



# The Declassification Initiative at Library and Archives Canada (LAC)

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Declassification

DISCOVER. UNDERSTAND. CONNECT.



Library and Archives  
Canada

Bibliothèque et Archives  
Canada

Canada

# Basics of the developed approach

## 1. Principle of creator authority

- Only the creator of the classified document / information has the authority to declassify it.
- **Consequence:**
  - LAC must contact the creating departments to obtain their authorization to declassify.

## 2. Principle of decreasing sensitivity

- With the passage of time, the sensitivity of classified information decreases.
- Reflected by the concept of sunset clauses.

# Definitions

## Classified

- Document / information whose unauthorized disclosure could cause injury to **the national interest**
- **CONFIDENTIAL** – injury to the national interest
- **SECRET** – serious injury to the national interest
- **TOP SECRET** – exceptionally grave injury to the national interest

## Declassify

- Cancel / decrease the security classification of a classified document / information

## Equity

- Authority to declassify shared by another creating department

# Overview of classified documents at LAC

Approximately 3,000 boxes containing Top Secret documents

- (a box contains 2 to 20 records...)

Countless (literally)  
Secret and Confidential records

Incomplete finding aids (transfer lists)

- Some illustrative examples

# Examples of old finding aids

No title

1166 6016 1197-1112-04 1091 DIST 04/04/04

SAMPLE #1

LISTING OF FILES FOR STORAGE CA/SR MEANS HISTORICAL RECORDS

FILE NUMBER/NAME	SUBJECT	CASE#	DATE		DISPOSAL DATE	FAC. AUTH.	BOX NUMBER
			FROM	TO			
1000-1	001/00		1/1/00	1/1/00	2000 100		1
1000-1(2)	001/00		1/1/00	1/1/00	2000 100		1
1000-1	001/00		1/1/00	1/1/00	2000 100		1
1000-1	001/00		1/1/00	1/1/00	2000 100		1
1000-1(2)	001/00		1/1/00	1/1/00	2000 100		1
1000-1(2)	001/00		1/1/00	1/1/00	2000 100		1
1000-1(2)	001/00		1/1/00	1/1/00	2000 100		1
<p>Box - 2012-00202-1                      EA - 24-42 (100)                      HRC - 97-1112-04</p>							

Old transfer lists rarely contain the classification level of records.

No title / date

1166 6016 1197-1112-04 1091 DIST 04/04/04

SAMPLE #1

LISTING OF FILES FOR STORAGE CA/SR MEANS HISTORICAL RECORDS

FILE NUMBER/NAME	SUBJECT	CASE#	DATE	DISPOSAL DATE	FAC. AUTH.	BOX NUMBER
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						

# Why declassify

## Improve access to Government of Canada documents

### Impact on LAC:

- specialized storage (\$\$\$)
- specialized IT network
- longer process (specialized circulation of documents)
- longer ATIP process (requires trained employees and secure networks)



# Methodology



FIND CLASSIFIED  
DOCUMENTS IN THE  
COLLECTION



ANALYZE CLASSIFIED  
DOCUMENTS



PRODUCE THE  
DECLASSIFICATION  
REPORT FOR THE  
CREATING DEPARTMENT

# Submissions to departments

## Includes three documents:

1.

### **Declassification application form**

Document constituting the official application for declassification, with signatures

2.

### **Appendix A: Analysis report**

Summary explaining all documents and why they can be declassified or downgraded

3.

### **Appendix B: List of analyzed records/documents**

Detailed list of analyzed documents submitted to the department for declassification



# Challenges faced



Finding classified material in LAC collections



Finding the right contact within the creating department



Being patient



Being patient

# Results



## FY 2023–2024

- Number of reviewed pages: **179,514**
- Number of pages submitted: **101,851**
- Number of declassified pages: **18,165**

## FY 2024–2025

- Number of reviewed pages: **332,058**
- Number of pages submitted: **114,621**
- Number of declassified pages: **45,241**

## Library and Archives Canada

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