

Guidelines for Administering Electronic Public Records with Access Restrictions

Goal

The staff of the Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS) Library, Archives, and Museum Collections Division strives to facilitate the broadest possible public access to the archival records of the state of Wisconsin while following all applicable state and federal laws that govern access to records. Archives staff will endeavor to screen records for information that may be restricted, but the burden remains with the originating agency to identify series which contain restricted information and specify the statute chapter and subchapter which governs that restriction.

General Rule Regarding Restricted Records

Records which are confidential, privileged, or exempt from public disclosure under state or federal law while in the possession of the originating agency, commission, board, committee, or other entity of state or local government retain their confidential, privileged, or exempt status after transfer to the state archives (Wis. Stat. § 16.61(13)(d)1).

Statutory restrictions are the only way records in the State Archives may be kept from public access. The catalog record and the EAD finding aid will identify the restriction with a brief description and statute citation.

Method of Screening and Restricting Electronic Records

Electronic public records are held in secured network storage at the State Archives. Archives staff will endeavor to screen for electronic records containing restricted information, using at least one of the following methods:

- Identifying and segregating material flagged by the originating agency as containing restricted information
- Using digital forensics tools in the [BitCurator Environment](#) to identify PII such as social security numbers

Electronic records with statutory restrictions are segregated into separate electronic folders and tagged as “restricted.” These folders are not available for public access without explicit written permission from the relevant authority.

Redaction

Records acquired by the State Archives are not redacted upon receipt. State Archives staff will only redact information in electronic records if a patron has been granted permission to view those records. In these cases, redacted access copies will be made available for patron use, while preservation copies of the unredacted records will be maintained by the State Archives. Archives staff will follow current industry best practices for redaction, using appropriate technology tools.