



Electronic Records

Electronic records lack the restrictions that paper records have. They are not as limited by physical space and can be easily created and accessed. More and more organizations rely on electronic records and implement electronic record management programs. They are easily classified and can contain more metadata than the traditional paper method.

Classifying

Electronic records need to be classified just like paper records. It is possible to use functional classification methods with electronic records, but there are other methods of classification.

Subject-based classification is based on broad subjects that are broken down to the basic activities. The problem with this context is that it can be difficult to maintain because it does not consider the purpose of the activities being recorded.

Business classification links the files to the context of the company. There are typically three different tiers in the classification methods:

Business – Series or categories



Action – file volumes of individual records



Transactions – individual records



Folders and Directories

Unlike paper records, electronic records allow for the creation of much larger files and directories. Folders are placed within folders so that it is possible for there to be a single folder for a single document in a small subcategory. This action can create a fully functional record. Still, a record that is based on a complete model may be difficult to navigate if the model goes too far.

Directories provide an order to folders and subfolders making them easier to find. This can be easily seen in shared folders that breakdown records throughout the organization. Directories also provide guidance about how new folders should be created.

Example:

Departments:

- Department A
 - Staff folders
 - Client Records
 - New Clients
 - Active Clients
 - Past Clients
- Department B
 - Staff folders
 - Client Records



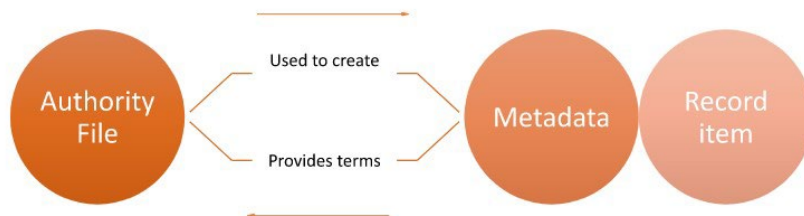
Groupings

The groupings of electronic records do not have to follow subject classification. Different automated systems will help determine the best method for grouping and retrieving different records in the classification system. It is possible to create new records using search options that find all of the pertinent information at one time. For example, you can break down a client’s records to specific time periods.

Electronic records have the benefit of allowing greater change. Navigating records that do not rely on subject groupings does require an accessible index of terms used. One example would be the index from an earlier module.

Metadata

Metadata is directly collected in electronic records. The context of metadata can be used to develop a classification method for records. When using metadata for classification, an authority file such as an index is needed. In this method, the item is connected or tagged to the process or subject metadata and the authority file identifies the search terms that will help find the relevant records based on the metadata terms. While it is not a traditional method of classification, metadata classification is growing in popularity. There are different systems available that help tag and catalog metadata.



There are approved standards for the use of metadata. The standards may involve terminology as well as abbreviations used. The Library of Congress is one source of standards. It is necessary to discover which standards apply to individual organizations.