

ARCS and ORCS User Guide

2018 Version

Revision history

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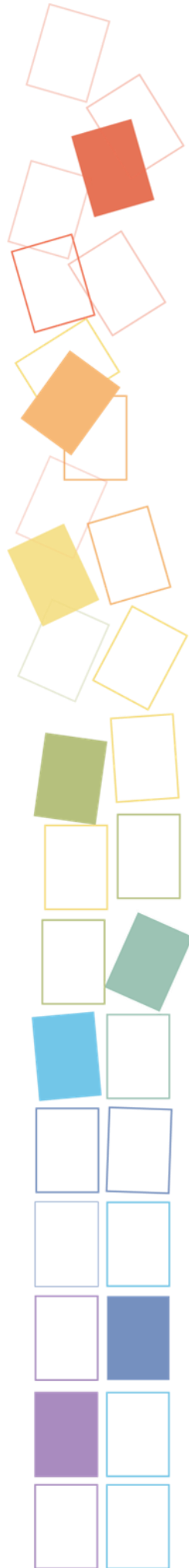


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1. Introduction

1.1 General

This document explains the purpose, organization, and elements of the *Administrative Records Classification System (ARCS)* and *Operational Records Classification Systems (ORCS)*. It is designed to help you understand, interpret and use *ARCS* and *ORCS*.

1.2 What are ARCS and ORCS?

ARCS and *ORCS* are integrated records classification and scheduling systems that facilitate the efficient and systematic organization, retrieval, storage, and disposition of the government's records. *ARCS* is the government standard for **administrative records**. *ORCS* are specific to **operational records**.

Administrative records are common to all offices. They support functions such as the management of facilities, property, material, finance, personnel, and information systems, as well as committee activities, agreement development, contract management, information services, and obtaining legal opinions.

Operational records are unique to each government organization. They support its operations and services in carrying out the functions for which it is responsible according to statute, mandate, or policy.

A **classification component** is required in most information schedules. Classification helps with filing and retrieval of records in an office recordkeeping system. It links records to one another and their business context. Classification reflects the functions, activities and purposes the records serve, as well as their value to the creating agency.

ARCS and *ORCS* are also records scheduling systems. An **information schedule** is a timetable that governs the life span of a record from creation and active use, to semi-active storage (if needed), and final disposition (destruction, transfer to the government archives, or other.)

Government information must be disposed of according to approved information schedules. Schedules prescribe timetables that govern the records' **life cycle** for the purposes of ensuring that:

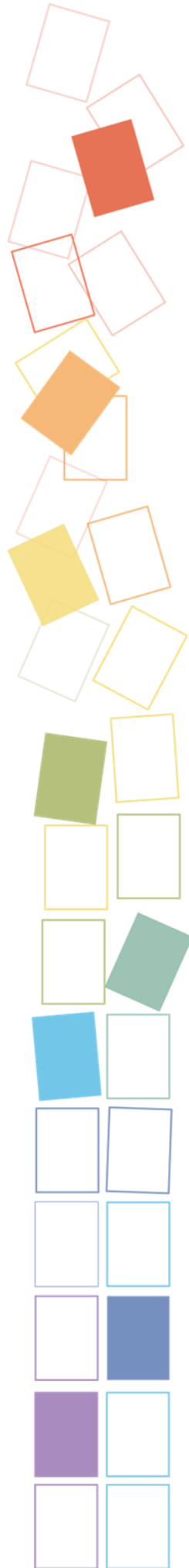
- records are retained as long as required for business purposes,
- records with permanent value are identified and protected, and
- other records are routinely destroyed when no longer needed.

For a selection of *ORCS* currently in use, see the [ORCS Library](#) on the Records Management [website](#).

2. How to Read a Primary

The **primary** – a function- or subject-based grouping of records – is the basic building block of *ARCS* and *ORCS*. Primaries are identified with a five-digit number in *ORCS* (three or four digits in *ARCS*) and a descriptive title. Primaries are subdivided into two-digit secondary classifications.

The first primary in each section is called a section default primary. It provides general information relating to primaries throughout the section.



The fictional sample primary on pages 14-15 includes pointers to text that explain each annotated element of the primary. Where necessary, these explanations will cover any variations between the *ORCS* and *ARCS* format.

Please note that this fictional sample primary is presented in the current approved format for *ORCS*. *ORCS* approved prior to 2012, and amendments to them, appear in a slightly different format.

2.1 Primary Number and Title

Each primary has a primary number and a title that appear at the top of each page of the primary. The primary title describes the function of the records grouped under the primary.

2.2 Scope Note

The scope note describes the administrative or operational function to which the records relate, and the activities and/or work processes leading to records creation. It provides information general to the entire primary, and a high level description of the purpose, uses, content, and context of creation of the records, and to show the relationships among the records within the primary.

2.3 Office of Primary Responsibility (OPR)

The OPR is the office responsible or accountable for the activity or function documented in the records, and therefore maintains the official or master record to satisfy operational, financial, legal, audit, and other requirements. All other offices are non-OPR offices.

OPR in *ORCS*

In *ORCS*, the name of the OPR appears in a statement beneath the cross-references. (If the OPR for a specific secondary is different, an OPR note appears under that secondary.) In the fictional sample primary below, the Unidentified Flying Objects Branch is the OPR. All other offices holding records covered by this primary are non-OPR with a retention and disposition of SO nil DE.

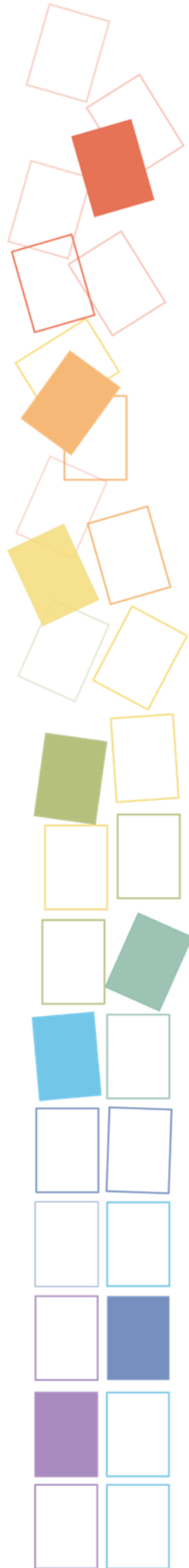
All new and recently amended *ORCS* have a standard non-OPR retention period and final disposition of SO nil DE.

OPR in *ARCS*

OPR names do not appear in *ARCS*. Ministries and agencies designate the OPR based on their individual requirements. *ARCS* has a standard non-OPR retention period and final disposition of SO nil DE. For advice about determining your ministry's or agency's *ARCS* OPRs, contact your Records Team.

Non-Office of Primary Responsibility (non-OPR)

Any office that holds a copy of a record but is not accountable or responsible for the activity documented in it is considered non-OPR. There can be many non-OPR offices for any given record.



2.4 Secondary Number and Title

Secondary numbers and titles cover specific record series or groupings of records relating to the function covered by the primary. Secondary numbers link the records to the retention and disposition schedule, and the secondary title describes the records. The combination of the two-digit secondary number with the primary number forms the file number (e.g. 100-20 or 23120-04).

There are three types of secondaries: reserved secondaries, subject secondaries, and case file secondaries.

2.4.1 Reserved Secondaries

Reserved secondaries cover records series that are repeated in several primaries. For example, secondaries -00 and -01 are reserved throughout *ARCS* and in all *ORCS*.

Secondary -00 is reserved for "Policy and procedures" records; that is, records that document the requirements for how an organization carries out its business. This includes draft and approved policy documents, working materials and correspondence, precedent-setting documents, procedural guidelines and manuals, and standards documentation.

Secondary -01 is reserved for "general" records that cannot be classified in specified subject or case file secondaries. Use secondary -01 when:

- the document does not relate to any of the existing secondaries, but does fall within the primary
AND
- the document contains information of a general nature and does not reflect actions or decisions of the creating office

Note that the retention period for secondary -01 is generally shorter than related subject or case file secondaries. The designated final disposition is almost always destruction.

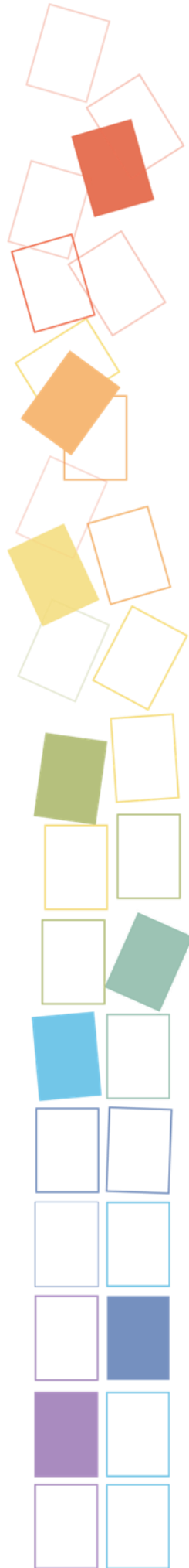
Do not use the -01 General secondary for records that relate to two or more of the subject or case files secondaries. Instead, file the record in each relevant secondary. Where appropriate, provide a cross-reference between files.

2.4.2 Subject Secondaries (-02 To -19)

Secondary numbers -02 to -19 are used for specific subjects and other non-case file series. These are commonly referred to as subject files.

Subject files may be coded to aid in retrieval. Coded subject files usually consist of many different files, each dealing with a different aspect of the same subject. Codes may take the form of names, titles, abbreviations, or other alphabetic/alphanumeric codes. An oblique (/) separates the code from the secondary number.

In the fictional sample primary, secondaries -03 (Extraterrestrial reports and statistics) and -04 (Visits by unidentified extraterrestrials) are subject secondaries.



2.4.3 Case File Secondaries (-20 and Higher)

A case file secondary number is used for a set of records that document similar and time-limited transactions with respect to a person, event, product, organization, or other entity. The records within each file or data set are generally consistent with other records in the same series. For example, the same types of forms may appear in every file. Case file series are assigned secondary numbers -20 and higher (-30, -40, -50, etc.).

For physical records and unstructured data, individual files within case file series are usually identified with a file code. The code identifies the specific person, event, project, or other entity covered by the file. Codes can take many forms (e.g. proper names, acronyms, unique system-generated numbers and alphanumeric). For guidelines on developing file codes, see **4 How to Name Files and Documents**.

In the fictional sample primary, secondaries -20 (Extraterrestrial registrant case files) and -30 (Extraterrestrial Registration System) are case file secondaries.

2.5 Cross References

Cross references point users to other related classifications. Cross references link the primary to related primaries and secondaries, both within the *ARCS* or *ORCS* and in related information schedules.

2.6 Retention Period and Final Disposition

The retention period and final disposition linked to each secondary indicates how long records should be retained in active storage space, when or if they should be transferred to semi-active storage (i.e. offsite storage for physical records, nearline storage or other digital equivalent for digital records), what their final disposition will be, and when that will take place.

Retention information for each secondary is indicated in the A (Active), SA (Semi-active), and FD (Final Disposition) columns to the right of the secondary title. The abbreviations used in each column are explained in [2.7 Retention Terms](#).

2.6.1 Active (A) Retention Period

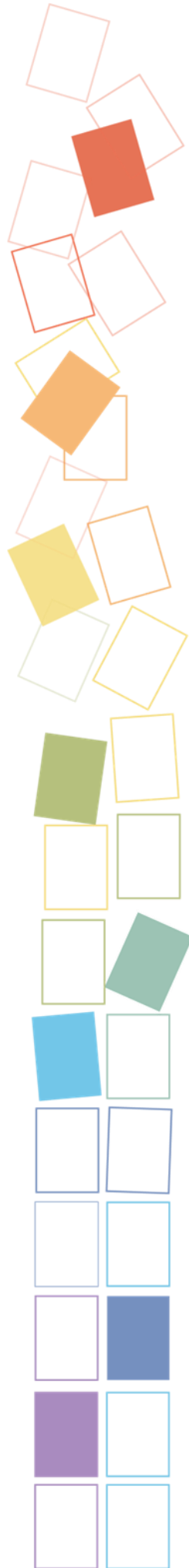
The active column indicates the length of time a record is retained in the active phase of its life cycle. Active records are used frequently and therefore are maintained in the creating office.

Entries in the active column use the designations of "SO", or "CY" or "FY", and when applicable, have an additional time period indicated. For example:

CY+1y

Maintain all records created or received within the calendar year (1 January to 31 December) together until the end of the calendar year. Then retain them for an additional calendar year.

In the fictional sample primary, extraterrestrial reports and statistics (secondary -03) are active for the calendar year (CY) of their receipt or creation, plus one more year.



FY+1y

Maintain all records created or received within the fiscal year (1 April to 31 March) together until the end of the fiscal year. Then retain them for an additional fiscal year. When required by financial administration policy and procedures, place financial records relating to the prior fiscal year, but created or received after March 31, on the file for the prior fiscal year.

2.6.2 Semi-Active (SA) Retention Period Column

Semi-active records are used only occasionally and therefore may be more cost-effectively and securely stored away from the office. Semi-active records retain administrative, operational, fiscal, audit, or legal value for the ministry or agency that created the records. Store semi-active records in approved records storage facilities; when electronic records change to semi-active status, location changes may be noted in electronic recordkeeping systems. Electronic semi-active records may be stored in secure nearline storage in your office recordkeeping system. (See [RIM 422 Preparation for Offsite Storage](#), Section 2.1 *Using Approved Records Storage Facilities*).

In the fictional sample primary, the extraterrestrial reports and statistics (secondary -03) are semi-active for three years.

2.6.3 Final Disposition (FD) Column

The final disposition column indicates that records with enduring value to the BC Government are preserved and those that have no enduring value are destroyed. Records are eligible for final disposition when their active and semi-active retention periods have expired.

In the fictional sample primary, extraterrestrial reports and statistics (secondary -03) are fully retained. This means they will be transferred to the custody of, and can be accessed only through, the government **archives**. In the fictional extraterrestrial registration system below, (secondary -30) will be destroyed when the function supported by the database is no longer performed by government.

2.7 Retention Terms

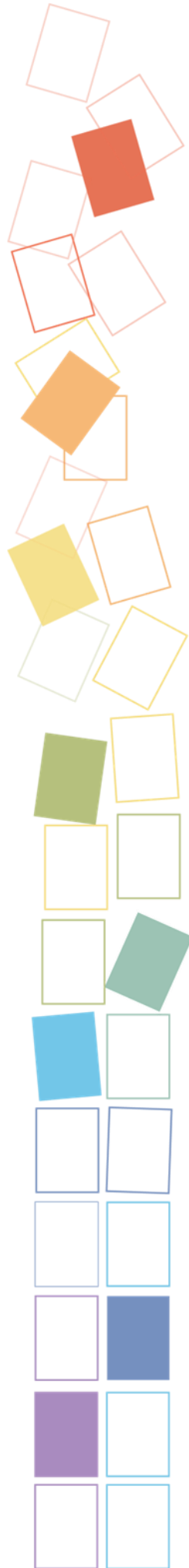
A variety of terms and abbreviations are used in the active, semi-active and final disposition columns. (see [Section 3 Key to Information Schedule Codes and Acronyms](#))

2.7.1 Terms Used In the Active and Semi-Active Retention Period Columns

A. Calendar-Based Abbreviations

These are used in combination with numbers, to indicate how long records will be kept in the office or offsite:

w	=	week
m	=	month
y	=	year
CY	=	Calendar Year (1 January to 31 December)
FY	=	Fiscal Year (1 April to 31 March)



B. SO = Superseded or Obsolete

"SO" identifies records for which retention is dependent upon the occurrence of some event or action. For routine records, "SO" is used to allow records to be retained for a flexible period, until they are no longer useful for reference or informational purposes.

In the fictional sample primary, non-OPR policy and procedures files (secondary -00) are designated "SO".

For case files and some subject files, "SO" may be used to identify the specific action, event, or the completion of a procedure that triggers file closure. This trigger is described in an explanatory note labelled "SO".

In the fictional sample primary, Extraterrestrial registrant case files (secondary -20) are active for SO+3y, with SO defined as "when extraterrestrial visitor leaves the province". The OPR will close the file when the visitor leaves, and retain it in active storage space for three years afterwards, after which the records may be transferred to offsite or nearline storage.

C. NA = Not Applicable

"NA" is used when records are not covered by the secondary at a specified stage of their lifecycle. The reasons for the "NA" designation are stated in a note under the secondary.

In the fictional sample primary, visits by Unidentified extraterrestrials files (secondary -04) have a semi-active and final disposition of "NA" because files are reclassified to secondary -20 when the visitor is identified.

D. Nil = No Semi-Active Retention Period

"Nil" is used in the semi-active column to identify records with no semi-active retention period.

Many types of government records remain active as long as they serve an administrative or operational function, after which, they have no semi-active retention period and are ready for final disposition.

In the fictional sample primary, the semi-active period for records in non-OPR offices is designated as nil. This means that the records are ready for destruction (as designated in the final disposition column) upon expiry of the active period and authorization of the Records Officer.

2.7.2 Terms Used In the Final Disposition Column (FD)

All disposition of government records must be in accordance with relevant legislation and policy; see [RIM 501 Records Destruction](#), and ministry/agency procedures. The final disposition of records can be full retention, selective retention, destruction, or other disposition as explained below.



A. FR = Full Retention

"FR" means that a government archivist has determined that all the records covered by a secondary have enduring value and will be preserved in their entirety for the government archives. Under the terms of full retention, the archivist responsible may destroy unnecessary duplicates, and other items which are not an integral part of the record series. The reasons for full retention may be explained in an "FR" statement.

In the fictional sample primary, Extraterrestrial reports and statistics (secondary -03) are FR "because they document extraterrestrial visitors to the province."

B. SR = Selective Retention

"SR" means that a government archivist has determined that a portion of these records may have enduring value and should be retained by the government archives. The reasons and criteria for selective retention may be explained in an "SR" retention definition.

In the fictional sample primary, Extraterrestrial registrant case files (secondary -20) are SR "because they document extraterrestrial visitors to the province" and the selection criteria is to retain "all files relating to green extraterrestrials."

SR retention definitions may include instructions to identify the records that are eligible for archival retention; for physical files, this may require boxing those files separately from those to be destroyed. The instructions for fictional sample extraterrestrial registrant case files require the OPR to box records selected for retention in the government archives separately from those identified for destruction.

C. DE = Destruction

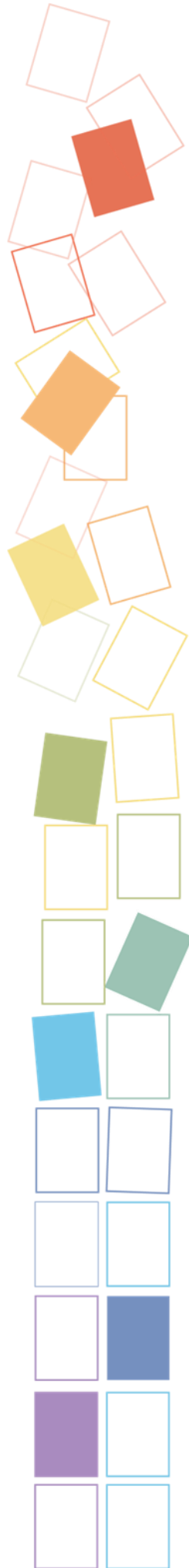
The final disposition of records that have insufficient enduring value to justify their preservation is physical destruction. In some cases, especially in section default primaries, the destruction is justified with a "DE" note.

D. OD = Other Disposition

"OD" means that the final disposition of the records will be through permanent transfer from the BC Government to another entity. A final disposition "OD" note will provide information relating to the disposition.

E. NA = Not Applicable

Where appropriate, some government records are reclassified to a new primary and/or secondary at the end of their active or semi-active retention period. The final disposition of such records is "NA".



2.8 Personal Information Banks, Privacy and Vital Records

Personal Information Banks (PIB)

The *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (RSBC 1996, c. 165, s. 69 (1)) defines a PIB as a collection of personal information that is organized or retrievable by the name of an individual or by an identifying number, symbol, or other particular assigned to an individual. PIBs can be identified in *ARCS* and *ORCS*. In the fictional sample primary, the “PIB” acronym appears to the left of the Extraterrestrial registrant case files secondary (-20). In *ARCS*, PIBs are identified with a note underneath the relevant secondary (see *ARCS* 1385-20).

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPPA)

Information contained in a record series may be restricted, in whole or in part, from public disclosure. A special “FOI” explanatory note is used to explain the access restrictions and to point to the section of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPPA)* that allows for the exemption. In the fictional sample primary, the Extraterrestrial registrant case files secondary (-20) has an FOI explanatory note which quotes section 15 (1)(b) of the *Act* to justify restricting access.

Vital Records

Vital records are those containing information essential to the functioning of government during and after a disaster, and essential for preserving the rights of citizens, government and corporate bodies. In the fictional sample primary, the Extraterrestrial Registration System (secondary -30) is identified as a vital record (VR).

2.9 Explanatory Notes and Qualifiers

Explanatory notes are used in *ARCS* and *ORCS* to help you understand the records, to explain office procedures and practice, and to summarize provisions governing the creation, processing, accessing, and disposition of records. There are two types of explanatory notes: qualifiers and other notes.

Qualifiers

- Qualifiers provide information that will help you organize and access the files covered by a secondary. They appear directly under a secondary title, in curved brackets. Qualifiers may list types and forms of records covered by the secondary (these begin “includes ...”), give methods of arrangement (these begin “arrange”), designate the physical format, or provide other pertinent information
- In the fictional sample primary, the Extraterrestrial registrant case files secondary (-20) instructs records creators to “arrange by registration number.”



Other Notes

The notes below are presented in the order in which they may appear below a secondary.

- OPR** provides the name of the Office of Primary Responsibility if it is different from the primary default OPR
- SO** explains when a file designated SO should be closed
- ##y** gives reasons for active and/or semi-active retention periods that are longer than seven years.
(see fictional sample primary below: "303y =" note under secondary -20)
- NA** explains why the usual active, semi-active, or final disposition designation does not apply
- SR/FR** explains why records are being selectively or fully retained
- DE** explains (if not self-evident) why records are being destroyed
- OD** explains that a permanent transfer is being made from government to another entity
- FOI** explains issues of confidentiality relating to the records
- NOTE** provides other useful information related to the records, such as their history, volume, filing procedures, or location of copies



2.10 Fictional Sample Primary

OPERATIONAL RECORDS CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

This is an approved information schedule, as defined by the [Information Management Act \(SBC 2015, c. 27\)](#). For more information consult your [Records Team](#).

- 2.1** → **23120 EXTRATERRESTRIAL REGISTRATION AND TRACKING**
- Records relating to the registration of extraterrestrial visitors to the province. Extraterrestrials are registered and tracked to ensure they do not contravene provincial legislation. Registrants must provide identifying information and report regularly to the government liaison.
- 2.2** → Record types include registration forms, reference materials, photographs, videotapes, correspondence and reports.
- 2.5** → For a description of the Extraterrestrial Registration System (ERS), see the Systems Section.
For operational policy, see primary 23100.
For records relating to diplomatic etiquette and protocol, see ARCS primary 415.
- 2.3** → For reference material/topical files, see ARCS secondary 358-20. The ministry OPR is Unidentified Flying Objects Branch unless otherwise noted below. See specific secondaries for OPR retention schedules.

2
3
1
2
0

EXTRATERRESTRIAL REGISTRATION AND TRACKING

2.6

A S F
A A D

All non-OPR offices will retain these records for:

- 0 1 General

S O n i l D E

- 0 3 Extraterrestrial reports and statistics

C Y + 1 y C 3 D Y y D E

FR: The government archives will fully retain these records because they document extraterrestrial visitors to the province.

C Y + 1 y C 3 F Y y R

2
3
1
2
0

EXTRATERRESTRIAL REGISTRATION AND TRACKING

A S F
A A D

-04 Visits by unidentified extraterrestrials

S N N
O A A

NA: reclassify to secondary 23120-20 when visitor confirmed

PIB -20 Extraterrestrial registrant case files
(arrange by registration number)

SO+ 300 SR
3y y

SO: when extraterrestrial visitor leaves the province

303 y: allows for file to be reopened if registrant returns

SR: The government archives will selectively retain these records because they document the effect of extraterrestrial visitors on the province. Files relating to green extraterrestrials will be selected for transfer to the archives; all other files will be destroyed. The office will box physical files relating to green extraterrestrials separately to facilitate this.

FOI: Access is restricted under the [Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act \(RSBC 1996, c. 165\)](#)

VR -30 Extraterrestrial Registration System (ERS)

SO nil DE

SO: when the function supported by the database is no longer performed by government

END OF PRIMARY

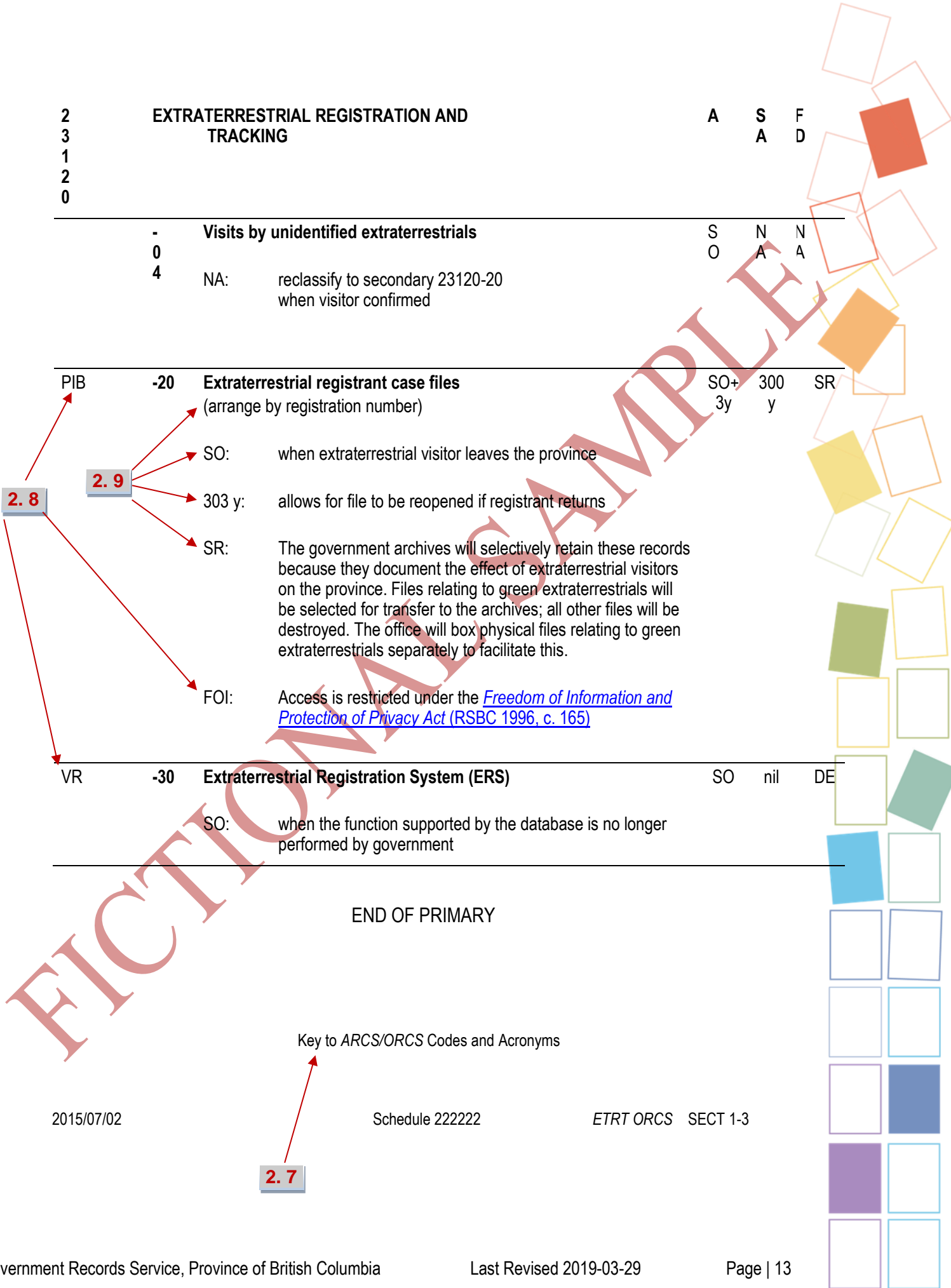
Key to ARCS/ORCS Codes and Acronyms

2015/07/02

Schedule 222222

ETRT ORCS SECT 1-3

2.7



USEFUL INFORMATION

3. Key to Information Schedule Codes and Acronyms

Information Schedule titles	ARCS = <i>Administrative Records Classification System</i> ORCS = <i>Operational Records Classification System</i>
Office information	OPR = Office of Primary Responsibility
Records life cycle	A = Active SA = Semi-active FD = Final Disposition
Active and semi-active period codes	CY = Calendar Year FY = Fiscal Year NA = Not Applicable SO = Superseded or Obsolete w = week m = month y = year
Final disposition categories	DE = Destruction FR = Full Retention SR = Selective Retention OD = Other Disposition NA = Not Applicable
Special flags	FOI = Freedom of Information/Protection of Privacy PIB = Personal Information Bank VR = Vital Records



4. How to Name Files and Documents

Many files may be classified under one ARCS/ORCS secondary. Standard naming conventions and codes can make all the difference for retrieval over time, particularly in the digital environment.

Implementing good document and file names supports the following objectives¹:

- Facilitates better access to and retrieval of electronic documents
- Allows sorting of documents in logical sequence (e.g. version #, date)
- Helps users to identify the items they are looking for easily
- Helps keep track of versions of documents

FILE NAMING BEST PRACTICES

File and Document Names Provide a unique, concise, meaningful title that will aid in retrieval. Use standard terms (also known as “controlled vocabulary”). Keep title short if possible; a long one may be truncated in a digital system. Avoid repeating information that is provided by the context (i.e. ARCS/ ORCS primary and secondary titles). If possible, avoid sensitive information.

Codes and acronyms Use standard abbreviations, acronyms, and alphanumeric codes, if these are available (see some useful sources below), or use codes generated by a registration system or a database, or develop your own (see tips below).

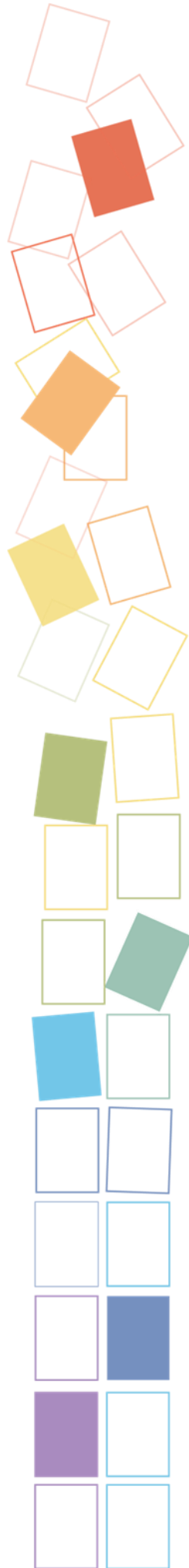
Standard terms/ controlled vocabulary Consistency is essential for efficient keyword searches and other online searches. Identify standard terms and always use them. (e.g. if the same item can be referred to as a “box”, “enclosure”, or “container”, a search for all files with “box” in the title will yield incomplete results)

Structure and punctuation Arrange data elements in logical order and use consistent wording, punctuation and spelling (e.g. if one name is “UFO branch weekly update 2015-07-20”, search problems will result if the next name is “Weekly update – UFOB – July 27th 2015”). Avoid punctuation that is incompatible with common software (safe choices are a dash – or an underscore _). *Dates Tip: using the YYYY-MM-DD format ensures the documents will sort in chronological order.*

Version control It may be useful to indicate “version 1” or to consistently add terms such as “CURRENT”, “DRAFT”, “REVIEW COPY”, “SUPERSEDED”, “CLOSED”, “FINAL”, “APPROVED”, to document or file titles. Ensure these notes are updated so that you don’t end up with 3 “CURRENT” versions of the same document or file.

Documentation Document your standard terms, codes, abbreviations, and acronyms, and structure so that current and future users know what they mean and can update them when necessary. (file a list under ARCS 100-05 or develop a register of codes).

¹ This list of objectives is derived from the Alberta Government Information Management guide entitled “Naming Conventions for Electronic Documents” (August 2005); see page 1.



Tips for Developing Alphanumeric Codes

Codes that consist of letters and/or numbers can be used to develop common reference terms and, where required, unique identifiers for specific documents or files. Electronic folder retrieval codes may also be in a separate searchable field, allowing for flexibility in using a full name or word.

One good approach is to use four-letter codes built upon the words in the full name, e.g. ICIY (Inter-ministerial Committee on International Youth Year). If the name only has three significant words, use the second letter of the third, e.g. EWCE (East-West Centre), or simply abbreviate the first word, e.g. AUST (Australia).

Optionally, use additional letters and/or use numbers. A longer combination of letters and numbers can help ensure that each code is unique.

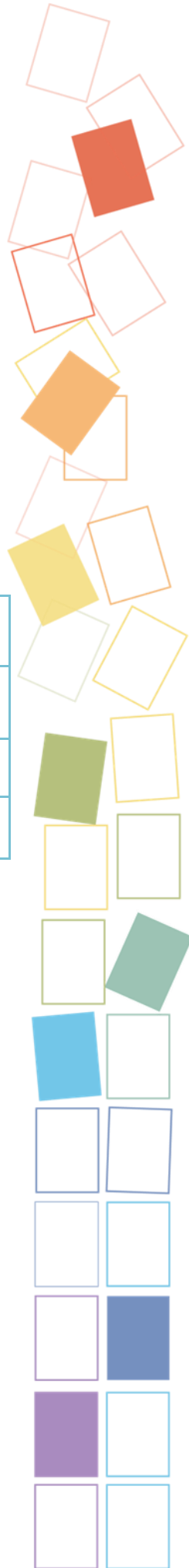
Standard codes

Use these standard codes where applicable rather than developing your own codes. Many are available on BC Government websites or elsewhere online.

Government	Chart of Accounts uses a three-digit code to identify ministries. The chart is available on the Office of the Comptroller General intranet site (IDIR required)
Local government codes within BC	Local government codes (for municipalities, regional districts and improvement districts) CivicInfoBC http://www.civicinfo.bc.ca/directories
School district	Ministry of Education http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/apps/imcl/imclWeb/Home.do
Provincial and Territorial	Canada Post http://www.comeexplorecanada.com/abbreviations.php (2 letters)

For ARCS files, alphanumeric codes can be particularly useful in coding such things as:

- administrative meetings (primary [102](#))
- agreements (primary [146](#))
- associations, clubs and societies (primary [160](#))
- committees (primary [200](#))
- conferences and events (primary [220](#))
- cost-sharing arrangements and claims (primary [950](#))
- legislation (primary [125](#))
- publications (primary [312](#))
- schools (primary [230](#))



5. Index and Glossary Terms

Index and Glossary Terms – see [RIM Glossary](#) for definitions of terms that appear in **bold black font**

Active records	Legal custody
Administrative records	Non-Office of Primary Responsibility
Administrative Records Classification System	Office of Primary Responsibility
Archives	Offsite storage
Classification system	Operational records
Destruction of records	Operational Records Classification System
Electronic Records	Primary
Electronic Systems	Information schedule
Final disposition	Secondary
Full retention	Selective retention
Inactive records	Semi-active records
	Transitory records

Additional Information

Contact your [Records Team](#) or check out the [Records Management website](#).

