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Content Management Solutions

White Paper:

A practical understanding of Document Retention and its use with WebSearch document management software

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Intended Audience

This document is intended for anyone interested in applying document retention policies to electronic files managed by Archive Studio WebSearch.

Scope

This document describes document retention concepts and features for WebSearch. The understanding and application of document groups, record series, record types and legal holds.

An Overview of Document Retention
and its use with WebSearch

Document retention is the systematic process of maintaining document records for their legal life schedule and then systematically destroying documents at the end of the retention period. Originally document retention was intended to save organizations the burden and responsibility of maintaining warehouses filled with unneeded documents. A document retention policy or schedule establishes procedures that define those documents which should be kept; how long they should be kept; and how, when, any by whom they should be destroyed. This allows for organizations to retain only those documents which are valuable, and to only retain those documents for the required time period.

Modern document retention takes into account not only paper documents and storage issues, but also electronic documents and legal requirements. The modern standards of document retention require that documents be organized in accordance with a multi-level classification hierarchy, that documents (paper or electronic) be securely destroyed, that destruction be halted at the first threat of impending litigation, and that all retention standards meet all of the federal, state, and local legal requirements. WebSearch addresses all of these needs and allows for each organization to customize all aspects of document retention to meet their unique needs.

The basic principles of modern document retention are:

- **Document Group -** A *document group* is a broad collection of related documents. Typically document groups are organized by department, so common document groups might include 'accounting' and 'personnel'.

- **Record Series** - is made up of a *record type* and a *retention rule*. A *record series* is a more specific subgroup within the document group, such as a 'invoice" document series being contained within the accounting group. A record series is generally related to a document type within a particular document group

- **Record Type** – The type of document (document type) within the records series.

- **Retention Rules -** A *retention rule* is a named specification of the conditions under which documents may become eligible for destruction.

- **Retention Schedule -** A subsection of the *retention policy*. The retention schedule associates retention rules with document groups and/or document series.

- **Retention Policy -** A formal document that sets forth an organization's standard policies governing the retention and destruction of documents. The retention policy includes the retention schedule.

- **Litigation Holds -** A *litigation hold* prevents documents belonging to the document group and/or series to which it applies from being destroyed, and is typically enacted against a document group or series when the organization becomes aware litigation may be eminent (or on receipt of a court order). Once a litigation hold is in place all destruction of affected documents instantly ceases until all litigation holds affecting the documents are removed.

- **Controlled Document Destruction -** Ideally a document is destroyed shortly after the retention rules specify that it is eligible for destruction. When a physical document is involved it should be destroyed only by authorized personnel within the organization.
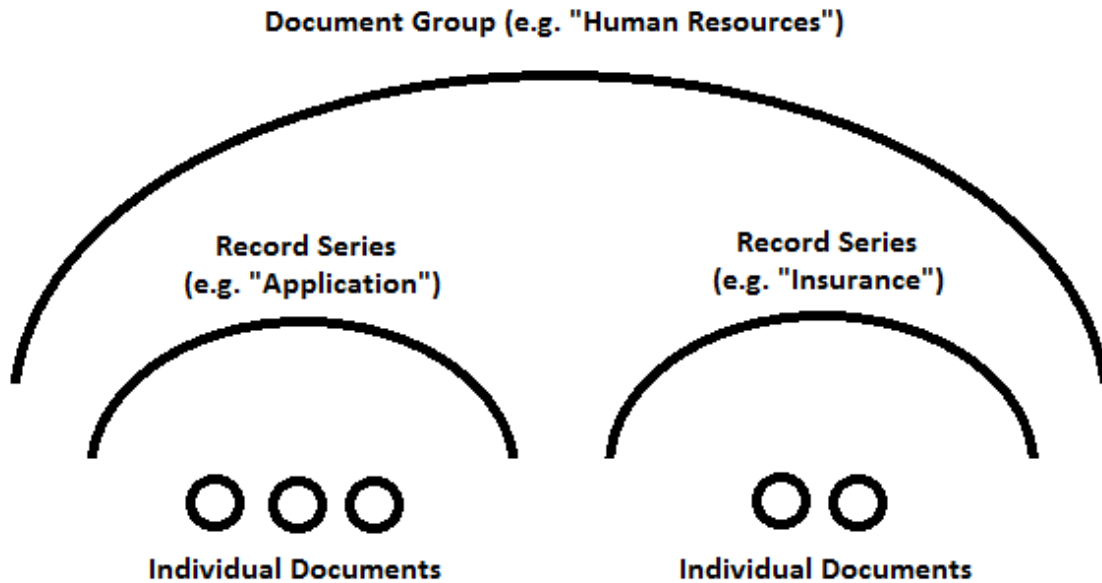
Document Group (e.g. "Human Resources")

**Record Series
(e.g. "Application")**

**Record Series
(e.g. "Insurance")**

Individual Documents

Individual Documents

FIGURE 1 – The "Retention Umbrella" ... Document Group and Record Series

Before proceeding with a discussion of these basic principles the reader should first be aware of some basic WebSearch concepts:

- **Single install support for multiple organizations** –WebSearch supports the ASP model – which is to say that a single install of the product can provide services for multiple organizations. These organizations can be separate divisions within a large organization, or separate companies hosted by a third party service provider. Each organization maintains its own document retention rules and policies.

- **Separate logins for site admin and organizations** – Because a single WebSearch install can service multiple clients there are necessarily two levels of administration. The site administrators have the ability to manage site-wide resources such as clients, document libraries, etc, while the administrators for individual clients *(organizations)* can administer their organization-specific settings, users, communities, security level definitions, document status codes, etc. Site administrators log into a single site admin login page, while members of individual organizations (including their administrators) log in through a separate page. Client administrators control document retention for their respective organizations.

- **Users and *communities* in WebSearch** – WebSearch allows individual users to be associated with one or more communities. User communities may or may not necessarily correspond to document groups, depending on the needs and preferences of the organization.

The following sections of this document discuss how the basic document retention principles are addressed within WebSearch and/or the environment in which WebSearch is installed.

1. **Document Groups and Series**

As part of the implementation of document retention in WebSearch, the initial installation does not setup any record series. Libraries and document types per library must be setup per the organization's specifications before the retention policy can be setup. The default installation with reflect that, all records in WebSearch will be recognized as permanent until the retention policies are established and setup. These settings are customizable by the client administrator, who will be able to add, delete, and edit document groups and series as well as their associated retention rules and litigation holds. The unique combination of document group and series will be identified as a *record type* within WebSearch, and each document will exist in some scope that is governed by a retention rule.

2. Retention Schedule

The WebSearch client administration interface provides the client administrator with the ability to create, update and delete document groups and series, and to associate each with litigation holds and retention rules. This list of document types and series, and their rule and litigation hold properties, is collectively referred to as the *retention schedule.*

3. Retention Policy

Once the client administrator has established the document groups, record series and record type for their organization they will have the ability to print a retention policy for their organization. This is intended to be a 'model' or 'starter' document, and not to be the definitive document retention policy for the organization.

4. Retention Manager

WebSearch allows one or more communities to be specified as having *retention manager* permissions*.* All users belonging to such a community will have the ability to destroy documents that are eligible for destruction, set legal holds on record types within a records series, as well as to revise the organization's retention rules and schedules.

5. Retention Rules

Retention Rules in WebSearch are composed of four elements; a unique name, a condition, a time period, and an indicator of whether the time period is in months or years. An example of retention rules in WebSearch would be: *'Filing date plus 3 Years',* which indicates that the document(s) in question would be retained for three years from the date that they were originally filed before they are eligible for destruction. It is important to note that WebSearch will allow retention managers to apply a retention exception on a per document basis (through the document properties page), allowing the end user to identify documents that might need to be retained for a period of time other than that which the record type might otherwise specify.

6. Litigation Holds

Litigation Holds serve an extremely vital function in WebSearch. Any retention manager will be able to create a litigation hold. A Litigation Hold and a unique name and description, may be associated with any number of records series within a document group. Each litigation hold may be associated with multiple entries in the retention schedule, and each record type may have none, one, or multiple litigation hold(s) associated with it.

7. Controlled Document Destruction

Ideally documents will only be destroyed only after they have existed beyond their retention period; however some organizations may have different needs.   WebSearch allows retention managers to produce lists of documents eligible for destruction, and to electronically 'shred' those documents such that they cannot be recovered by any existent technology. Retention managers and users with "deletion" permissions will also be able to override the retention policy for specific documents and to subsequently destroy such documents. Once a document has been destroyed or moved to media outside of the control of WebSearch, the document record will remain and display a certificate of disposal, including the retention policy action, the description of the document and the date of the disposition activity.

Conclusion

WebSearch has been designed to meet industry-accepted document retention practices, and to fulfill the retention needs of the most demanding environments. The document retention principles and mechanisms built into WebSearch are widely accepted within government, academia and industry. As a result, it is expected that WebSearch will meet or exceed the document retention needs of any organization.