



Office of the Secretary of State
Washington State Archives

Records Management Advice

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Using Records Retention Schedules: Notorious/Historically Significant Court Exhibits and Recordings of Proceedings

Purpose: Provide guidance to Superior Court Clerks on the identification and retention of notorious/historically significant exhibits & records of oral testimony and proceedings.

The *County Clerk and Superior Court Records Retention Schedule* includes a records series that covers **exhibits** (DAN CL65-01-22) and another that covers records of **oral testimony and proceedings**, including court reporter notes and transcriptions as well as audio/video/digital recordings (DAN CL50-01-12). Both series have “Archival” designations because certain records may have enduring historical value for future research.

The Superior Court Clerk determines the historical significance of exhibits and records of oral testimony and proceedings from civil, criminal, juvenile offender, and other types of cases.

The following list provides criteria that may be considered by the Clerk when evaluating whether exhibits or recordings are **notorious or historically significant**:

- *Did the incident have a lasting impact on the community (water rights, tidal lands, etc.)?*
- *Did the case attain significant contemporary public notoriety beyond the community?*
- *Is the case frequently cited in scholarly or professional literature or other resources?*
- *Has the case caused a change in policies or laws?*
- *Was the case controversial?*
- *Was the defendant acquitted of serious charges on grounds of insanity?*
- *Was the case a three-strikes/life imprisonment or death penalty case?*
- *Was the case the subject of a well-known book or feature film?*

The following list provides criteria relating to **format** that may be considered by the Clerk when evaluating whether exhibits or recordings should be transferred to Washington State Archives:

- *Are the records of oral testimony & proceedings in an accessible format (written transcriptions, decipherable reporter’s notes, .wav, .mp3, .tiff)?*
- *Do the exhibits have long-term research value, such as maps, charts, photographs/visuals/graphics, artifacts (ransom notes, drawings, weapons, etc.)?*

If a case meets one or more of the above criteria, the exhibits and/or the records of oral testimony and proceedings must not be destroyed. Instead, the Clerk should contact Washington State Archives to discuss archival transfer pursuant to [RCW 40.14.070\(2\)\(a\)\(iii\)](#) and [RCW 36.23.070](#).

**Additional advice regarding the management of public records is available from
Washington State Archives:**

www.sos.wa.gov/archives
recordsmanagement@sos.wa.gov