



# FOLDERSTRUCTURE AND FILENAMES FOR ELECTRONIC RECORDS



## 1. Preface

### **Goals**

Administrations have a lot of information in an electronic form. A good and efficient management should make sure that this information is available in the administration in an organized and accessible manner. This is not always easy to accomplish, but you'll get far by saving computerfiles in an orderly filingstructure and by assigning clear-cut filenames. Both elements constitute the bases for an effective management and determine to a great extent the quality of the information. This document contains certain guidelines and recommandations for the development of a good filingstructure and the assigning of efficient filenames for records created with desktopapplications. It ends with some recommandations about storing electronic records. The attention for management can not be detached from the savekeeping of electronic records

### **Advantages**

With the aid of an orderly filingstructure, one can keep datarecords in a classified way. Clear-cut names identify the electronic information. This offers several advantages: less time is lost by searching for information, it's more easy for colleagues to find computerfiles, the making of duplicates is avoided, it's more easy to assess which information does or doesn't exist, you can easily establish the latest version, etc.

### **Importance**

These advantages aren't redundant in an age where there is an overload of information. It's even more important for public administrations to take good care while making and managing computerdata because the governement usually deals with governmental documents. These records have an administrative and a legal value and can therefore be used as justification.

### **Agreements**

It is advisable to make agreements within the departement for the development of the folder structure and the filenames, in order to assure that everyone uses the same system. The networkadministrator is the appropriate person to co-ordinate this.

**Limitations** The proposed folder structure and filenames come with some limitations. These are a consequence of the application on the ISO-9660 standard for the making of CD's. The city archive of Antwerp and some other departements use CD's as storage medium for longterm preservation of computerdata. Although the operating system Windows offers more functions (f.i. longer filenames and more valid characters), it is better not to use them. This way, we avoid making filenames that have to be altered when making CD's. This would result in different filenames on CD and on harddisk. In the future these limitations will probably be undone with the introduction of the DVD and the universal Disk Format.

## 2. Folderstructure

**What?** Electronic records are saved in files on computerdisks. A folder structure can be best compared to a tree that branches off. The treetrunk is the rootfile, to which several main branches are attached. Each main branch is a folder and can contain documents and/or subfolders. By logically dividing the tree branches, you can create a surveyable structure in the collection of maps that is easily accesible to everyone.

**Division** In principle you can divide the folderstructure freely, but the best method for organising a logical entity, is based on the workprocess and activities of your department. The filingsystem for the paper records cannot merely be used as inspiration but should be followed if possible. Such a classification offers 4 advantages:

1. You make sure that the information is situated within the work process. The assignments and activities reflect the context in which the records were made and used. This context is very important to interpret the records afterwards. The preservation and interpretation of records with archival value should be as contiguous as possible to the workproces in which they are created, received or used.
2. You create a folderstructure of which you're sure that all the information of your departement can be classified in a structured manner. This way you avoid having to make a bunch of "diversfolders" or having to make a mainfolder for one record.
3. You're establishing an obvious link between written records and electronic records.
4. You're using a strict and durable way to structure your folders. Small reorganisations or staff turnovers will hardly ever require a structural change.

## How?

You can make main branches in the rootfolder for the general functions of your department. These main branches can be subdivided for more specific assignments and activities necessary for the completion of the departmental assignments. If necessary you can divide this classification into more steps. This way you create subfolders and underlying subfolders until you reach the level of the files and subjects. You can make a separate folder for each file or subject at the lowest level of your folderstructure. Place the appropriate records in each file. Actually this way you're *making files*: the records that belong together are placed in the same file.

## Importance:

This subdividing of electronic records into file- and subjectfolders offers certain advantages:

1. Related records are grouped together. This is important in the context of *making files*. And this assures that others will be able to find information quickly.
2. Decisions concerning the records management such as establishing archival value, selection, destruction, the record transfer and the accessibility, can be taken at folder level.
3. When the folder structure reflects the work process, it automatically contextualize the records that it contains.
4. The folderstructure acts as guide on the search for information. Records can be refound by browsing through the treestructure

## Pointers



use foldernames with a maximum of 31 characters.

choose clear cut, univocal, process related names for the folders

avoid interspaces in foldernames, use the underscore sign (\_) instead or write the foldername in one word.

do not use

use

Civil Register

Civilregister

Civil\_Register



only use the following characters: 0-9, A-Z, \_

do not use the following characters: interspace \ / : \* ? " < > | ! % & ' - ; = ( )



base the classification on the workprocess and activities of the department and organise the structure from general to specific. Make sure that it's easy to recover records when browsing through the folderstructure.



limit the number of levels to a depth of 5 folders. Certain applications have problems reading long pathlengths and deep folderstructures are often obscure. Moreover, the ISO-9660 standard for CD's only accepts pathlengths upto a maximum of 25 characters.



if possible, use the same folderstructure and structure as the paper records. Use the same structure as much as possible in the folderstructure of the e-mailsystem.





avoid the possibility for one record to be placed in different folders.




use clear cut and meaningful names for the mainfolders. Make sure that in case of an automated *searchtask*, the folder can be easily found.


for instance: finances, staff, IT, business trips, ...

 assign unique names to the file- and subjectfolders. It is not necessary to repeat the folder names in subfolders and filefolders.

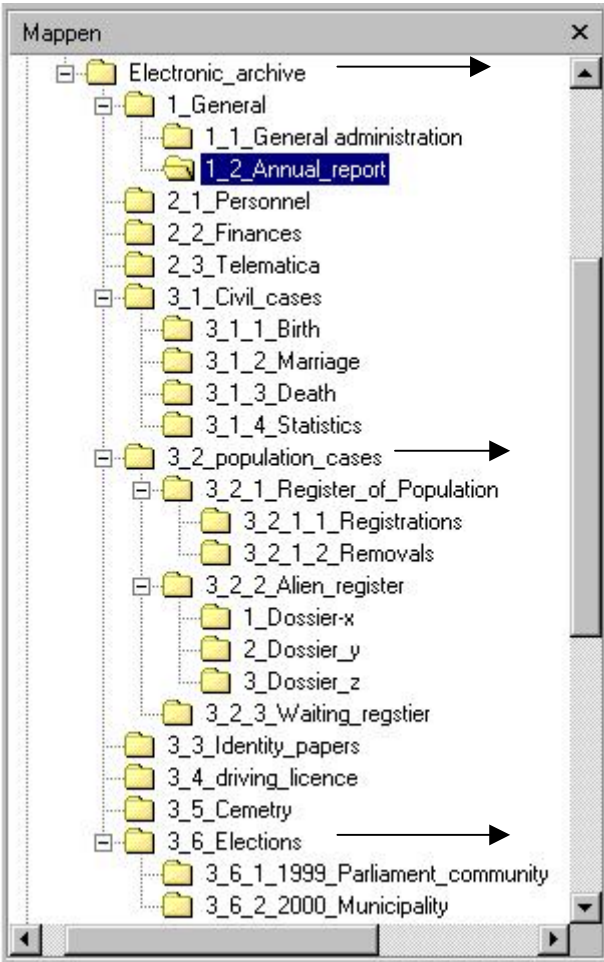
 re-use the archival- or classificationcode in the foldername. This code can be used as archivalcode or to refer to the corresponding case or subject in documents. By placing the code in the foldername, you avoid the disadvantages of an alphabetical sorting and you can clearly point out the difference between internal and external activities and arrange the folders from general to specific.

 make agreements about the making of new mainfolders and subfolders. some possible agreements can be:

- mainfolders can only be created by the networkadministrator.
- administrative assistants can create subfolders for new files.

 do not place loose files into the rootfolder.

**Example**



General ←

Internal functions ←

External functions ←

Its easier to classify the folders by letting the folder names start with the archival- or classification codes; from general to specific, first the internal (2\_) and then the external functions (3\_).

Population cases is an external task (main folder) to execute the general task a population-, alien- and waiting register is kept (subfolder). For every dossier in the subfolder Alien register, a separate folder is kept which groups all the electronic records of that particular dossier.

Organising the elections is another task of the service. A subfolder is created for every election.

### 3. Filenames

## Goals

- give your electronic records a clear and unique filename:
  - make sure that your files can be easily traced on the bases of their filename.
  - avoid having to open files to find out their content.

## Pointers



use filenames with a maximum of up to 30 characters.



avoid interspaces, use the underscore sign ( \_ ) instead or write the filename in one word.



only use the following characters: 0-9, A-Z, \_

do not use the following characters: interspace \ / : \* ? " < > | ! % & ' - ; = ( )



do not repeat folder names in the filenames



use a meaningful filename:

► indicate which kind of document is involved for instance: report, policy document, bills, annual report, agenda, invitation, letter, brochure, contract, memo etc.

► indicate the subject.

► letters should contain the name of the addressee or the sender, other documents could contain the name of the author.

► documents for which it is important to distinguish between several versions, should contain the version number or status of the document.

- use set abbreviations to indicate the status.

for example: draft (DFT), revision (REV), final (FNL)

- version numbers (f.i. 0.9 for a draft or 1.0 for a final version) containing a point aren't permitted. Use the underscore sign instead. Put the capital letter "V" in front of the version number.

for instance: policynote\_V0\_9.doc,

policynote\_V1\_2.doc

- indicate the date of the document as follows JJJJMMDD.

for instance 6th of December 2001= 20011206

- avoid unclear abbreviations, only use abbreviations that will be


understood by everyone in your department. Design a list with all the permitted abbreviations.


- make sure that the filename and the title of the document are the same.


- always mention the parts of a filename in the same sequence.

for instance: <the kind of document > <subject

/addressee/sender> <version> <date> <point> <extension>

 for certain documents, the version management is very important. An indication in the filename is not sufficient. Fill out the documentprofil or keep a summary of the version management in the document itself.

 attune the filenames to the extensions: it speaks for itself that a ppt. file contains a presentation. Leave redundant words out.

 maintain the original extensions of the fileformats.

f.i. txt: ASCII of Unicode

doc: Word

mdb: Access

xls: Excel

ppt: Powerpoint

## Examples

don't

do

letter W Vanneste 08dec01.doc

letter\_Wvanneste\_20011208.doc

bill year 2001.xls

bill2001.xls

presentation exercise A-lecture.pps

exercise\_Alecture.pps

operational plan definitve version.doc

operationalPlan\_V1\_0.doc

## 4. Safe keeping

### Goals

electronic records can be stored on several places: shared disks, personal folders on the serverdisks, local disks on the PC, CD's or diskette.

- ▶ provide a secure keeping for all your records and make sure that back-ups are made of all your records.
- ▶ avoid scattering your information over several locations and store as much as possible all the information pertaining to the same subject together.
- ▶ avoid the storage of the same information at different locations.

### Pointers:



place as little electronic information as possible on local hard disks. Accidents with files on C-drives can rarely be repealed. These files are not protected by back-up procedures. Overwriting or erasing information is done all too swiftly. Moreover, other users of your pc have access to your data.








make sure that clear agreements exist on which data should be stored on the shared disk space and which information should be stored in the personal folders.



store as much information as possible on the shared disk space.



provide a clear policy on userrights. Make sure that it is determined which user can alter, add or shift certain files and folders and who has readingrights only.

-  place personal files in your homefolder on the serverdisk.
-  separate the folder containing software and the folder containing documents as well as possible.
-  place confidential information in a shielded folder; assign as few individual passwords as possible to documents.
-  check the filelocation before saving documents.
-  use as few disks as possible for the long term storage of electronic records.

## 5. ?Questions? Suggestions ?



Turn to DAVID for all your questions and suggestions:

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