Managing Email:
Keywords for Identifying Specific Types of Email for Possible Deletion
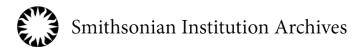
Deleting email that is no longer needed can be an overwhelming task if it has not been done routinely in the past. A good first step is to identify messages that really should not be there, such as emails containing personnel information or personal emails not related to Smithsonian business. A good second step is to identify messages that have no business value, such as emails related to social activities with colleagues.

This document suggests keywords that can be used to make the process of deleting (also known as "weeding" or "culling") and organizing email more manageable. Keywords can be entered into the email program's search box. The search results will provide a subset of messages that contain that keyword somewhere within the message or attachment, though not every message in the search results will be on topic. Staff will still need to look at most of the messages to determine if they can be deleted, but there will be far fewer messages in the search results than in the account as a whole.

Keep in mind that keywords will not catch every message related to a particular topic. Always keep an eye out for additional messages which should be deleted.

Tips for using keywords:

- Search "Entire Mailbox" rather than just the inbox.

- Use quotation marks around phrases.

- Use categories or flags to mark emails that have already been looked at and will not be deleted. If the emails show up in the search results of another keyword, they can be ignored.

- Skip keywords that are not useful. For instance, if the keyword "performance" results in thousands of messages about musical acts instead of personnel, move to the next keyword.

- Try combinations of keywords, particularly a topic with the name of an individual, to narrow the search results.

- Remember that search results include messages with a keyword in the attachment.

- Always check content of message before deleting to ensure it should be deleted.

- Remember to empty the items in the Deleted folder.

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Personnel Information

With few exceptions, the Smithsonian Institution's central Office of Human Resources and its equivalents at the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory and Smithsonian Enterprises are responsible for all personnel documentation related to individual Federal and Trust staff. Emails, including their attachments, containing sensitive personnel information related to individuals should be deleted once there is no longer a business need for that email.

For most staff, emails pertaining to general personnel matters, such as staffing levels or reorganization, without containing personal information related to individuals can generally be deleted or kept for reference purposes. Central and unit human resources staff as well as unit directors and department heads may be required to treat some emails regarding general personnel matters as permanent records if the information is not maintained in another format.

Please note that if there is active or potential litigation to which the personnel information may be subject, move the email into a folder labeled accordingly but do not delete until given permission.

Common Keywords Found in Emails with Personnel Information:

Personnel
Overtime
Compensation
Benefits
Position Description
Names of individual OHR liaisons
Salary
Payroll
Exit Clearance
Performance
Performance Appraisal
EPMS
OPF or eOPF
Applications
Retire or Retirement
Annual Leave
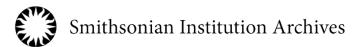Sick Leave
Maternity Leave
Paternity Leave
Leave Without Pay
Family Medical Leave Act or FMLA
Administrative Leave
Telework
Equal Employment Opportunity or EEO
Office of Human Resources or OHR

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Office of Equal Employment and Minority Affairs or OEEMA
Office of General Counsel or OGC
Settlement
Accident
Injury
Disability
Accommodation
Reduction in Force or RIF
Social Security Number or SSN
Employee Identification or Employee ID or Emp ID
Badge
Orientation

Personal Emails

Email that is purely personal in nature should be deleted from institutional email accounts. It can first be forwarded to a personal email account if appropriate.

Common Keywords Found in Personal Emails:

Names and email addresses of family members and friends
Names of children's schools, daycares, summer camps, etc.
Names of external groups or professional associations
Names of contractors, doctors, lawyers, and service providers
Names of listservs, news alerts, and RSS feeds

Social Emails

Emails related to office social events can quickly clutter an inbox and generally have no business or long-term reference value.

Common Keywords Found in Social Emails:

Lunch
Happy Hour
Bar or Pub
Drinks
Baby Shower
Wedding Shower
Birthday
Retirement
Anniversary

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Party

Celebration

Gathering

Treats

Cater

Kitchen

Decorations

Coffee or Tea

Donuts, Cookies, Chocolate, Cake, Bagels, Danish, Candy, Pizza, etc.

Names of bars, restaurants, coffee shops, or caterers