The Records Classification System

An Introduction

A Presentation:

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Agenda

• What is Records Classification?

• Rationale of Classifying Records;

• Hierarchies: Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary Blocks;

• Records Retention Scheduling and Disposition;

• CARICAD Records Classification Scheme.

• Questions and answers
What is Records Classification?

The process of devising and applying schemes based on the business activities which generate records, whereby they are categorized in systematic and consistent ways to facilitate their capture, retrieval, maintenance and disposal. Classification includes determining document or file naming conventions, user permissions and security restrictions on records.
Rationale for Classifying Records

Records serve no purpose unless they can be retrieved!

The best way to ensure that the record can be retrieved is to ‘group’ the records within a category. This process is called “classifying” the record, as they are grouped into classes or categories. These categories are called series.
Records Series

A listing of records series by department showing, for each records series, the period of time it is to remain in the office area, in an inactive records area, and its final disposition. (Benedon, 1969)

A records series is a group of identical or related records that are normally used and filed as a unit and with the same retention periods. (Bernal, 1981)
Master List of Subject Headings

In this system a comprehensive list of all subjects dealt with, or likely to arise within the organization should be compiled within a list.

The main objective of this list/index is to provide subject headings which may be used in combinations of twos or threes to form ‘file series’, which will define as precisely as possible the scope of a particular group of papers/documents. In addition, it will ensure that standard nomenclature is used, thereby reducing the possibility of duplicating file series.
Hierarchies: Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary Blocks

**Primary** – This is the general subject block, e.g. **CAR: 1 - Organizational governance and structure**

**Secondary** – This is the sub-block under the general subject block, e.g. **.3 – Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Agreement**

**Tertiary** – This is the more specific title under the sub-block, e.g. **.2 – CARICOM – Heads of Government Meetings**
Hence the specific record would be:

**CAR: 1.3.2**

**CARICOM Heads of Government Meeting**
Records Retention Scheduling and Disposition

Records Retention Scheduling

A records retention schedule identifies the length of time a records series must be retained in active and inactive storage before its final disposition to permanent storage, archival preservation, or destruction. (Bernal, 1981)
NB. A major legal objective and benefit of a retention scheduling programme is to serve as *evidence* to indicate that the organization does, in fact, observe an official policy for the disposal of its business information, and that this policy is implemented systematically in the normal course of business.

E.g.; Enron, MCI cases in the United States. This resulted in new laws for the management of corporate information, most notably Sarbanes-Oxley Act (SOX).
Records Retention Scheduling

Records Value

• Legal Value
• Fiscal Value
• Archival-Evidential Value
Legal Value

These are the records which involves long or short term rights of the government or the private citizen, and which are enforceable by laws and regulations. They are more easily identified than other records. Some examples of these are: patents, contracts, leases, titles, deeds, treaties, etc. Most legal documents and records are never destroyed and are usually archival in value.
Fiscal Value of Records

These are records which show how monies are obtained, allotted, controlled, and expended. Fiscal value varies in lengths of time, from short periods for such routine items such as expense accounts and invoices, to long-term superannuation accounts, trust funds, etc.
Archival-Evidential Information Value of Records

This value may be defined as the ability of a record to aid in the reconstruction of the organization’s past activities, provides information for current and future planning, and to furnish data upon which new activities may be based. Certain records have archival-evidential informational value because they are ‘UNIQUE’. The term ‘unique’ implies that the record contains information which is not available, or which cannot be obtained easily from any other known source.
CARICAD’s Classification Scheme

Blocks are arranged as under:

- CAR 1 - Organizational Governance and Structure
- CAR 2 - Financial Matters
- CAR 3 - Administration
- CAR 4 - Personnel
- CAR 5 - Member Countries
- CAR 6 - Development Partners
- CAR 7 - Projects
- CAR 8 - Meetings/ Workshops
Questions and answers
Thank you!

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