# The Document Life Cycle

- Document life cycle is divided, by frequency of reference, into *"active" and" inactive"* (less active) stages
- Active stage: timely availability of information, storage medium must permit convenient retrieval
- Inactive stage: concerned with retention of information, storage medium must provide cost-effective, reliable retention of documents often for long periods of time
- Life cycle applies to documents in paper, microfilm or electronic formats.
- Retention periods are estimates of life cycle duration for specific types of documents
- Paper, micrographics and electronic formats each have strengths and limitations
- The strength of one storage medium often complements the limitations of the other
- A mix media approach combines the distinctive advantage of paper, micrographics and electronic formats to satisfy specific life cycle requirements that cannot be satisfied by a single document management methodology or technology

| Format | Strengths | Limitations |
|---|---|---|
| Paper | • Paper is familiar, convenient and a versatile reference medium<br>• Paper documents are portable in reasonable quantities and can easily be reproduced by photocopiers<br>• Paper requires no special hardware or software for reference, an advantage for both active and inactive stages of the document life cycle<br>• Legal status of paper is well established for recordkeeping requirements and admissibility in evidence | • (active stage): subject to wear and tear, difficult to organize for effective retrieval, difficult to control when removed from filing areas<br>• (inactive stage): require a considerable amount of space, cost of record centre storage<br>• Can be misfiled, lost or stolen |
| Micrographics | • Micrographics technology provides miniaturizes information. It offers compact, economical and reliable storage for both active and inactive stages of the document life cycle<br>• Micrographics are easy to handle, reduce storage space requirement by 95 per cent or more compared to paper<br>• Microfilm offers superior physical and chemical stability for archival retention of documents (polyester based silver gelatin microfilm, 500 years) (acetate based silver gelatin microfilm, 100 years)<br>• Microfilm images contain human readable information and have minimal hardware and software dependencies<br>• Micrographic images created today will be compatible with display and printing equipment introduced in the future<br>• Legal status of microfilm images is well established for recordkeeping requirements and admissibility in evidence | • Indexing<br>• Slow retrieval |
| **Electronic formats** | • Encompass digitized document images and character-coded textual documents<br>• Offer superior references functionality for the active stage of the document life cycle<br>• Well suited to applications requiring rapid retrieval of documents, remote access to documents or controlled documents<br>• Electronic documents are stored on hard drives or in optical disk autochangers for rapid fully automated access<br>• Retrieve documents can be displayed, printed or routed to other users<br>• Unlike paper records, then cannot be damage by use, stolen or misplaced<br>• Greatly reduce storage space when compared to paper<br>• When properly authenticated, electronic documents are admissible as evidence in trials or other legal proceedings | • *limitations* for document retention, the principal concern of inactive stage<br>• Hard disk drives cannot be considered stable storage media as information is vulnerable to damage through hardware malfunctions<br>• Electronic documents recorded on hard drives must be copied onto optical disks or magnetic tapes for offline storage, a concern for documents that must be retained for a long period of time<br>• Anticipated life span is 30 years or less<br>• Optical disks and magnetic tapes are designed for use with specific hardware and software components<br>• An electronic retrieval system installed today is likely to be replaced or significantly upgraded within five or six years |

## Media-mixed Solutions

- Paper, micrographics and electronic formats each have strengths for document management but no single medium offers the best solution for all phases or the document life cycle
- *Paper:* convenient for reference copy but require large amount of space
- *Electronic format*: provide excellent retrieval during the active stage of the document life cycle, but poorly suited for retention of information for long period of time
- *Micrographics:* very well suited to long even permanent retention of documents. Micrographic technology also provides good functionality for the active stage of the document life cycle
- Paper, micrographics and electronic formats CAN and MUST coexist in document management applications.
- A mixed-media approach effectively addresses the active and inactive stages of the document life cycle. Document formats complement and supplement each other, the strengths of one format addresses the limitations of the others