

Here be Dragons
Appraisal of Government Records at the
British Columbia Archives and Records Service (BCARS)¹
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An article came across my desk the other day which I found very interesting and highly comforting: "A New Approach to Intuition: IQ2" by Daniel Cappon, MD.² The IQ2 test is designed to measure the oldest and, in the author's opinion, greatest part of human intelligence, namely intuition. Among other skills it tests for **hindsight** (knowing where to look in order to find things), the associative and dissociative skills of **sorting things out** (the skill of imposing order on seemingly disparate items), and the ability to see the **meaning of information** contained in iconic imagery and symbols (the translation of the Rosetta Stone is mentioned as an example of the last skill). Don't these skills sound familiar? I think if the IQ2 test were conducted on archivists, most of us would score high in these areas.

It's so nice to read flattering magazine articles. This article is especially delightful in that it helps me defend my inability to articulate how I arrive at appraisal decisions. Since it is inherent to the nature of the intuitive process that one cannot explain how one arrived at point D from point A, if I can argue that the appraisal process is intuitive, I don't have to be able to explain it, do I?

So, today I am not going to attempt to systematically explain the process by which I arrive at my appraisal decisions; I will merely mention that I rely on my education in archival theory, my experience with appraising archival records and working with them at various stages of their lives, BCARS' policy on Appraisal of Government Records (Policy 5.6/01), and my knowledge of the government of British Columbia and some of its vagaries. My creed is to keep the records which, in the most concise and useful form available, give **evidence** of the history and organisation of a government function or program, for the purposes of accountability and posterity.

My focus today will be on how the process of archival appraisal is conducted at my institution, BCARS, based on my personal experience. I will also speculate on the future of appraisal at BCARS. My comments represent my opinions and outlook, and do not necessarily reflect the official policy and perspective of BCARS. I am not going to take the time to describe the institutional context in

¹ I would like to thank Walter Meyer zu Erpen and Beth Pitblado for reviewing this paper and making useful editorial comments, as well as ensuring general accuracy of the contents. This paper received its final revision after the conference at which it was presented.

² Daniel Cappon, "A New Approach to Intuition: IQ2," *OMNI*, September 1994, pp. 34-40. Thank-you Walter Meyer zu Erpen for circulating this.

detail. Walter Meyer zu Erpen³ and Alexander Wright⁴ have done so already in papers presented at recent ACA conferences, and information is also available on the gorgeous BCARS internet homepage.⁵

Appraisal of Records Classification Systems

Appraisal for acquisition at BCARS is conducted using an integrated records classification and scheduling system as its main tool. While many of the **ongoing records schedules** which are created using this system apply only to one or two case file series reflecting a specific government function (such as consumer investigation case files), the most important and comprehensive such schedules are known as ARCS and ORCS. **ARCS** stands for Administrative Records Classification System, and covers records common to all government agencies, mainly "housekeeping records" relating to personnel, finance, equipment and supplies, and so on. The ARCS manual also includes special schedules for such things as transitory records, electronic data processing records, executive records, and email records. **ORCS** stands for Operational Records Classification System, and a different ORCS is needed for every distinctive function of government. Some ORCS are at the ministry level, such as the *Forests ORCS* and the *Agriculture, Fisheries and Food ORCS*, but this works well only for ministries which are stable over time; more common and appropriate is the example of Attorney General, which has several approved ORCS including *Corrections*, *Elections*, and *Order in Council Administration*. An ORCS is ideally based on a function or program rather than an organisational entity, because as BCARS recent experience demonstrates, government agencies transmogrify so frequently that ORCS would have to be rewritten with gruelling rapidity in order to attempt to keep up.

HANDOUT: sample primary

From the archivist's perspective, the most important aspects of an ORCS are the descriptions of "primaries" and "secondaries" and the final disposition determinations and explanations for the secondaries. An ORCS is essentially an organized collection of **primaries**, each one relating to a function or subfunction of the program which the ORCS covers. Each primary has a distinctive number and title, a scope note describing the function and the records which reflect it, and a set of numbered secondaries. The **secondaries** relate to the specific types of records created as a consequence of the work of carrying out this function. (In archival parlance, these secondaries sometimes

³ Walter Meyer zu Erpen, "British Columbia's Integrated System of Records Classification, Records Scheduling, and Archival Appraisal," presented at the 1991 ACA conference.

⁴ Alexander Wright, "British Columbia's Freedom of Information and Privacy Act and Archival Acquisition at the B.C. Archives and Records Service," presented at the 1995 ACA conference.

⁵ <http://www.bcars.gs.gov.bc.ca/bcars.html>

correspond to series and sometimes to subseries. They do not correspond precisely because they have been developed for administrative purposes, not for archival purposes. A better general term for secondaries might be "classes of records.") Every primary includes a secondary for policy and procedure files and one for general files; most primaries also include a few subject files and one or more case file series. For each secondary there will be an indication of the active retention period, the semi-active retention period (during which the records can be warehoused), and the final disposition (which can be destruction, full retention, or selective retention). *See column on right-hand side of the sample primary.*

BCARS is the central agency of the B.C. government responsible for records scheduling, and as such sets standards and policies for ORCS development. We also produce and update ARCS, but we do not produce ORCS ourselves anymore; that is the responsibility of the ministries whose programs the ORCS relate to, delegated to their Ministry Records Officers (or MRO's). BCARS' role once an ORCS is drafted is to review it, recommend changes, and once it is up to standard and approved by the appropriate member of the ministry executive, to shepherd it through the approval process - that is, to bring it to the Public Documents Committee (consisting of senior bureaucrats including the Provincial Archivist and representatives from Attorney General and the Comptroller General's Office) and the Public Accounts Committee (consisting of members of the Legislature).

Once a Ministry Records officer presents a draft ORCS to BCARS, our review process takes place in two main stages. First a records analyst reviews the draft and critiques it to ensure it is organized logically, that it conforms to formatting standards (which are laid out in the *Standard ORCS Kit*⁶), that the scope notes are meaningful and clear, and that the semi-active retentions are reasonable. (BCARS pays for storage so we take a dim view of recommendations to store a voluminous series for sixty years; we tend to suggest microfilming or a radically barbered retention period.) After a new draft has been produced to the records analyst's satisfaction, an archivist reviews the ORCS, in order to determine the final dispositions. This is where I come in as an archivist in the Records Scheduling and Description Section (the same section, by the way, as the records analyst who has reviewed the earlier draft).

When I sit down to read through an ORCS, I am trying to determine which of the records described therein are valuable enough to be included among the sacred 3% of government records which we will preserve in archival heaven. I find that it is NOT ideal to simply to read through the ORCS and send a list of questions to the MRO; outside of the context of creation, an ORCS simply does not seem terribly meaningful unless one is seeking specific information. It is after all a

⁶ British Columbia Archives and Records Service, *Standard ORCS Kit*. Victoria: Province of British Columbia, 1995.

reference manual, and very few of those can be usefully read from cover to cover. It is better by far to call the MRO and set up a schedule of meetings, so we can work through each section of the ORCS together. I should mention here that the MRO is not always the person who wrote all or any of the ORCS, so may not be as intimately knowledgeable about its contents as one might think. If a records analyst reporting to the MRO is really the main author, she or he may be the person I meet with. However, in many cases the ORCS was drafted by an outside contractor who is not available for meetings, and the MRO and I have to analyse the ORCS together. This can be a very positive experience for both of us, as we both learn more about the ministry and its programs. Generally I find that we need to talk to a few of the staff responsible for the records, and to look at some of the records ourselves.

As I work through the ORCS review process with you, I will give examples, primarily from the *Agriculture, Fisheries and Food ORCS* (which I will refer to as the Agriculture ORCS), my most recent conquest. The MRO for Agriculture is Beth Pitblado, who is happily a graduate of the same MAS program as myself, so she knows her stuff and we speak the same language. Beth has been MRO for Agriculture for three years now, and knows the ministry very well, but she learned even more as we worked through the ORCS. The draft ORCS was born in 1993, just before Beth was hired, and has been worked on by seven different people: two consultants, four temporary staff, and Beth herself. We started holding three-hours weekly meetings in June of 1995, and finished working through the ORCS in December, with a few wrap-up sessions in January and February. We mostly met in Beth's office, and she was able to pull out notes relating to the ORCS, check on what files had actually been created using her automated records management system, and arrange impromptu visits to relevant offices when questions came up which she could not answer. In September we even made a few-days trip to the other major offices of Agriculture in Abbotsford, in their new office building amusingly designed to resemble a huge barn - yes it WAS red. There we met with several key staff, checked out records series which had previously mystified us, found out why ostrich eggs are so valuable, admired a model barn, participated in a contest to guess the identity of a dozen varieties of apples, and were delivered a paean on the virtues of the new *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act* (it keeps encroaching suburbanites from limiting a farmer's right spread smelly manure and operate noisy equipment in the wee small hours - so long as farmers are following normal farm practices and not merely their own whims).

As I look at a primary I have two main questions in mind: *Do I understand the purpose of the records it is describing?* and *Should any of these records be retained by the Archives?* If I cannot understand it, I may negotiate a revision to the scope note; after all, this description will be used not only by me, but also by entry-level records clerks responsible for classifying records, so the MRO is usually responsive to my suggestions. It is in everybody's interest to ensure that

it is easy to identify which records should be classified where. While the MRO is thinking of those clerks, I am thinking of the archivists who will be selecting, arranging and describing these records one day, and of members of the public who may use the ORCS to identify records they need to access, whether before or after these records enter archival custody.⁷

As I review the secondaries, I skim over the required secondaries; these have standard dispositions so unless the ORCS departs from the norm, I never take issue with their final dispositions. As you may suspect, policy and procedure files are always "full retention" and general files are always "destruction".⁸

Subject files are often also appropriately destroyed. These tend to be background files containing ephemera used for reference purposes. Sometimes, however, these files do contain memos and correspondence relating to significant events and decisions, in which case I may well be tempted to retain them. *See sample primary in handout, secondary 63320-02 of the Agriculture ORCS.*

A secondary relating to "reports and statistics" usually grabs my interest; often these qualify as detailed summaries of information gathered and actions and decisions made. In the *Agriculture ORCS*, we were able to recommend full retention of most reports and statistics (including the -10 "Finfish reports" for the handout example), and destroy almost all associated case files, which contained a level of detail unnecessary for the purposes of preserving evidence of the history of agricultural programs.

I take special interest in the case file secondaries, because these form the heart of a primary, and indeed the heart of records-keeping in government. These records are created in the course of pursuing the core activities of a program. For example, consumer investigation case files are the files created when the Consumer Operations Branch (part of the Ministry of Attorney General) investigates a consumer complaint or other potential instances of contravention of the *Consumer Protection Act*. While other records are created in the pursuance of this regulatory function, these files are the main by-products of the

⁷ Some of these people may end up making formal requests for information under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*; for their sake and the sake of staff responsible for administering these requests, some secondaries are marked as PIBs (personal information banks) and PURs (public use records).

⁸ General files are marked for destruction partly as a deterrent to anybody tempted to classify records under general as a lazy way out of having to determine more precisely where they ought to go. I usually find that if a general secondary has been marked for retention, further investigation reveals that the creation of one or two more specific secondaries which are full or semi-active retention alleviates this need.

investigations which form the central activity of the program. Under the current approved ongoing records schedule, those cases which lead to court cases are kept and the others discarded. A proposed revision of this schedule may result in the retention of other major cases which did not lead to court challenges; these can be identified on the basis of file thickness. This determination was reached by a records analyst (me on secondment to the then Ministry of Housing, Recreation and Consumer Services) in consultation with a chief investigator who had a long familiarity with the files. (I haven't used an Agriculture example here because most Agriculture activities are reflected in detailed summary reports which provide adequate documentation, and keeping the repetitive case files is unnecessary.)

I should explain at this juncture that a final disposition recommendation is usually made in the draft ORCS, before an archivist has ever seen it. This disposition is suggested by the records analyst who has drafted the ORCS, in consultation with the staff of the affected program. This records analyst, as I've mentioned before, may be a short-term contractor, a permanent member of the records management program of the ministry, or even the official Ministry Records Officer; none of these people has a great deal of authority in the ministry hierarchy. Depending upon the amount of influence the records analyst has as a result of brilliant social skills, Machiavellian manipulations, or a combination thereof, the ministry staff may have (a) read the ORCS with great care and negotiated a few changes to reflect their records-keeping more accurately, (b) read the ORCS with care and hated it, and demanded that most of the records require full retention because they are the most precious records of government, or (c) skimmed through the ORCS in half an hour and said it looked fine, please go away and let me get on with more important matters. Since any one ORCS is likely to relate to several different offices, each with its own internal variation on Byzantine politics, the result may be a combination of the three circumstances. The fascinating complexity of the situation is revealed to the archivist as the ORCS review unfolds, and the archivist may well become involved in the negotiations to turn situations (b) and (c) into (a)s. Such involvement only confirms my contention that a background in ethnographic research is invaluable to any archivist.

One of my favourite examples of such a negotiation was a *Forests ORCS* silviculture case file series which contained records of trees of admirable fecundity, whose seed had been used to germinate other trees, in fact whole forests. The staff of the labs responsible for these trees not surprisingly wanted to have the files on hand for a good long time, and so they wanted full retention for these files. While I was lost in admiration of these marvellous trees, and felt the fact of their existence and of their progeny was significant, I knew these facts were recorded elsewhere and the details of their existence were fairly routine; I wanted to recommend the files for destruction. The compromise? We devised an active retention period statement which required that the records remain

active for the life of the tree and of all its progeny - in other words, as long as those new forests flourish! Somehow I don't think those files will outlive those forests, but they will lead long, meaningful lives in their creating office.

Another example of a negotiation which worked out splendidly in my experience is the Aboriginal Affairs section of the *Agriculture ORCS*. Every single secondary, including the general ones, was recommended for selective or full retention. I was able to guess part of the reason for this right away; aboriginal land claims negotiations are a very hot topic in B.C. these days and are likely to remain so for many years, and as a result any records relating to the topic are not only considered highly valuable, but also their destruction may result in political consequences if there is any suspicion that they were destroyed for nefarious purposes. However, I also knew that there is a special Ministry dedicated to Aboriginal Affairs in the B.C. government, and I suspected that the most significant records to do with the negotiations were likely to reside with that ministry. Many of the related records held by Agriculture were likely to be duplicates held for reference purposes. It is more appropriate to retain the original records, created by the central agency responsible for this function, than to retain the copies held for information purposes by other agencies. At the same time, however, all ministries with records relating to natural resources have an active role in the negotiations, and some of their records are certain to have unique, significant evidential value. My need was to identify which aboriginal affairs records were worth keeping in Agriculture, and to convince the ministry that the other records need not be retained once their immediate operational and legal needs for them were satisfied.

Beth Pitblado, the MRO, anticipated that the disposition of the Aboriginal Affairs records would be of concern to me even before I asked her about them. Early in the course of our meetings she explained that refining the dispositions would mainly be a matter of negotiating with one key person, a senior administrative officer with a library degree and a protective passion for "her" records. Beth cautioned me that this person had developed a defensive posture towards these records after years of defending them from the depredations of careless staff who did not respect her professional concern for them. If she could be convinced that the Archives not only respected her but also would care tenderly for the most significant records, she would probably be willing to negotiate. We duly invited her to a meeting and sang her (well deserved) praises, and she helped us identify the few key case files subject files which really were significant. She also explained that she was concerned about knowing what the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs is doing with its related records, so she, Beth, and the Aboriginal Affairs MRO had a meeting to determine this. For one series she was willing to agree to the kind of disposition statement which is generally viewed with distaste by ministry staff, namely weeding "selective retention" files by removing ephemera. This is the sort of task archivists otherwise sometimes

end up doing, and of course it takes us much longer than it would take somebody closely familiar with the records.

The appraisal of the records of a secondary is not only expressed in a simple final disposition designation of *DE*, *FR* or *SR*. If the disposition is *FR* or *SR*, it must be explained in an **appraisal statement**. BCARS has developed a set of Standard Appraisal Statements, some of which are available in the *Standard ORCS Kit*, but often more specific statements must be developed. I've included some examples in the handout you've received. As you can see, we've developed a series of statements which are standard within a particular ORCS; this ensures consistency, and is a useful starting point for each new appraisal. The final disposition of *DE* or destruction seldom requires an appraisal statement, but one is sometimes included if we suspect that it will raise questions. For example, we included a general *DE* appraisal statement in the Aboriginal Affairs section of the *Agriculture ORCS* to the effect that "these files duplicate information held by the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs."

You may notice from the handout that there are more *FR* statements than *SR* statements - and I should emphasize that the *FR* statements are used far more often than the *SR* statements. This is no accident; if a records series has evidential value, it is usually appropriate to keep it in its entirety, and hence more secondaries are fully retained than selectively retained. However, sometimes an argument can be made for selective retention, in which case it is important to specify very clear and practical selection criteria, ideally criteria which can be implemented by the creating agency rather than by BCARS. In the early days of ORCS review we were not yet fully aware of the amount of work we were creating for ourselves; a vague statement or one requiring retention of "every tenth file" or "executive personnel files" can entail many hours of labour for BCARS archivists, in order to retain records of relatively low value. The only time when I've left my *SR* criteria vague is for a new program, when nobody knows how valuable a case file series will prove to be. There, we have used a statement to the effect that BCARS will consult ministry staff when conducting the selection procedure (*see SRAFF6 in the handout*). I anticipate that when the ORCS is eventually amended, this statement can be refined.

Another factor I should mention in relation to ORCS review is that of electronic records. It is required that every ORCS be accompanied by one or more **Information Systems Overviews** (ISOs), which give the details of electronic database systems in use by the creating agency. These details include some general description of hardware and software, system history, the location of manuals, and where input and output records are classified in the ORCS. The ISO also includes an appraisal statement for the system itself. In my experience so far, the databases have been fairly simple and their output records are the key records worth keeping; the system itself is scheduled for destruction once it ceases to be used.

Before I close my discussion of ORCS appraisal, I should mention that most programs of the B.C. Government do not yet have approved ORCS in place. Many have draft ORCS however, and it is very likely that reviewing these drafts will be a top priority of BCARS during the next few years. When choosing which ORCS to review first, we consider such factors as: how many records already in offsite storage will be covered by the ORCS, how willing the relevant ministry is to devote resources to completing the ORCS, and how likely the program is to continue to exist.⁹

What happens when all the ORCS are finished? We'll begin again with revisions to existing ORCS; ideally each is revised every five years or so, and some programs are evolving so quickly that they require amendment even more frequently. And there will always be new programs requiring new ORCS. However, the current stage of establishing a comprehensive set of ORCS throughout government is, I believe, the most exciting stage of all.

One last thing I should mention in relation to ORCS review, and that is that the roles of archivists and records analysts are becoming increasingly interlinked, and our work processes are merging. I think the time is coming when we will share the same classification within the B.C. Government, and at least some of us will switch roles from time to time. This flexibility is of course invaluable to our organization and to our own deepening understanding of our work.

***THE FOLLOWING SECTION WAS OMITTED FROM THE PRESENTATION
DUE TO TIME CONSTRAINTS***

The Initial Selection Process

I've admitted that many government programs are not yet covered by approved ORCS, so you are probably wondering what happens to their records. There are three scenarios. Some of them are covered by **ongoing records schedules**, which as I briefly mentioned earlier, are essentially one-primary schedules relating to key voluminous records series. Other records are covered by **draft or soon-to-be-drafted ORCS**; all ministries have signed memoranda of agreement with BCARS to complete their ORCS soon, and with this understanding we accept their records into offsite storage. The third group is the Achilles' heel of BCARS: the **backlog**. This consists of records not covered by any draft or approved schedules, which were transferred offsite in what overburdened MRO's wistfully remember as the "good old days"; as one recently stated, "it was much better when you [BCARS] did everything for us." To our minds at BCARS those were the bad old days, when we accepted records

⁹ One particular records analyst, who has moved about in the B.C. government and completed several excellent ORCS, seems to have a damning effect; the programs covered by his ORCS tend to be discontinued or significantly changed. In case you're wondering, yes he had a hand in the BCARS ORCS.

without requiring detailed file lists or schedules, in order to get the ministries' support for our records management program. This approach worked all too well, and now we have a backlog. It's like a government deficit, and the senior bureaucrats want it gone as fast as possible.

Much of the backlog can be removed and is being removed, as more approved schedules become available and as the ministries endeavour - at our urging - to provide adequate descriptive information about the records to identify them. However, there are thousands of boxes of records to which existing schedules can never be applied, either because they relate to defunct programs or because they are a hopeless mixture of administrative and operational files, idiosyncratically labelled. About 5,000 of these boxes of records form my little backlog, to which I apply the **Initial Selection Process** (or ISP).

The idea of the Initial Selection Process is to do two things: one, to write up an archival appraisal for a **one-time schedule**, determining whether the records can be destroyed, fully retained, or selectively retained; and two, if the records require selective retention, to make a rough initial selection. The purpose of initial selection is to destroy as soon as possible whichever records are clearly of no lasting evidential or historical value, so that BCARS does not have to pay for storage of them until the time when they can be properly selected, arranged and described - because that time may not come for years. When conducting ISP, I keep about twenty percent of the records rather than 3%, because I am not taking the time to learn enough about the administrative history of the creating agency or the other records we might have or receive from it in future, to enable a properly thorough selection.

Clearly ISP is not an ideal approach to appraisal, but it is very useful to BCARS and it is very interesting for me. I often get the opportunity to delve into boxes of records, which happens less frequently with ORCS appraisal. There are a great many puzzling situations - these are, after all, the records nobody else has quite managed to process, for one reason or another. I have worked my way through many boxes of records with no file lists at all. There were eighty boxes of Public Works records, many not even in file folders, which contained poignant Depression-era letters from people pleading for work. There were a few hundred boxes of deceased TB patient files from the 1940's through the early 80's, which I was going to sample, until the doctor currently in charge of the TB program for government informed me that the World Health Organisation is very excited about them because everybody else has already sampled or destroyed their TB files, and our complete run has a high research value.¹⁰ There were the

¹⁰ Following the doctor's advice, we kept the textual records but not the x-rays, which actually reduced the bulk of records to approximately 10% the original number of boxes anyway. We also gained the opportunity to make a little money from recycling the silver content of the x-rays, which is quite high for the older ones.

400 boxes of completely unidentified Environmental Lab records from before this function was privatised in the early 1980's, which I tore through in a warehouse in Burnaby, identifying 35 boxes worth keeping. Well, we all have stories like this. It is especially gratifying when the relevant ministry is pleased to have some missing or forgotten records identified, because they are still useful or at least meaningful to them.

When I work through an ISP, I keep in mind that the appraisal notes I make may form the only description available for some time, so I try to make these notes intelligible for use by other staff and potential researchers. I also try to make them detailed enough so that, if somebody questions my appraisal, the answers and explanations will be on file. In the back of my mind when I am doing any appraisal work is an image of myself in a court-room witness stand, having to defend destroying certain records. Unlikely? Yes. Impossible? No.

Once I've finished picking off those 5,000 boxes requiring ISP, most appraisal for acquisition at BCARS will, we hope, be a matter of ORCS review. There will always be some office clean-outs of files which defy easy scheduling, but under current requirements they will at least be accompanied with good file lists and should be much easier to appraise than the records in the ISP backlog. Appraisal for selection should be a routine and limited affair, especially after we get a chance to refine some of the existing ORCS and ARCS statements. Archivists will be able to concentrate more resources on arrangement and description, and with the use of ORCS, this will be a much easier proposition than it has been in the past.

Appraisal Without Boundaries?

I would like to close with a few brief remarks addressing the official topic of this session. I haven't said anything about boundaries yet so I suppose I'd better do so now! The BCARS approach to appraisal crosses some traditional boundaries but respects others, and for some records we do a bit of both.

One traditional boundary we both acknowledge and ignore, depending on circumstances, is **media**. For example, we have a special schedule for records of non-textual media (excluding electronic records), mainly for the purpose of dealing with conservation issues quickly rather than waiting for otherwise long semi-active periods to expire. However, many special media records are explicitly scheduled in various ORCS (for example, maps relating to land and resource use are scheduled in the Agriculture ORCS¹¹), and it is a general

¹¹ Primary 55200 "Land and Resource Use - Analysis" includes secondaries -20 Cartographic reference materials (SO/nil/DE because also available in published form from Maps B.C., and all Maps B.C. products reach BCARS automatically through a separate schedule); -30 Geographic information systems (GIS) (SO/nil/DE; this is the electronic data); and -40 GIS thematic (output) maps (SO/nil/DE "Maps which are

scheduling principle that the function of a record is the main consideration, regardless of form. We require ISO's for electronic systems, but in many cases these systems are also assigned a place in the ORCS itself (again the Agriculture ORCS serves as an example).

BCARS' ARCS and ORCS system is built to weather changing **jurisdictional boundaries**, because these schedules reflect function over jurisdiction. ARCS applies to administrative records throughout government, as do special schedules such as the ones for special media and email. ORCS are written to be flexible enough to withstand a certain amount of government restructuring. This is especially true of the ORCS written at the program level, but even the ministry-level ORCS do not have the word "ministry" in their titles; if the ministry adds or loses a few programs, most of an ORCS can survive. Each ORCS must be approved by the agency which has jurisdiction at the time it is completed, but after that it is valid for the function it covers even if the jurisdiction changes. When scheduled records in offsite storage are ready for destruction or transfer to BCARS, notice is sent to the "current legal custodian" rather than the creator of the records (the creator probably does not even exist anymore).

Another traditional boundary we ignore at BCARS is that of appraising only **inactive** records. Appraisal using ORCS ideally takes place before records are ever created, though in practice many of the records an ORCS will eventually cover were created before the ORCS was drafted. The Agriculture ORCS is retroactive to 1894, when the ministry was first formed, because its core functions have been stable over time. In practice, a new ORCS is applied to current records before they are created (they are classified according to ORCS and its block-numeric codes), to semi-active records in offsite storage, and to inactive records languishing in office corners and offsite records storage centres. We hope to do away with such malingerers within the next few years; the push is on.

Would BCARS ever create a new boundary beyond which we would simply dismiss all the records of a certain age or of one program or ministry, as having such low value that they are not worth even appraising? I imagine such a boundary as a line on an old map with the words "here be dragons" to one side of it. Well, the dragon-slaying option has been discussed! However, I cannot foresee British Columbia drawing such a line, for two reasons. The first is our legislation, which requires that all government records be reviewed by the Public Documents Committee before they can be destroyed, and since they have to be adequately described and covered by a schedule signed off by an archivist for this to happen, we (the archivists) inevitably become aware of any records of lasting value and, once we are aware, it is our professional duty to retain them. The second reason is that our democratic government is accountable for all its

important for decision-making purposes are reclassified under the primary to which they relate. All other maps are destroyed.)

programs, for everything it spends money on, for every decision it makes which affects the lives of the citizens of British Columbia. Every program must therefore be documented. I believe in shrinking our dragons to manageable size by getting to know them well, rather than slaying them.¹²

¹² This approach appears to contradict that of Peter Horsman, from the National Archives of the Netherlands, who was the other speaker in this session. He claimed that, using his approach, the records certain functions of government would all be destroyed. However, in the ensuing discussion he admitted that he was talking about the case files relating to these functions, and that policy records and statistical records would be kept relating to the function he made an example of (parking tickets). This approach is very similar to ours in British Columbia.

Agriculture, Fisheries and Food ORCS

"SR" Definitions

SRAFF1 = BCARS will selectively retain these records because of their value in documenting [ecological concerns].

SRAFF2 = BCARS will selectively retain these records to document the history of

SRAFF3 = BCARS will selectively retain these records because of their significant historical and evidential values. BCARS will retain the first box sent offsite each year.

SRAFF4 = BCARS will retain one container of [reports] per file closure year. Ministry will identify a container holding [reports] from a different [report number range] for selective retention each year, and designate all other containers for destruction. This will ensure that [reports] from all different [seasons] are represented in the sample.

SRAFF5 = BCARS will selectively retain these records because of their significant historical and evidential values. BCARS will retain all files which are X centimetres or more in thickness.

SRAFF6 = BCARS will selectively retain these records because of their significant evidential and historical values. BCARS will consult the Board and the Ministry Records Officer in order to determine which files are significant or sufficiently representative enough to be retained.

"FR" Definitions

- FRAFF1 = BCARS will fully retain for their evidential value all [*standards files*] created by offices having primary responsibility for [*standards*] development and approval. Draft and duplicate materials which hold insufficient evidential value to merit preservation may be purged and discarded.
- FRAFF2 = BCARS will fully retain these records because of their significant value for the study of environmental history.
- FRAFF3 = BCARS will fully retain these records because of their significant evidential value.
- FRAFF4 = BCARS will fully retain these records because they document [*the state of the aquaculture*] industry.
- FRAFF5 = BCARS will fully retain these records because of their significant legal, historical, and evidential values.
- FRAFF6 = BCARS will fully retain these records because of their significant evidential and historical values.
- FRAFF7 = BCARS will fully retain these records because of their significant legal, historical, and evidential values. The ministry will ensure that background materials (records created by offices which do not document the work of [INSERT NAME OF OPR OFFICE HERE], but have been kept for their informational value) are purged before records are transferred to BCARS.
- FRAFF8 = BCARS will fully retain these records because of their significant evidential value, and for the study of environmental history.
- FRAFF9 = BCARS will fully retain these records because of their significant legal, historical, and evidential values. Draft, duplicate and background materials which hold insufficient evidential value to merit preservation may be purged and discarded. (Background materials are records created by offices which do not document the work of [INSERT NAME OF OPR OFFICE HERE], but have been kept for their informational value.)

This draft records schedule has NOT been approved under the provisions of the *Document Disposal Act* (RSBC 1979, c. 95) and DOES NOT constitute authority for disposition. Return with comments to: British Columbia Archives and Records Services, 865 Yates Street, Victoria, B.C. V8V 1X4

PRIMARY #

63320 FISH PRODUCTION - CULTURED SPECIES - FINFISH

Records relating to the production of marine and freshwater finfish. Freshwater trout farms have been in existence since the 1950s and saltwater salmon farms were first developed in the early 1970s. This primary includes performing applied research and facilitating the transfer of new technology from universities, research institutions, and other information sources to clients through informal education programs such as demonstrations, short courses and workshops, and professional counselling. Includes correspondence, memoranda, reports and studies.

For listing of standard commodity codes, see Appendix I.

For the production of bulletins, production guides and fact sheets, see ARCS primary 312.

For seafood production, see primary 68800.

Unless otherwise specified below, the ministry OPR (Aquaculture and Commercial Fisheries Branch) will retain these records for:

CY+2y 7y DE

Except where non-OPR retention periods are identified below, all other ministry offices will retain these records for:

CY+2y nil DE

Secondaries

-00 Policy and procedures

- OPR

SO 5y

FR

- non-OPR

SO nil

DE

-01 General

-02 Lake cage culture

SO 10y

FR

SO = when the information is no longer required for research or reference purposes

10y = Records are required for research and operational purposes to respond to fisheries management issues and international negotiations that are known to recur within ten years.

(Continued on next page)

A = Active

SA = Semi-active

FD = Final Disposition

OPR = Office of Primary Responsibility

PIB = Personal Information Bank

BCARS = B.C. Archives and Records Service

CY = Calendar Year

FY = Fiscal Year

NA = Not Applicable

VR = Vital Records

DE = Destruction

SR = Selective Retention by BCARS

FR = Full Retention by BCARS

w = week m = month y = year

PUR = Public Use Records

SO = Superseded or Obsolete

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A SA FD

63320 FISH PRODUCTION - CULTURED SPECIES - FINFISH

(Continued)

FR = BCARS will fully retain these records because of their significant evidential value and for the study of environmental history.

} appraisal
Statement

-10 Finfish reports

NA NA FR

NA = Reports will be transferred to BCARS when their number reaches sufficient volume.

FR = BCARS will fully retain these records because of their significant historical and evidential values.

-30 Finfish industry development strategies

SO+1y 6y DE

SO = when plan is obsolete, completed or replaced by a new or amended plan

-35 Finfish issues

SO 5y SR

SO = when the issue has been resolved

SR = BCARS will selectively retain these records because of their significant historical and evidential values. BCARS will retain all files which are two centimetres or more in thickness.

-40 Finfish research projects
(includes tests, trials, analyses, etc.)

SO 5y DE

SO = when research project is completed and data no longer have current research or operational values

(Continued on next page)

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DRAFT**For Discussion Purposes Only****DRAFT**

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A SA FD

63320 FISH PRODUCTION - CULTURED SPECIES - FINFISH
 (Continued)

-50 Finfish technology transfer activities and programs SO 5y DE
 (includes short courses, demonstrations,
 seminars, and workshops)

SO = when program has been developed or delivered,
 or development is abandoned, and the
 information is no longer useful to the delivery of
 the program

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