



SEARCHLIGHTS AND SUNGLASSES

LEARNING LAYER

How do handlers of records see their role?

Public records usually are defined officially as documents, papers, letters, maps, books, tapes, photographs, films, sound recordings, data, data processing software or other material made or received pursuant to law or ordinance or in connection with the transaction of official business by any agency.

Laws differ by locale, but they can include marriage and death certificates, court documents, community meeting proceedings, proposed laws and legislation, zoning measures and political candidate tax records. General records schedules are published by local and state governments to determine how long public records should be kept.

A professional organization that has established ethical practices in records management is the [International Association of Records Managers and Archivists](#). It explains best practices for digital and physical records.

Activities for students: Look at public records from the perspective of someone who must manage those records. Locate information about organizations who have established best practices in records management, such as ARMA. Be prepared to discuss in class: Who joins these professional organizations? Are their goals consistent with journalism best practices? What challenges do they face?