MANAGING GOVERNMENT RECORDS - MODULE 6

MANAGING ELECTRONIC RECORDS

This module helps you:

- Understand common issues, risks and solutions.
- Learn valuable tips and tricks.
- Manage electronic information effectively.

Introduction

Electronic records held on government network drives are government records that need to be managed according to the same standards as paper records. This means you need to classify, retain and dispose of electronic records using *ARCS* (*Administrative Records Classification System*) and *ORCS* (*Operational Records Classification System*). If you are not familiar with *ARCS* and *ORCS* or the basic principles of records management you should review Modules 1 through 5.

Here are some of the challenging issues facing government!

Overview

Most government employees have access to the office/branch shared drive where electronic documents are filed. However, many of these drives are organized in ways that are meaningful to only one or a few people. They may not appear logical or accessible to others who need to locate, file, or clean up the drive. As well, electronic records are being inappropriately stored in email accounts and personal drives, and are not easily accessed and certainly not well managed.

Local area network (LAN) or shared drives, email accounts, and personal drives are simply storage spaces and were not designed to manage records. In order to ensure we are meeting our recordkeeping obligations we need to adopt everyday practices to gain control and manage these electronic records.

The three common issues are:

1. Disorganized/large shared drives
2. Overly full email accounts
3. Government records on H: drives

Sounds like risky business! However, there are solutions.

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Managing Electronic Records

1. Large/Disorganized Shared Drives:

Issues:

- Not consistently organized.
- No *ARCS/ORCS* applied, so no lifecycle management.
- An abundance of drafts, duplicates, and transitory material.
- Information searches take too long and are frustrating.

Risks:

- Information is not accessible.
- Records are unmanaged.
- Confusion about final versions.
- Lack of business continuity.
- Large shared drives are difficult to back up, can crash servers, and incur extra charges.

Solutions:

- Organize your LAN using *ARCS/ORCS* (click picture to right for example).
- Establish naming conventions.
- Use the transitory records schedule.
- Do periodic maintenance.

2. Email Overload!

Issues:

- There is barely time to read them, let alone MANAGE them.
- They are too easy to send.
- They contain large volumes of transitory records.
- They are not normally transferred to other ministries if and when you move positions. That means they are left to be cleaned up by other staff.

Remember: emails are government records!

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Risks:

- Information is inaccessible to others.

- Government records may be destroyed too soon, or kept too long.

- Branch files are incomplete without emails.

Solutions:

- Customized cheat sheets – create a list of your commonly used *ARCS/ORCS* classifications.

- Determine which records are transitory and get rid of them.

- Organize your outlook folders.

- Periodically move emails to the shared drive, or print to file.

- If your office uses EDRMS (TRIM), link your Outlook folders to TRIM.

Email is a communication tool - not a filing cabinet

3. Government Records on H: Drives

Issues:

- Are not intended to hold government records.

- Personal drives are inaccessible to others.

- Personal drives are not transferable to other ministries when you move positions.

Risks:

- Government records are not managed.

- Records are hidden from colleagues, FOI, and litigation searches - but are known to exist.

- Deleted when you move to other ministries

Solutions:

- Do not save or move records to your H: drive.

- Move government records to the shared drive, or print to file.

- Move personal records (photos, recipes) off government servers.

Seven Easy TIPS and Tricks for Managing Electronic Records

Tip 1 - File as you go

Do not let your filing pile up. Sometimes easier said than done, but always worth it.

Tip 2 - Create customized cheat sheets

Create a list of your commonly used *ARCS/ORCS* classifications. This will help you to manage your information regardless of the storage medium (including email).

Tip 3 - Add file paths, names and dates to documents

- Add file paths, file names, and dates to document footers.
    - Windows 2003: click on the "View" menu item and choose "Header and Footer". Switch to "Footer". Under the 'Insert AutoText', click on 'Filename and path' and it will be inserted into your footer.
- Windows 2007:
    - Hover cursor over footer and right click, then click on the "edit footer" box that appears.
    - Position cursor where you want the file path, name or date to appear.
    - On the "Insert" ribbon, choose "Quick Parts", then "Field".
    - In the dialogue box that opens, scroll to and select "FileName.
    - Check option box on right that states "Add path to filename".
    - Click OK.
- Insert a "last revised" date in the footer; but be sure to update it every time you make changes.

Tip 4 - Establish Naming Conventions

- Facilitates better access to and retrieval of electronic documents.
- Allows sorting of documents in a logical sequence (e.g., version #, date).
- Helps users to identify the items they are looking for easily and supports the ability to recognize the content of a document from a list.
- Helps keep track of versions of documents.
- Design naming conventions that work for your office.

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Naming convention guides:

Service Alberta– Information Management - [Electronic Document Naming Conventions](#)

Here is an example of a document name using all seven elements of the naming convention. The elements you choose will be based on your particular needs.

Managing Electronic Records_V01_2008-08-29_msmith_IMB_PRC.doc

TITLE_VERSION_DATE_AUTHOR_ORGANIZATION_TYPE_EXTENSION

[ARCS Filing Guide in ARCS Online](#): This provides file codes for municipalities and regional districts and links to standardized file codes for ministries, provinces and territories, school districts, British Columbia provincial legislation, names of federal agencies, etc. These codes are guidelines, so if another code makes more sense for your office you should use it.

[Free Text Title Naming Guidelines for TRIM Folders and Documents](#): These are naming guidelines for entering a clear title with sufficient information into the Free Text Title field in TRIM. This helps to ensure searches in TRIM locate and retrieve all relevant records.

Tip 5 - Save Email to a Shared Drive

Saving email to a shared drive is a very simple process.

- Open or highlight the email you want to save.
- Windows 2003: Under 'File', choose 'Save As', your LAN will open (attachments will also be saved). Windows 2007: Click on the Office Button in the upper left corner. Choose 'Save As', then either save it into TRIM EDRMS or onto your LAN.
- Choose the appropriate folder to save it to.
- Under the 'File name' you can choose to rename your document or leave it to be the same as the 'subject' line in the email.
- Under the 'Save as type' you <u>should</u> change it to *.msg as this saves the email and any attachments and takes up less space than *.rtf .

Tip 6 - Copy Documents

- Minimize your Outlook and LAN so they are side by side.
- Click on the email you want to copy.
- Drag it to the appropriate LAN folder.
- This does not delete the email from outlook, so be sure to go back and delete the email.

Tip 7 - Use file path references in your emails

Instead of sending attachments, simply insert the hyperlink to the document in your email.

- Click on 'insert' in the Outlook menu bar. Choose 'Attach File'. Search for and select the document. Click on the 'Insert' drop-down menu and select 'Insert as Hyperlink'.

Next question - Which record is the official record? Think about it and then click on the person.

Conclusion

Information created and retained in 'electronic' form presents specific challenges for government. To properly manage government information on the LAN, classification and filing practices must be the incorporated into the use of the LAN. Cleaning up and organizing the LAN will enable staff to find information and support business operations and decisions. Information will be managed, well-structured and easily retrieved. The integrity of the records will be maintained and government will be adhering to government-wide polices and standards regarding the management of information.

Hopefully, we have shed some light on managing electronic information. We direct you to the link below for additional resources.

- Email Management

Wrap up:

Congratulations! You have completed the "Managing Government Records" Course. You should have a much better appreciation of how good recordkeeping is crucial both for your own work and for government as a whole. Now you can put into practice everything you have learned. Take the Self-Test Quiz to see how far you have come. Questions Answers You will need to have ARCS Online handy throughout the quiz.

If you would like to provide us with any feedback on this course, or if you have any questions, send an email to GRS@gov.bc.ca and we will be happy to assist you.