MANAGING GOVERNMENT RECORDS MODULE 1:

THE BENEFITS. WHY *ARCS* AND *ORCS*?

This module helps you to:

- Discover the benefits in taking appropriate steps

- Recognize bad habits and where they can lead

- Understand issues that require sound business practices in information management

Introduction

So you are starting a project and already you have a piece of paper with your notes on it. Something should be done with it.

However, you have just returned from a week's vacation and you have spent the day in meetings, answering voice message, and checking email.

You are tempted to put it aside for now. Thinking about having to look for the right code, or walking those extra feet to file it makes you want throw it in a "just for now folder".

Before you do that check out the top three reasons why this is about more than just filing; why it is really about using good business practices to make sure the information you create and use is appropriate and can be found again.

| The object of a classification system: |
| --- |
| To get the right information to the right person at the right time for whatever reason they need it, be it to make operational decisions, or for evidential purposes. |

Top 3 Reasons

(click on file folder)

Time well spent/Reducing frustration

If you think it takes a while to figure out the file number for a file or to go find it, click on the file next door to see all the things you lose time on when not employing good records business practices.
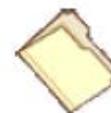
Minimizing legal liabilities

Yes, you too can be involved in litigation. That is when time spent on good records business practices lets you sleep at night.
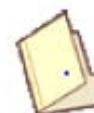
Enjoying "group" benefits

Poor records practices incur costs beyond frustration and potential legal liabilities.

Why ARCS?

Ministries and agencies must classify and apply approved retention schedules to their records in accordance with the *Information Management Act (IMA)* and related polices and guidelines established by Government Records Service (GRS), the central agency.

The BC Government uses the *Administrative Records Classification System (ARCS)* for its administrative records.

What is ARCS?

ARCS is a standard **classification system** that identifies and describes the administrative records created by government offices and organizes them into a structure that reflects administrative functions. This organizational structure ensures that records can be quickly and easily identified, documented and retrieved.

ARCS is also a **records scheduling system**. A records schedule is a timetable that governs the life span of a record from creation, through active use within an office and retention in off-site storage, to destruction or transfer to the government archives.

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The records schedules in *ARCS* ensure that administrative records are retained for the period of time required to meet legal, operational, audit, fiscal or other requirements of government. A records schedule also identifies records with enduring values and provides for their transfer to the government archives. And finally, records schedules provide for the timely destruction of administrative records when they are no longer required to support the government's administrative functions.

What are administrative records?

Administrative records document and support those functions that are common to all government offices, such as the management of facilities, property, finances, equipment and supplies, personnel, and information systems.

Administrative records also document common management processes, including committees, agreements, contract management, public information services, information and privacy, records management, postal services, and other related functions.

ARCS is divided into six numbered sections covering broad groupings of primary subjects corresponding to major administrative functions and program activities.

ARCS Sections

Subject	Primary Number
Administration	100 - 499
Buildings and Properties	500 - 699
Equipment and Supplies	700 - 899
Financial Management	900 - 1299
Human Resource Management	1300 - 1999
Information Technology	6000 - 6999

Now you know something about the administrative records of government.

Let us move on to look at the operational records of government, which are covered by records schedules commonly referred to as *ORCS*.

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What is ORCS?

ORCS stands for *Operational Records Classification System*. Operational records relate to the operations and services provided by a ministry or agency in carrying out the functions for which it is responsible according to statute, mandate or policy. Operational records are distinct from administrative records and are unique to each government organization. For example, the operational records of the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations will be quite different than those of the Ministry of Health.

ORCS are mandatory for ministries and agencies covered by the *Document Disposal Act*. Information Access Operations (IAO) establishes the standards for *ORCS* development and the format is the same as it is for *ARCS*. IAO also provides *ORCS* development services. The *ORCS* usually goes through several draft stages until a final product is produced. It is then reviewed by the Public Documents Committee (PDC), which is chaired by the provincial archivist, and includes the Comptroller General and a representative from the Ministry of Attorney General. After PDC approval, it goes to the Select Standing Committee on Public Accounts Committee (PAC) for recommendation to the Legislative Assembly, which provides final approval and transforms the *ORCS* into a legal document. As procedures and processes change within program areas, so should the *ORCS*.

Special schedules

Some categories of records or data have special retention and disposition requirements and are handled though the use of the 'special schedules' (i.e., transitory and executive records). These schedules are standardized for all ministries and agencies, and cover both administrative and operational records. They can be used effectively to dispose of records not covered by *ARCS* and *ORCS*.

Executive schedule note:

If you work in an executive office, you will use the Executive schedule #102906, which has a retention of SO 10y SR. Executive records are the administrative and operational records of the offices of ministers, deputy ministers, assistant deputy ministers, and equivalent positions. You would still code the records using *ARCS/ORCS*, but the executive retention period and final disposition supersedes the retentions in *ARCS/ORCS*, unless it is longer than 10 years. For more information, please refer to the schedule.

Click icon to see the entire list of special schedules -->

Go to Module 2, Classifying Records.