NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF AUSTRALIA

Overview of Classification Tools for Records Management

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

This publication advises Commonwealth agencies on how to develop classification tools to support records management processes in their organisation. The management of records and other business information can be greatly facilitated by developing and implementing tools to assist with classification, titling, retrieval, sentencing and disposal of records.

The overview begins with a brief introduction to classification by business function, and to the benefits of classifying by function. It then advises on different presentations of classification tools, which can be developed from an organisation's business classification scheme. The information given in the overview assumes that your organisation has developed a business classification scheme in accordance with the methodology outlined in Step A and Step B of *DIRKS: A Strategic Approach to Managing Business Information*.[1] In many cases, there is a distinct advantage in completing Step C of the DIRKS methodology, before commencing work to develop classification tools. Step C will often expose recordkeeping requirements that have been inadequately addressed by the organisation. Consequently, classification tools will usually require revision if developed before completing Step C.

Divided into five parts, the overview compares two classification tools developed from a business classification scheme. One is arranged hierarchically – a records classification scheme. The other is arranged alphabetically – a functions thesaurus. The overview also examines the business environment in which the classification tool will be implemented, highlighting the importance of stakeholders, organisational business practices, and the value of preparing a business case to support the development of the tool.

The overview includes references to the Australian Standard for Records Management, AS ISO 15489 – 2002,[2] which supersedes AS 4390, and to *Keyword AAA: A Thesaurus of General Terms, Commonwealth Version* (May 2001).[3]

This overview has been issued as an interim publication, pending the outcomes of the work of the Standards Australia IT-021-09 Committee, convened to develop a Records Management Classification best practice standard. The National Archives of Australia is actively involved in the Committee's work on applying classification principles to a functions-based approach and translating them into implementation tools. This publication will be reviewed in the light of the Committee's work.

Acknowledgments

The National Archives of Australia would like to express its appreciation to the Attorney-General's Department for its permission to use examples derived from its business classification scheme, and to the State Records Authority of New South Wales, which has assisted in the development of this material.

[1] See www.naa.gov.au/recordkeeping/dirks/dirksman/dirks.html – hereafter, this document is cited as the DIRKS Manual.

[2] See www.naa.gov.au/recordkeeping/rkpubs/advices/advice58.html

[3] See www.naa.gov.au/recordkeeping/control/keyaaa/summary.html – hereafter this document is cited as Keyword AAA (CV).

1 ORGANISING BUSINESS INFORMATION

Organisations achieve success by realising business goals through strategic resource management. Effective information management is a key enabler in achieving business success, as access to records and other documents containing strategic information is the basis of sound decision-making. Sue Myburgh stresses the importance of internal information management as follows:

> Essential elements of strategic information management also include the identification of internal information sources or documents that might be relevant to the organisation's strategic direction. This means understanding how information containers or documents can be described and organised so that they can be retrieved effectively.[4]

The process of classification helps describe, organise and control information. It creates order in understanding what an organisation does and how it does it. A simple classification tool can facilitate and enhance the capacity of the organisation to share information and knowledge.

Information can be organised in different ways for different purposes. In a library, for example, classification is used to organise information by subject to facilitate resource discovery. In this overview, classification is undertaken for the purpose of managing records and other business information according to their business context within an organisation.

1.1 The value of classification for records management

The Australian Standard for Records Management, AS ISO 15489, defines classification as the:

> systematic identification and arrangement of business activities and/or records into categories according to logically structured conventions, methods, and procedural rules represented in a classification system.[5]

A classification system is the set of terms and conventions applied in a particular organisational setting to classify, title and retrieve records and other business information. It controls the vocabulary used, generating consistency in the description of information produced by business activities and improving retrieval of that information. The capabilities of classification tools for records management can be extended to assist sentencing and disposal.

Imposing a classification system can also mitigate some organisational risks. AS ISO 15489 further explains the need for controlling titling and description, particularly in a large and complex organisation:

> The higher the level of accountability and/or public scrutiny, the greater the need for accuracy and speed in locating individual records. The greater the risks in the business activity, for example public safety concerning hazardous chemicals, the greater the need for precision and control in retrieval.[6]

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[4] Myburgh, Sue, 'Strategic information management: understanding a new reality' in *The Information Management Journal*, Jan/Feb 2002, vol. 36, no. 1 p. 42.

[5] Australian Standard for Records Management, AS ISO 15489 – 2002, Part 1, Clause 3.5.

[6] AS ISO 15489, Part 2, Clause 4.3.4.2.

1.2 Why classify business information by function?

Classifying records and business information by functions and activities moves away from traditional classification based on organisational structure or subject. Functions and activities provide a more stable framework for classification than organisational structures that are often subject to change through amalgamation, devolution and decentralisation. The structure of an organisation may change many times, but the functions an organisation carries out usually remain much the same over time. Within the government sector, administrative change may periodically result in the loss or gain of functions between agencies. In these instances, functional classification makes it much easier for agencies to identify records that have to follow functions.

In the past, it was common to classify records according to their subject content. According to the Australian Standard for Records Management, AS ISO 15489, best practice in records management bases classification on a rigorous analysis of business functions and activities. A functions-based approach anchors information and records classification firmly in business processes. The classification tools discussed in this overview stem from a functional analysis of an organisation.

Classification by function is based on the *context* of a record's creation and use, rather than on the *content* of the record itself. This means the record will be classified according to why it exists – ie, its function – rather than what it is about – ie, its subject. Linking records to their business context is a key requirement for making and capturing full and accurate records.[7] The Australian Standard for Records Management, AS ISO 15489, which has been endorsed by the National Archives of Australia, supports classification grounded in analysis of an organisation's business activities and processes:

> An analysis of business activity and processes will provide an understanding of the relationship between an organisation's business and its records.[8]

A functions-based classification has further advantages, as it helps organisations to:

- identify records that should be created because of their evidential value for business;
- recognise high priority records that should be captured because of their business significance;
- make decisions on retention; and
- sentence records at the point of creation.[9]

It is important to know the extent of a function, to ensure that business responsibilities are met. Functions consist of component activities, which consist of component transactions. These are supported by identifiable recordkeeping requirements. The sum of activities, transactions and recordkeeping requirements provides the framework to ensure a function is performed accountably.

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[7] See the DIRKS glossary for a definition of 'full and accurate records', www.naa.gov.au/recordkeeping/dirks/dirksman/glossary.html

[8] AS ISO 15489, Part 2, Clause 3.2.3.

[9] Jay Kennedy and Cherryl Schauder, *Records Management: A Guide to Corporate Recordkeeping*, 2nd edition, Longmans, Melbourne, 1998, p. 115.

Further information on identifying functions, activities and transactions is available in Step B of the DIRKS Manual.

1.3 Recordkeeping requirements

The nature of an organisation, and the context in which it operates, dictate the type of evidence of its activities it needs to create, the form that evidence takes, how long the evidence should be retained and what access should be provided to that evidence over time. These recordkeeping requirements are identified through a systematic analysis of the organisation's business needs, legal and regulatory obligations, and broader community expectations, as well as an assessment of the organisation's exposure to risk if these evidential requirements are not addressed.

Recordkeeping requirements influence the type of record to be produced as evidence of business activity and how such records are to be maintained. Some recordkeeping requirements are stated explicitly in laws, regulations and other instruments of authority, while others are implied by the environment in which the organisation operates.

For example, a recordkeeping requirement may direct:

- that a record be created, or particular information be captured;
- that recorded information be retained for a specified period;
- conditions surrounding disposal of the recorded information;
- that specific content must be recorded;
- the form in which the recorded information is to be retained;
- conditions regarding access to the recorded information; and
- conditions surrounding the quality of the recorded information.

Further information about recordkeeping requirements, and how to identify them, is available in Step C of the DIRKS Manual.

1.4 Benefits of developing a functions-based classification tool for records management

When records and information are properly classified, a business information system operates more efficiently. Classification tools guide users to the most appropriate classification for individual records.[10]

The classification tools described in this overview stem from an organisation's business classification scheme. Terms assigned to the functions and activities identified in the business classification scheme form the basis of the terms used in these classification tools. These terms are the interface between performing a function and documenting it. Classifying business activities through a functions-based classification tool is a powerful means of supporting the conduct of business, as it:

- establishes and documents the relationships between the business activity and the evidence to show that it has been performed efficiently, openly and accountably;

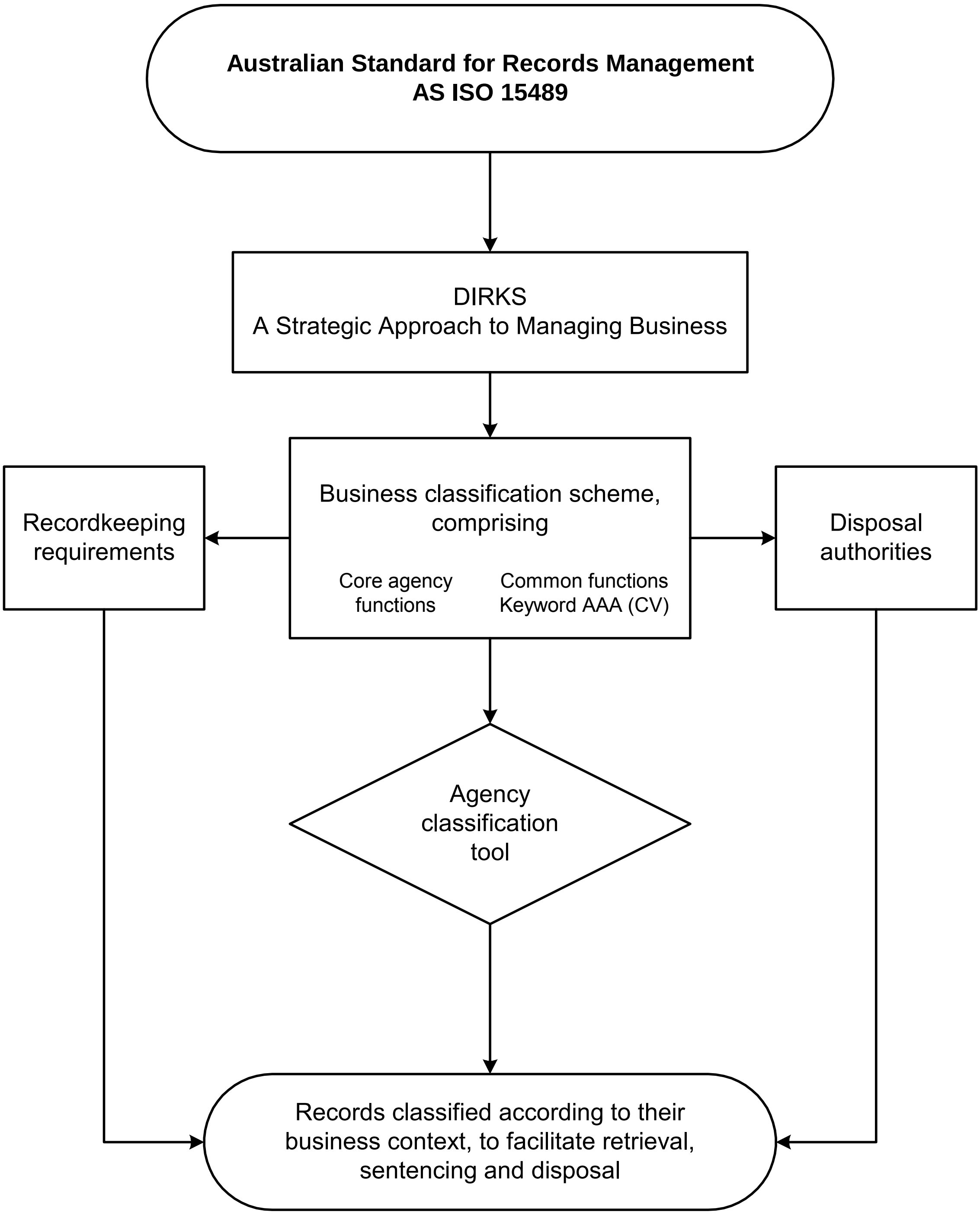
[10] AS ISO 15489, Part 2, Clause 4.2.3.2.

- establishes links between individual records that combine to provide a continuous record of organisational activity;
- enables identification of records over time by ensuring records are titled in a consistent manner;
- assists retrieval of all records relating to a business activity, as it provides links from previous naming/titling conventions to current business terminology;
- controls the language for titling and indexing records in specific business contexts;
- assists users to navigate from non-preferred terms to preferred search terms;
- provides a guide that makes retrieval of information more predictable;
- determines security protection and access levels, or 'use' permissions, appropriate for particular sets of records; and
- assists in managing retention periods and disposal actions for records.

1.5 Relationships between key records management products

The development of a classification tool is integral to the establishment of an integrated business information system. A classification tool implemented with a range of other records management products provides a unified framework for strategic records management. Figure 1 illustrates the connections between these products and procedures and how they relate to classification tools.

Figure 1 – Relationships between key records management products



2 EXPLAINING CLASSIFICATION TOOLS

In this overview the merits and limitations of two classification tools are compared: a records classification scheme and a functions thesaurus.[11] One is a hierarchical representation of a business classification scheme and the other an alphabetical representation. The purpose of the comparison is to help you make decisions regarding the most appropriate tool for your organisation. The selection process should take into account your organisation's business information systems and the availability of resources to develop the product. Organisations may adopt different classification tools over time, depending on the nature of their business environment.

2.1 What is a business classification scheme?

A business classification scheme is a conceptual representation of the business activity performed by an organisation. It is a by-product of the analysis of business activity undertaken in Step B of DIRKS. It is a hierarchical model of what an organisation does. The business classification scheme is the foundation from which the classification tools described in this overview are developed.

Table 1 shows a 'bare bones' example of a portion of the Attorney-General's Department's business classification scheme relating to the function of legislative drafting and its associated activities. In a business classification scheme, only the hierarchical relationship of activities to their particular function is provided.

Table 1 – Activities in one function in a business classification scheme

Function	**Legislative Drafting**
Activity	Advice
Activity	Agency Evaluation
Activity	Committees
Activity	Implementation
Activity	Legal Drafting
Activity	Legal Publishing
Activity	Policy
Activity	Procedures
Activity	Reporting
Activity	Tabling

Source: Attorney-General's Department, 2003

An example of a full business classification scheme is provided in Keyword AAA (CV), which most agencies have access to through licencing arrangements with the National Archives.[12]

[11] The terms 'records classification scheme' and 'functions thesaurus' are derived from the Australian Standard for Records Management, AS ISO 15489, Part 2, Clause 4.2.2.1.

[12] Commonwealth agencies have free access to Keyword AAA (CV) and explanatory material under a whole of government licence. See www.naa.gov.au/recordkeeping/control/keyaaa/summary.html for further information.

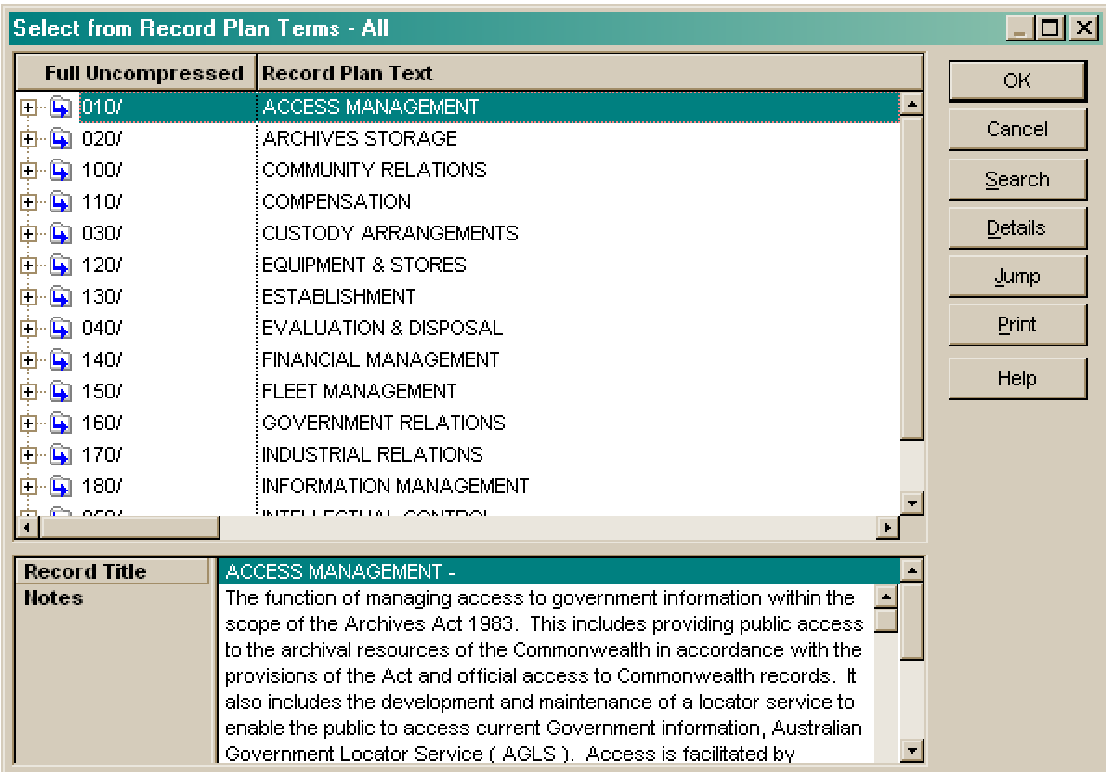
2.2 What is a records classification scheme?

A records classification scheme is a classification tool presented in a hierarchical structure. It is sometimes referred to as a 'file plan' or 'record plan'. Stemming from an organisation's business classification scheme, it is a tool for classifying records and other business information, based on the business activities that generate records in a particular organisational setting. When applied to a business information system it can facilitate the capture, titling, retrieval, maintenance and disposal of records and other corporate information.

Often a records classification scheme is depicted as a directory or 'folder' structure. It can provide classification to two, three, and sometimes four, levels. Terms are allocated according to established rules or conventions. The components of the records classification scheme are displayed hierarchically in the order, or ranking, of function – activity – topic – subtopic. Records classification scheme applications range from simple folder utilisation to applications with relatively sophisticated navigation options.

When a records classification scheme is accessed via a desktop application, users may initially see only the top level of classification terms – ie, function terms. The terms at this level of the hierarchical ranking are usually listed alphabetically, as shown in Figure 2, of the National Archives record plan in its corporate business information system.

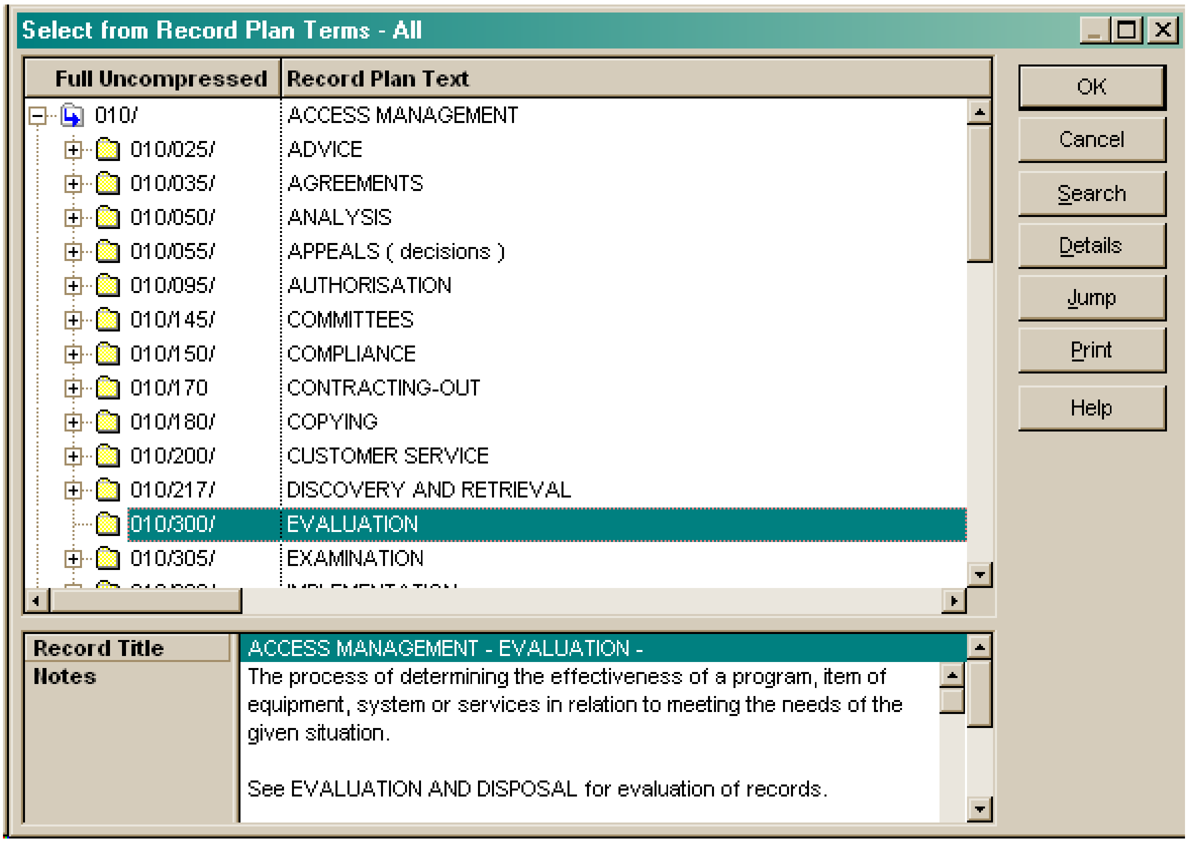
Figure 2 – The National Archives record plan showing function-level classification terms



Source: National Archives of Australia, 2003

In an electronic business information system, users can select the folder with the function term they wish to apply, to reveal a drop-down list of the second-level classification terms – ie, activity terms – linked to that function. For example, when the function term Access Management is selected, the activity terms linked to the function are displayed, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3 – The National Archives record plan showing activity-level classification terms under the function of Access Management



Source: National Archives of Australia, 2003

Third-level classification terms are topic terms. In some records classification schemes, the third level of classification is 'free text'. This means users are able to type in their own terms, or a short phrase, to describe the transactions being documented. In other records classification schemes, clicking on the activity folder reveals a list of third-level classification terms and phrases that users can apply to records and other business information.

It is not always easy to identify the right terms for the activity–transaction being documented. A user may find that, because they are thinking at the activity level rather than the function level, the function–activity context that is displayed is not appropriate. As a result, they may have to scroll through several hierarchical relationships to find the right combination of terms for classification.

Depending on the functionality of the classification tool, there may be several ways to navigate to the correct classification terms. Sometimes *scope notes* will be available to assist users. More sophisticated applications for records classification schemes can have the functionality to list all the classification 'strings' in which a term appears. Users can then navigate to the most appropriate combination by selecting from the displayed list.

Using a Keyword AAA (CV) term as an example, selecting the activity term 'Acquisition' could display the following classification options:

Equipment and Stores – Acquisition – Appliances

Equipment and Stores – Acquisition – Order Forms

Equipment and Stores – Acquisition – Stationery

Fleet Management – Acquisition – Vehicles

Financial Management – Acquisition – Requisitions

Information Management – Acquisition – Library Materials

Information Management – Acquisition – Publications

Information Management – Acquisition – Inter-library Loans (ILL)

Property Management – Acquisition – Building Materials

Technology and Telecommunications – Acquisition – Hardware (computers)

Technology and Telecommunications – Acquisition – Software

Technology and Telecommunications – Acquisition – LAN

Records classification schemes always provide some navigational paths, such as links between related terms. But their navigational paths are limited. For example, records classification schemes do not link terms that a user may think are appropriate but which are not used for classification – ie, non-preferred terms – to terms that are used for classification – ie, preferred terms.[13] Scope notes are not always available to explain the meaning of terms, which can lead to misinterpretation and incorrect classification. The limitations of a records classification scheme can reduce efficiency of records retrieval.

2.3 What is a functions thesaurus?

A functions thesaurus is a classification tool presented in an alphabetical structure. Building on an organisation's business classification scheme, its use can be extended from classifying, titling and retrieving records and business information to managing, sentencing and disposing of records. A thesaurus is:

> a controlled list of terms linked together by semantic, hierarchical, associative or equivalence relationships. Such a tool acts as a guide to allocating classification terms to individual records.[14]

A functions thesaurus can provide classification to three, four or more levels, allowing comprehensive classification of records and other business information. Terms are allocated according to established rules or conventions. Although a functions thesaurus displays terms in alphabetical order, when the classification terms are selected they are usually presented in the 'function – activity – topic – subtopic' combination.

A functions thesaurus also includes terms that are not authorised for classifying and titling records. These non-preferred terms – words or wording – are similar to terms

[13] More information on related terms and non-preferred terms is available in 'Part three: Determining relationships between terms' of *Developing a Functions Thesaurus: Guidelines for Commonwealth Agencies*, www.naa.gov.au/recordkeeping/control/functions_thesaur/intro.html

[14] AS ISO 15489, Part 2, Clause 4.2.3.2.

that can be applied to records. The purpose of adding non-preferred terms is to provide links, for users, to terms that can be applied to records.

At a term's entry point in the thesaurus, any links it has to any other term are displayed. These relationships are explained in detail in 'Part Three: Determining Relationships between Terms' of *Developing a Functions Thesaurus: Guidelines for Commonwealth Agencies.* All hierarchical relationships are expressed at the term's entry in the thesaurus. Any related relationships between terms are also shown. Scope notes are included, explaining the meaning and usage of terms, to avoid misinterpretation and incorrect classification. Where a non-preferred term is listed, the thesaurus shows the term that should be used.

An example of an alphabetical listing of classification terms as they may be displayed in a functions thesaurus is provided in Keyword AAA (CV) which most agencies have access to through licencing arrangements with the National Archives.[15]

As a functions thesaurus includes more navigational paths for users, it incorporates more functionality than a records classification scheme but it is also more complex, requiring more resources to develop, implement, maintain and to train users. Further information on the step-by-step development of a functions thesaurus is available in *Developing a Functions Thesaurus.*[16]

2.4 Comparing classification tools

The table below summarises the similarities and differences between a business classification scheme, a records classification scheme and a functions thesaurus, showing their benefits and limitations.

Table 2 – Comparison of the properties of a business classification scheme, a records classification scheme and a functions thesaurus

	Business Classification Scheme	Records Classification Scheme	Functions Thesaurus
Purpose	• Conceptual model of the business activity of an organisation; intellectual basis for developing recordkeeping tools, such as a records classification scheme or a functions thesaurus.	• Tool for classifying, titling, accessing and retrieving records	• Tool for classifying, titling, accessing and retrieving records

[15] As noted, Commonwealth agencies have free access to Keyword AAA (CV) and explanatory material under a whole of government licence. See www.naa.gov.au/recordkeeping/control/keyaaa/summary.html for further information.

[16] www.naa.gov.au/recordkeeping/control/functions_thesaur/intro.html

	Business Classification Scheme	Records Classification Scheme	Functions Thesaurus
How the tool aids classification and retrieval	• Scope notes to define functions and activities	• Hierarchical presentation of classification terms • Function-level terms are linked to activity-level terms • Activity-level terms are linked to topic-level terms (where available) • Terms in each hierarchical level are listed alphabetically • Related terms are linked • May include scope notes to define functions and activities • Some applications will list classification strings	• Alphabetical presentation of classification terms • Access can be via activity, function or topic level • All relationships between terms are displayed and defined • Navigation from non-preferred to preferred terms through synonyms and other variations in description • Includes scope notes to define functions and activities • History notes connect current terminology with outdated terms • Related concepts are linked • Displays one-to-many relationships
Limitations of the tool with regard to classification and retrieval	• No navigation to preferred terms • Displays only one-to-one relationships	• No navigation from non-preferred terms to preferred terms • Displays only one-to-one relationships • Scope notes may not be included	
Levels of classification	Three: • Function • Activity • Transaction	Two or more: • Function • Activity • Topic • Subtopic	Two or more: • Function • Activity • Topic • Subtopic

	Business Classification Scheme	Records Classification Scheme	Functions Thesaurus
Differences in third level of classification	Transactions – the smallest unit of a business activity; the tasks undertaken to perform activities	Topics and subtopics may be a mix of transactions, subjects or record types based on the most appropriate way to title the record for searching and retrieval	Topics and subtopics may be a mix of transactions, subjects or record types based on the most appropriate way to title the record for searching and retrieval
Example of third level of classification	Transactions, eg COMMUNITY RELATIONS – Research • Receive research request • Determine scope of project • Consult internal and external experts • Conduct literature search and gather documentation • Analyse material • Formulate report	Topics, eg COMMUNITY RELATIONS – Research • Brochures • Business case • Equal employment opportunity • Ethnic affairs • Hazardous substances • Literary contributions • Oral history • Projects • Publications • Questionnaires *Source: Keyword AAA (CV)*	Topics, eg COMMUNITY RELATIONS – Research • Brochures • Business case • Equal employment opportunity • Ethnic affairs • Hazardous substances • Literary contributions • Oral history • Projects • Publications • Questionnaires *Source: Keyword AAA (CV)*

3 EXPLAINING CLASSIFICATION LEVELS

The number of classification levels required for classifying and titling records and other business information must be decided, as this affects the depth of detail in the classification tool and degree of training that will be required by users. The terms used in the organisation's business classification scheme form the basis of the terms used in the classification tool. These terms will need to be assessed for their suitability to translate into terms for titling purposes.

As described in Part Two: Explaining Classification Tools, a classification tool can be developed to four (or more) levels of classification. The number of classification levels incorporated into the classification tool will depend on factors such as the:

- purpose(s) of the classification tool
- expertise of users
- sophistication of the technology
- type of business environment in which users work
- weight and support given to accountable recordkeeping practice by the organisation
- extent of the business information system in which it will be used.

With some training, most users are capable of classifying records and other business information to the first and second levels. In particular, users are often adept at classifying at the activity level, as this is the context they are most familiar with. However, sometimes users find it difficult to see above or below the activity level when classifying their business information.

It is important to keep the classification tool intuitive to users, as they are the key to its success or failure. Maintaining communication with users is vital, particularly when further analysis is required to develop appropriate terms that have meaning to users. If user needs are not taken into consideration, the classification tool may be ignored. As a result, unauthorised, parallel recordkeeping systems will develop. This has consequences for the effective sharing of knowledge, and efficient tracking of records and other business information throughout the organisation.

3.1 What are classification levels?

Classification levels are the degrees of specificity incorporated into a classification tool. A business classification scheme has three components, or levels:

- a broad, encompassing category, called a function
- a narrower subset of the function, called an activity
- a narrower and more specific subset of the activity, called a transaction.

In general, the levels of classification incorporated into a classification tool correlate to the levels developed in the organisation's business classification scheme. The same terms used in the business classification scheme are, in general, used at the corresponding levels developed in the classification tool. In most cases, the top level of classification is the same as the function level in the business classification scheme, with the second level of classification the same as the activity level. The third level of classification is known by various names, such as the transaction level, the subject descriptor level or the topic level. Terms from each classification level are 'strung' together and known as a 'classification string'. In this document, they are strung together as 'FUNCTION – ACTIVITY – TOPIC – SUBTOPIC'.

Many terms in a classification tool are accompanied by scope notes. Scope notes define the breadth of a term and clarify its meaning and use in a particular organisation. Function and activity terms used in a classification tool that are derived from the agency's business classification scheme, should already have scope notes, which were developed during the analysis of business activity undertaken in Step B of the DIRKS process. If you need to compose scope notes for topic or subtopic terms in the classification tool, further guidance is given in Step B of the DIRKS Manual.

3.2 The classification tool, the business classification scheme and the records disposal authority

An organisation's business classification scheme represents 'pure' analysis of the functions and activities undertaken by an organisation. It is a conceptual representation of what the organisation does. In most instances, the terms and levels used in the business classification scheme will directly translate into the terms and levels required in a classification tool.

However, there will not always be direct translation of the terms used in an organisation's business classification scheme to terms required in the classification tool. For some business units, the business classification scheme may not be flexible enough for user requirements. For example, a user may wish to keep many activities relating to a particular case or project on one file, for convenience and ease of use. Adaptations of the business classification scheme to accommodate such user preferences can occur at any level of classification, although it is unusual at the first – or function – level.

The records disposal authority (RDA) for the organisation's core business activities is also an extension of the business classification scheme. In many instances, the terms in the classification tool will correlate directly to the terms used to develop record classes in the RDA and their associated disposal actions. In this way, the classification tool can support the records management process of assigning disposal at the point of records' creation.

Disposal actions for non-core – or common – administrative functions of most Commonwealth agencies are specified in the *Administrative Functions Disposal Authority* (AFDA),[17] which is based on Keyword AAA (CV). The terms in the classification tool can be aligned to these terms and disposal actions, particularly if the core thesaurus is merged with Keyword AAA (CV).

When a term does not directly match the one in the business classification scheme, it must be mapped back to the equivalent term or position in the business classification scheme, and then to the appropriate disposal class in the relevant disposal authority. This mapping process is undertaken by information and records management personnel, behind the scenes, without users needing to know or understand this.

For example, the National Archives business classification scheme contains the function term 'Access Management' and a range of activity terms derived from Keyword AAA (CV) including Agreements, Grant Funding and Joint Ventures. However, users have expressed a preference to use an omnibus term 'Sponsorship Management' to classify records relating to agreements, grant funding and joint ventures, rather than using the three separate Keyword AAA (CV) terms from the

[17] www.naa.gov.au/recordkeeping/disposal/authorities/gda/afda/summary.html

business classification scheme. This user preference can be accommodated because the relationship between the term and the business classification scheme has been identified and documented.

3.3 Classification terms at the first level

The first – or top – level of classification in a classification tool is the function level. Function terms from the organisation's business classification scheme will be used to classify records at this level. For most function terms, users will be able to relate these terms to the business functions they perform.

Although uncommon, there may be occasions when a term allocated to the business classification scheme at the function level will not be seen as appropriate by users who need to classify records under this term. This can occur if the function has been pitched too high, or when the responsibilities of a workgroup straddle two or more similar functions and it is difficult for users in these workgroups to distinguish which function is being documented in the record.

To overcome these problems, a new term may need to be developed in consultation with the affected workers and incorporated into the classification tool to assist these users to classify and title their records. It is a fundamental principle that classification terms must make sense to users. Otherwise, they will not classify their records appropriately, and unauthorised, parallel recordkeeping systems may develop. In this event, retrieval is more difficult.

A function term in the classification tool that deviates from the function term in the business classification scheme must be mapped, or linked back, to the corresponding function in the business classification scheme by the records and information management staff. When records are classified and registered under the 'divergent' function term, records management staff are able to recognise how these records are aligned with the business classification scheme and the records disposal authority and will be able to apply correct disposal actions confidently.

For example, users in the Attorney-General's Department have expressed a preference to use the term 'Legal Policy Development' to classify records rather than the function term 'Legal Counsel' which is specified in the agency's Business Classification Scheme, because they do not readily identify with the latter term in their day-to-day work practices. This user preference can be accommodated because the relationship between the term and the business classification scheme has been identified and documented.

3.4 Classification terms at the second level

The second level of classification is formulated by using the activity-level terms in the business classification scheme and is usually referred to as the activity level of classification. For the most part, the terms in the business classification scheme will be appropriate for use in the classification tool. However there may be some user preferences that need consideration.

For example, users may require a 'case' activity-level term, especially if this is a preferred – or legally required – method of maintaining information for particular business activities. 'Project management' is another business activity that, depending on user habits and preferences, may or may not be a useful term for classifying and titling records. There may be a number of activities that users wish to keep together on case and project management files, which will necessitate a process of mapping the terms back to the business classification scheme.

Users will be able to articulate the types of records and documents they wish to maintain together in such mega-activities. Table 3 gives an example of user requirements for a project file, with a corresponding equivalent activity for a particular function from the business classification scheme.

Table 3 – Example of documents in a project file and the activities they correspond to in the business classification scheme

Project file	Corresponding activity
Project schedules	Implementation
Risk analysis documentation	Risk management
Project reports	Reporting
Implementation schedules	Implementation
Project budget	Budgeting
Authorisation documentation	Authorisation
Post-implementation review	Reviewing

The scope of the mega-activity is ascertained by analysing the activities involved in the work processes. Each activity within the mega-activity is mapped to the appropriate activity under an appropriate function of the business classification scheme. Such mapping is necessary in order to understand the file, to develop an appropriate second-level titling term, and to assign appropriate disposal actions.

3.5 Classification terms at the third level

Terms at the third level of classification are known by various names. If present, the third level in a business classification scheme is usually referred to as the transaction level. In this document, terms at the third level are referred to as topic terms and are formulated from the transaction flows identified during the business classification scheme's development in Step B (and possibly Step C) of the DIRKS process.

The flow of tasks or transactions required to do each activity is identified in the process of defining the boundaries of the activities that the organisation performs. In general, topic-level classification terms will not relate directly to each component of the transaction flow. More commonly, topic terms will relate to the output of a small group of tasks, because it is not usually necessary to separately classify every single business transaction.

For example, Table 4 shows some transactions associated with the Risk Management activity. Risk Management can relate to many functions, but in this example it has been related to Occupational Health and Safety.

Table 4 – Example of a transaction flow and the records and topics relating to each transaction

Activity	Transactions	Record	Possible topics
Risk Management	1. Research and identify criteria to assess workplace OH&S risks	List of criteria	• Criteria • Workplace assessment • Named risks – eg Manual handling, Ergonomic assessment
	2. Determine suitable risk assessment method		
	3. Develop a report on risk assessment methodology for OH&S-related risks	Report on methodology to assess risks	• Risk assessment methodology • Report
	4. Collate data		
	5. Report findings	Report on findings	• Findings report • Hazards
	6. Develop treatments to minimise OH&S risk		• Risk treatment • Preventive action • Named risk(s)
	7. Gain approval for OH&S risk assessment measures	Authorisation of risk assessment measure	
	8. Treat OH&S risks as appropriate		
	9. Produce reports on treatment of risks	Report on treatment of risk	• Treatment report
	10. Maintain ongoing monitoring of levels of risk	Monitoring reports	• Risk monitoring reports
	11. Produce periodical reports assessing levels of risk	Periodical reports	• Risk assessment • Periodic report (date)

The topic list from this example is as follows:

- Criteria
- Ergonomic assessment
- Findings report
- Hazards
- Manual handling
- Methodology
- Periodic report
- Preventive action
- Risk assessment
- Risk monitoring report
- Risk treatment
- Treatment report
- Workplace assessment

These terms can be used singularly or as a string, for example 'Occupational Health and Safety – Risk Management – Workplace Assessment – Criteria – Manual Handling'.

Other sources of information may be useful in developing third-level terms. Previous file titling conventions can indicate the types of terms favoured by users. This can assist not only in identifying preferred terms but also non-preferred terms to add for navigation purposes. An industry thesaurus, relevant to some or all of the organisation's business, is worth examining for suitable topic terms.[18] If the agency has a functions-based records disposal authority, the record descriptions identified in that process can assist with the development of topic-level terms. It is important to remember, however, that the disposal authority is developed at a particular point in time, while the classification tool will evolve over time to accommodate changes in user preferences. It is therefore unlikely that the agency will be able to rely on a direct correlation between preferred third-level terms and disposal classes over time. Information and records management personnel will need to undertake some mapping of third-level terms to the disposal authority to provide for effective sentencing on creation.

Often, a fourth level of classification – a subtopic – is included in the classification string. Such terms may be added to qualify the topic term, or to give further description and meaning to the third-level term. Subtopics can take the form of abbreviations, or the authorised way of citing proper names. In some organisations, fourth-level classification is free-text description. For example, 'Occupational Health and Safety – Risk Management – Workplace Assessment – Criteria – Manual Handling in Records Handling Section'.

It is up to the agency to decide on the most useful application of each level of classification, and to define its boundaries in the business rules.

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[18] Further information about subject and other thesauruses is available in 'Appendix D: Subject and other thesauruses' in *Developing a Functions Thesaurus*.

3.6 Establishing business rules for titling

Business rules should be established for applying terms at each level of the classification tool. These are the rules, or conventions, imposed to ensure consistency in classification throughout the organisation. Workgroups sometimes initiate and establish the conventions, but more often the organisation's records and information manager does this work.

For example, the National Archives has implemented corporate classification and titling conventions at the function and activity levels. Beyond these levels, users enter free-text descriptions. However, some workgroups also adopt local conventions and preferences, particularly for classification at the third and fourth levels, to maintain consistency and to enable retrieval of records related to the workgroup.

Table 5 shows the format the National Archives uses to title records that document the progress of agencies through the DIRKS process.

Table 5 – Example of titling conventions or rules

Classification level	Convention for terms
Level one – Function	Nominated function – Evaluation and Disposal
Level two – Activity	Nominated activity – Disposal Authorities
Level three – Topic	Agency name
Level four – Subtopic	Step in DIRKS methodology being undertaken

For example, the relevant file documenting liaison with the Attorney-General's Department regarding its Step A project is 'Evaluation and Disposal – Disposal Authorities – Attorney-General's Department – Step A'.

4 PREPARING TO DEVELOP A CLASSIFICATION TOOL

This part of the overview discusses the environment in which the classification tool will operate. It highlights aspects of the organisation's structure and practices that must be considered before the agency embarks on a project to develop a classification tool. A well-developed business case, to underscore the benefits of implementing a classification tool, will indicate that the business environment, the business information systems, users and other stakeholders, resource requirements and project management have all been adequately analysed and evaluated. Developing and implementing a functions thesaurus, in particular, is a resource-intensive process, so the required resources must be identified in the project planning stages.

4.1 Investigating how a classification tool will be beneficial

A classification tool will enhance the efficiency of an organisation's business information systems and improve records management outcomes. Some problems that a well-designed classification tool can overcome include:

- low success in retrieving required records and other information;
- retrieval of too many records or too much information;
- retrieval of unrelated and unwanted records and other information;
- use of incorrect terminology for searching;
- scattering of records and other information across different sources or business information systems;
- failure of searches on plurals of terms to retrieve any information or records;
- multiple terms used to describe the same project;
- inability of users to decide on the best terms to use for searching;
- inability of users to decide on the best way to classify or describe the records they create;
- inability to retrieve related records and other information – where a search retrieves some records and information, but users do not know which terms best describe related concepts;
- 'bag' files in the business information system, which can indicate users do not understand how to classify the records they have created; and
- difficulties in determining the functions and activities when sentencing records.

4.2 Considering the organisation's business environment

The complexity of the business activities, and the way business activities are performed, will influence the type of classification tool most suited to an organisation. Other factors, such as the extent of centralisation or decentralisation of records management responsibilities, the types of business information systems used across the organisation, the level of support given to users, and the arrangement of the organisation's business units – ie, as a single-site or a multi-site agency – will influence decisions about the development and implementation of particular classification tools.

4.2.1 Considering stakeholders when developing a classification tool

Stakeholders are groups that have an interest in the type of classification tool that is produced and the way it will influence their work practices. Understanding the needs of stakeholders is an important aspect that will affect both the process of development and the success of the end product. Traditionally, an agency's records and information management staff managed the classification and titling of records and other business information. Online and remote retrieval technologies have shifted the creation, capture, classification and retrieval of records and business information to the user of the business information system. This has implications for the type of classification tool developed and how its implementation is planned and managed.

A range of stakeholders have an interest in, and will be affected by, the outcome of the processes to create and maintain a classification tool. The most important stakeholder group is the users. They may not have an intimate knowledge of what the classification tool is, but they will be expected to apply terms from it effectively. An understanding of the way users create, capture and utilise records and other information in the organisation will help.

Appendix A identifies stakeholders that require consideration, and outlines the impacts of their particular responsibilities and interests on the development of a classification tool.

4.2.2 Models for managing records and business information

Different models for managing records and other business information operate in different organisations and will affect the type of classification tool developed and how it is implemented.

- **Centralised** – This model involves the establishment of one physical location for the records management operation in the organisation, the development of a single policy and the formation of one group of people responsible for carrying out records management activities.
- **Decentralised** – This model involves the establishment of multiple records management units at different office locations or in different parts of one office location. Each unit provides records management services for its particular area, and may be controlled by an operational records manager reporting to the corporate records manager. In some organisations this model is further decentralised, to the point that users undertake operational records management.
- **Devolved** – This model can be distinguished from the decentralised model in that records management staff report directly to the business unit manager in which their operation is located, rather than to an operational or corporate records manager. Under this model, the corporate records manager is involved in policy and standards setting, but there are no reporting lines between the corporate records manager and records management staff.
- **Combination** – This model combines aspects of the other models. An organisation with regional offices may, for example, establish a centralised records management unit in its head office under the leadership of the corporate records manager, but may also give responsibility for operational records management to managers at regional offices, in accordance with standards and policies set by the corporate records manager.

4.2.3 Considering the organisation's business information systems

A business information system is a set of processes, including policies, procedures, software and hardware, designed to capture evidence of business activities performed by an organisation. It should create, capture, manage and provide access to business information over time. Classification tools can be used to impose order and consistency on a range of corporate business information systems, from organisation-wide correspondence systems, intranets and shared directories, to smaller, discrete information systems.

Many organisations will have at least one enterprise-wide business information system. Users of this type of business information system will benefit from access to a classification tool reflecting the business activity of the organisation as a whole. This is particularly applicable if the organisation is large and complex.

It is important to be aware of the entirety of business information systems that an organisation uses. Independent, discrete business information systems need to be identified and viewed as components of a whole system. These systems include those that are viewed as separate entities because of the medium in which they are managed, for example:

- paper systems (such as a paper-based registry)
- email systems
- e-commerce and web-based transaction systems
- electronic document management systems
- electronic data systems – including discrete databases managed in a variety of business areas
- dedicated recordkeeping systems.

These systems may also be viewed by the organisation as separate systems because different workgroups are assigned to administer them. For example, a paper file system may be considered the domain of the records management unit but an email system may be considered the responsibility of the IT area. In some organisations, some of these systems will overlap. For example, an organisational policy of printing important emails to paper will impact on the management of the email system and the paper system. Regardless of the business information systems being used, the same issues of records creation, capture, classification, maintenance and disposal need to be addressed.

Organisations will usually operate a number of discrete data systems, and manage them independently of the correspondence system. Discrete data systems are designed for specific purposes, such as:

- human resource management
- financial management
- management of client information
- database applications.

Such data systems are usually not accessible by everyone in the organisation. However, the specialist staff managing these data systems will also use the correspondence system and it may not be clear which workgroup has responsibility for the records and business information produced.

For example, when officers in a finance section need to inform the organisation of changes to processing financial arrangements, this information will be captured in the correspondence system and the records management unit will be seen as the area with responsibility for the management of these records. However, in undertaking their duties, officers will create, store and manipulate data on the financial management system. The finance section may see itself as responsible for these records. The recordkeeping requirements of all of these independent systems must be identified and administered appropriately in order for the organisation to manage its records and other business information in an integrated manner.

Some business information systems may incorporate a subsystem for certain records. For example, a human resource management unit may establish a subsystem specifically to manage confidential records. In some cases the records are physically removed into a secure storage environment with restricted access or, in an electronic business information system, are removed 'virtually' through the application of access restrictions. A classification tool can also facilitate the application of security and access regimes.

Business information systems that manage a narrow range of functions and activities – and which are operated by selected staff – can benefit from integrating a classification tool that provides access to terms specific to the particular business area.

It is worth viewing all of these diverse systems as parts of a whole. Understanding how each component system produces records, and their associated recordkeeping requirements, will assist in the development of appropriate classification tools.

Step D of the DIRKS Manual examines business information systems in detail and Part 1, Section 4 of the manual gives further advice on systems that keep records and other business information.

Table 6 describes aspects of the business environment and business information systems to consider when making decisions about how your organisation works and what the classification tool will be required to do.

Table 6 – Business environments and classification tool requirements

Business environment	Classification tool content and implementation considerations
Organisation-wide business information system, with decentralised and devolved creation, capture and retrieval of records and information, with minimal quality control.	• Develop either an alphabetical listing of all terms or a standardised listing of the records classification scheme to simplify the classification process, reduce reliance on training and improve consistency in classification. • Develop third level of classification to reduce reliance on free text. • Incorporate non-preferred terms for navigation to preferred terms. • Detailed, clear scope notes explaining the meaning of terms. • Instant access through desktop icon in an electronic application. • 'User friendly' search options.

Business environment	Classification tool content and implementation considerations
Remote users without ready access to expert advice.	• Develop either an alphabetical listing of terms or a standardised listing of the records classification scheme to simplify the classification process, reduce reliance on training and improve consistency in classification. • Develop third level of classification to reduce reliance on free text. • Incorporate non-preferred terms for navigation to preferred terms. • Detailed, clear scope notes explaining the meaning of terms. • Instant access through desktop icon in an electronic application. • 'User friendly' search options.
Use of discrete business information systems where users create and capture most of their records and other business information within a small range of business functions and activities.	• Display preferred terms limited to functions used by workgroup. • Develop third level of classification to reduce reliance on free text. • Incorporate non-preferred terms for navigation to preferred terms. • Detailed, clear scope notes explaining the meaning of terms. • Detailed user training.
Previous extensive use of a subject thesaurus, which users wish to continue using for retrieval purposes.	• Incorporate these terms into the third level of classification.
Titles of paper-based records have been loaded into the business information system. These records were titled using free text or subject headings.	• Incorporate non-preferred terms to allow cross-reference to preferred terms for retrieval and sentencing purposes.

4.3 Developing a business case

Developing a business case for a project to create and implement a classification tool will be useful to support your recommendations and to engender endorsement from senior staff. It will also increase the likelihood of a successful project outcome. Section 1.4 describes the benefits a classification tool can realise. You could incorporate these into your business case to substantiate your recommendations.

Further information on structuring and presenting a business case is available in Appendix 9 of the DIRKS Manual. Appendix 10 of the manual gives advice on evaluating the costs and benefits of recordkeeping projects.

The business case must clearly state:

- the purpose of the classification tool
- the scope of the project
- the process of managing the project
- the resources required
- the expected benefits to the organisation.

The business case should be a compelling document, containing persuasive information that:

- describes current user practices and problems with classifying, titling and retrieval;
- establishes success and failure rates in retrieving records, describing how success will be enhanced through the development and implementation of a classification tool;
- considers, and accounts for, the interests of the range of stakeholders in the organisation with a role in developing, maintaining and using the classification tool;
- explains the potential risks to the organisation if a classification tool is not developed and how the tool will contribute to ameliorating these risks;
- gives sound judgements as to why a particular classification tool is required by the organisation;
- evaluates the resources and expertise needed to undertake the project, including any use of external consultants; and
- provides an analysis of the likely cost–benefit ratio that the organisation can expect.

5 MAXIMISING THE UTILITY OF A CLASSIFICATION TOOL

A classification tool creates consistency in classifying, titling and retrieving records. It helps users to identify preferred terms. It can also be used to enhance other records management processes, including disposal, sentencing on creation, security and access to records and compliance with recordkeeping metadata standards.

It is also important to ensure that classification tools remain relevant over time through periodic monitoring and review.

5.1 Disposal authorities

The analysis of recordkeeping requirements undertaken in Step C of DIRKS determines the length of time different classes of records are required to be kept. These determinations are expressed in a disposal authority, which is arranged according to the organisation's functions and activities. This could be the agency's records disposal authority for its core business records, or a general disposal authority such as AFDA. Mapping a classification tool to the disposal authorities used by the organisation provides for both the creation and disposal of records.

5.1.1 Sentencing on creation

Once the organisation has full disposal coverage, the period of time a record is to be retained can be assigned at any point in its existence. Usually, the most efficient time to signal the longevity of a record is when it is created and classified. Linking the organisation's classification tools to its disposal authorities gives an organisation the capacity to sentence a record on its creation.

It is unlikely that all the terms in the classification tool will correlate directly to the agency's disposal authorities. However, as discussed in Part Three of this document, 'Explaining Classification Levels', the terms used in the classification tool that do not directly relate to the organisation's disposal authorities can be mapped to the record classes and disposal actions.

5.2 Aligning security and access classifications

An organisation allocates security and access controls to the records and other business information it produces after analysing its recordkeeping requirements and the level of risk it wishes to manage. Access and security controls operate as a dual system: security classifications are applied to information in conjunction with access restrictions applied to personnel. Access restrictions are applied due to the sensitive nature of information, for example, to comply with privacy legislation, risks to national security, intellectual property rights or commercial confidentialities.[19]

Once access and security controls are defined, they can be aligned with the classification tool and applied at the point of classification. An effective method of implementing security and access controls is to:

> link restrictions to instruments such as activity classification systems or thesauri, that are used to describe records. In this way, caveats or restrictions can be automatically invoked when records are captured and registered in the records system.[20]

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[19] AS ISO 15489, Part 2, Clause 4.2.5.2.

[20] AS ISO 15489, Part 2, Clause 4.2.5.2.

Security and access controls can be predetermined for particular records, or classes of records, and aligned with the classification tool. The security level is then applied to the record when it is created and classified. In effect, security and access controls are built into the classification tool. As access and security status can alter over time, these will need to be monitored and the classification tool amended accordingly.

5.3 Recordkeeping metadata

Recordkeeping metadata helps to identify, authenticate, describe and manage records in a systematic and consistent way to meet business, accountability and archival requirements. The National Archives has developed the *Recordkeeping Metadata Standard for Commonwealth Agencies*,[21] which recommends the use of 20 metadata elements to provide physical and intellectual control over records. One of these elements is the Function element, which provides contextual information about records and other business information contained in business information systems.

Once the classification tool is developed and finalised, the terms it contains provide a structured, controlled vocabulary from which recordkeeping metadata can be selected. Using controlled terms in the Function element of the metadata assists discovery and retrieval, as the terms describe recognisable agency functions. The tool also limits the number of terms available for use, which creates consistency.

5.4 Promoting the classification tool

Action officers are now more involved in creating and managing records and other business information than ever before. A classification tool is an important means to assist with records management in decentralised and devolved business environments. If the classification tool is new to the agency, there are some measures that can ameliorate its introduction and encourage its use, such as:

- marketing the new tool through agency newsletters and the intranet;
- maintaining communication channels with users;
- offering support and training to users;
- ensuring tools are intuitive to users; and
- emphasising, from an accountability, evidential or freedom of information viewpoint, the advantages of retrieving all relevant records and, therefore, the importance of the tool.

5.4.1 Training users

Training in the use of the classification tool will facilitate understanding of what it is and how it can assist users. Users need to know how to use the classification tool to find the right terms to apply for titling and retrieval purposes. But they do not need a detailed understanding of a business classification scheme or the intricacies of the classification tool.

When developing training material and delivering training, you could:

- develop training packages with ready reference guides and quick tips sheets
- prepare interactive presentations for face-to-face workshops:

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21 www.naa.gov.au/recordkeeping/control/rkms/summary.htm

  - o ask participants attending workshops to bring documents produced through their work activities, and to classify these documents, perhaps one of their own and one of another participant
  - o generate discussion on the ease or difficulty of classifying the documents – Was more than one classification possible? Is it easier to classify your own documentation?
  - o consider organising workshops for functional workgroups – show the whole classification tool, but concentrate on the portion pertinent to the group's business activities; and make it clear that classification tools can be customised to meet user needs
  - o include hands-on experience using the classification tool by providing computers in the workshops (if the tool they will be using is a software application available on the computer), or hard copy versions
- conduct awareness sessions (particularly when amendments are made to the classification tool, such as when a function is added or removed – it is important to communicate the implications of losing or gaining functions, especially to users responsible for those functions)
- publish instructions online, guiding users through accessing the classification tool from their computer; and applying selected terms to the record
- prepare online tutorials for remote learning
- provide induction programs for new staff and follow-up training sessions
- publicise the locations of any printed versions of the tool.

5.5 Monitoring the classification tool

Organisations are dynamic entities, so any classification tool must be responsive to change to remain relevant. For example, an organisation may gain or lose functions as its responsibilities change, and the language and terminology it uses will also evolve over time. It is important the organisation has mechanisms to regularly monitor the suitability of the classification tool for the agency's business needs and, if necessary, to adjust it. Part Three of *Developing a Functions Thesaurus* describes when a classification tool, such as a thesaurus, may require updating and outlines the procedures to implement and document the process successfully.

APPENDIXES

A Stakeholders – their responsibilities and interests affecting development of a classification tool

Stakeholders	Responsibilities and interests
Users who create records	• Need to be able to easily find the right term to classify or title a record and other business information • Will need to know if a file has already been created to document the business activity • Can offer suggestions on more appropriate terms based on local usage • May want to reflect the identity of their business unit when classifying and will need guidance on the functions approach rather than an organisational structure approach • May need a functions thesaurus, if the terms they intuitively want to apply are not the terms authorised to classify records or other business information, because a functions thesaurus contains non-preferred terms which link users to the preferred terms.
Users who retrieve records and other business information	• Need to be able to search and browse to retrieve records and other business information for action or reference • Can offer suggestions on more appropriate retrieval terms based on local usage
Agency information and records managers	• Are responsible for content and integrity of classification tool • Approve changes and control access to amend the tool • Monitor appropriate use of classification terms • May need to select or build a software application in which the terms are stored and manipulated • May liaise with consultants involved in aspects of the agency's records and business information retrieval environment • Deliver training in understanding the classification tool and using it effectively • Map business processes to classification terms to help users identify which terms are relevant for the records and business information they require
National Archives of Australia	• Gives advice to agencies on terms and relationships in business classification schemes during DIRKS appraisal projects • Manages the licence for the Commonwealth modified version of Keyword AAA – Keyword AAA (CV) • Advises on any Keyword AAA (CV) updates • Maintains the *Administrative Functions Disposal Authority,* which links Keyword AAA (CV) terms to disposal classes • Assists with identifying administrative change when functions are lost or gained
Project managers	• May be responsible for implementing new business information systems, of which the classification tool is a component, and need to understand ramifications of its use.

Stakeholders	Responsibilities and interests
Database managers	• Manage migration and global changes • Ensure the classification tool is integrated with business information systems and applications • Extract records and the classification tool to transfer to another agency in the event of administrative change
Systems developers	• Ensure capability for classification is incorporated in the design of business information systems and applications (for example, metadata requirements)
Records and information management service providers (outsourcing)	• May need to incorporate the classification tool into their business information systems – the service provider must use the same terms, for consistency in classification and sentencing • Must be able to 'hand back' or 'hand over' the classification tool if the contract expires, or the agency is abolished or its functions dispersed
Records and information managers of the agency inheriting functions as a result of administrative change	• May have to incorporate business functions and activities inherited from other agencies, or create them if the relinquishing agency did not have a business classification scheme
Records and information managers of the agency relinquishing functions as a result of administrative change	• Determine how much of the function has been lost, and whether the agency can continue to use those function terms for titling records and other business information • Need to ensure, from the date of handover of functions, no new records or other business information can be classified or titled against the transferred business functions • Determine their rights/obligations to sentence records against the functions for which they have lost formal responsibility
Software vendors	• Develop and market classification applications and provide browsers for retrieval • Need to ensure their applications satisfy agency specifications and that their functionality can be customised to suit the organisation and its business information environment • Need to ensure applications are compatible with other business systems in the organisation
Industry thesaurus providers	• May need to incorporate their thesaurus into a broader one, where the agency is cooperating with an industry-wide intranet or internet service

Stakeholders	Responsibilities and interests
Agency information managers/librarians	• May be responsible for a number of classification tools including thesauruses • May use the classification tool in creating AGLS metadata[22] • May set rules for using subject thesauruses and may be responsible for maintaining links between a functions thesaurus and any subject-based thesauruses • May approve changes to classification tools including thesauruses • May be responsible for updating and monitoring quality of the classification tools including thesauruses
Agency intranet manager/webmaster	• May need to liaise closely with those responsible for the classification tool, if the intranet is structured to reflect the functions of the agency rather than its administrative structure • May use the classification tool in creating AGLS metadata • May be responsible for providing agency-wide access to the classification tool, where it is accessed via the intranet • May incorporate the terms of the classification tool in the search engine for the agency's intranet and website

[22] www.naa.gov.au/recordkeeping/gov_online/agls/summary.html

B Glossary

This glossary defines terms that are central to this document. Most definitions have been extracted from the Australian Standard for Records Management, AS ISO 15489 – 2002, or the DIRKS Manual.

For more comprehensive definitions refer to the Glossary in the DIRKS Manual.[23]

Activity – the major tasks *performed* by the organisation to accomplish each of its functions. Several activities may be associated with each function.

It is the second level of a business classification scheme.[24]

An activity is identified by the name it is given and its scope (or definition). The scope of the activity encompasses all the transactions that take place in relation to it. Depending on the nature of the transactions involved, an activity may be performed in relation to one function, or it may be performed in relation to many functions.[25]

More information on activities is available in Step B of the DIRKS Manual.

Business classification scheme – A classification system derived from an analysis of business processes to ensure that the records and their metadata descriptions accurately represent the business process that created them.

The structure is usually hierarchical and reflects the analytical process as follows:

- first level – the business function
- second level – activities constituting the function
- third level – groups of transactions that take place within each activity.[26]

A business classification scheme 'produces a representation of the organisation's business functions, activities and transactions'.[27]

Further information on a business classification scheme is available in Step B of the DIRKS Manual.

Business function – The largest unit of business activity in an organisation or jurisdiction.[28]

Functions represent the major responsibilities that are *managed* by an organisation to fulfil its goals. They are high-level aggregates of the organisation's activities.[29]

The first level in the business classification scheme of an organisation.[30]

[23] See www.naa.gov.au/recordkeeping/dirks/dirksman/glossary.html

[24] AS ISO 15489, Part 2, Clause 4.2.2.2.

[25] DIRKS Manual, Glossary.

[26] AS/ISO 15489, Part 2, Clause 4.2.2.2.

[27] AS/ISO 15489, Part 2, Clause 4.2.2.1.

[28] AS/ISO 15489, Part 1, Clause 4.15.

[29] DIRKS Manual, B.4.2.

[30] AS/ISO 15489, Part 2, Clause 4.2.2.2.

In this overview, a function can also be referred to as a *core business function,* to distinguish it from an administrative function, common to many agencies, such as the functions described in Keyword AAA (CV).

Further information on functions is available in Step B of the DIRKS Manual.

Business information system – A set of processes, policies and procedures designed to capture evidence of business activities undertaken by an organisation. A business information system provides for the creation, capture and management of, and access to, an organisation's records, documents and other business information over time. Includes hardware and software of the system.

Classification – The systematic identification and arrangement of business activities and/or records into categories according to logically structured conventions, methods, and procedural rules represented in a classification system.[31]

Classification system – A classification system is the set of terms and business rules that are applied to records and documents in a particular business information system, in a particular organisational setting.

A classification system that is related to business functions may provide a systematic framework for records management. Analysis for the purpose of developing the business activity classification identifies all of an organisation's activities and locates them in the framework of its stated or mandated mission or purpose. Classification systems promote consistency of titling and description to facilitate retrieval and use. Classification systems can be used to support a variety of records management processes in addition to facilitating access and use – for example, storage and protection, and retention and disposition.[32]

Function – See *Business function*.

Functions thesaurus – A thesaurus that reflects the unique functions of an agency.

A keyword thesaurus produced and maintained by an agency which has implemented the Keyword Classification System, and which contains keywords, descriptors and forbidden terms. The thesaurus covers terms of a functional nature relating specifically to [an organisation's] specific functions, to provide comprehensive controlled vocabulary over paper and electronic records and recordkeeping systems.[33]

Hierarchy – Relationship based on degrees or levels of superordination and subordination, where the superordinate term represents a class or whole, and subordinate terms refer to its members or parts.[34]

A relationship between terms that is based on a ranking or order from a superior to a subordinate position. For example, the activity Child Maintenance Management is a subset of the broader term Legal Case Management.

Keyword – The highest level term in Keyword AAA. See also *Business function*.

A common data element name in a retrieval interface where the user enters text as a single word, multiple words or a phrase.

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[31] AS/ISO 15489, Part 1, Clause 3.5.

[32] AS/ISO 15489, Part 2, Clause 4.2.2.1.

[33] State Records Authority of NSW, *Government Recordkeeping Manual*, Glossary.

[34] ISO 2788, Clause 8.3.

Keyword AAA – A thesaurus of general terminology designed for use in classifying, titling and indexing administrative records in most technological environments. It covers terminology common to most organisations and should be used in conjunction with a functions thesaurus relating to the organisation's specific functions to provide comprehensive controlled vocabulary coverage.[35] It was developed by the State Records Authority of New South Wales.[36]

The National Archives has developed a Commonwealth version of Keyword AAA – Keyword AAA (CV), available to Commonwealth agencies under a whole of government licence.[37]

Keyword classification – Keyword classification involves classifying words into broad, functionally based areas represented by keywords. These are further defined by descriptors. The keywords and descriptors are the authorised terms provided by the thesaurus. The authorised terms can be supplemented by some free text – that is, words not derived from the thesaurus – such as the name of an organisation, an individual or a project.[38]

Merged thesaurus – A single alphabetical list of terminology for both general and [core] functional terms, which is used to classify records according to the Keyword Classification System. See also *Thesaurus*.[39]

Records system – An information system which captures, manages and provides access to records through time.[40]

Recordkeeping requirements – Identified needs for evidence arising from various internal and/or external sources that may be satisfied through appropriate recordkeeping action (such as creation, capture, maintenance, preservation and access). The sources include legislative and other regulatory sources, industry codes of best practice, broader government interests, external clients or stakeholders and the general public.[41]

An explicit or implied condition with implications for the type of record to be produced as evidence of a business activity or how it is to be maintained.

There are seven recordkeeping requirements. These give explicit or implied instructions on the:

- capture of information
- retention of the record
- disposal conditions of the record
- content to be captured
- form in which the record is to be generated and retained

35 State Records Authority of NSW, *Government Recordkeeping Manual*, Recordkeeping in brief.

36 See www.records.nsw.gov.au/publicsector/rk/aaa/keyword.htm – as noted, the National Archives of Australia has developed a Commonwealth version of Keyword AAA.

37 See www.naa.gov.au/recordkeeping/control/keyaaa/summary.html for further information.

38 State Records Authority of NSW, *Government Recordkeeping Manual*, Glossary.

39 State Records Authority of NSW, *Government Recordkeeping Manual*, Glossary.

40 AS/ISO 15489, Part 1, Clause 3.17.

41 DIRKS Manual, Glossary.

- access to the recorded information
- quality of the record.

Further information on recordkeeping requirements is available in Step C of the DIRKS Manual.

Records classification scheme – A classification system applied to records in a particular business information system, in a particular organisational setting. Hierarchical in nature, it is a system for classifying records based on the business activities that generate the records.

It is a carefully constructed set of terms, business rules and process, which – when applied to records and documents – facilitate their capture, titling, retrieval, maintenance and disposal. It enables records in a business information system to be managed, understood, linked to other related records and retrieved by users.

A records classification scheme should stem from an analysis of the functions an organisation performs and the resulting business classification scheme.

Scope note – Defines the meaning of a particular term, or combination of terms, in a business classification scheme or a classification tool (such as a functions thesaurus) and guides users on how such terms should be applied. It facilitates consistency in usage by discouraging personal interpretations of the same term by different people across an organisation. See Step B of the DIRKS Manual for more detail.

Thesaurus – An alphabetical presentation of a controlled list of terms, linked together by semantic, hierarchical, associative or equivalence relationships. Such a tool acts as a guide to allocating classification terms to individual records.[42]

In a thesaurus, the meaning of the term is specified and hierarchical relationships to other terms are shown. A thesaurus should provide sufficient entry points to allow users to navigate from terms that are not to be used to the preferred terminology adopted by the organisation. See also *Merged thesaurus*.

Thesaurus application – A software package designed to present words, and their meanings, in a structure that enables the display of relationships according to pre-determined thesaurus structure conventions. The application stores terms and gives them tags and stores their relationships with other terms. It sets validations to prevent non-preferred terms being used for classification and titling.

The software should also have a browse facility to enable users to enter terms. The software then displays relationships and links to search engines to retrieve the records.

For further information on features of thesaurus applications, see *Developing a Functions Thesaurus,* Appendix C: Notes on thesaurus software applications.

[42] AS/ISO 15489, Part 2, Clause 4.2.3.2.

Topics – Terms used at the third level of classification in a functions thesaurus. Sometimes a fourth level of classification, subtopics, is also included.

Topics are formulated from the transaction flows that define the boundaries of activities. In general, topics will not relate directly to each transaction but more commonly to a group of transactions or tasks.

Transaction – The smallest unit of business activity.

The third level in a business classification scheme.[43]

A transaction should be activity-based rather than subject- or topic-based. A transaction provides the basis for identifying, in detail, the records that meet the business needs of the organisation. Depending on the complexity of an organisation's business activities, it may be necessary to group transactions on the basis of their similarities or to further dissect this level to obtain an appropriate degree of specificity for the organisation's recordkeeping purposes.

A particular instance in the performance of an activity.

In some cases, the term transaction is used to cover a class of transactions that occur in the performance of an activity.

Further information on transactions is available in Step B of the DIRKS Manual.

[43] AS/ISO 15489, Part 2, Clause 4.2.2.2.

C References

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