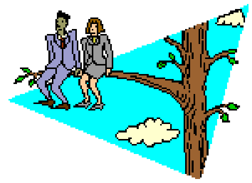

"Ask the CRM" - Bob Dalton, CRM

Question:

Managing files in a Records Center

While reviewing my daily dose of email messages on the Records Management ListServ[i] (RECMGMT-L@LISTS.UFL.EDU) the question was asked "how do you manage to retrieve files that have been checked out for a long period of time?" This was an excellent topic that I believe most records managers have struggled with and some of the responses by our peers provided some good suggestions on the Records Management ListServ. Here are some of their suggestions:

- Barbara Wyton, on 8/20/2009 had two methods:
  - She attached a bright yellow sticker to every individual file removed from their custody. It identified the file as archived material and instructed them to return it to their records center.
  - She reviewed the database quarterly for files that had not been returned. She sent an email listing the items checked out to the individual and requested they return the item or indicate how much longer they needed to retain the records.
- Gary Link, 6/20/2009:
  - Sends out periodic email reminders that included the file identification, retrieval date, and requests that they return the files if they are finished using them.
- Steve Morgan, 8/20/2009:
  - Runs a report once a month listing files that have been out for an extended amount of time and sends an email message requesting the files be returned to the file center

Over the years I have seen variations of the methods listed above. Some of the methods I have seen and used are:

- Prepared and attached a document to the file and/or box that stated the files are "official corporate records" that have been retrieved for use by the requestor and must be returned within 30 days.
  - A charge out card is placed in the spot where the file was retrieved and lists the requestor's name, telephone number, file code, file name and date retrieved. The cards are reviewed monthly for any files out over a month. An email message is sent to the individual requesting they return the file and/or send a response indicating how much longer the files are required.
  - A simpler system using a clip board with a charge out sheet can be used with instructions on how to fill out the form. The individual can fill out the form with the file code and name, their name, telephone number and date checked out. The clip board is checked monthly and an email message is sent to the individual emphasizing that the files are "official corporate records" requesting the return of the files and/or a response indicating how much longer the files are required.
- For records in an electronic document management system that uses barcode technology to track the files and/or boxes I pulled a monthly listing and emailed the person who checked out the records, again emphasizing the files/boxes are "official corporate records" and request their return to the records center. Records management software may be able to generate reminder notices sent to users on a schedule established by the records manager. A telephone call may be required for users who do not respond to your email message.
- I have prepared and posted signs in the file room and/or on cabinets with instructions on how to sign out and return records for re-filing. I also provided an in-box where the users were instructed to put files when they returned them for re-filing. ***All*** re-filing was accomplished by the records staff to preclude misfiles.