

Introduction to the Records Center site

The Records Center site template in Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007 is designed to help organizations implement their records management and retention programs.

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Features of the Records Center site template

The Records Center is intended to serve as a central repository in which an organization can store and manage all of its records. The Records Center supports the entire records management process, from records collection through records management to records disposition. Typically, a Records Center site is designed and configured by an organization's records management professionals and information technology (IT) staff to support an organization's file plan.

The Records Center site template combines some standard features available in Office SharePoint Server 2007 with some additional specialized records management features to provide the following capabilities:

Vault abilities The Records Center has several features that help ensure the integrity of the records stored within it:

Records are never automatically modified by the system. This ensures that records that are uploaded to a Records Center site and then downloaded again later are always identical.

Site administrators can easily configure the Records Center with settings that prevent the direct tampering with records by versioning any changes that are made to document contents and by auditing specific types of changes.

The Records Center allows records managers to add and maintain metadata on items separately from a record's metadata, so that the information that is pertinent to records management tasks can be updated without modifying the underlying record. Changes to metadata are also versioned.

Information management policy enforcement Office SharePoint Server 2007 includes several policy features that are useful for records management:

Auditing This feature logs events and operations that are performed on files. In the context of records management, auditing is useful to record who is viewing and accessing information in the Records Center.

Expiration This feature specifies how long a record should be retained and what action should occur when the retention period ends, such as deletion or the initiation of a Disposition Approval workflow. In the context of records management, the retention period for a record usually begins when a record is initially submitted to the Records Center.

Barcodes This feature provides each record with a unique barcode image and numeric value. The value of the barcode is stored and indexed along with the electronic version of the record. In the context of records management, barcodes are useful for retaining and tracking physical records. When the records in a library have physical versions, barcodes provide a way to correlate the physical versions with their electronic counterparts.

Record collection programmable interface The Records Center supports a set of services that facilitate records collection. The Records Center's programmable interface enables organizations to configure both document management and e-mail systems to automatically submit files to the Records Center site. Content can be submitted to the Records Center through a Web service by using the SOAP protocol or through e-mail by using the SMTP protocol.

Record routing The Records Center includes a Record Routing list that automatically routes incoming records (whether submitted automatically or manually) to their proper location, based on their record type. When a record is submitted to the Records Center, it is often accompanied by additional related information, such as audit history and metadata. A record's audit history is stored in the Records Center as an XML file, and a record's metadata is stored both in an XML file and in metadata columns on the Records Center site.

Hold The Records Center enables organizations to take records that are under legal discovery as part of litigation, or relevant to an audit or investigation, and place them on a Holds list. When records are placed on a hold, they are suspended from any expiration policies that may be in effect, and they are thus protected from destruction. For example, if in the event of litigation, an organization places relevant records that it may be required to produce on hold, these records are available until the litigation is complete. Records can be placed on more than one hold at a time. Records managers can also search the Records Center for records that need to be placed on hold.

Designing a Records Center site

At the highest level, there are two major steps involved in designing a Records Center site to implement a records management program:

1. An organization must [develop a records management strategy and a formal records management plan](#). This is a collaborative effort that involves coordination among records managers, compliance officers, IT professionals, and information workers.
2. An organization must then [configure one or more Records Center sites to implement its records management plan](#).

The sections below outline the primary elements involved in each of these steps.

Records management planning

Before an organization can configure a Records Center site as its records management solution, it should develop a formal plan for its records management strategy. The specific elements of a formal records management plan are likely to be unique to individual organizations or businesses. However, virtually all records management plans include the following documents and processes:

File plan A file plan describes the types of documents or items that an organization acknowledges as official business records. It indicates where these records are stored, and it provides information that differentiates one type of record from another. The file plan serves as a comprehensive collection of policies, processes, and guidelines for creating, storing, and managing records. A file plan should cover all records, regardless of media, including paper, e-mail, and electronic files. It must also specify how each record is classified, secured, and ultimately destroyed. It should also include considerations for special categories of records, such as Confidential, Vital, Trade Secret, or Privileged records. Finally, a file plan must specify the people who are responsible for managing each type of record.

Retention schedule A retention schedule specifies how long each record type in the file plan must be retained (its retention period) and the process for disposing of it when it reaches the end of this period (its disposition process). The guidelines in a retention schedule are usually based on legal requirements, risks to the organization, and business need. Additionally, a retention schedule usually describes the risk management contingencies that determine the retention period for each record type.

Compliance requirements document A compliance requirements document defines the rules to which IT systems for records management must adhere, the capabilities they must have, and the kinds of regular monitoring they must support in order to ensure compliance.

Formal process for suspending the disposition of records This process, which is often called a *hold*, details how an organization suspends the disposition of records when events such as litigation, audits, or investigations occur.

System for monitoring and reporting the handling of records To ensure that employees are filing, accessing, and managing records according to defined policies and processes, a records management program must have a process or system for monitoring and reporting on the handling of records.

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Configuring a Records Center site

After an organization engages in detailed planning of records management and develops a formal plan for records management, it can create and configure a Records Center site to help it implement this program.

You need to take the following steps to configure a Records Center site:

1. Create document libraries or lists to manage and store each type of record that is specified in the file plan.

We recommend that you create one document library for each content type in your records plan.

When records are submitted to the Records Center, they are routed to the relevant list or library.

2. Create columns for the relevant document libraries, lists, or content types to contain and display the metadata for each record type that is specified in the file plan.
3. Specify the information management policies for each record type on the Records Center site. These policies should reflect the retention periods and auditing requirements that are specified in your organization's file plan and retention schedule.
4. Configure the Record Routing list to route each record type to the appropriate location. When records are submitted to the Records Center site, either manually or programmatically, Office SharePoint Server 2007 uses this table to determine how to classify the record within the Records Center site and where to send it.

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