

Tertiaries and Quaternaries

In some of the previous bulletins, we said that tertiaries and quaternaries are part of the block-numeric classification system. This bulletin will go into more detail about what tertiaries and quaternaries are, when you should create them, and how to set them up.

What is a Tertiary?

The block-numeric classification system is the classification system used in the GNWT Administrative Records Classification System (GNWT ARCS) and the Operational Records Classification System (ORCS). It is used to:

- Sort your files into groups of related records.
- Assign file numbers to your files
- Assign file titles to your files.

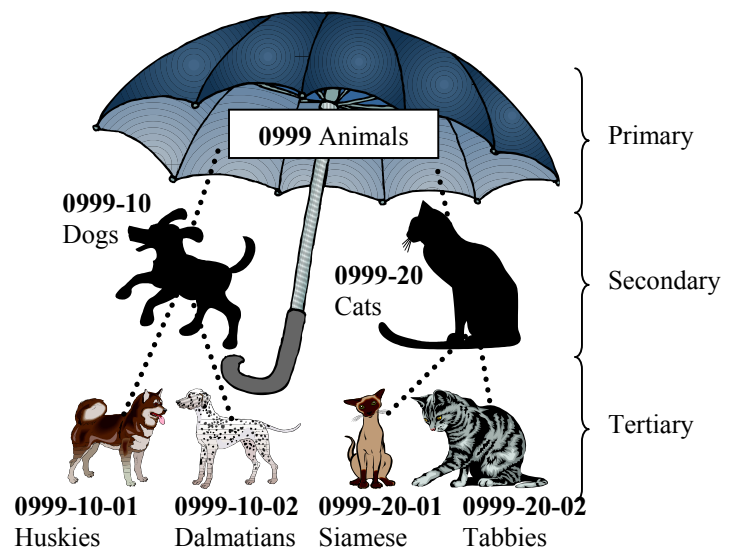
Primaries are used to group records into broadly related subject areas. In most cases, the subject of a primary is too broad to let you find your records easily, so it is split up into **secondaries**. Secondaries are used to sort records into smaller groups of related records.

A **tertiary** is a sub-division of a secondary. In most cases it also equates to a specific file.

You do not have to create a tertiary if you want your file title to be the same as the secondary title. In most cases, the secondary title is too broad to be useful for filing. So, you need to break the secondary down into tertiaries.

For example, imagine that your classification system looks like the one in the picture below. You want to classify a file on Dalmatians. You will classify the file as follows:

- First, you classify it to the primary:
0999 Animals.
- Next, you classify it to the secondary:
0999-10 Animals-Dogs.
- Now you need to create a tertiary for your file:
0999-10-02 Animals-Dogs-Dalmatians.



What is a Quaternary?

A **quaternary** is a sub-division of a tertiary. For example, suppose that you want to create a file for each of your Dalmatians: Dotty and Spotty. After creating a tertiary for Dalmatians, you create a quaternary for each dog:

0999-10-02-01 Animals-Dogs-Dalmatians-Dotty

0999-10-02-02 Animals-Dogs-Dalmatians-Spotty.

Where do I Get the Numbers?

Each primary and secondary in the GNWT ARCS and ORCS has a **classification number** associated with it. When you classify your files, you assign the classification numbers to the file.

For example, a committee file is classified as **1145-30**. The number **1145** represents the primary and the number **30** stands for the secondary. The primary and secondary numbers come from ARCS or ORCS.

Tertiaries also have a classification number assigned to them. Your department assigns tertiary numbers. The tertiary number follows the primary and secondary numbers, e.g. **1145-30-05**. In this example, the number **05** means that this is the fifth committee file that you have created. The number 1145-30-05 becomes the file number for that file.

In most cases, new tertiaries are given the next available tertiary number. Your department's records coordinator or someone in your division will keep track of the tertiary numbers that have been used. They may use a file list or a database to assign the numbers. Check with your records coordinator to find out who assigns tertiary numbers in your department.

Departments sometimes have pre-assigned tertiary numbers for certain groups of records. Check with your records coordinator to find out if your department has pre-assigned tertiary numbers.

When do I Create a New Tertiary?

You should create a new tertiary when:

- You have documents on a subject that is not already in your filing system.
- When the subject matter of the file is more specific than the subject covered by the secondary.
- When the secondary title is not descriptive enough to help you find your files.
- When you have a case file that deals with a specific person, place, thing, or event.

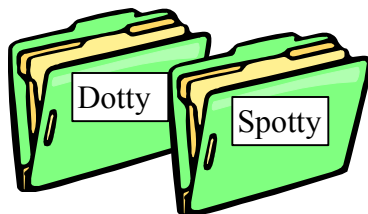
When Don't I Create a New Tertiary?

There is a well-known rule that says that you should create a new file when the previous file is one-inch (2.5 cm) thick. What this really means is that when your original file folder becomes too thick, you should open up a new **volume** of the same file.

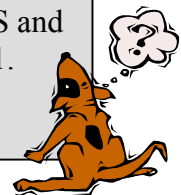
For more information, contact your department's records coordinator, or contact the Records Management Unit at 920-3009 or 873-7446

You do not have to create a new tertiary if the new file folder is a continuation of an earlier folder. Simply assign the original file number to the new folder. The new folder is “Volume 2”, and has the same file number and title as the original volume.

You also do not have to create a tertiary when the secondary title gives you enough information to let you retrieve your files. For example, “General” secondaries are not usually divided into tertiaries because the secondary title says it all.



For more information on ARCS and ORCS, see Bulletins # 9 and 11.



For more information, contact your department’s records coordinator, or contact the Records Management Unit at 920-3009 or 873-7446