STANDARD ORCS KIT CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION TO THE STANDARD ORCS KIT

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 GENERAL

The *Standard ORCS Kit* is a manual for BC government staff and consultants to use when developing and amending operational classification and scheduling systems (*ORCS*). Use of this manual ensures that *ORCS* meet government-wide standards required for Legislative approval under the *Document Disposal Act* (RSBC 1996, c. 99). This manual is published by the central agency of government responsible for records management standards, Corporate Information Management Branch (CIMB). The standard *ORCS* glossary defines *ORCS* as follows:

> An integrated records classification and scheduling system tailored to the operational records of a specific function or program of government, in accordance with government-wide standards. *ORCS* facilitate classification, filing, retrieval and disposition; *ORCS* may also be used to identify vital records and freedom of information and privacy designations. *ORCS* is a block numeric records classification system, reflecting function and subject. Corporate Information Management Branch establishes standards for the development of *ORCS* that are published in the *Standard ORCS Kit*.

This chapter provides an overview of the *ORCS* development and review process, organized in the following sections:

1. **Introduction**
   1.1 General
   1.2 Overview of the *Standard ORCS Kit*
   1.3 Formats
2. **Overview of the *ORCS* Development Process**
   2.1 What is an *ORCS*?
   2.2 Structure of *ORCS*
   2.3 Getting Started
   2.4 Internal Review
   2.5 CIMB Review
   2.6 Establishing Timelines
   2.7 Strategy for Contractor-Developed *ORCS*
   2.8 Additional Resources
3. ***ORCS* Development Steps**
4. **Archival Appraisal**
   4.1 Overview of Archival Appraisal
   4.2 Overview of Standard Archival Questions
   4.3 Standard Archival Questions

1.2 OVERVIEW OF THE *STANDARD ORCS KIT*

Chapter One, "Introduction to the *Standard ORCS Kit*," provides the basic information necessary for a government ministry or agency and its *ORCS* developer to gain an understanding of the purpose and structure of an *ORCS* and the project planning process for bringing an *ORCS* through from conception to Legislative approval.

Each subsequent chapter consists of three main sections:
- **Introduction** (a one-page overview of the chapter)
- **Formats** (paper copies of electronic formats available from CIMB for use when creating the wordprocessing documents which form the *ORCS*)
- **Standards** (itemized standards covering all specifications for the relevant part of the *ORCS*, introduced by overviews in narrative form, and followed by examples in clearly marked boxes)

Chapter Two, "*ORCS* Basics," provides formats and standards for most parts of the *ORCS*, other than those warranting their own chapters. These include the simpler, smaller parts, such as headers, footers, and section title pages. This chapter also provides general style notes and instructions for completing the Records Services Application (ARS 118) form used to obtain a schedule number for the *ORCS*.

Chapter Three, "Primary Structure and Content," provides formats and standards for developing the basic building block of *ORCS*, the primary. This chapter is organized according to the constituent parts of the primary, such as the primary number and title, scope note, records retention and disposition schedule, and so on. It also includes standards for organizing groups of primaries, known as "primary blocks".

Chapter Four, "Electronic Records and the Information System Overview (ISO)," provides formats and standards to be used for describing electronic records within the *ORCS*. Due to the special nature of electronic records, they are not only classified within primaries along with associated records, but they are also further described in a special ISO section immediately following the last primary section.

Chapter Five, "'How to Use *ORCS'* Section," provides standards and a format for the section that appears before the primary sections in every *ORCS*. This section explains the *ORCS* and the basics of records management in the BC Government. It is a training tool for beginners and a reference tool for users. While most of the contents are standard, some parts of it require tailoring to reflect the relevant *ORCS*.

Chapter Six, "Executive Summary," provides a format and standards for developing the executive summary, which is the high-level overview of the *ORCS,* presenting significant retention and disposition issues.

Chapter Seven, "*ORCS* Approval and Publication," provides an overview of the steps required after CIMB has completed its review of an *ORCS*. These are the formal *ORCS* approval process (involving the Public Documents Committee, the Public Accounts Committee, and the Legislature) and the publication process (managed by CIMB). *This chapter has yet to be completed.*

Chapter Eight, "*ORCS* Amendments," provides standards and guidelines for developing *ORCS* amendments packages*. This chapter has yet to be completed.*

The **Glossary** of special terms used throughout *ORCS* immediately follows the chapters. This glossary is completely standard and is not tailored for individual *ORCS*.

Two **Appendices** follow the Glossary. These are:
- Appendix A, "List of *ORCS* Formats"
- Appendix B, "List of *ORCS* referenced in *Standard ORCS Kit* examples"

1.3 FORMATS

The formats for the various parts of the *ORCS* (primaries, information systems overviews, the executive summary, etc.) appear in the relevant chapters of the *ORCS Kit*. Upon request, CIMB can provide copies of these in electronic form. The electronic documents contain the standard headers, footers, spacing, indents, and other formatting standards, thereby reducing the time required by *ORCS* developers to set up their own documents and ensuring compliance with the established standards.

The following conventions are standard throughout all electronic formatting requirements:
- Sections in red print, square brackets, and all caps should be removed or replaced, according to directions in those sections and relevant standards
- "XXX" should be replaced by appropriate numbers (primary number, schedule number, etc.)
- "???" should be replaced by appropriate wording

See Appendix A for a complete list of *ORCS* formats.

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2.   OVERVIEW OF THE *ORCS* DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

2.1   WHAT IS AN *ORCS*?

An *Operational Records Classification System* (*ORCS*) is a tool to facilitate the organization, retrieval, storage, and disposition of operational records throughout their life cycle, from creation to final disposition. Operational records relate to the unique operations and services provided by a ministry, Crown corporation, or agency in carrying out the functions for which it is responsible according to statute, mandate, or policy.

The *Document Disposal Act (DDA) e*stablishes approval requirements for the retention and disposition of records and recorded information. The *DDA* uses the term "record" as defined in the *Interpretation Act* (RSBC 1996, c. 238). Record is defined broadly to include all recorded information regardless of physical format:

> "Record" includes books, documents, maps, drawings, photographs, letters, vouchers, papers and any other thing on which information is recorded or stored by any means whether graphic, electronic, mechanical or otherwise.

This definition applies to all recorded information created, kept, used, or filed by the ministries, commissions, boards, and other institutions of the Executive Government of British Columbia to which the *DDA* applies.

An *ORCS* is not complete unless the information flow of an agency's electronic system(s) is analyzed and the records created, stored and generated by the system(s) are scheduled. For this reason it is necessary to complete Information System Overviews (ISOs) to describe the systems.

> See Chapter 4 for guidance in describing electronic records.

CIMB is responsible for establishing government-wide policies and standards for recorded information management practices for all British Columbia ministries, agencies, commissions and corporations subject to the *DDA*. CIMB documents these policies and standards in the following publications:

- the Office of Comptroller General's *Core Policy and Procedures Manual* (CPPM), chapter 12, available at http://www.fin.gov.bc.ca/ocg/fmb/manuals/CPM/CPMtoc.htm
- the Chief Information Officer's *IM/IT Management Manual*, available at http://www.cio.gov.bc.ca/prgs/CPM12.pdf
- CIMB's *Recorded Information Management Manual*, available at http://www.mser.gov.bc.ca/CIMB/policy/
- *The Standard ORCS Kit*, available at http://www.mser.gov.bc.ca/CIMB/policy/

The standards for the structure of *ORCS* for all operational records of the Government of British Columbia are provided in the *Standard ORCS Kit*, but the content of each *ORCS* is developed by records management staff of the ministry or agency that will use it*.* Every *ORCS* is tailored to fit the specific operational records of a unit of government.

CIMB staff, your ministry executive, the Public Documents Committee, and the Select Standing Committee on Public Accounts (commonly called the Public Accounts Committee) review each *ORCS.* Final approval is by resolution of the Legislative Assembly.

	See Chapter 7 for more information about *ORCS* approval and publication.

2.2 STRUCTURE OF *ORCS*

The Government of British Columbia has adopted a block numeric records classification system as the standard for describing its recorded information resources. A block numeric records classification system is based on the assignment of blocks or groups of numbers to represent primary and secondary subjects.

The BC Government's system covers both administrative and operational records and is commonly known as "*ARCS* and *ORCS.*" *ARCS*, or the *Administrative Records Classification System*, is the government-wide standard for classifying, filing, retrieving and disposition scheduling of records relating to the management of facilities, property, materiel, finance, personnel, and information systems.

This system uses three- and four-digit numbers in *ARCS* (100 to 6999), four-digit numbers in special records schedules (9000-9999), and five-digit numbers in *ORCS* (10000 and 99999). Special records schedules cover broad categories of records that are not covered by *ARCS* or *ORCS*. While not technically part of *ARCS*, the special records schedules appear in the *ARCS* manual.

CIMB recommends that the *ORCS* developer read the "How to Use *ORCS*" chapter that appears in slightly tailored form in every *ORCS*, and in generic form in Chapter Five of the *Standard ORCS Kit*. This chapter provides essential reference information for comprehending the structure and content of an *ORCS*.

2.3 GETTING STARTED

To determine the scope of the *ORCS*, look at the diversity and complexity of the programs of your ministry or agency. CIMB recommends a functional or program-specific approach, rather than one large *ORCS* covering many diverse programs. When gathered together, the resulting program-specific *ORCS* will form a ministry or agency-wide system for classifying and scheduling operational records.

A functional approach is simpler to design, approve and maintain, especially in the context of an ever-evolving government structure. This approach also allows for the clear identification of the Office of Primary Responsibility for record series

Before designing your *ORCS*, complete each of the activities on the following checklist:
- request and receive executive support for the project;
- conduct a records inventory;
- review relevant legislation;

- review annual reports, web sites, and other program publications and reports;
- interview staff who create, use, and file the records;
- look for evidence of electronic records (including systems, inputs, and outputs, as well as online filing systems and web sites);
- look for evidence of access and privacy concerns;
- review *The Standard ORCS Kit;*
- visit the CIMB office at 548 Michigan Street, and review related *ORCS* and other approved *ORCS;* and
- Meet with your CIMB contact to discuss the *ORCS* and timelines for its review

2.4   INTERNAL REVIEW

Internal review is the review and approval of a draft *ORCS* by appropriate ministry/ agency personnel to ensure that it meets the requirements of the organization it is designed to serve. It is essential to the success of an *ORCS* that program staff and management approve the classification system and retention periods before the first CIMB review. A thorough internal review is likely to result in significant changes to the *ORCS*. Reviewers may suggest refinements to records descriptions, classifications, and retention schedules, and may identify additional records that have not been included. These suggestions should be carefully considered in relation to the relevant standards in this manual (see the *Standard Archival Questions* in this chapter and Chapter *3 Primary Structure and Content*).

CIMB recommends that internal reviews be conducted by:

- **Program staff** or the people creating, receiving and maintaining the records classified and scheduled under the *ORCS*. This review ensures accuracy and usefulness. While it may be impossible to consult all program staff, key senior and support staff identified by the program manager should be asked for input.

- **Management** such as the section managers and the overall program director. This review ensures that the *ORCS* accurately reflects the functions, activities, and needs of the program. The director will be a signatory in the formal *ORCS* approval process. The relevant deputy minister will also be a signatory, but while that person should be aware that the *ORCS* is being developed, it is not usually appropriate for her/him to review it at this stage.

- **Director/Manager of Information and Privacy**. This review ensures that personal information banks (PIBs) and public use records (PURs) are identified and that other records with privacy issues or other access concerns are appropriately identified with freedom of information and protection of privacy (FOI) notes.

- **Ministry/agency legal counsel** or legal advisor. This review ensures that the retention schedules address legal issues relating to the records. In most cases legal services is provided by the Attorney General Legal Services Branch, but legal services for some agencies may be privately contracted.

This consultation should take place at a later stage, after the primary CIMB review but before the final draft is submitted to the Public Documents Committee.

- **Auditors** either within the ministry/agency and/or at the offices of the Comptroller and Auditor generals. This review ensures compliance with specific audit periods or other audit requirements.

2.5   CIMB REVIEW

CIMB reviews the *ORCS* for compliance with *ORCS* standards and conventions. In a sense, CIMB assumes the role of editor and publisher, since the *ORCS* is a legal document and is published after its approval by the Legislative Assembly. As any author can attest, the editing process can involve several drafts, additional research, and some rewriting.
Unless otherwise agreed, CIMB requires that each draft of the *ORCS* be received on double-sided paper, 3-hole punched.

An *ORCS* serves both records management and archival purposes. To ensure an efficient review process and a minimal number of drafts, and to avoid contradictory recommendations, your *ORCS* review contact will have expertise in both these areas.[1]
Your contact will see your *ORCS* through to completion, and will be available to meet with you and answer questions by phone, email or in person at any stage of *ORCS* development. **CIMB recommends that you ask for an introductory meeting with your *ORCS* review contact at the beginning of the *ORCS* planning stage.** The CIMB *ORCS* review encompasses the following aspects:

- **Records analysis**: The *ORCS* is reviewed to ensure that it is logically organized and that it conforms to the standards established in *The Standard ORCS Kit*. The objectives of this review are to:
    - confirm that the overall structure of the *ORCS* is appropriate for the records that it covers and consistent with the standards documented in the *Standard ORCS Kit*;
    - confirm that the citation of legislation and use of government nomenclature is accurate and up-to-date;
    - ensure clarity and comprehensiveness of wording, with particular attention to scope notes and secondary descriptions;
    - ensure that the schedules and justifications for retention periods are appropriate and well explained; and,
    - ensure the electronic records are properly documented

- **Archival appraisal**: The *ORCS* is reviewed to identify records with evidential and historical value, and to ensure that they are preserved for the government archives. See section 4.2 of this chapter for discussion of archival appraisal. The archival appraisal consists of:
    - detailed review of the *ORCS* with emphasis on final dispositions and related issues (scope notes, classification, secondary titles);

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[1] Formerly there were two *ORCS* review contacts, a records analyst and an archivist. Now staff with expertise in both aspects of the profession take on both these roles.

- review of the ISOs and related records dispositions;
- onsite examination of the records considered for retention, and those for which issues must be addressed before disposition decisions can be finalized;
- identification of related records already in the government archives holdings or in semi-active storage
- developing final disposition statements and selection criteria; and
- identification of records (including electronic records) discovered during records analysis and onsite examination that should be added to the *ORCS*.

Preservation and access consultation: Your *ORCS* review contact will consult with government archives staff to identify and address issues relating to:
- the preservation of records appraised for archival retention, especially issues surrounding special media records and records with long semi-active periods; and
- public access to records that are transferred to archival custody

CIMB management sign-off: CIMB management endorses the *ORCS* when it is ready for submission to PDC.

CIMB strongly recommends that the *ORCS* not be implemented until it is ready for submission to the Public Documents Committee. If the review process results in the *ORCS* being reorganized and renumbered, any files that have been assigned *ORCS* numbers must be relabelled.

2.6   ESTABLISHING TIMELINES

Developing an *ORCS* requires cooperation with both ministry staff and CIMB staff. It is helpful to meet at various points, to ensure agreement on timelines and other matters. Depending on the size and complexity of your *ORCS*, it may take you several weeks or months to complete the research, review meetings, and re-drafting that is required. CIMB receives *ORCS* for review on an ongoing basis, and in fairness to all clients reviews these drafts in the order that they are received. The volume of *ORCS* under current review is another factor to consider when timelines are being established.

After CIMB has completed its review, the *ORCS* is submitted to the Public Documents Committee (PDC), and subsequently the Public Accounts Committee and the Legislative Assembly. *ORCS* development is complete when the Records Officer receives formal notification from CIMB that the Legislative Assembly has approved the *ORCS.* At this point the "approved" header and the footer with the date of legislative approval are inserted and the required copies submitted to CIMB (see Chapter 7).

2.7   STRATEGY FOR CONTRACTOR-DEVELOPED *ORCS*

Because developing *ORCS* is a significant commitment for which regular staff may not have the time or expertise, ministries often choose to hire contractors for this purpose.[2] Here are some tips to keep in mind when writing the contract, and working with a contractor on an *ORCS*:

- CIMB staff are available to review and provide advice regarding contracts for *ORCS* development projects. It highly recommended that contractors hired to draft *ORCS* have previous experience in *ORCS* development and be familiar with records management standards within the British Columbia government.
- Allow contract and staff time for CIMB review and processing time, including meeting time between contractor, ministry/agency staff and CIMB staff.
- Allow contract time for minor revisions towards the end of the process, including revisions required to convert it from draft to approved *ORCS*.
- If the *ORCS* development contract ends before the *ORCS* is approved, a staff member with sufficient expertise should be assigned the task of final revisions.
- Consult with CIMB regarding the contract duration, the review schedule, and the resources available at CIMB in order to agree upon a review schedule.
- The Records Officer is the primary contact for CIMB and should be involved throughout the *ORCS* development process. This ensures that the *ORCS* accurately reflects the records management policy, procedures and practices of the ministry/agency. It also ensures that the Records Officer is familiar with the content of the approved *ORCS* and able to explain it to the Public Documents Committee.
- Retain the developer's notes and relevant research data for future reference.

2.8   ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

It is particularly valuable for the individual beginning to draft an *ORCS* to set aside some time to review *ORCS* that have already been approved. A complete *ORCS* library is maintained at the CIMB Office, 548 Michigan Street. Check with your CIMB contact to set up an appointment to view.

The following publication is a good source of information about records scheduling:
    Robek, Brown and Stephens, *Information and Records Management* (California: Glencoe, 4th ed. 1996).

The recommended reference manuals for *ORCS* are the most recent editions of *The Gage Canadian Dictionary* and *The Chicago Manual of Style.*

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[2] CIMB can provide a list of records management consultants upon request. Please note that CIMB does not evaluate or recommend particular contractors; names are added to the list at the request of the consultants themselves.

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3.   *ORCS* DEVELOPMENT STEPS

The following table outlines the steps required to be carried out by the Records Officer and *ORCS* developer during the development, review, legislative approval, and publication of an *ORCS*. This list does not include research conducted for an *ORCS*; interviews conducted with ministry or agency program staff; the internal reviews conducted within a ministry or agency; or the discussions and meetings that take place between CIMB and the ministry or agency at any step in the process. A reference to the relevant section(s) of the *Standard ORCS Kit* is provided for each step. The steps are presented in the recommended sequence in which they should occur.

NO.	STEP DESCRIPTION	REFERENCE
1	Submit Records Services Application (ARS 118) form*	Chap. 2
2	Obtain binder(s) from Queen's Printer	Records Officer to order
3	Obtain title page, artwork, and divider tabs from CIMB	Chap. 2
4	Develop *ORCS*, including Table of Contents, primary sections, and ISO Section	Chap. 2, 3 & 4
5	Submit draft *ORCS* for CIMB review, and submit revised drafts as required during review process*	Chap 1.2.5
6	Develop Executive Summary, How to Use section, Index, and Appendices (if needed)	Chap. 2, 5 and 6
7	Submit draft Executive Summary, How to Use section, Index, and appendices (if needed) for CIMB review, and submit revised drafts as required*	Chap. 1
8	Submit PDC draft of complete *ORCS* (except ARS 008)*	Chap. 7
9	Receive ARS 008 form from CIMB, gather signatures, and return to CIMB, accompanied by a current organizational chart for the program(s)/office(s) covered by the *ORCS* *	Chap. 7
10	Submit names of persons ministry wishes to attend PDC presentation*	Chap. 7
11	Receive notice of PDC meeting	Chap. 7
12	Attend PDC meeting, present *ORCS*	Chap. 7
13	Receive notice of PAC approval	Chap. 7
14	Receive notice of Legislative Assembly approval	Chap. 7
15	Prepare publication version of the *ORCS*	Chap. 7

   *   *Please note that **the ministry/agency contact for the ORCS and related documentation is the Records Officer**, as the ministry/agency authority for records management. CIMB will not accept draft ORCS that have not been approved by the Records Officer.*

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4. ARCHIVAL APPRAISAL

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This section contains the following subsections:
- **Overview of archival appraisal** purposes and approaches
- **Overview of the standard archival questions**, explaining the purpose of the questions relating to final disposition
- **Standard archival questions**

4.1 OVERVIEW OF ARCHIVAL APPRAISAL

The *Document Disposal Act* provides for the retention of government records "considered of sufficient public value to justify their preservation" (s. 2). While most government records have negligible value after they have finished serving the purposes for which they were created a small, select group of government records remain valuable. These are records created by all types of government offices and agencies at all levels, which have been appraised by an archivist as having ongoing value as documentation of the history, structure and actions of the BC Government, and the general history of the province. In other words, these records have evidential, informational, and/or ongoing legal value.

Archival appraisal means the process of determining the final disposition of records. Records having enduring value to government and society are appraised for retention by the government archives (formally known as the BC Archives, which is part of the Royal BC Museum), where they will be preserved and made accessible. Archival appraisal focuses on the information content of the records and the context of their creation. It takes into consideration their value for current administrative, operational, legal and fiscal use, as well as long-term evidential and informational values. (See *RIM* Glossary of Terms for definitions of values.) Other factors taken into consideration during appraisal are: relationships to other records, physical format and media, arrangement, date range, accessibility, and volume. The central question of archival appraisal is, which records should be kept to provide evidence of the structure, history, and major actions and decisions of the functions and programs covered by an *ORCS*? A list of specific questions archivists ask about records covered by *ORCS* is provided below.

It should be emphasized that the archivist determines the final disposition of records based on their value to the government archives, not on ongoing value to the creating ministry or agency. Such ongoing value must be addressed during the active and semi-active phases of the records schedule.

Archival appraisal also determines the format in which the information should be retained (for example, microfilm may be preferred to paper or electronic versions of the records). All records retention and disposition recommendations must address the physical format in which the information is stored and any technology used to access it. This ensures that the record will last as long as the information has value and that the information is retained in the most economical and accessible format possible.

An archivist reviewing an *ORCS* for the purpose of archival appraisal will typically need to meet with the Records Officer and/or *ORCS* developer to review the *ORCS* and ask

questions. The archivist will also need to view the records under consideration for archival retention and may need to speak to relevant program staff about them. The expertise of the Records Officer, the *ORCS* developer, and program staff is invaluable to the archivist.

When the archival appraisal is complete, the archivist will provide the *ORCS* developer with a set of appraisal statements to be incorporated into the *ORCS*. The archivist will probably also recommend other changes to descriptive portions of the *ORCS* to ensure that the records to be retained are adequately documented. The archivist reserves the right to require editing of scope notes, qualifiers, explanatory notes, etc., to ensure adequate documentation of records to be preserved in the government archives.

The archivist will explain and defend the archival appraisal of the records covered by the *ORCS* to the Public Documents Committee.

After an *ORCS* is approved and records covered by it are transferred to the government archives, they are no longer the property of the creating ministry/agency. Instead, the archives preserves them for use by the public and government, subject to provisions of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy* (*FOIP) Act.* Visit the BC Archives Reference Room at 655 Belleville and the BC Archives web site located at: www.bcarchives.gov.bc.ca for information about holdings

> See *RIM* Glossary of Terms entries regarding primary values and residual values for further discussion of these issues. See Chapter 3.9 for information about how to incorporate archival appraisal notes into the *ORCS.*

4.2   OVERVIEW OF STANDARD ARCHIVAL QUESTIONS

Purpose Of The Questions

The standard questions relating to final disposition are to be used during research for *ORCS* development to simplify and expedite the process.

This list of standard questions is offered as an aid to *ORCS* developers to enable them
- to obtain information necessary for an archivist to determine the final disposition of records, and
- to assist in the development of practical selection criteria for records designated for selective retention.

The answers to some of the questions may require research by the *ORCS* developers. Not all the questions will apply to all types of records.

The answers to these standard questions are in many cases provided for other purposes by the *ORCS* developer:
- in the various kinds of *ORCS* primary and section scope notes that describe the functions and records covered by the primary;
- in good descriptive primary and secondary titles; or
- in other notes under specific secondaries.

However, the standard questions often require detailed answers, or the type of answers that cannot be provided in the body of the *ORCS*. For these questions the *ORCS* developers can make notes (handwritten, typed, or in electronic form), and include them as a separate document when the draft *ORCS* is submitted to CIMB for review. Alternatively, answers can be provided verbally at meetings with the archivist.

The standard questions are presented in two ways: as a check list of questions for easy reference; and as a set of questions with detailed explanations.

How To Use These Questions

You will need to supply a suggested final disposition for each secondary in the *ORCS*. The final disposition choices are:

- destruction (DE),

- selective retention in the government archives (SR), or

- full retention in the government archives (FR).

You are NOT required to supply formal statements explaining the reasons for destruction or retention, or the selection criteria for SR records. The archivist during the *ORCS* review process will provide these statements and criteria. However, you should provide an informal note explaining in your own words the reasons why you and the program staff think the records are important enough to justify full or selective retention in the government archives. Where appropriate, you may also supply reasons you recommend destruction, and criteria for selection. The standard archival questions in this chapter are used to help determine the value of the records, and can be helpful for preparing these informal notes.

You are NOT required to answer every question in writing for every secondary. During the archival review stage in the *ORCS* review process you should be prepared to answer the questions in this chapter that are relevant to each secondary.

See Chapter 3.9(k) for appraisal notes standards.

4.3   STANDARD ARCHIVAL QUESTIONS

Functions

1.   What function or activity do the records covered by this secondary document?

This question is asked because the importance of the function or activity can affect the final disposition of the records. The more important the function the more likely that the records will be retained in the government archives.

> **Example:** It may not be worth retaining a program's client registration records, but the case files that document how the program is delivered to the clients may be valuable enough to selectively retain. The annual statistical reports on the performance of the program, summarizing participation demographics, may be important enough to justify full retention in the government archives.

2.   Are there earlier forms of these records that may have documented the same function or activity?

The form of the records can change over time, and it may be necessary to account for historical records keeping in the creating office.

> **Example:** At one time the information may have been maintained in bound ledgers, then later on in file folders, and today may be maintained in computer data files. If all three forms still exist in the creating office, they all need to be accounted for in the *ORCS*, not just the current form or media.

Contents

3.   What information is in the records covered by this secondary? (This means information of all kinds and in all types of documents, including forms. Please note the titles and numbers of any ministry forms in the record series.)

Do the records contain information on clients, services provided (if so, what services), policy and standards, etc.? If the records are reports, on what do they report, for what purpose, and to whom? If they are computer reports, what data do the reports contain? If the records contain correspondence, who is the correspondence from, who is it to, and what purpose does it serve? Please note the titles and numbers of any ministry forms in the record series and what information is collected on each form.

> **Example:** a particular case file series may contain personal information on clients, such as name, residence, place and date of birth, ID number, and/or details on service provided.

4.   What is the information used for?

> **Examples:** reference (explain why information is needed), claim substantiation (describe what types of claims are being substantiated), service delivery (describe what service is being delivered).

Context

5. Were the functions that are performed by this office or agency previously performed somewhere else in the government?

If yes, where were they performed? Please identify any significant structural or program differences in the way that the previous agency performed the functions and the way that they are performed now. The history of the functions related to the records helps archivists to determine the value of the records.

6. Does the office or agency have custody of the records from the office or agency that previously performed the functions, or does the staff know where the records are?

This information is useful for archivists to determine if these are the only records documenting the functions, or if related records are found elsewhere.

7. What other information can you supply about the history of the records and the functions they document?

As with other questions in this section, this kind of history is useful in determining the value of the records. It also aids in explaining the arrangement and content of the records.

8. Are there any current functional links to other parts of the ministry/agency or elsewhere in government?

The functional linkages related to the records help to determine the value of the records. The more important the linkages, the more valuable the records may be.

> **Examples:**
> - "This *ORCS* covers records created and received since 1967, when BCHMC was established. Previous records relating to the functions documented in this *ORCS* were created under housing programs funded by the Provincial Secretary from 1947 on (BC Archives accessions 90-1584, 90-1589, and 90-1882)."
> - "For records relating to the disposition of the University Endowment Lands through sale and lease, as well as the relationships that the University Endowment Lands Administration has with the Provincial Government beginning in 1910, refer to records of the office of the Surveyor General with the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks. For records regarding the relationship with the Provincial Government since 1986, see the records of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs."

Evidence of Decisions and Actions

9. Do the files covered by this secondary contain a record of decision-making? If so, which decisions?

If the files document decision-making, additional questions to ask are:
- what type and level of decisions;
- what is the significance and affect of the decisions;
- what groups of people, within and outside of the government, are involved in or affected by the decisions?

Records that document decision making are important for ensuring government accountability and for documenting government activity. If a decision affects general government operations, it is likely to be more significant than a decision that only relates to one individual.

> **Examples:** briefing notes with decisions attached, or case files containing decisions made or actions taken, are likely to be valuable enough for retention in the government archives.

10. Would the records be an important resource for researchers interested in understanding how the program worked?

The primary responsibility of the government archives is to document the functions and activities of the provincial government. Records that illustrate how departments, agencies, or branches operate are important to achieving this aim.

> **Example:** case files that demonstrate the process by which individuals receive service from a ministry may have enough permanent value to warrant selective or full retention in the government archives.

11. Do the records covered by this secondary contain information that provides evidence of actions that may have long-term ramifications (e.g., environmental or health consequences)?

Some records may have long-term evidential values that are different from their current primary values.

> **Example:** records relating to possible claims against government, such as records of a program that regulates pesticide spraying.

Information Duplicated / Summarized Elsewhere

12. Is the information in the records covered by this secondary duplicated or summarized in other files, annual reports, or other summary documents?

If the information is available elsewhere at a sufficient level of detail, it is probably not necessary to retain the series under consideration, or a small selection might be appropriate.

> **Example**: "Statistical summaries of this information are filed under secondary 89999-02."

13. Is the information in this series duplicated or related to information in electronic form (including database)?

It is always useful to know if the information is documented elsewhere, but particularly so if it is partially or fully duplicated on an electronic database, where the information can be manipulated in various ways.

> **Example**: "Some information from these files is duplicated on the CMS database (names, registration numbers, and date of last payment received)."

File Type

14. Is this a subject file or a case file series?
- **Subject files** (should be secondaries 02 –19): files maintained in a single folder or a few volumes, providing general information on specific subjects or documenting a function (e.g., inquiries and reports arranged chronologically).
- **Case files** (should be secondaries -20 on): a series of many files relating to a common function, each of which contains records pertaining to a specific time-related entity, such as a person, event, project, transaction, product, or organization.

Records Media

15. In what media do the records exist (are they paper, electronic, or microfilm; is the information duplicated in more than one medium)?

It is necessary to schedule all forms of records and all media, and each type of media may have special conservation and retention considerations.

> **Example:** A certain case file series may be in both paper and electronic format. In such a case both media need to be specifically classified, scheduled and appraised in the *ORCS*, and their relationship needs to be clarified within the *ORCS* and the ISO.

16. Are there "special media" among the records in this secondary?

 "Special media" include non-textual records such as:
- photographs
- sound recordings
- motion picture films
- video recordings
- audio-visual materials
- pictorial records
- paintings
- prints
- maps
- plans
- blueprints
- architectural drawings

Special media records need to be identified for the following reasons:
- to ensure that their special preservation and access needs can be addressed,
- to document the context (including related textual records) of the special media records, and
- to clarify, for persons making scheduling decisions, that a particular special media record is to be scheduled using the *ORCS* rather than special schedule 102905 or 102908, or one of several possibilities in *ARCS*.

It is therefore necessary to identify special media records and specifically name them as being a component of a primary. This can be done either in the primary scope note "Includes …" statement, or in an includes qualifier under the relevant secondary.

> **Example:** A typical includes qualifier reads: "(includes textual records, architectural drawings, and photographs)."

Arrangement

17. How are the records arranged (e.g., alphabetically, numerically)?

Knowing this information helps the archivist understand the organization of the records and how they are used. This information is particularly important for case files, as these tend to be the highest volume secondaries and are most likely to be selectively retained. The method of selective retention often reflects the arrangement.

> **Example**: Records arranged alphabetically. Possible appraisal: Retain one box of these records per year, from a different alphabetical range each year.

18. Are records created and filed in a central office or regional offices?
   If regional offices:
   a) **Do all regional offices arrange or file the records in the same way?**
   b) **Which office (central or regional) is the Office of Primary Responsibility (OPR) for the records?**

Knowing who creates and files the records is an important part of understanding them well enough to determine if they are worth preserving in the government archives. If the same series is being arranged different ways by different offices, this makes selecting and searching them more complicated.

> **Example:** Records created and filed by regional offices. Office X arranges them alphabetically, Office Y arranges them chronologically.

Volume

19. What is the volume of the records series (secondary)?

This information is useful in determining what proportion of records might be retained if selective retention is being considered.

> **Example**: 50 boxes of files created per year. Possible appraisal: selective retention by selecting one box of these records per year.

Appeals

20. Do the records covered by this secondary document decisions or other processes related to appeal functions?

This includes appeal processes of any kind, including quasi-judicial appeals. Because successful appeals of government decisions potentially generate adjustments to related policy or procedure, appeals records often have enduring value. Therefore it is useful to identify the appeal function and related functions and records. This is especially important to identify when the record title does not mention or infer the appeal function.

> **Example:** A typical description reads: **"**…These hearings are quasi-judicial so may be subject to an application for judicial review pursuant to the *Judicial Review Procedure Act*. In addition to being subject to judicial review the decision of a regional manager may be appealed to the Director, Fish, Wildlife and Habitat Protection Branch by the person affected by the decision if he/she is aggrieved. Similarly, a decision by the Director may be appealed to the Environmental Appeal Board.**"**

ARCS Links

21. Are some of the records filed under *ARCS* vital to understanding the operational activities recorded in these records? If so, what are the specific links with *ARCS* records?

Knowing the final disposition of related records in *ARCS* can help archivists determine whether it is necessary to retain certain records covered by an *ORCS*.

> **Example**: Minutes of the committee that makes the decisions documented in this series are filed in *ARCS* 200-20. Possible appraisal: FR the series because it documents the decisions made by the committee, as *ARCS* 200-20 files are SR and therefore will not be fully retained.

Websites

22. Have you incorporated into your *ORCS* all documents published on your web site, that were created resulting from operational activities?