Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about
GRS 4.4, Library Records

INTRODUCTION

1. What is the purpose of GRS 4.4?

This schedule provides disposition authority for records that agencies create and maintain in the course of administering and operating Federal agency libraries. This schedule does not provide disposition authority for a library's collection or holdings.

2. Whom do I contact for further information about this schedule?

Please contact NARA's General Records Schedules Team at GRS_Team@nara.gov with questions about this schedule.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

3. This GRS covers library collections but not special collections. What is the difference between them?

Library collections covered by this GRS consist of information and materials collected by Federal libraries and information centers to support their agency's users (agency employees, military personnel, embassy personnel, etc.) and mission. Library collections may include reference copies of agency publications and related books, journals, and electronic resources. 36 CFR 1222.14 defines most material held in library collections as non-records.

Special collections are library and archival material characterized by its intrinsic, historic, or unique nature, regardless of format (*e.g.*, rare books, manuscripts, photographs, institutional archives). These collections rarely circulate, and are often in a secure area. They may need special handling and require special preservation. Thus, what distinguishes special collections from library collections is that the former tend to include unique materials, often including archival materials (records) that often need special care. [1]

4. Why doesn't the GRS cover administration of special collections?

The GRS schedules records based on content, not type. GRS 4.4 schedules records that agencies create in the course of routinely administering and managing a library. While special collections involve similar functions, their administrative records are less likely to be routine. Since special collections contain unique material, their management creates records specific to special business processes: accessioning, special handling, access restrictions, security, tracking, preservation requirements, and loans to external entities, to name a few. In addition, agencies often prove the authenticity and provenance of special collection items through records showing chain of custody. The historical value of these records must

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[1] Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) http://www.oclc.org/research/publications/library/2010/2010-11.pdf, p. 16.

be linked to the value of the special collection itself. For these reasons, it is not possible to include these records in a GRS.

5. My agency creates and publishes special reports, journals, and magazines that are in the library collection. Are these permanent records?

It depends on whether the library maintains the record copy or a reference copy. Agencies typically schedule their own publications as permanent records. Libraries often collect and make available agency publications for reference purposes. Copies the library keeps only for reference are non-record and the agency does not need to schedule them. If the library maintains the recordkeeping copy of its agency's publications, then they are records and the agency must schedule them.

6. My library creates and maintains a website. Can we use this GRS for our library website?

This GRS covers described records (for instance, "promotional material describing library services and resources" in item 010 and "catalog searches and circulation of material" in item 020) whether the agency implements their function via hard-copy records in real space or via a website. Many library online resources are non-record material (reference material, books, newspapers, *etc*.), which the agency does not need to schedule. As a result of the mix of materials that may be on a given website, this GRS does not automatically cover *all* records on a Federal library website *per se*. We also note that an agency may choose to schedule its website(s) individually or collectively as its "web presence."

QUESTION RELATED TO ITEM 020

7. Item 020 covers records that contain information about library users (circulation records, research requests, sign-in sheets, etc.) that likely include personally identifiable information (PII). Why are there are no instructions for how agencies should handle PII?

The GRS provides instructions for how long agencies must retain records, not how agencies internally manage their records. Agencies should include handling PII as part of their policies and procedures; it is outside the scope of the GRS.