

Chapter 3: Filing Rules and Standards

Overview

This chapter discusses the primary classification systems for filing and the associated filing rules. Using standardized rules and procedures is critical to ensure that records are easily found and refiled. *Be sure to tell students about ARMA and review each of the rules with examples.*

Lecture Notes

A. Alphabetic Filing Systems

This is the oldest form of classification system and the basis for other types.

1. **Alphabetic Filing Rules** have been recommended by ARMA. *Review all rules and examples shown in the text.*

- a. Arrangement of alphabetic files is in unit-by-unit order.
 - Filing unit may be a number, letter, word, or combination.
 - Filing segment consists of one or more filing units used for filing purposes.
- b. Filing units and segments are all considered EXCEPT a, an, the, prepositions, &, conjunctions.
- c. File nothing before something and single-unit filing segments before multiple-unit segments.
- d. Ignore punctuation in filing; hyphenated words are considered a single unit.
- e. Arabic numbers and Roman numerals: Filing segments that begin with numbers come before those with letters. Arabic numbers precede Roman numerals.
- f. Acronyms, abbreviations, and station names are filed as a single unit.
- g. The most commonly used name or title should be used when filing.

2. **File Personal Names** with the surname considered as the first unit, followed by the first name and then the middle name. *Review all rules and examples shown in the text.*

- a. A surname with a prefix (Da, De, L', Mc, etc.) is filed as one unit.
- b. Personal names with professional titles and suffixes do not consider the title or suffix as units except when there are duplicate surnames.
- c. Hyphenated personal names are filed as one unit; the hyphen is ignored.
- d. Names that are pseudonyms are filed as written, word by word.
- e. Names with royal and religious titles (King, Father, etc.) are filed as written.
- f. Foreign personal names are filed like personal names; use a cross-reference for clarity if necessary.
- g. Nicknames commonly used should be a filing unit.

3. **Filing Business and Organization Names** is done using each word in the name as a unit EXCEPT a, an, &, and, the, prepositions, and conjunctions. "The" is moved to the end of the name when it begins a business name. *Review all rules and examples shown in the text.*

- a. Cross-reference an acronym with the complete business name, if necessary.
- b. Each filing unit in a geographic place name is a separate unit; similar rules are followed with personal names.
- c. Each word containing a compass term is considered a separate filing unit.

4. **Filing Names by Addresses** is done when the same business name applies to more than one location; it is filed by the location by 1. city, 2. state or province, and then 3. street name. *Review all rules and examples shown in the text.*

5. **Individual Names in Company Names** are filed as a personal name. If it includes the full name of an individual, it is filed by the surname first. *Review all rules and examples shown in the text.*

6. **Hyphenated Business Names** are filed as a single unit, ignoring the hyphen. *Review all rules and examples shown in the text.*

7. **Names of Government and Political Organizations** are filed under the name of the government and then the name of the department. (order of authority). *This is often the most difficult rule for students to understand. Review all rules and examples shown in the text.*

- a. If it is a federal government name, the first filing units are the name of the government.
- b. Military names are filed under the name of the military site after the prefix "United States Government."

8. **State and Local Government Names** are filed by their name, including the words county, city, department.

9. For **Foreign Governments**, the first filing unit is the distinctive English name of the country

B. Numeric Filing Systems

A numeric filing system is an indirect-access system (Ch. 2). An accession record is used to provide an official list of the names to which numbers have been assigned. A relative index is necessary to show a list of names to which numbers have been assigned. *Be sure students can differentiate between the two.*

1. **Straight Numeric** filing arranges files in consecutive order, aka sequential or serial. Color coding may be used for quick access. *Review the examples shown in the text.*

2. **Duplex Numeric** filing uses two sets of numbers with a separator; primary numbers are filed together in secondary order. *Review the examples shown in the text.*

3. **Block Codes** are reserved for records that have a common feature or characteristic; they are sometimes grouped by department. *Review the examples shown in the text.*

4. **Middle Digit** records are filed numerically by the middle digit; file numbers in the accession record are in straight numeric sequence. *Review the examples shown in the text.*
5. **Terminal Digit** records are filed by the last digits; this is considered more efficient than the middle digit system. *Review the examples shown in the text.*
6. **Decimal Numeric** systems allow a subject to be subdivided. *Review the examples shown in the text.*
 - a. Subdividing subjects assigns a number to major divisions of a subject and decimal digits for subdivisions.
 - b. Dewey Decimal System was developed in 1873; it is the most widely known system of this type. It includes ten categories that are then divided into ten subcategories.
7. **Coded Numeric** systems give numeric codes that tell about the person or item. *Review all rules and examples shown in the text.*
 - a. ZIP codes are used by the USPS for mail delivery.
 - b. Area codes are used to divide geographic zones for telephone networks.
 - c. Catalog numbers and product codes represent information about the items.
8. **Chronological System** records are filed according to date. *Review the examples shown in the text.*

C. Alphanumeric Filing Systems

When a combination of letters and numbers is used in a filing code, it is referred to as alphanumeric code.

1. A **Soundex Code** is an alphanumeric code that includes a letter and three numbers representing the consonants. *Review the examples shown in the text.*
2. **The Library of Congress System** uses alphanumeric code that includes one or two letters and then numbers. *Review the examples shown in the text.*

D. Subject and Geographic Filing Systems

1. **Subject Filing** arranges records in alphabetical order by topic or category. An electronic or manual index of all topics used must be maintained; users refer to the index to see if a topic has been established yet. Subject files may get large and need to be separated. *Review the examples shown in the text.*
2. **Geographic Filing** arranges records alphabetically according the geographic locations; it is useful for companies with branch locations because it is easy to determine how areas are being served. However, it may be cumbersome and require separate files for clients. *Review the examples shown in the text.*

E. Filing Standards

It is a procedure to follow in establishing consistent filing rules; the following standards ensure consistency in handling and filing records.

1. **Documentation of Use of Rules** includes a written set of filing rules; it should be available. Any exceptions to rules should also be documented.
2. **Training of Records Personnel** should be required in order to allow access.

3. **Cross-references** are helpful and should be used where they make sense.
4. **Manual and Electronic Procedures** should be included in the operations manual. Continual upgrades should be made to the system and then documented.

Additional Resources for Students

Recommended readings (no texts should be more than two years old):

- Kallaus, Norman and Judith Read Smith. *Records Management*.
- Keeling, B. Lewis and Norman F. Kallaus. *Administrative Office Management*. South-Western Publishing Co.
- Oliverio and Pasewark. *The Office: Procedures and Technology*. South-Western Publishing Co.
- Quible, Zane K. *Administrative Office Management – An Introduction*. Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- Ricks, B., A. Swafford, and K. Gow. *Information and Image Management*. South-Western Publishing Co.
- Robek, Brown, and Stephens. *Information and Records Management*.
- Scriven, Kozell, Myers, and Hapke. *Professional Office Procedures*. Glencoe/McGraw-Hill.

Current issues of periodicals, business publications, or organizations are also an excellent resource. Some of the following periodicals have an accompanying Web site.

| <i>Current Periodical</i> | <i>Web Address</i> |
|---|---|
| <i>Association of Records Managers & Administrators, Inc.</i> | http://www.arma.org |
| <i>Gregg Reference Manual</i> | |
| <i>IAAP Complete Office Handbook</i> | http://www.iaap-hq.org/products/handbook.htm |
| <i>Modern Office Technology</i> | |
| <i>OfficePro</i> | http://www.iaap-hq.org/officepro/toc.htm |
| <i>The Office</i> | |