

Findlay-Hancock County Public Library
Public Records Policy
Approved February 19, 2008

Section 1. Public records

In accordance with the Ohio Revised Code and applicable judicial decisions, records are defined as any item that (i) contains information stored on a fixed medium (such as paper, electronic – including but not limited to email – and other formats); (ii) is created or received by, or sent under the jurisdiction of a public office and (iii) documents the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations or other activities of the office. Public records are to be open to the public at all reasonable times with exceptions only as provided for in the law.

Section 1.1

As required by Ohio law, records will be organized and maintained so that they are available for inspection and copying at all reasonable times during regular business hours. Copies will be made available within a reasonable period of time with exceptions only as provided by law. (See Section 4 for the e-mail record policy). Record retention schedules are to be revised as needed and posted conspicuously.

Section 2. Record requests

Each request for public records should be evaluated for a response using the following guidelines:

Section 2.1

Although no specific language is required to make a request, the requester must at least identify the records requested with sufficient clarity to allow the public office to identify, retrieve, and review the records. If a requester makes an ambiguous or overly broad request or has difficulty in making a request for copies or inspection of public records under this section such that the public office or the person responsible for the requested public record cannot reasonably identify what public records are being requested, the public office or the person responsible for the requested public record may deny the request but shall provide the requester with an opportunity to revise the request by informing the requester of the manner in which records are maintained by the public office and accessed in the ordinary course of the public office's or person's duties.

Section 2.2

The requestor does not have to put a records request in writing. The Library may request the requestor's identity, but only if the Library first discloses to the requestor that the requestor may decline to disclose his or her identity.

Section 2.3

Public records are to be available for inspection during regular business hours, with the exception of published holidays. Public records must be made available for inspection promptly. Copies of public records must be made available within a reasonable period of time. "Prompt" and "reasonable" take into account the volume of records requested; the proximity of the location where the records are stored; and the necessity for any legal review of the records requested.

Section 2.4

Each request should be evaluated for an estimated length of time required to gather the records.

Section 2.5

Any denial of public records requested must include an explanation. If portions of a record are public and portions are exempt, the exempt portions are to be redacted and the rest released. If there are redactions, each redaction must be accompanied by a supporting explanation.

Section 3. Costs for Public Records

Those seeking public records will be charged only the actual cost of making copies. The Library may require payment in advance of making copies of the requested records.

Section 3.1

Requesters may ask that documents be mailed or faxed to them. They will be charged the actual cost of the postage, mailing supplies, and faxing. The Library may require payment in advance of mailing the requested records.

Section 4. E-mail

E-mail is to be treated in the same fashion as records in other formats and should follow the same retention schedules.

Section 4.1

Records in private e-mail accounts used to conduct public business are subject to disclosure, and all employees or representatives of the Library are instructed to retain their e-mails that relate to public business (see Section 1 Public Records) and to copy them to their business e-mail accounts and/or to the office's records custodian.

Section 4.2

The records custodian is to treat the e-mails from private accounts as records of the public office, filing them in the appropriate way, retaining them per established schedules and making them available for inspection and copying in accordance with the Public Records Act.