

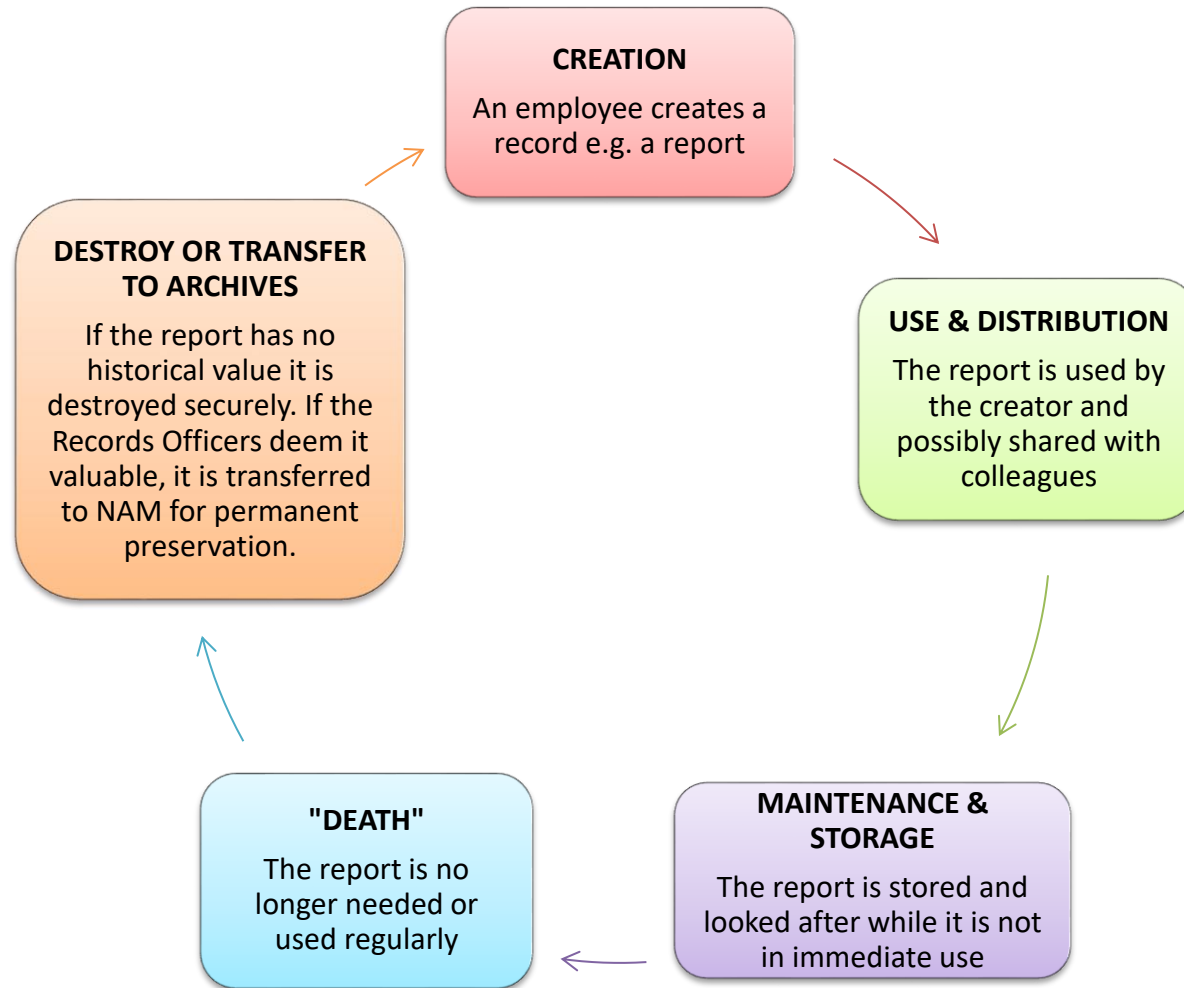
What is a Record?

Records are everywhere, and almost everybody has them. A receipt is a record of items purchased; a drawing of a street is a record of a location; an audio recording is a record of someone's voice and the information it conveys, and photographs and video recordings are records of what was in front of a camera lens. These are all everyday items that people encounter, create and possess all over the world.

Malta has a profound, longstanding and cosmopolitan history which is documented in thousands of letters, photographs, drawings, maps, plans, and an array of other records which are housed at NAM. From the Giuliana Masini (1509-1940), which documents almost all of the Gozitan families, to the documentation of Malta's independence from the United Kingdom in 1964, the preservation of historically significant Maltese documents helps illustrate what happened both centuries ago and in our lifetime.

Records have "Lifecycles"

Different records are generated everyday within government departments and agencies. What happens to those documents? Typically, they follow the basic "Record Lifecycle":



What happens when records arrive at NAM?

When records arrive at the National Archives, they are repackaged (transferred into acid-free boxes and folders, and cleaned if necessary). The physical condition of the records is noted, so that items may be referred to the conservation team later on. During the sorting phase the archivist or archives assistant tries to understand the context of the records e.g. who created them, why, and what is the structure and original order of the collection? Knowing the answer to these questions makes understanding the records and their arrangement much easier. When creating a basic inventory of the records, information is recorded, such as a summary of what is contained in the records, who created them (e.g. from which agency or department did they originate?), and covering dates. Following these initial stages, records are arranged and described more thoroughly, so that more comprehensive catalogues and indexes can be produced. These finding aids allow the archives to be searched much more easily and efficiently.

Preservation:

Records are packaged and stored according to archival standards, so that they do not deteriorate over time. Continued copying and handling causes small amounts of accumulative damage to records. Items that are in an extremely poor state are not available to researchers, as a measure to protect the records from further damage. Very fragile records are treated in the on-site Conservation Laboratory.