

Classifications for Real People: Designing for the End Users

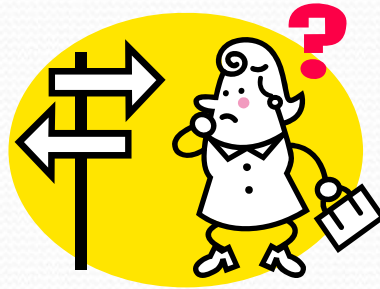
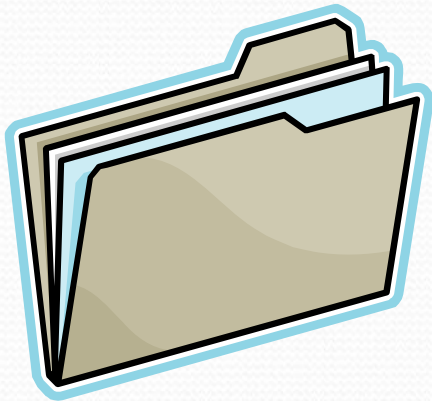
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Purpose

- To challenge our assumptions and traditions about records classification systems.
- To make us aware of obstacles to understanding and usability in records classification systems.
- To stimulate creative approaches in making records classification systems easier to read and implement.

Premise #1

Paper Vs. Digital Environment



“...organizations have begun to recognize in this technology-enabled world that *every* employee has responsibilities surrounding records and information. With the exploding volume of electronic records they are generating, employees must adhere to the controls provided by an information management policy to ensure the integrity, accuracy, and reliability of their organizations’ information assets, intellectual property, and capital.” (Ellie Myler, *Minimizing Risks through a Corporate Information Compliance Initiative*, Information Management Journal, January/February 2008, p. 58-63.)

Premise #2

Where have all the File Clerks gone!



“The Information Management Forum, led by the National Archives of Canada, has identified a number of record keeping issues relevant to description. Some of the issues are as follows: the lack of human resources available for classification in departments; the Block-Numeric system is dated and is not adapted to the needs of electronic record keeping; classification schemes for both electronic and paper records may not be linked; in the electronic work environment, where records classification will occur at the desk top (e.g. the 25 most likely files to be consulted will be available at the user's desk top), guidance may not be available for the pc user/creator.” (Description and Classification of Government Records Working Group, Approach to the Description and Classification of Government Records, www.imforumgi.gc.ca/documents/1999/classification_e.asp, February 1999.)

What's a Classification System?

- Aka Taxonomy or Records Schedule
- Policy document
- Organizes, Manages and Disposes of your Records
- Consistency

Basic Components

- A Descriptive Title to group the records
- A Retention Period to set a lifecycle to the records
- A Code to provide a unique identifier for tracking and administration of the records

Classification Samples

- Operational Records Classification System (ORCS)
 - Provincial Government
- Directory of Records (DoR) based on the University Classification System (UCLASS)
 - University of Victoria
- Ken's Records Classification System
 - Island Medical Program (Half Implemented)
 - BC Investment Management Corporation (Beginning Implementation)

Extra Components

- “Primary” Title and Code
- Scope Note
- Cross-References
- Office of Primary Responsibility (OPR)
- File Arrangement
- Includes/Covers/Examples
- Retention Notes
- Other Notes

Design Process

1. Research Office Functions/Activities
2. Interview Office Staff
3. Examine Existing Records
4. Draft Classification
5. Review Draft with Office Staff
6. Repeat 1-4 until Draft is Acceptable
7. Repeat 1-6 with all Offices
8. Review Classification with Legal, Archival and Organization's Records Authority
9. Approval

Obstacles to Understanding

- DoR

- Secondaries not easily viewed within a Primary
- Retention Rules not clear

Obstacles to Understanding

- ORCS
 - Grammar
 - Scope Note information too far from Secondaries
 - “Record types include”
 - “Unless” and “Except”
 - -00 Policy & Procedures
 - -01 General
 - Subject Files vs. Case Files
 - Retention Columns
 - Retention Codes

Jargon!

“Pitfalls of Jargon : In some cases it is used as a shibboleth to distinguish those who belong to a group from those who do not. This is sometimes called "guild" or "insider" jargon. ... [S]ince outsiders may not see the reference made via jargon, they are all the more sensitive to its more visible elitist social framing. Jargon may be perceived as pedantic, nerdy, and divorced from meaning to outsiders.”

(Wikipedia, *Jargon*,

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jargon#Pitfalls_of_Jargon, April 10, 2008.)

Jargon: Good or Bad?

- Good...
 - Concise, clear communication within a community.
 - Coding
- Bad...
 - Confusing, frustrating obstacle when used to communicate with those outside of the community.
 - Retention Columns
 - Odd, ungrammatical sentences and sentence fragments

Resolving the Obstacles (Maybe)

- Ken's Records Classification System
 - Primary Scope Note
 - Secondary information in tables
 - Secondary Number =
Primary + Secondary Number
 - Jargon removed where possible
(still uses Codes)
 - Secondary Details
 - -9 Reference Material instead of -01 General

Added Features

- Ken's Records Classification System
 - Official Media
 - Official Locations
 - Retention and Disposition Rationales
 - Standardized Retention Periods

Electronic Environment

ARCS Finance www.lcs.gov.bc.ca/CIMB/arcs/index/section4.asp

Vs. IMP Accounting and Finance Primary

| # | Title of Functional Sub-Series (Folder Arrangement) | Time in Office | Time in Offsite | Final | Official Media |
|------|--|----------------|-----------------|---------|-----------------------|
| 01-1 | Accounting and finance (by FY, then by function or project) | FY+3y | 5y | Destroy | Digital |
| 01-2 | Physical financial records (by month, account and sub-code) | FY+3y | 5y | Destroy | Physical |
| 01-9 | Reference material | XY | None | Destroy | Digital & Physical |