

Alberta Records Management Committee (ARMC)

ARMC Circular: 2008-001

Topic: Management of Instant Messages

Background

Instant messaging is a computer-based messaging service. The Government of Alberta (GoA) has purchased licenses for Microsoft Office Communicator that includes a secure instant messaging application which will be discussed in this Circular. The GoA does not endorse the use of external providers such as Yahoo Messenger, AOL Instant Messenger, etc.

Instant messaging is like a conversation, but uses text-based communications rather than voice-based communication.

Instant Messaging

- While instant message threads are records, many are transitory in nature.
- Instant messages will not automatically be saved and stored by Information Technology service providers.
- If an employee needs to save an instant message thread about a business transaction or decision, this can be done before closing the communication screen to exit the conversation.
- Saved instant message threads must be managed in accordance with GoA recordkeeping requirements.
- Instant message threads are subject to FOIP inquires and discovery litigation.

Management of Instant Messaging

- Instant message threads involving business transactions or decisions may be captured and managed as official records. However, since the technology is not mature and these threads cannot be stored in a format that can guarantee integrity and authenticity, business transactions and decisions discussed in instant message threads should be followed up in an appropriate medium and managed in accordance with GoA recordkeeping requirements.
- Instant messages threads can be managed as transitory records and disposed of regularly by individuals under Records Schedule 1995/007-A001.
- ARMC will review this guidance on instant messaging as technology matures and functionality for storing these messages improves.

Conclusion

For clarification, further details or assistance on the contents of this circular, please contact the ARMC secretary at SA.InformationManagement@gov.ab.ca or (780) 427-3884.

Original Signed by:

Tom Thackeray, Chair

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