

# THE CRS MANUAL

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*The Records Data Services program of the Australian Archives is responsible for the organisation's intellectual control activities. Procedures, guidelines and explanatory information relating to those activities have been collected in a multi-volume CRS Manual. That Manual, which is described in this article, is primarily intended for use by staff of the Australian Archives but copies will be available to archival institutions and government agencies or individuals.*

This article provides a broad introduction to the CRS Manual. The Manual is a multi-volume work containing procedures, guidelines, explanatory material and a variety of other documentation relating to the Records Data Services program of the Australian Archives.

In particular, it codifies the operation of the CRS System of intellectual control and provides information about the Records Information Service (RINSE) ADP System. That facility covers the input, retrieval and display of intellectual control information for use by Archives staff or clients and forms the basis for a key element of the Archives main public finding aid.

The Manual supersedes most explanatory or procedural material about the CRS System and intellectual control which has been issued by the Archives over the past twenty years. It may thus be of interest to archivists or other professionals concerned with the identification and description of records and administrative structures.

## **Intellectual Control in the Australian Archives**

As readers of *Archives & Manuscripts* will be aware, the Australian Archives has utilized two techniques for the intellectual control (ie identification and description) of records. New transfers are no longer made using the Accession System but substantial holdings in many regional offices are still documented using that technique. The CRS technique, based on the 'series' concept and description in context, is used for all new transfers and for the documentation of many records transferred to the custody of the Australian Archives in the past.

The information about records and their context (ie the government agencies and individuals which created the material) is presented in different configurations in a range of finding aids. Of those aids, the most important is Part One of the Australian National Guide to Archival Material (ANGAM I) which is primarily derived from the organisation's intellectual control database—the Records Information Service (RINSE)—and serves as the organisation's main public finding aid.

ANGAM I consists of documentation (descriptive registrations, inventories and indexes) in a microfiche and paper format. It can be examined in any regional office of the Australian Archives and supports the associated ANGAM II, which provides information about the access status of record items under the terms of the Archives Act 1983.

### **Records Data Services**

All areas of the Australian Archives use intellectual control information and the finding aids. However, the maintenance of ANGAM I and the application of intellectual control techniques is the responsibility of the Records Data Services (RDS) program. As its name suggests, that program is essentially concerned with intellectual control activities undertaken by officers throughout the Australian Archives such as the registration of records and their administrative context (eg government agencies), but it does encompass a range of other services and activities.

The 'News Notes' within recent issues of *Archives & Manuscripts* have highlighted some aspects of the organisation's ADP program. The Australian Archives intellectual control processes have recently been automated as part of that programme. Documentation which formerly was manually typed and photocopied for placement in paper finding aids in all regional offices is now compiled on an online ADP System (RINSE) for display online to authorized users or output as microfiche in ANGAM I.

Records Data Services has therefore prepared a range of new procedures, formal standards and operational guidelines relating to the RINSE System. At the same time it has taken the opportunity to collect and revise existing explanatory or training material about intellectual control concepts, the finding aids and the CRS techniques. That documentation has been assembled in the CRS Manual.

### **The Manual**

The Manual will serve as a comprehensive source of information about most intellectual control activities. Some more restricted management or technical material (such as library and clerical support or statistical procedures) is housed in a separate RDS Handbook.

The Manual will be used by staff in the organisation's regional offices and its central office (including staff outside the RDS Program who prepare

registrations and retrieve intellectual control information from the RINSE database). It provides instructions about day-to-day registration work undertaken by staff and forms the basis of their training. It formally establishes standards for the preparation and approval of registrations which are the core of the finding aids documentation. The Manual also provides those officers with a basic introduction to intellectual control theory, the finding aids and the CRS System. That introduction includes detailed step-by-step instructions about how the finding aids (in particular ANGAM I) operate.

### **Format**

The Manual currently consists of five grey plastic three-ring binders, each containing several independent (but usually cross-referenced) documents of up to one hundred pages. The document will be replaced as information is superseded. For ease of use most will be broken into a sequence of subsections separated by tabbed dividers (and will incorporate numbering down to the paragraph level for ease of retrieval). All will incorporate summaries; some will in future include detailed indexes.

### **Distribution within the Australian Archives**

All Archives staff will have access to a full set of the Manual in the libraries located within the regional offices of the Australian Archives. Officers who have an operational responsibility for intellectual control activity and those officers who use the online RINSE database and microfiche finding aids to assist researcher will have ready access to the Manual.

### **Structure**

The Manual has a modular structure. The first volume provides the introduction to intellectual control, the finding aids and the RINSE System. Later volumes provide more detailed information about particular aspects or parts of that System (eg the volume on the input of descriptive data about agencies). In summary, the content of the volumes is as follows.

#### *Volume One*

The first volume of the Manual contains an introduction to the finding aids (with detailed step-by-step instructions for the use of ANGAM) and the CRS System. That documentation is supported by an overview of the RINSE System and a basic fifty term glossary of intellectual control terms (to be superseded in future by a comprehensive CRS Dictionary). The volume also includes a concise annotated reading list which identifies seminal monographs and articles on intellectual control (eg the *Archives & Manuscripts* articles by Finlay, Scott and Smith on the conceptual basis of the CRS System).

### *Volume Two*

Volume Two covers the retrieval face of the RINSE System. It contains a document which provides comprehensive information about how to use the online retrieval and display of intellectual control information held on the RINSE database, which was mentioned above. Volume Two covers the various types of searches and printouts or reports that are available and gives exhaustive examples that can be used as a training aid.

### *Volume Three*

The third volume covers the online entry of agency registration information onto the RINSE database. It includes a detailed procedural document encompassing all aspects of the definition, identification and description of agencies. That document provides guidance about dealing with anomalous or difficult cases and information about the theoretical basis or rationale underlying most entries. The volume also contains step-by-step instructions for keying agency registration data onto the RINSE database and training documentation.

### *Volume Four*

This volume covers the entry of person registrations (ie information about the individuals associated with the Commonwealth who created personal records) onto the RINSE database. It includes a detailed procedural document encompassing all aspects of the definition, identification and description of persons. That document provides guidance about dealing with anomalous or difficult cases and information about the theoretical basis or rationale underlying most entries. The volume also contains step-by-step instructions for keying person registration data onto the RINSE database and training documentation.

### *Volume Five*

The fifth volume of the CRS Manual covers the entry of record series registration information onto the RINSE database. It includes a detailed procedural document encompassing all aspects of the definition, identification and description of series. That document provides guidance about dealing with anomalous or difficult cases and information about the theoretical basis or rationale underlying most entries. The volume also contains step-by-step instructions for keying series registration data onto the RINSE database and training documentation.

### **Availability**

As mentioned above, the CRS Manual is primarily directed at the staff of the Australian Archives and is designed as the basis of their training or day-to-day operational work. However, it contains material which may be of interest to the staff of other organisations.

The Australian Archives is therefore planning to make sets or individual volumes of the CRS Manual available to institutions and individuals. Detailed arrangements for that release are currently being finalized. Information about the availability of the Manual will be given in a 'News Note' in a forthcoming issue of *Archives & Manuscripts*.

Pending that Note, any queries about the Manual should be directed to

Director,  
Records Data Services

*Attention:*  
Assistant Director,  
National Management