



Records Management Tip

Records management advice prepared for GNWT records professionals by the Records Management Unit, PWS

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**Records
Disposition
Authorities Series**

Developing an ORCS – Part 1

What is an ORCS?

ORCS stands for Operational Records Classification System. It combines a classification system with a retention schedule for a department's operational records. Operational records are records that are created because of or in support of a department's mandated programs and services.

The Records Disposition Authority series gives you tips on how to develop a records disposition authority.

What is the purpose of an ORCS?

An ORCS is used to manage the operational records of a division or department. It offers a number of benefits:

- Records are organized according to a standard system.
- Similar records are kept together for easier filing and retrieval.
- The official or master record is identified. This leads to more reliable records and improves decision-making abilities. It also reduces the volume of copies that are created and stored.
- The life cycle of each series of records is identified. This makes it possible to move records through their life cycle.
- Moving records out of expensive office space and into lower-cost records centre storage reduces expenditures.

What is the scope of an ORCS?

Most departments develop separate ORCS for each division. In some cases, departments even develop ORCS for sections within a division. It is possible to develop a single ORCS for an entire department.

The advantages to having a single ORCS are:

- A single system is in place for the entire department.
- There is a reduction in duplication across the department, because the holder of the master record is identified.
- Information silos within the department are broken down.

The advantages to having separate ORCS for each division are:

- Development can take place when each division is ready for it.
- Divisions that are reluctant to adopt the system do not hold other divisions back.

Blocks of Primary Numbers available for ORCS

ORCS typically use a four-digit primary number. The 1000 through 6999 range of numbers is reserved for ARCS. The following blocks of numbers are available to use for ORCS:

- 0000 through 0999
- 7000 through 9999

Organization of an ORCS document

An ORCS is divided into three main parts.

Cover Page: First, there is a title page or cover page. The cover page contains the title, Records Disposition Authority Number, and a signature block for approval of the schedule by the Chair of the Public Records Committee. It may also contain signature blocks for departmental approvals.

Introductory Material: The next part contains introductory material. Typically, the introductory material will include:

- The purpose of the Records Disposition Authority.
- A description of the records.
- A description or profile of the division and its regulatory environment.
- Definitions of records management terms used in the ORCS.
- An explanation of abbreviations used in the ORCS.

Classification and Retention: The third part consists of the actual classification structure and retention schedules. Each page represents a single primary. The page should contain:

- Primary number and title.
- A scope note that describes the records that will be classified in the primary. The scope note should be detailed enough to give users a good idea of which records belong in which primary.
- Cross references to related primaries in ARCS or ORCS.
- A table for secondaries that contains:
 - Secondary numbers and titles
 - The active and semi-active retention and final disposition of master files.
 - The active and semi-active retention and final disposition of copy files.
- Notes on classification and retention.

For more information:

See these Records Management Bulletins:

- #8 Administrative vs. Operational Functions
- #9 Structure of the GNWT Administrative Records Classification System (ARCS)
- #10 Operational Records Classification Systems (ORCS)