
File Clerks

(0*NET 43-4071.00)

Nature of the Work

The amount of information generated by organizations continues to grow rapidly. File clerks classify, store, retrieve, and update this information. In many small offices, they often have additional responsibilities, such as entering data, performing word processing, sorting mail, and operating copying or fax machines. File clerks are employed across the Nation by organizations of all types.

File clerks, also called records, information, or record-center clerks, examine incoming material and code it numerically, alphabetically, or by subject matter. They then store paper forms, letters, receipts, or reports, or enter necessary information into other storage devices. Some clerks operate mechanized files that rotate to bring the needed records to them; others convert documents to film that is then stored on microforms, such as microfilm or microfiche. A growing number of file clerks use imaging systems that scan paper files or film and store the material on optical disks.

In order for records to be useful, they must be up to date and accurate. File clerks ensure that new information is added to files in a timely manner and may discard outdated file materials or transfer them to inactive storage. They also check files at regular intervals to make sure that all items are correctly sequenced and placed. Whenever records cannot be found, the file clerk attempts to locate the missing material. As an organization's needs for information change, file clerks implement changes to the filing system established by supervisory personnel.

When records are requested, file clerks locate them and give them to the person requesting them. A record may be a sheet of paper stored in a file cabinet or an image on microform. In the former case, the clerk retrieves the document manually and hands or forwards it to the requester. In the latter case, the clerk retrieves the microform and displays it on a microform reader. If necessary, file clerks make copies of records and distribute them. In addition, they keep track of materials removed from the files, to ensure that borrowed files are returned.

Increasingly, file clerks are using computerized filing and retrieval systems that have a variety of storage devices, such as a mainframe computer, CD-ROM, or floppy disk. To retrieve a document in these systems, the clerk enters the document's identification code, obtains the location of the document, and gets the document for the patron. Accessing files in a computer database is much quicker than locating and physically retrieving paper files. Still, even when files are stored electronically, backup paper or electronic copies usually are also kept.

Employment

File clerks held about 265,000 jobs in 2002. Although file clerk jobs are found in nearly every sector of the economy, more than 85 percent of these workers are employed in service-providing industries, including government. Health care establishments employed around 1 out of every 4 file clerks. About 1 out of every 3 worked part time in 2002.

Job Outlook

Employment of file clerks is expected to experience little or no growth through the year 2012. Projected job growth stems from rising demand for file clerks to record and retrieve information in organizations across the economy. This growth will be slowed, however, by productivity gains stemming from office automation and the consolidation of clerical jobs. Nonetheless, job opportunities



File clerks examine and classify material numerically, alphabetically, or by subject matter.

for file clerks should be plentiful because a large number of workers will be needed to replace workers who leave the occupation each year. Job turnover among file clerks reflects the lack of formal training requirements, limited advancement potential, and relatively low pay.

Jobseekers who have typing and other secretarial skills and who are familiar with a wide range of office machines, especially personal computers, should have the best job opportunities. File clerks should find opportunities for temporary or part-time work, especially during peak business periods.

(See the introductory statement on information and record clerks for information on working conditions, training requirements, and earnings.)