

## Three definitions of a 'record' ~ which do you like best?

### **An organizational definition of a record**

A “record” is information in any form or medium that is within the organization’s control and relates to the organization’s activity or business. This includes both electronic and hardcopy information and other tangible items such as promotional materials. Recorded information that is personal and not related to the organization’s business is not a record under this Policy.

*(This is a short definition that could be found in a policy statement. It says what a record is and what a record is not at this particular organization.)*

### **ISO 15489 Information and documentation — Records management – Part 1**

Section 3.15 RECORDS – information created, received, and maintained as evidence and information by an organization or person, in pursuance of legal obligations or in the transaction of business

*(It is short and says what a record is with an emphasis on legality and transactional value.)*

### **ARMA’s definition of record**

Records are the evidence of what the organization does. They capture its business activities and transactions, such as contract negotiations, business correspondence, personnel files, and financial statements, just to name a few.

Records come in many formats:

- Physical paper in our files, such as memos, contracts, marketing materials, and reports
- Electronic messages, such as e-mail content and their attachments and instant messages
- Content on the website, as well as the documents that reside on PDAs, flash drives, desktops, servers, and document management systems
- Information captured in the organization’s various databases

When there’s a lawsuit, all of these – including the copies that individuals have retained and any items prematurely deleted or destroyed – may be identified as discoverable. This means they could be used against the organization in a lawsuit.

*(This is the longest and specifies both the physical format and that copies of records are included and it emphasizes the importance of records as evidence of activities and the risk of possible lawsuits.)*