Session W003 – BUILDING A BETTER CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM: A CASE STUDY
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Filing of an organization's active records is sometimes considered a tedious task by administrators and support staff alike and can, therefore, be neglected, left to chance or done in an *ad hoc* manner. Nonetheless, it is well understood by the records management and archival community that the design and implementation of an effective classification system for active records can enable organizations to achieve maximum use of the information contained in records by facilitating active records filing and retrieval and by rationalizing record storage and retention.

A well-designed, logical classification system promotes faster and more systematic record filing and retrieval; accelerates decision making and research because relevant information is easier to retrieve; makes records available quickly to those who have the need and right to see them; and contributes to record completeness, reliability and authenticity and thus, the ability of records to serve as legal evidence. An effective system provides greater protection of information because a coherently filed and stored record is a safer record. Space, equipment and human resources are used to their best advantage and the costs of managing records can be rationalized or reduced. The benefits of an effective classification system are numerous.

This paper presents a case study of the development and implementation of a functionally-based classification system at the University of Calgary Archives. Begun as part of a records management pilot project in 1995, the system is considered an organic one, growing and changing with the organization. Efforts are constantly being expended to build a better classification system, and therefore, the system is a continuous "work in progress".

Continuum of care model[1]
The University of Calgary Archives provides records services for the entire campus. These services provide a continuum of care that acts as a framework for an accountable recordkeeping regime, enabling access to essential and useable evidence of social and business activity. These services include the integration of recordkeeping rules into business processes, records classification design, retention and disposition scheduling and archival appraisal, arrangement and description of archival records, reference services, and public programming.

This continuum of care is provided by four archivists in two programs, the Information Management Program and the Archival Program. While the archivists in each program have specialized training and experience in their area, input into the operations of both programs is needed from archivists from the entire records continuum and is available through this closely collaborative structure. Within the collaborative structure, both the creation and maintenance of active records and the acquisition of those of archival value into the archives repository can

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[1] For a fuller discussion on the continuum of care model, see Michael Roper and Laura Millar, eds. <u>The Management of Public Sector Records: Principles and Context</u>, Managing Public Sector Records: A Study Programme, no. 1. (London: International Records Management Trust, 1999); Derek Charman, "The Expanding Role of the Archivist," <u>Records Management Quarterly</u>, vol. 32, no. 4 (October 1998): 16-20; Jay Atherton, "From Life Cycle to Continuum: Some Thoughts on the Records Management – Archives Relationship," <u>Archivaria</u> 21 (Winter 1985-86): 43-51; and Laurie Sletten, "Lessons from Down Under: Records Management in Australia," <u>The Information Management Journal</u>, (January 1999): 26-32.

occur with the commitment and expertise of all of the archivists, each bringing their own specialized knowledge and experience.

This continuum of care model integrates recordkeeping, records management, and archival practice, is informed by archival science, and is unified by service to the creator and the user. The goal of this service is to ensure that users have timely access to reliable and authentic records; to increase the efficiency of employees weighed down by document and information management tasks; to improve the ability of staff to create, share, copy, send, store and transform information; to assist in the protection of the privacy rights of clients and employees; to help the University meet its recordkeeping obligations under government legislation; and to ensure the permanent preservation of the University's archival record.

To make sure that University records retain their administrative and archival value, the archivists on both the records management and archives sides are involved with the record-creating process itself. All of us are involved with and work to understand the processes that lead to the creation of records. We all study the record, its physical nature and characteristics, and the business functions, activities and recordkeeping practices that generate records and cause them to be used and maintained.[2]

The classifying of records is also of concern to both programs. Those of us on the records management side want to ensure that the right records can be found quickly by those who have a right to see them as they carry out their business, while those on the archives side need to ensure that the format and arrangement of records is adequate to ensure the long-term retrieval and preservation of permanent records. [3]

The continuum approach was first articulated by Canadian archivist Jay Atherton in 1986 and subsequently provided the basis for the records management model adopted by the National Archives of Australia and the Australian Standard for Records Management. The model provides records managers and archivists with a way of thinking about the integration of recordkeeping and archival processes, and brings records managers and archivists under one recordkeeping umbrella. It focuses on the unifying purpose shared by all records professionals which is to provide a framework for accountable recordkeeping regimes.

Recordkeeping crisis in the Executive Suite
The University Archives has not always operated according to the continuum model. In 1995, the Archives was a passive repository with no real records management responsibilities. We had relationships with the governing bodies of the University who transferred their archival records to the Archives routinely. In addition, faculties and departments of the University tended to send us their obsolete records when they no longer had space for them. However, there was no formal records management on campus.

Our records management adventure began when a representational group of administrative assistants and the office manager of the Executive Suite formed a working group to address severe filing and retrieval problems experienced in the Suite. They approached the University Archives to see if we could help with the organization of their records.

The office of the President and each vice-president, associate vice-president, and administrative officer in the Executive Suite had a unique system of classifying, filing and retrieving records in

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[2] Roper and Millar, 16.
[3] Charman, 20.

1995. What the systems had in common, however, was that they were all based on subjects and administrative structure. For example, most of the VPs and Associate VPs had a series called "Faculties and Departments" consisting of case files of faculties and departments, filed by name of the body. Generally, the files in this type of series contained records related to academic programs. These series also contained circulars from departments and other transitory documents such as notices of absence. Retrieving the right information from these series was difficult – it was very hard to find important operational records on a specific activity when they were mixed in with all kinds of other records and correspondence with a particular unit and when the desired records were obscured by records of a transitory nature. For example, one administrative assistant in the Vice-President (Finance and Services) area could never seem to find anything in the over-stuffed filing cabinets. The existing classification system could not help her when the Vice-President asked for "that memo with the Dean of Science about building a new laboratory." She needed to go through the entire Faculty of Science file with all of its numerous file volumes to find documentation with a particular person on a specific matter. Because she was worried that she would not find what she needed, she routinely made a number of copies of every record she filed and filed these copies under different classification categories, hoping that this "scattershot" approach would increase the likelihood of stumbling upon what she was looking for. Of course, this just made the system completely unworkable.

Analysis of records-related problems in the Executive Suite
Archivists from the University Archives started spending time with the administrative staff and the records in the Executive Suite in the fall of 1995. We discovered that there were no recordkeeping or records management standards of any kind and these were sorely needed to facilitate active records filing and retrieval and to rationalize record storage and retention.

When we began analyzing the recordkeeping problems in the Executive Suite, the symptoms of improper management of active records were well in evidence:
- The retrieval and storage of records was inefficient and ineffective.
- There was a backlog of outdated records.
- There was unnecessary duplication of filing systems. For example, the Vice-President (Finance and Services) office looked after two main functional areas with an administrative assistant looking after each one. The assistants were each maintaining a filing system that had a number of common record series (although they were coded differently) and neither person could find records easily in either system.
- There was also an unnecessary increase in record volume because the staff was photocopying records to file in more than one place. The proliferation of records had led to a misuse of floor space and equipment in these executive offices because of the continuing need for additional filing cabinets.
- Some of the Associate VPs were starting up their own private filing systems because they had lost faith in the main systems.

The result of these symptoms was a loss or delay of information needed for decision-making, loss of time, energy, and money in unsuccessful searches, and poor staff morale.

Records management pilot project
The University Archives began developing a records management pilot project in 1995. The pilot covered the flow of information from creator to final disposition; the goal was to facilitate timely access to comprehensive, appropriate and accurate information in the Executive Suite. The Suite included the President's Office, the University's self-governing bodies, and senior administrative officers in charge of academic, financial, student and research responsibilities.

We first talked to a number of other post-secondary institutions to see what type of classification systems they were using and researched the types of systems available. Then we studied the records of the Executive Suite through records inventories; we looked at how the records were created, for what purpose, and how they were routed. Our next step was to consult with a representative group of users in the Suite to define their needs and expectations. Some of the staff we interviewed was a budget analyst, a number of Vice Presidents, a few Associate VPs, the office manager, and administrative assistants, the main recordkeepers. The inventories and interviews allowed us to identify, analyze and evaluate the size, scope and complexity of the records, and to understand the responsibilities of the different units and the functions represented in record series.

When it came time to choose the type of classification system, there were numerous requirements we had to satisfy:

- The system had to provide a more natural way of classifying and retrieving that was easily understood by recordkeepers instead of requiring that they master long lists of classification subjects.
- The system needed to provide a rational, standard framework for classification and retrieval across campus to enhance communication and effectiveness.
- The system had to facilitate the application of retention rules. Because we wanted the records management program to manage records at the record series level and not the individual document level, records needed to be organized into categories that allowed for decisions about their organization, storage, transfer and disposal to be made on a category-wide basis. For example, support staff employee files as a record series would be classified under a particular category and there would be a retention rule that applied to this record series as well.
- The system had to order and describe records in such a way that access and retrieval throughout the life cycle of records would be facilitated, including after records were transferred to the archival repository.
- Very importantly, the system had to allow for continuous organizational change. When organizational change occurred, the classification system would still reflect the functions and activities of the organization and would not need to be revised unless functions and activities were added or discontinued.

It became clear to us that the system should be based on the functions, activities and transactions that generated the records and that this approach would fulfill the requirements that we were concerned about.

In March 1996, we proposed to the Executive Suite a uniform classification system called UCLASS, or University Classification System. The system would be based on functional analysis, patterned after best practice in Canadian government institutions and recommended by the National Archives of Canada. The system consisted of a hierarchical structure of the University's functions, activities and transactions and covered both administrative and operational functions and activities performed in service of University mandates. The system would be used by all units, but the categories they would use would depend on the units' functions. Units would store and maintain their active records in their own office spaces so that employees would be physically close to the records for rapid retrieval.

Functional analysis and the structure of UCLASS

To understand the functional approach to classifying and a classification system based on functional analysis, it is important to be aware of the connection between records and activities. It is also necessary to know what are functions, activities and transactions and how these concepts relate to classifying records according to a function-based system.

There is a direct connection between records and activities. Records are the material evidence left over after the activities of an office are completed. They are the product of particular actions that occur at particular moments in time. Because they fix actions in time, they can be referred to in the future to accurately portray those actions. And finally, they are created, looked after and used in a particular context. That is, they are filed with other records relating to the same activity and they show a sequence of actions. This direct connection or bond between records and the office activities that generate or create them provides the foundation for the University's classification system and its functional approach.

Every organization has broad goals or purposes to accomplish; in fact, the organization has been created to accomplish these goals. For example, the broad goals of the University are to provide instruction, to provide continuing education, and to carry out research in all branches of knowledge. To accomplish its goals, an organization must break the goals down into areas of responsibility or functions and assign people to carry them out. For example, to accomplish the University's broad goals, the responsibility or function of "directing academic operations and long-range academic planning" has been delegated to the Vice-President (Academic).

In UCLASS, the first level of classification is based on University functions and each of these functional areas is called a block. Each block has been given a title and an alphabetical code. A description of the function and the types of activities involved in fulfilling the function have been included to help users identify under which block a record should be classified. The University function described as "directing academic operations and long-range academic planning" is represented by the UCLASS block, Academic Programs.

In order for a function to be accomplished, certain tasks or activities have to be done. A function consists of all the activities aimed to one purpose over time. At the University of Calgary, the function of "directing academic operations and long-range academic planning" consists of a number of activities aimed to accomplishing this function over time such as academic program development, program review, and curriculum development.

Just as a function has to be broken down into activities for the function to be accomplished, the functional blocks of UCLASS are subdivided into what are called primary headings. Each primary represents an activity that fulfils or supports the function represented by the block to which it belongs. Each primary has been given a title and a numeric code, and a description explains the activity and the types of records that will likely be classified under the primary. The University activity described as "creating and developing new academic programs" is represented by the UCLASS primary heading, Program Development, and this primary corresponds to a record series consisting of program proposals and supporting documents. The code identifying this particular primary heading is AC570 Program Development. The AC identifies this primary as belonging to the Academic Program block, and 570 is the numeric code for the Program Development primary.

Finally, activities are made up of transactions. Transactions are the smallest unit of business activity carried out within an organization. In UCLASS terminology, transactions are represented by the third level of classification called secondary headings. Files containing

records are classified under secondaries and are the result or evidence of transactions which fulfill the activity represented by the primary. Each secondary is given a classification code and a title. An example of a secondary code and title is AC570-3 International Program Approval Process. Each level of classification is represented in the code: the AC identifies this secondary as belonging to the Academic Programs block, 570 is the numeric code for the Program Development primary, and 3 is the code for the secondary, International Program Approval Process.

Records Conversion to UCLASS
By the summer of 1996, the University Archives had a working draft of UCLASS created using the function, activity, transaction model. We had completed the initial research and also created a tentative numbering system. We began a test conversion of the Vice-President (Finance and Services) records in July and we made continual adjustments to the system as we progressed. The goal of the file conversion process was to check each existing file and match up the activities represented in the records with the activities outlined in UCLASS.

Our lack of any large scale experience at file conversions resulted in some basic errors. In our determination to ensure that every record in every file had a properly assigned UCLASS code we "exploded" a large number of files: in other words, every record in a file was assigned to a different primary. Not every file was "exploded" since the classification system was predicated on the concept of the record series. However, two factors in this office conspired against retaining this concept. The first was the vast quantities of "General" or "Miscellaneous" files generated by this office. The second factor was the tendency to create files according to administrative structure or origin instead of according to function.

We also failed to create accurate documentation on the process. At the very least a "Before and After" list would have indicated how the original file plan matched with UCLASS. This list would correlate the previous file title with the newly assigned UCLASS code at the block and primary levels. Secondary and tertiary file designations would be assigned later in the second phase of the conversion.

Our third major error was a lack of consultation and liaison with recordkeepers during the actual conversion process. Senior administrators and recordkeepers had been consulted extensively prior to the conversion to determine how certain series of records were created and maintained. However, we did not continue to work closely throughout the conversion with the recordkeepers or include them in the decision-making process. We have since learned that discussions with staff during the process serve several important purposes: we can make appropriate changes to our initial block and primary choices; recordkeepers remain closely involved; and the discussions provide a venue for grass-roots training.

Despite the problems we encountered, the inaugural roll-out of UCLASS to the senior administrative offices achieved three key results:
- Identification of potentially permanent records series
- Refinement of conversion processes
- Increased understanding about the practical application of functional analysis

What went wrong: Impact on recordkeepers
Our initial lack of practical experience meant that we did not have a complete understanding of the impact that functional file conversions would have on recordkeepers. Although we were certainly aware that a complete change would have some adverse effects, we did not have enough tools at our disposal to help make the transition easier for recordkeepers.

Classifying records according to functional analysis tends to be a foreign concept for the average staff member. The process itself is not difficult but the change from current thinking can be. Recordkeepers tend to think about records according to either subject or administrative origin. They also keep all the records sent from one unit together in one file, regardless of the activity represented by that record. Files are arranged alphabetically by title without standardized file-naming conventions.

Functional analysis significantly changes this thinking by creating a number of files based on activity. Recordkeepers now had to think in terms of record series or activities instead of creating a single file containing all the records created or received from a single unit. For example, fund-raising became a separate file from strategic planning. Space management was kept separate from the budget records. These processes are not something that recordkeepers initially understand.

Senior administrative endorsement
We went to considerable lengths to obtain the approval of senior administrators before our initial conversion. Subsequent conversions have indicated a flaw in this system. The continual change at the senior administrative level meant that with each new administrative appointment, endorsement might have to be sought again.

The University's newly created policy, *Information Asset Identification and Classification*, may address this problem. The policy was approved by the Board of Governors this year and states:
> Business information assets owned by and/or in the custody of the University will be identified and classified in accordance with the University Classification System.[4]

This official policy explicitly stating the authority of UCLASS will assist with future conversions. An attitude does exist at the University where units tend to ignore policies on the principle that they will eventually be forgiven their transgressions. The compliance environment that we currently operate under is changing this attitude but change can be glacially slow.

Inclusion of recordkeepers in decision-making process
During an early file conversion, the senior administrator became upset at the project's apparent lack of transparency. She wrote a memo stating that she "deemed [the process] a failure'", going on to state that although she had "no quarrel with the concept, with the classification system, or with the software, the problem is the execution of the conversion". She concluded her statements with the words, "This stops now".[5]

This memo became a turning point in our approach to file conversions as we were forced to rethink and retool the entire process. We had committed the error of not explaining how the mechanics of the process actually worked before we started the conversion. When we returned to the unit, we ensured that unit staff understood the process before we even touched the files. The file conversion was initially done only on paper with each file title and the corresponding new UCLASS primaries written into a "Before and After" list. We then held a series of meetings with all staff members to consult extensively with them and to explain our choice of primaries. The files were then relabeled and moved to their new locations in the file cabinets. This round-

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[4] University of Calgary Policies and Procedures, https://pr1web.ucalgary.ca/UofCPandPA_R1/Forms/MainHome.aspx (accessed 03 August 2006)
[5] E-mail from Rhonda Williams, Director, University Secretariat to Bonnie Woelk, Information Management Program Manager, University Archives, 08 April 1998.

table, consultative approach has since proved extremely successful. The extra time needed by Archives staff to achieve a level of comfort with the recordkeepers has been built into the process ever since.

What went right: Care and handling of staff

Tact, diplomacy and humor are essential when involved in a file conversion. Recordkeepers tend to initially see you as the "bulldozer of death"', or someone who has come to "mess with my files"'. They see a file conversion as yet another challenge the institution has imposed on them to make their lives even harder. Recordkeepers express their fears that they will never again be able to find their records when they need them.

You must acknowledge these fears as legitimate and worthy of discussion while not becoming overly sympathetic to complaints. Remain friendly and accessible while also appearing in complete control. Sharing information about the outcomes of previous conversions can show units how a functional classification system will make their lives easier, or at least no harder than it was before. For example, the full Executive Suite file conversion resulted in 78 file drawers reduced to 26 or a reduction of 4,500 files down to 1,300. This records reduction and the functional approach to classifying improved the working environment for these recordkeepers.

Never say never

Persistence has also paid off for us with recalcitrant units. For the last ten years, the use of UCLASS has been voluntary on campus for a number of reasons including the lack of an enforcing policy. However, the primary reason has always been the shortage of Archives staff. We have two archivists responsible for the records management needs of over five thousand staff. A colleague once used the metaphor "herding cats" to describe the work we are attempting to do and the atmosphere in which we are attempting to do it.

One unit in particular has benefited from persistence. This unit first approached the Archives in 2002. We converted the files, trained the staff and left the unit with a certain sense of confidence in the process. However, senior administration changed the next year, several key support staff members left, and the new administrator decided to change all the files back to the previous file plan without notifying the Archives. The attempt was disastrous. The recordkeepers completely rebelled and by the time we were called in again, no-one had any idea of where the records were, paper was being stored in boxes under desks, and nothing had been physically filed for over eight months. The next file conversion in this unit was very costly in terms of staff time, both for the unit itself and for the Archives, and we also had to completely rebuild a relationship with the new recordkeepers. At last contact with this unit, all appears to be going quite well.

A learning process: Learning from technology

Back in 1996, the University Archives went through an extensive process to select just the right kind of file management software. We chose a software package called GENCAT created by Eloquent Systems based out of Vancouver. Ten years ago this was state-of-the-art software.

GENCAT is strictly a file management system, not a document or electronic records management system. GENCAT tracks file titles created and maintained by different units and allows both keyword additions and file volume control. The system also facilitates the transfer of file information from the records management database to the archives database for those records deemed of permanent value.

Eloquent extensively reconfigured our version of GENCAT to accurately reflect the University Classification System. The marriage of GENCAT and UCLASS appeared quite efficient. The software displayed the functional hierarchy of UCLASS in a compact and graphic way that was easily accessible to recordkeepers. Although the creation of files was not entirely user-friendly, we thought that recordkeepers would readily adapt to both the use of the software and the use of UCLASS. We were wrong.

The software was introduced at almost the same time as the University Classification System with the result that recordkeepers assumed that GENCAT and UCLASS were one and the same. They also relied far too heavily on the search capability of the software instead of learning UCLASS and the functional approach to classification. We had made the fundamental mistake of not ensuring that recordkeepers first understood how the UCLASS categories represented the functions and activities reflected in the files before allowing them to use software that only *appeared* to do this thinking for them.

GENCAT became obsolete long before we were able to look into a replacement for it. The University continues to use this file control system and has not implemented an electronic recordkeeping system to date. However, there are plans to move the University into the world of electronic recordkeeping in the next few years and functional analysis will be integral to that process.

Learning through training
As professionals we may live and breathe the concept that a "function-based records classification is a logical arrangement of all records documenting or evidencing the activities of an institution",[6] but it is safe to state that the majority of recordkeepers at the University do not start their day reciting this creed. A good training program is therefore essential to the maintenance of a function-based classification system.

We have tried both group and individual training sessions. Group training is more cost and time effective in an organization with a small number of trainers and a vast number of continually changing trainees.   On-line tools including "Frequently Asked Questions" can address common concerns or queries voiced by most recordkeepers. The University Classification System is also posted to the web along with the fundamentals of how to classify by function.

However, the group training package must be created at a very general level. Group training tends to capture a number of recordkeepers from a number of units representing a number of different functions and activities. Functions and activities common across all units are represented in UCLASS such as the Administrative function and portions of the Governance function. These common functions can provide a foundation for the basic concepts of classifying by function universal to all recordkeepers. However, staff members are frequently looking for more from a training program. Individuals are far more interested in asking unit-specific questions: What do I do with *this* specific file? How does the functional approach affect *my* office and *my* files and *my* records?

Our past experience with the senior administration units has indicated that personalized training is best. Despite the time and cost involved, the creation of specialized training packages has proved that the "return on investment" is worthwhile. At the University, the current thinking

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[6] Library and Archives Canada, Information Management Services, http://www.collectionscanada.ca/information-management/002/007002-2084-e.html (accessed 03 August 2006).

about teaching is centered on Inquiry Based Learning which holds that involvement in learning leads to understanding.[7] This concept can be easily applied when teaching a classification system. The updated version of our training package will include a hands-on, client-specific learning experience. Recordkeepers will be invited to bring copies of their own files and records to the training program.   Participants will use the foundations of the functional approach to classify real documents, instead of passively following canned examples provided by the instructors.

Benefits of the system: What's in it for ME?
One consistent attitude towards the classification system is: "What's in it for me?" The information that a uniform classification system will eventually capture all records on campus still comes as a shock to many individuals. The university culture is very different from a corporate entity in that the separate faculties and even some of the departments are very used to working in an autonomous manner. Many units have their own separate support and information technology areas. Some units are also physically removed from the main campus which fosters a sense of separateness and uniqueness. The concept of "academic freedom" under which universities operate also lends itself to an awareness of independence. Trying to bring these independent thinkers back into the fold can be challenging.

This attitude can be addressed by underlining the value-adds of the classification system. The standardized vocabulary of a uniform classification system can establish better communication between units. Recordkeepers familiar with UCLASS are now so used to the naming conventions and the titles of individual primaries and blocks that they tend to ask other units for similar records by these names. Staff now have the knowledge that certain activities are common across campus and that other unit's record series will reflect the same information found in their own files. This knowledge has proven invaluable for recordkeepers searching for supplemental information on a specific issue. A uniform classification system also lessens the learning curve for staff as they move around campus.

Records continuum
The system also benefits from the fact that the University of Calgary Archives has adopted the records continuum model. Recordkeepers are continually reminded that the classification system is but one component in managing the records continuum and all these components are inter-related. Every primary in UCLASS constitutes a record series with a records retention rule assigned to it. These retention rules stipulate whether a record series is ultimately preserved in the Archives or destroyed via recycling or shredding.

Recordkeepers frequently experience an "a-ha" or "light-bulb" moment when they come to understand that UCLASS is related to retention rules.   Most recordkeepers are so busy that they have trouble seeing the forest for the trees. They are too immersed in their day-to-day work to be able to separate out their specific record issues from the long-term goal of the Archives which is to accurately identify and ultimately preserve the institutional record. Providing recordkeepers with this "light-bulb" moment guarantees that the records continuum becomes real. The records in their file cabinets take on a global context ensuring that the value of the classification system becomes apparent. Retention rules empower recordkeepers by giving them the authority both to destroy records and to say "no" to senior administrators who may not have the right to access certain files.

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[7] "Concept to Classroom Workshop on Inquiry Based Learning", http://thirteen.org/edonline/concept2class/inquiry/index.html (accessed 03 August 2006).

While the records continuum model has certainly benefited the recordkeepers, the Archival Program has also been significantly impacted. There has been a marked application of UCLASS in archival records retrieval. Records classified by UCLASS and transferred to the Archives tend to be filed in a more orderly fashion. This in turn makes it easier for Archives staff to retrieve them for clients and other users. Less arrangement and description of archival records is required when records are transferred for permanent preservation in this orderly state. The application of records retention rules and the subsequent shredding of records deemed unworthy of preservation results in less culling of records once they reach the Archives. By empowering the recordkeepers to destroy records as appropriate at the office level, only those records worth preserving are transferred to the Archives.

UCLASS revision through natural organic change
The organic nature of a functional classification system necessitates a continual monitoring of the functions and activities that take place within an organization. Every organization experiences shifts in its priorities, directions, mandates and mission statements over time. Since records naturally follow these changes in direction so too should the functions and the activities reflected within the classification system.

As an example, a change of focus in international activities resulted in the introduction of an entirely new block or function in UCLASS some years after its inception. International outreach and related activities were placed within a single primary when the classification system was first introduced in 1996. The University had an International Centre that oversaw the integration of international students into campus life and there was also some involvement with international partnerships. None of these activities were significant enough in themselves to warrant separate primaries.

In 1999, the University appointed an Associate Vice-President (International). By 2002 there was a noticeable change to the scope of international activities. We consulted with International Centre staff and completed a number of records inventories. An entirely new function or block in UCLASS called Internationalization was created and assigned five separate primaries. The records inventories helped us see how the records related to the Internationalization function were part of work-flow processes or recordkeeping chains complemented or completed by other records in other units. In this case, the records inventories indicated that major changes were needed to six primaries within other blocks due to this close examination of work-flow.

UCLASS revision through macro-appraisal
The need for revision of a functional classification system is natural because the system is organic in that it reflects the organization which is a living, changing organism. This is what occurred when the Internationalization block was created. However, in the years following the implementation of UCLASS in the Executive Suite, it became clear that the underlying functional analysis upon which UCLASS was based was not comprehensive or complete enough. Firstly, UCLASS was not based on a comprehensive functional analysis of the University but of the Executive Suite only. This limited the ability of UCLASS to truly represent the functions and activities of the University. Secondly, when we inventoried records in the Suite, we were trying to get a comprehensive picture of the Suite's functions by looking from the bottom up, i.e. trying to derive functions from the records we found, rather than analyzing from the top down, i.e. from the mandated functions of the Suite. When we analyzed from the bottom up, we were distracted by the way people were currently filing – by administrative structure. This led us to create some primaries that were not functionally based such as "Budgets – Faculties and Departments".

Cracks in UCLASS were beginning to show by 2001 and we stopped giving UCLASS group training. Our plan was to revise UCLASS and begin training in it again. However, more immediate priorities and issues seemed to fill up our time such as retention rule development, records disposition and transfer to the Archives, and electronic records management.

We decided that there must be a more efficient and effective way for our small staff to accomplish these enormous tasks. Late in 2003, we decided that we needed a planned, rational, global approach that would provide a continuum of care for University records. We found this approach in the macro-appraisal strategy. In the early 1990s, it was proposed by some archival theorists and practitioners, in particular, Terry Cook at the National Archives of Canada, that a rational, comprehensive documentation of an institution could be obtained by determining the value of the records to the organization and to society according to a contextual understanding of the functions and processes that generated the records rather than by assessing individual records in departments on an *ad hoc* basis. A methodology called macro-appraisal was developed that assesses the archival value of records by analyzing the context in which they were created, that is, the structures and functions of the organization, in order to understand the value of the records generated there. Through this analysis, the functions and structures (i.e. organizational bodies) most significant to the mandate of the organization are identified. The bodies listed in this appraisal hypothesis are most likely to generate the best archival records because records follow function. This is done instead of looking at the entire mass of the institution's records for information that may be useful in the future.[8]

The appraisal hypothesis provides the basis upon which *micro-appraisal* can be applied to relevant records. Micro-appraisal, that is, appraisal of actual records, confirms or amends the macro-appraisal analysis and hypothesis, and the micro-appraisal research is published in the form of records retention rules.

From this very brief description of macro-appraisal, it is evident that the main purpose of the strategy is to identify records of permanent value and to develop retention schedules. However, because the strategy is focused on functional and structural analysis, it provides the means to develop a comprehensive, rational classification system that is coordinated with the records retention and appraisal results.

Our macro-appraisal project, called STAR or Strategy for Active Records, was formally begun in 2004. It was clear to us that the project would be labour intensive and that it would require a collaborative effort between the Archival and Information Management programs. Archivists from both programs carried out a functional-structural analysis based on research provided by two archives interns on the mandate and functions of the University.

The University Archives team used this research and analysis to redesign UCLASS from "scratch"; we completely revised the existing blocks. We determined that a distinction should be made between the substantive[9], facilitative[10], and supportive[11] functions of the University and

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[8] For further information about macro-appraisal, see Terry Cook, "Mind Over Matter: Towards a New Theory of Archival Appraisal," in Barbara L. Craig, ed., <u>The Archival Imagination: Essays in Honour of Hugh A. Taylor</u> (Ottawa, 1991), 38-70; Richard Brown, "Macro-Appraisal Theory and the Context of the Public Records Creator," <u>Archivaria</u> 40 (Fall 1995): 121-172; and Catherine Bailey, "From the Top Down: The Practice of Macro-Appraisal," *Archivaria* 43 (Spring 1997): 89-128.
[9] Substantive functions were defined as those core functions that accomplish the broad goals or purposes for which the organization was created.

that this distinction would help clarify macro-appraisal decisions and assist us in redeveloping UCLASS blocks. We also studied the University's Academic Plan, developed by the governing bodies of the campus to articulate the core principles and priorities that inform the University's academic direction in the foreseeable future. We decided that the Plan would give a good indication of the functions in which the University was engaged and that would need to be represented in UCLASS.

Based on the functional-structural analysis and taking the University's Academic Plan into consideration, the team identified three substantive or core functions: provide instruction, carry out research, and return to community (to develop effective relations with the broader community). The team also identified one facilitative or sustaining function consisting of activities that will enable the University to continue its operations into the future such as long-term strategic planning, financial management and personnel management. Finally, the team identified one supportive function consisting of all support activities such as grounds landscaping and student employment services.

At the time of writing, the archivists are completing the macro-appraisal work on paper. Once this is completed, we will need to go out and confirm that our new functional descriptions match the functions and activities in the field and that they will work for actual records. We will do this by inventorying the relevant records related to a targeted function. The inventories will also gather retention requirements for all record holders for that functional group. The final disposition of the records will be dictated by the earlier macro-appraisal of the functions and the retention and disposition decisions will be developed into records retention rules for each functional group of records.

Electronic recordkeeping and UCLASS
It is interesting to note that the impetus for finally moving forward with this macro-appraisal project has come from the "sudden" development of an electronic recordkeeping project. University Archives has been involved with a few electronic recordkeeping projects before, but due to lack of funding and, perhaps, political will, these projects have always faltered in the planning and budgeting stages. However, the University has recently entered into a strategic partnership with an industry partner to develop a selection of comprehensive information solutions and services including an electronic recordkeeping system (ERS).

Our industry partner will help us build a business case that will lead to full funding for an enterprise ERS. This must include the resources to complete the macro-appraisal, the resultant retention rules and the "new and improved" UCLASS so that the University is prepared for an ERS pilot and future enterprise-wide roll-out. At time of writing, the essential work of strengthening our records management foundation in preparation for the ERS project is not recognized as a pilot project expense. The University Archives' current budget provides for only two archivists to support the records management needs of 5,000 academic and administrative staff and this is clearly not adequate to support an imminent ERS project.

The design and implementation of a logical, comprehensive and effective classification system has become even more crucial with electronic records. In the same way that the University of Calgary's UCLASS categories have provided the structure upon which to "hang" retention rules

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[10] Facilitative or sustaining functions were defined as those comprised of activities aimed towards allowing the organization to continue carrying out its principal, substantive functions into the future.
[11] Supportive functions support the substantive functions of an organization, but the records they generate do not provide direct or valuable evidence of the core functions.

in a paper based regime, UCLASS categories will be linked to retention rules in the electronic recordkeeping system. In fact, the "Declare and Classify" action, where a document is declared an official record of the organization and is classified according to the file plan, is the critical, "make or break" element of an ERS project. The classification system must be easily understood in order to promote adoption of the ERS by users. In addition, when a client classifies a record, the retention rule is automatically linked to that record so that when the retention period expires, the system will take appropriate action in relation to the record. The classifying action has to be accurate so that the correct retention period is applied to the record.[12]

It remains to be seen whether senior administration at the University of Calgary will recognize the need for and financially support the records management development essential to the ERS project's success. It is more important than ever that UCLASS continue to be built into a better classification system.

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[12] The source of these ideas is Bruce Miller's seminar, "Implementing Electronic Recordkeeping – A Methodology for Success", Calgary, Alberta, February 21, 2006.