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Information Security Oversight Office

National Archives and Records Administration



700 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20408

ISOO Notice 2009-04: “Best Practices” for Declassification Review Record Keeping

October 10, 2008

While conducting assessments of agency automatic declassification reviews in the summer of 2008, Information Security Oversight Office staff observed several “best practices” in the declassification review record keeping procedures of several agencies. These practices ensured that agency review decisions would be accurately recorded for future actions (e.g., systematic declassification review of exempted information, referral processing, and archival processing). These “best practices” include:

- **The use of a database to record agency decisions.** Agencies should create, use, and maintain a database that records, at a minimum, records series descriptive information, location, box number, folder descriptive information, the review date, and the data recorded on the SF 715 concerning declassification, referral, exemption, and exclusion for each decision made during reviews conducted under the automatic declassification provisions.
- **The use of box summary sheets.** Agencies should create box summary sheets that stay with each box of reviewed records that summarize the decisions made on the records in that box. These summary sheets, particularly when produced from the information recorded in the declassification database, serve as a hard-copy backup of the review decisions, and ensure the preservation of those decisions in case the declassification database cannot be accessed by future reviewers or archivists or a problem arises with a SF 715. The sheets should include at a minimum the identifiers necessary to enable ready access to associated agency created documentation. Such sheets should be placed in a new folder at the front of each box.
- **The use of NARA tracking numbers.** For reviews of records that are in the physical custody of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), the recording of persistent NARA tracking numbers is highly recommended. These numbers include, among others, the NARA accession number, such as “NN3-319-01-009;” the Federal Record Center transfer number, such as “319-75A-0035;” and the Record Group (RG) and Master Location Register (MLR) entry numbers, such as, “RG 319 UD-UP 45.” The recording of these numbers ensures that declassification review actions will be able to be tracked throughout the lifecycle of those records.

Please direct any questions regarding this ISOO notice to: isoo@nara.gov.