Chapter 6.   CLASSIFICATION

1. <u>Basic Steps</u>. Authors should assign file designations for Reclamation originated documents during creation. However, for incoming materials, the recipient must read and analyze the document and then classify it based on the informational content (see Illustration 6-1). How quickly a particular document can be located after it has been filed depends largely on how carefully it had been classified before filing. It is important to recognize that the author or recipient is the best qualified to decide the file designation. If as file custodian you do not agree with the assigned file designation, you can prepare a cross reference or contact the author or recipient. <u>Do NOT change any codes unless agreed to by the author or recipient</u>.

2. <u>Techniques</u>.

    a. The ability to identify essential key phrases and ideas helps one to select the correct file designation. The topic is sometimes difficult to determine. In such instances, it is helpful to consider the correspondence in this light: "Why was it written?" Usually the purpose for writing suggests where it should be filed.

    b. It is helpful at times to refer to previous files to verify a tentatively selected file designation.

    c. Be consistent. This is the first rule of classifying. Consistency will ensure that papers currently being classified will be filed with the previous documents with which they belong.

    d. At times, the topic is so extremely vague that it is impossible to determine the proper file designation from the letter itself. In such cases, the classifier should contact someone familiar with the material for more information.

3. <u>Subject Files</u>. Classifying subject files is more complex and distinctly different from classifying other types of records. The basic steps in classifying subject material are as follows:

    a. Read and analyze the document to determine its major subject or function. The mail code or subject lines, appearing above the body of the document, are often helpful in classifying, but the subject line should <u>not</u> be relied upon too heavily. It may be vague, misleading, or even remote from the real subject concerned.

    b. Select the proper file designation from the Office File Plan or the Information Management Handbook Retention Schedules. First select the appropriate primary subject or functional category and then the correct subdivision of the primary subject, if any. If no subdivision has been provided, use the primary subject itself as the file designation. When a sufficient volume of paper accumulates in a subdivision which was not originally selected as a subject topic, add the new topic to the file plan and create a folder to accommodate these documents.

c. Authors will assign a classification code to all outgoing correspondence during preparation. It should be located just below the "In Refer Reply to:" line or on the author line for correspondence signed outside Reclamation.

If recipient of an incoming document determines that the document is a record to his/her office, the recipient should initial and classify the document by writing the alpha-numeric file code (i.e., ADM-1.10) in the upper right corner of the file copy if its designation does not already appear on the document. If a file plan is available, a folder ID number should be notated. These actions certify that the document is to be filed.

d. Lightly underscore the reference when documents refer to previous records already on file. This will emphasize that there are previous documents involved. Earlier material should be consolidated with later documents on the same subject.

4. <u>Case Files</u>. The type of document does not control the filing feature because all records pertaining to a case are brought together to create the case file. The basic steps in classifying case files are as follows:

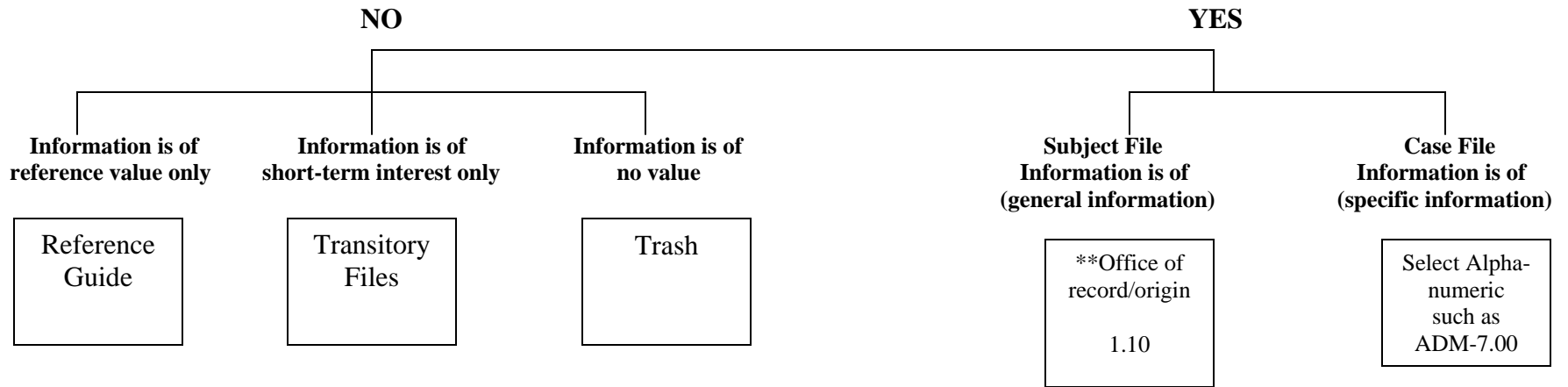a. Read and analyze the incoming document to determine its major topic.

b. Select the proper file designation from the Office File Plan or the Information Management Handbook Retention Schedule.

c. Authors will assign a classification code to all outgoing correspondence during preparation. It should be located just below the "In Refer Reply to:" line or on the author line for correspondence signed outside Reclamation.

If recipient of an incoming document determines that the document is a record to his/her office, the recipient should initial and classify the document by writing the alpha-numeric file code (i.e., ADM-8.00) in the upper right corner of the file copy if its designation does not already appear on the document. If a file plan is available, a folder ID number should be notated. These actions certify that the document is to be filed.

5. <u>Transitory Files</u>.   These types of records can often be identified by a date included in the document, i.e., training announcements. Once the date has passed there is no value to the record. If no date is included, the classifier must analyze whether or not the document will have any future reference value.

a. Read and analyze the document and decide if the document has any future reference value.
b. If the document has a short term reference value, write TRA-0.00 in the upper right-hand corner of the file copy.

If the document is not considered a subject or case file and has no reference value, the document does not need to be kept

_____

IS THE DOCUMENT A <u>RECORD</u>?*
IF THE ANSWER IS

NO   **YES**

Information is of reference value only	**Information is of short-term interest only**	**Information is of no value**		**Subject File Information is of (general information)**	**Case File Information is of (specific information)**
Reference Guide	Transitory Files	Trash		**Office of record/origin 1.10	Select Alpha-numeric such as ADM-7.00

*What is a Record? A record is something that describes, documents, or indicates the Government's daily activities. A record can be as simple as a note of a telephone conversion or as complex as a 500-page report. A record can be in many forms. It can be written minutes…a typed memorandum…a computer database…a photograph… or ever a fingerprint!

**Office of Origin – The office within Reclamation that originated the documents.

Office of Record – The office responsible for maintaining incoming or outgoing documents that support the operation or mission of the office.