Fact Sheet

1c

Describing Series:

Series Arrangement and Control Records

This fact sheet will assist you in answering Question 7 on the PRO 21B – New Series form and Questions 2 and 6 on the PRO 21B – New Consignment form, in which agencies are required to identify the systems of arrangement and control for the records being transferred to PROV.

System used to manage records when in active use

In order to identify a record series it is important to be able to recognise the record system that has been used to organise the series.

The system of arrangement and control refers to the manner in which the recordkeeping system worked and how an agency kept control of its records when they were in use.

The concept of arrangement and control is relevant to both physical and digital records, as records may be classified and uniquely identified in either of these formats.

Different ways of managing records

Systems of arrangement can include:

- Chronological: 1989/1, 1990/2, 1990/3, 1991/1 etc.
- Alphabetical: Andrews, Cooper, Ferguson etc.
(Words/names that have been randomly arranged under the alphabetical heading. e.g. all surnames starting with "A" will be listed together under that letter but the names themselves will not be in alphabetical order)
- Numerical: 1, 2, … 283, 284 etc.
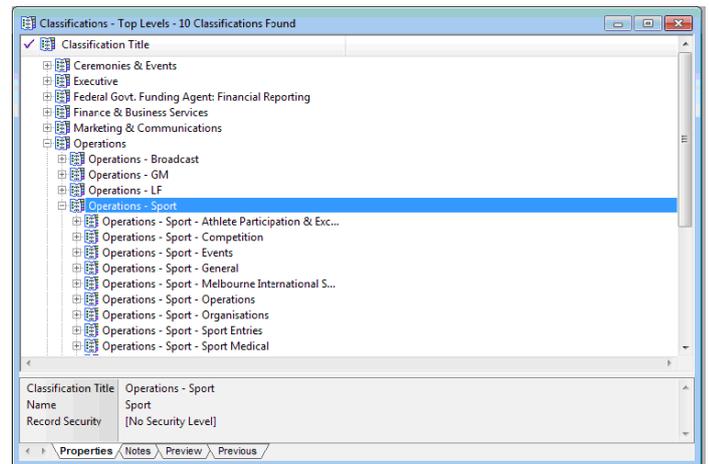- Alpha – numeric: A/1, A/2, B/1 etc.

A records control system can involve:

- Annual Single Number System: 95/1 to 95/200 etc. (In this control system the prefix (i.e. 95 for 1995) refers to the year the file was created while the second number (i.e. 200) represents the number assigned to the file as it was created)
- Single Number System: 1, 2, 3 etc.

- Two Number System: 1/1, 1/2, 1/3 etc.
- Multiple Number System: 5/13/1, 5/13/2, 5/13/3 etc. (In this control system the prefix (i.e. 5) relates to the subject or classification)
- Alpha – Numeric System: A/1, A/2, B/1 etc.

Control systems apply to both physical and digital records. Examples of control systems in records management software can be seen below.

Typical records management software can control records using a classification scheme:

In order to understand how a series has been arranged attention should be paid to:

- The components of the recordkeeping system
- The registry and other recordkeeping practices of the agency which created or is currently using the records
- The control records, such as indexes, and how they relate to the series
- The filing systems and control systems used by the agency

If records have been rearranged from their original order both the original system and the new system need to be documented.

If possible information should be provided on:
- previous and subsequent arrangement and control systems used to classify the records
- any special or unusual features or anomalies in the recordkeeping practice

- any subsequent action taken by agency staff, users or archives staff which has affected the arrangement of records, e.g. the top numbering of files
- records that have been transferred to a successor agency, lost or destroyed

Control Records

Control records refer to records, such as an index or a register, that are used to organise a records series. They are specifically created to govern the arrangement of a series or to allow for information to be retrieved from another series.

Control Records: The date range of control registers is usually the same as the series date range; however, in some circumstances the contents date range may vary.

Control Relationship: A control relationship refers to the relationship that exists between two series in a recordkeeping system.