency's recordkeeping system. Where records are managed entirely in an electronic environment or in a hybrid system it is necessary to ensure appropriate links exist between associated electronic documents.

On occasion, a record may be related to an issue other than the one for which it was originally intended. This may mean the retrieval of a source document from a day-batch or the need to link an electronic record within a recordkeeping system.

An example of this is the management of FOI applications. In this instance a structured case file should be created to manage the FOI application, the discovery process and final determination.

Managing this information within a day batching system becomes problematic, as links to associated records are often not maintained. It therefore becomes important that the

agency maintains links between the electronic records and the FOI case file and also includes links to versions of records that have been modified/redacted prior to release.

Recommendation

State Records recommends that agencies:

- undertake a detailed business and risk analysis if day batching is being considered;
- only day batch records of short term temporary value and of the same content and retention period;
- ensure that records of long term temporary or permanent value are retained in a structured file and links to associated electronic documents are maintained (refer to *Recordkeeping Advice Sheet: Management of Hybrid Records* for further information); and
- where necessary maintain case files for business transactions and maintain links to electronic documents, eg FOI.

For further information regarding this Advice Sheet, please contact Records Management Services on srsaRecordsManagement@sa.gov.au.

Further Information

- State Records of South Australia, *Adequate Records Management Standard* (2002)
- State Records of South Australia, *Digitisation of Official Records and Management of Source Documents* (2009)
- State Records of South Australia, *General Disposal Schedule 21 - For management disposal of source documents and digitised versions after digitisation* (2006)
- Queensland State Archives, *Public Records Alert No.1/05 - Day Batching of Records* (2005)
- State Records Authority New South Wales, *Recordkeeping In Brief 37 – Day Boxing Dilemma – Advice for NSW Councils* (2004)
- *AS ISO 15489-2002: Records Management*, Standards Australia (2002)
- State Records of South Australia, *Recordkeeping Advice Sheet: The Management of Hybrid Records* (under development)

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