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RECORDS AND ARCHIVES FOR CLUBS, REGIONS, NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS AND NETWORKS

For the purpose of this document, references to SIGBI Limited and Soroptimist International will be written as "SIGBI" and "SI" only.

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Records and Archives Guidelines 1: Introduction to Records and Archives

Records and Archives

The two terms, records and archives, are often used interchangeably but there are differences between them. This is the first of a series of guidelines which aims to provide advice and information on how to manage records effectively and how to determine what should be kept as a permanently source of information about the work of Soroptimists.

What are Records?

Records are simply the recorded information created by or received in the course of the work and activities of Soroptimists, whether at club, regional, national or international level. This might include minutes, reports, accounts and other financial documentation, correspondence, photographs, video, websites and posts on Facebook and Twitter. As this list illustrates, records can be in any form and any medium.

Records are an important asset for any organisation because they provide evidence of processes, decisions and actions. If they are well managed, information can be found quickly and easily, and so help with the smooth running of any aspect of Soroptimists' activities. However, at some point, records will cease to be of regular administrative use. A decision then should be made about what happens to the records. Some, such as financial records, must be kept for a specific period of time for legal purposes; this is known as a retention period and advice on this can be found in:

Records and Archives Guidelines 3: Retention periods for records produced by Soroptimist clubs in the UK and Ireland in the SIGBI Federation

Records and Archives Guidelines 4: Retention of records produced by Regions and National Associations in the SIGBI Federation.

Other records be destroyed as they are of no long-term value and some may be kept permanently.

What are Archives?

Archives are records that are permanently retained because they judged to be of long-term value. This importance may relate to governance, such as a club charter and minutes. Records may also be retained permanently because they are of historical interest and contribute to the story of Soroptimism and its values and impact. There is a tendency to think of archives as 'old documents' and indeed Soroptimists may have boxes of old books and papers that they have inherited from former members or club officers. However, archives may also consist of much more recent material.

Records and Archives Guidelines 2: Managing records gives advice about deciding what to keep permanently and how and where archives should be stored.

Why do Records and Archives matter to Soroptimists?

1. They promote accountability: good management means that there is evidence available that justifies decisions and actions and ensures transparency.
2. They support current work: the record of what has happened in the past can stimulate discussion on current issues and inform decisions.
3. They demonstrate commitment and impact: records and archives show that the values and goals are, and have been, strong and consistent and can contribute to the evaluation of impact of the work of Soroptimists.
4. They can be used in outreach: the value of the work of Soroptimists can be shared in the wider community.
5. They help Soroptimists to celebrate: the work and commitment of members and officers at all levels can be seen and celebrated.
6. They contain our history: records and archives are the recorded memory of Soroptimism for current and future members.

Please contact the SIGBI Archivist on SIGBIarchives@gmail.com for advice and guidance on any aspect of managing and preserving these important assets.

Records and Archives Guidelines 2: Managing Records

The work of Soroptimists creates a lot of records. These guidelines provide advice for Club, Regional, National Association and Network officers on how to manage records which are in current use, how to store records and what to do with them when they reach the end of their administrative usefulness.

Current Records

It is likely that Club, Regional, National Association and Network officers will create and receive the majority of records, such as minutes, accounts, reports and correspondence. It is generally recommended that records should be retained by the responsible officers and passed on to their successors. Officers should keep the records for as long as they are required for the smooth running of the organisation. This is usually for at least the current year + 5 years for administrative records and the current year + 6 for financial records.

At the end of these retention periods, records may no longer be needed for reference on a regular basis. At this point, a decision can be made on whether to permanently preserve the records or to dispose of them. Detailed guidance on retention periods, what should be permanently preserved and what can be destroyed can be found in:

Records and Archives Guidelines 3: Retention periods for records produced by Soroptimist clubs in the UK and Ireland in the SIGBI Federation and Records.

Records and Archives Guidelines 4: Retention of records produced by Regions and National Associations in the SIGBI Federation.

Storing Current Records

All records should be stored appropriately; today's current active records will potentially become archives. Develop a filing system for print/physical records that reflects the work being carried out; for example, keep minutes for different groups and committees in separate folders. Avoid over-filling folders or boxes so that the papers or other printed material is not damaged.

As many records may be created in digital form, perhaps the most important thing to remember is that a back-up copy should be created. This could be a hard copy but this is not always desirable or necessary. A second digital copy, on a memory stick, for example, or cloud storage of some kind might be more appropriate (see also Records and Archives Guidelines 6: Digital Records).

Confidential records or records containing personal data should be stored securely and access restricted to only those who require information they contain. They must be destroyed appropriately, by shredding for example. When dealing with electronic records, good practice is to store confidential material in a separate folder, and ideally access should be password protected.

Appraising Records

When records come to the end of their retention period or are no longer essential for administrative or business purposes, they should be appraised to determine what can be disposed of and what should be retained permanently. It is good practice to do this annually. Generally, records which reflect the main work and administration of Soroptimism should be permanently retained. This does not mean that every document must be kept but careful consideration of records is important to ensure that vital information is not lost. The following advice may be helpful in making decisions about what to keep.

What to keep for Permanent Preservation:

Records and Archives Guidelines 3: Retention periods for records produced by Soroptimist clubs in the UK and Ireland in the SIGBI Federation and Records and Archives Guidelines 4: Retention of records produced by Regions and National Associations in the SIGBI Federation provide details of how long records should be kept and should be used in conjunction with these guidelines.

1. Records which provide evidence of governance should be retained permanently. This is the material that shows how Clubs, Regions, National Associations and Networks are/were organised and managed and how they promote the goals and values of Soroptimism. They might include minutes, reports, development plans, membership records and correspondence.
2. Records which illustrate the financial profile of a club, such as annual accounts or accounts relating to a specific project or event.
3. Records that illustrate the work and impact of Soroptimists. This might include records relating to programme action (such as returns to UKPAC), newsletters, reports on events, invitations, newspaper cuttings, photographs, video and correspondence with charities or other organisations which have benefitted from donations.

Remember, these records might well exist in digital format so when deciding what should be kept, make sure that records in all formats are considered. Records and Archives Guidelines 6: Digital Records provides additional advice on this.

What can be disposed of:

1. Duplicates: there is no need to keep more than one copy of items such as newsletters and reports.
2. Once the 6 year retention period for some financial records has expired, there is no need to keep them. Annual accounts, which **must** be kept permanently, capture the ongoing financial profile of a club so the more ephemeral items such as bank statements and invoices do not need to be kept. However, any items relating to a special or significant event, especially where other evidence exists, such as reports, correspondence or photographs, may be worth retaining permanently as they add to the story.
3. Items which have no long-term significance to the club. These are sometimes called ephemeral records and it may be more difficult to determine whether they should be kept or not. Things to consider when making this decision might include:
 - Is the same information contained elsewhere? For example, rough notes might be later recorded in minutes or reports.
 - Is there any contextual information? For example, a note with random sums of money with no date or record of what they were for tells us nothing useful.
 - Does the item relate to the work of the club/region? Records retained permanently should contribute to the story of the club/region. Printed items, such as leaflets about places visited or about the work of a charity to which a donation has been made do not fall into this category.

Disposal

Records which are not identified for permanent retention should be destroyed appropriately. Some could be placed in normal paper waste for recycling, for example printed leaflets. However, this is not appropriate for items that contain personal, sensitive or financial information. These should be shredded. See Records and Archives Guidelines 6: Digital Records for advice on disposal of digital records.

'Inherited' Records

Officers may find that when they take over a role, they acquire a large amount of documentation, some of which may date back many years. Sometimes records are passed on to clubs by former members or their family. If this is the case, it is good practice to sort through them and determine what can be disposed of and what should be retained permanently, as described above. It is best to keep older records in a cool, stable environment away from the risk of damp, dirt and fire. Attics, lofts, sheds and garages are not recommended.

Depositing Records with a Local Record Office

Records selected for permanent retention do not have to be kept in an officer's house; it may best to deposit them with a local record office for secure, safe keeping.

Most local authorities have a county record, or county archives office. One of the functions of the county record office is to preserve materials from a wide range of sources, such as charities, independent local organisations, churches, schools and businesses.

Records of an organisation such as Soroptimism are of interest to record offices, as they cast light on social changes and the role of women in society and may also contain evidence relating to local and national events. It is definitely worth contacting the local record office to discuss the possibility of depositing the records of a club or region. More details can be about depositing records can be found in Records and Archives Guidelines 5: Depositing records with a county record office.

If you need any advice on the management, storage, preservation and use of records, please contact the SIGBI Archivist on SIGBIarchives@gmail.com

Records and Archives Guidelines 3: Retention Periods for Records Produced by Soroptimist Clubs in the UK and Ireland

As well as the material that is created or received in the course of current activities, a club may also have records relating to work dating back several years, perhaps even to the year of foundation. These records are an asset but need to be managed appropriately and not everything needs to be kept forever (see Records and Archives Guidelines 2: Managing Records). The schedule below identifies how long records should be retained in order to meet statutory requirements and to ensure that the work of a club is preserved.

Records	Retention period	Officer responsible
Club charter	Permanent while a club is in existence. If a club closes, the original charter must be returned to SIGBI HQ.	Secretary
Minutes		
AGM minutes – signed copies	Current year + 5 years then permanent preservation	Secretary
Minutes of club meetings -signed copies	Current year + 5 years then permanent preservation	Secretary
Minutes of executive meetings – signed copies	Current year + 5 years then permanent preservation	Secretary
Officers' reports		
Officers' annual reports	Current year + 5 years then permanent preservation	Secretary
Officers' reports (if not included in minutes)	Current year + 5 years then permanent preservation	Secretary
Financial		
Annual accounts – signed copy	Current financial year + 6 years then permanent preservation	Treasurer
Financial records. This could include: Bank statements Bank paying in counterfoils/receipts Invoices Cash books (receipts and payments) Petty cash records Gift Aid documentation Expenses accounts and records Correspondence relating to donations	Six years from the end of the financial year in which the transaction was made. Clubs may want to retain for permanent preservation any records which relate to significant events. A sample could be kept for permanent preservation to illustrate changes in costs, for example, 1 year in 10. The remainder should be destroyed.	Treasurer
Other records		
Annual membership list	Current year + 5 years then permanent preservation	Secretary or Membership Officer
Programme	Current year + 5 years then permanent preservation	Secretary
Club development plan	Current year + 5 years then permanent preservation	Secretary

Correspondence	Any correspondence that records major policy decisions, financial issues, events or activities that reflect the aims, values and impact of Soroptimism should be retained permanently. However, duplicates and ephemeral material such as compliments slips can be removed. Other correspondence should only be retained while it is of administrative value and then destroyed.	Secretary
Club newsletter	One copy only. Current year + 5 years then permanent preservation	Secretary
Annual Charter Dinner programme and invitation list	Current year + 5 years then permanent preservation	Secretary
Copies of returns to SIGBI or UKPAC relating to membership and Programme Action	Current year + 5 years then permanent preservation	Secretary or appropriate club officer
Photographs/scrapbooks	Permanent	President, officers and members as appropriate.

The list above is not exclusive. Clubs may hold other records and if advice is needed on their retention, please contact the SIGBI Archivist by email at SIGBIarchives@gmail.com.

What should not be kept for Long Term Preservation

When no longer required for administrative purposes, the following do not need to be kept unless they contain material that specifically relates to the activities or work of your club:

- SI and SIGBI reports
- Federation, SIGBI or SI newsletters (or newsletters from other regions)
- Conference papers

Digital Records

In the past, records such as minutes or accounts were handwritten in books or ledgers and correspondence came by post. However, the advent of easily accessible computers and the rise of the internet has changed the way clubs keep records. Club records are now often born digital; that is, they are created electronically. Moreover, most circulation of information and correspondence is now done by email and photographs are taken on smart phones or digital cameras. Born digital records come with their own challenges and opportunities and advice on managing and retaining such material can be found in Records and Archives Guidelines 6: Digital Records.

Disposal and Storage

Those records which are not earmarked for permanent preservation should be disposed of appropriately; shredding is the best approach to ensure no personal information is disclosed. Records which should be kept permanently need to be appropriately stored but this does not necessarily mean they have to move between members' houses as officers change. There are other options to be considered such as deposit of the records with a local country record office. More advice on storage and disposal can be found in Records and Archives Guidelines 2: Managing records.

If you need any advice on the management, storage, preservation and use of records, please contact the SIGBI Archivist on SIGBIarchives@gmail.com

Records and Archives Guidelines 4: Retention of Records Produced by Regions, National Associations and Networks

As well as the material that is created or received in the course of current activities, Regions and National Associations may also have records relating to work dating back several years. These records are an asset but need to be managed appropriately and not everything needs to be kept forever (see Records and Archives Guidelines 2: Managing Records). The schedule below identifies how long records should be retained in order to meet statutory requirements and to ensure that the work of Regions and National Associations is preserved.

Records	Retention period	Officer responsible
Minutes		
AGM minutes -signed copies	Current year + 5 years then permanent preservation	Secretary
Executive meeting minutes – signed copies	Current year + 5 years then permanent preservation	Secretary
Council meeting minutes – signed copies	Current year + 5 years then permanent preservation	Secretary
Officers’ annual reports	Current year + 5 years then permanent preservation	Secretary
Financial		
Annual accounts	6 years from the end of the financial year then permanent preservation	Treasurer
Financial records. This could include: Bank statements Bank paying in counterfoils/receipts Invoices Cash books (receipts and payments) Petty cash records Gift Aid documentation Expenses accounts and records Correspondence relating to donations	Six years from the end of the financial year in which the transaction was made. Officers may want to retain for permanent preservation any records which relate to significant events. A sample could be kept for permanent preservation to illustrate changes in costs, for example, 1 year in 10. The remainder should be destroyed.	Treasurer
Other records		
Regional development plan	Current year + 5 years then permanent preservation	Development Officer
Annual Directory	Current year + 5 years then permanent preservation	Secretary
Programme of council meetings	Current year + 5 years then permanent preservation	Secretary
Regional conference programme and reports	Current year + 5 years then permanent preservation	Organisers
Newsletter produced by Region/ National Association – 1 copy of each	Current year + 5 years then permanent preservation	Secretary
Correspondence	Any correspondence that records major policy decisions, financial issues, events or activities that reflect the aims, values	Secretary

	and impact of Soroptimism should be retained permanently. However, duplicates and ephemeral material such as compliments slips can be removed. Other correspondence should only be retained while it is of administrative value and then destroyed.	
Photographs/scrapbooks	Permanent	President, officers and members as appropriate.

The list above is not exclusive. Clubs may hold other records and if advice is needed on their retention, please contact the SIGBI Archivist by email at SIGBIarchives@gmail.com.

What should not be kept for Long Term Preservation

Regions

When no longer required for administrative purposes, the following do not need to be kept unless they contain material that specifically relates to the activities or work of your region:

- SI and SIGBI reports
- Federation, SIGBI or SI newsletters (or newsletters from other regions)
- Conference papers

National Associations/Networks

National Associations/Networks may wish to keep copies of SI and Federation material which may be of future relevance to their area.

Digital Records

In the past, records such as minutes or accounts were handwritten in books or ledgers and correspondence came by post. However, the advent of easily accessible computers and the rise of the internet has changed the way records are kept. Records are now often born digital; that is, they are created electronically. Moreover, most circulation of information and correspondence is now done by email and photographs are taken on smart phones or digital cameras. Born digital records come with their own challenges and opportunities and advice on managing and retaining such material can be found in Records and Archives Guidelines 6: Digital Records.

Disposal and Storage

Those records which are not earmarked for permanent preservation should be disposed of appropriately; shredding is the best approach to ensure no personal information is disclosed. Records which should be kept permanently need to be appropriately stored but this does not necessarily mean they have to move between members' houses as officers change. There are other options to be considered such as deposit of the records with a local country record office. More advice on storage and disposal can be found in Records and Archives Guidelines 2: Managing Records.

If you need any advice on the management, storage, preservation and use of records, please contact the SIGBI Archivist on SIGBIarchives@gmail.com

Records and Archives Guidelines 5: Depositing Records with a County Record Office

Working with a local record office is a good way to ensure that Soroptimist records which are identified for permanent preservation are stored safely and securely. Contact details are usually easily accessible on the Internet and a directory can be found on The National Archives website on <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/find-an-archive>

The first step is to contact the record office and ask to speak to or meet an archivist. Record offices do not always accept everything they are offered for deposit, so it is useful to be prepared to explain what Soroptimism is and how its work captured in the records contributes to an understanding of local, regional and national issues relating to women. It is a good idea to have some information about the records you have identified for permanent preservation (e.g. type of records, dates covered, quantity). If the record office agrees to take the records, then you also need to consider the following:

1. Deposit or gift.

When records are deposited in a record office, ownership is retained by the organisation which created them. The records are in effect on long-term loan, and the record office staff would care for them on behalf of the depositor. If records are given as a gift, then legal ownership is passed to the record office.

It is recommended that records are **deposited** with a record office so that ownership is retained by Soroptimists and that an agreement is made with the record office in relation to how often records should be transferred.

It is also useful to have an agreement with the record office relating to whether archives could be borrowed for an anniversary for example, or an exhibition.

2. Access

When records are deposited in a record office, it is usual for them to be catalogued so that they can be used. However, this may not happen immediately, so it is useful if clubs can provide an overview of what is being deposited so that archivists know what they have. This could be very brief; for example, 'club meeting minutes, 1955-1995 (8 volumes)'.

Records are usually subject to a closure period of 30 years from the date of the last entry/record. During a closure period, records cannot be used by anyone who may wish to carry out research, such as historians, social scientists or genealogists. However, some records contain personal and/or sensitive information and in this case, it is normal to have a much longer closure period. This is often 100 years. Archivists will be able to advise on this when the records are deposited.

All the above issues should be covered in a record office's standard deposit agreement but don't hesitate to ask questions about any issues relating to the transfer of Soroptimist records. The SIGBI Archivist can also be contacted for general information on local county record offices or advice on depositing records on SIGBIarchives@gmail.com

Records and Archives Guidelines 6: Digital Records

It is likely that many of the records created or received by Club, Regional, National Association and Network officers will be in digital form. Minutes, accounts and reports are created on a PC and files sent as attachments for ease of circulation. Discussion of issues and organisation of events may well be carried out by email and membership records may be kept on a spreadsheet. Photograph albums and scrapbooks have perhaps been replaced by photographs taken on phones or tablets. However, digital records are vulnerable in many ways and they also need to be managed carefully and, where appropriate, preserved for future generations of Soroptimists.

Why are Digital Records vulnerable?

Digital records are in some ways more fragile than paper records as they are at risk of the following:

1. Digital records are dependent of software and hardware and this technology changes and becomes obsolescent. This might mean that it becomes impossible to access and use records.
2. The media on which digital records are stored can become unstable. Hard drives, memory sticks and CDs all have a limited life span
3. Digital records can be corrupted by viruses.
4. Files, emails and photographs may be accidentally deleted and so are lost.
5. Digital records tend to be spread across a variety of places so it can be difficult to keep track of them. They might be on PCs, tablets, phones, memory sticks or CDs.

All of this means that it is wise to take active steps to ensure that digital records are not overlooked and that their survival is protected.

Managing Digital Records

Good management of digital records will help ensure important information is not lost. Some suggestions are listed below.

1. Preservation of digital archives can start the moment they are created through good management. For example, if minutes are written on a PC, create folders for different types of minutes, such as club meeting minutes and executive meeting minutes. Individual documents should be saved with a title that will make sense to successors; 'My report' is not helpful but 'Secretary's monthly report' is much better.

Ideally, include a date. For minutes, this should be the date of the meeting. The date of a report might be the date at which it was presented to an audience (e.g. a club meeting). Although it may seem strange, using the dating format YYYYMMDD (e.g. 16 August 2019 = 20190816) is advisable. This means that documents will appear in chronological order, making it easy to locate information. Using this, a secretary's report might have the title '20190816 secretary's report'.

2. Organise emails into subject folders rather than letting them build up in an unsorted mass. Having subject folders makes it much easier to find information quickly and easily and can prevent the accidental deletion of important information.

You may want to store copies of important emails which record decisions or other important information on your computer. This can usually be done by opening the email, right click and then 'save as' in an appropriate folder.

3. Save attachments from emails in a relevant folder rather than leaving them with the email – which might get deleted. It can be useful to note the source of the attachment in a file name too, so that you know who sent it to you, e.g. '20190624 quarterly financial report sent by treasurer'. In this case, the date should be the date of the email to which it was attached. This means that when someone says 'the report was with the email I sent on 24th June', the file can be much more easily located.

4. It is very easy to take multiple photographs at events and special occasions and many of these might be taken on smart phones and so are vulnerable to loss; do we always download the photographs to a PC, for example? It is a good idea to download a sample of photographs and store them in folders, with an appropriate name (e.g. '20191106 annual charter dinner'). Give individual photographs an appropriate title too.

Storage

Active steps also need to be taken to ensure digital records are stored in such a way as to ensure their survival. The following suggestions will help to preserve your digital records.

1. Always have a back-up copy of records. The records saved on the hard drive of a computer, for example, should also be copied to a memory stick or a CD (although CDs have less storage space). Alternatively, you could store the back-up copies on a cloud storage.
2. Hard disks, memory sticks and other media physically decay or become outdated. Make sure that when you move from an old computer to a new one that all records are transferred. If material is left on the old device, at some point it may be impossible to access it and these potential archives are lost to the future.
3. Make sure your computer has good virus protection. Viruses can significantly corrupt files making them impossible to access.
4. Paper could be a backup option for absolutely crucial records

Digital records should be treated in the same way as paper record in relation to retention, appraisal, disposal or permanent preservation (see Records and Archives Guidelines 2: Managing records). The main difference is that digital records deposited in a local record office will be on media such as a memory stick, external hard drive or CD.

Disposal of Digital Records

Just as with paper records, digital records may contain personal, sensitive or confidential information so they must be disposed of appropriately. Remember that deleted documents will move to a recycle bin where they are stored until automatically deleted. If you want to remove a record from the recycle bin before this process takes place, you will need to do so manually. In the case of digital records which contain sensitive or confidential information, it would be best to electronically shred them, to ensure permanent deletion. This can usually be done through the security software installed on a computer.

Please contact the SIGBI Archivist on SIGBIarchives@gmail.com for advice and guidance on any aspect of managing and preserving these important assets.