

Content Change Management – Using the Archer Reference Fields

I often get questions around how to bring new content into Archer and what the best use of the “reference fields” included in the Archer Control Standards library. So today I’m reaching into the mail bag to answer some of the most common questions around the content update process.

What’s the story with the “reference fields” in the Archer Control Standards library?

Let’s start by clarifying what’s meant by “reference fields”. Figure-1 shows the Reference Content tab of an out-of-the-box Archer control standard record. The Archer reference fields are called “Archer Standard ID”, “Archer Standard Name”, and “Archer Control Standard Statement”.

The screenshot shows the Archer Control Standards library interface. The title bar reads "Control Standards: ATCS-001". Below the title bar is a toolbar with icons for New, Copy, Save, Apply, Edit, and Delete. A status bar indicates "Record 1 of 1,270" and "First Published: 8/3/2012 9:53 AM Last Updated: 4/11/2013 5:00 PM". The main content area has three tabs: General, Workflow, and Reference Content. The Reference Content tab is selected, showing a table with the following data:

Reference Content	
The fields on the Reference Content tab should not be modified. They capture content from the RSA Archer GRC Content Library. Updates from RSA Archer are imported into these fields and will overwrite any manual changes.	
Archer Standard ID:	ATCS-001
Archer Standard Name:	Mission and Purpose of Information Security
Archer Control Standard Statement:	The mission of Information Security is to protect the confidentiality, integrity and availability of the Company's information infrastructure and resources through the establishment, implementation and management of the Information Security Program. This involves creating, administering, and overseeing policies to ensure the prevention, detection, containment and correction of security breaches. The purpose of the Information Security Program is to ensure that management, Internal Audit and regulators are satisfied with the security controls that the Company has implemented, and that clients and business partners are confident their information is adequately protected.

Figure-1

By default these fields are intended to relate to the “Standard ID”, “Standard Name” & “Standard Statement” fields on the General tab which for our purposes we’ll refer to as the “production” fields. Out of the box the values in the production and reference fields are the same.

So why have duplicate fields?

Believe it or not the notion of reference content didn’t always exist in Archer. The feature was inspired by customer input as a way to maintain a link back to the default text of the control standard statement. As customers modified standards to suit their purposes they found they wanted a way to refer back to the original, and the concept of reference fields was born.

How are the reference fields relevant to the content update process?

In addition to a static reference point, another way Archer reference fields can be utilized is during an update to the Control Standards Library. As we’re mapping new authoritative sources to control standards we’ll sometimes encounter a new requirement or topic which isn’t adequately covered by an existing control standard. When this happens we have a couple of options. If it’s a new twist on a concept for which we already have an existing standard then we’ll update that standard accordingly. If it’s an entirely new topic or concept then we’ll usually accommodate it by creating a new control standard (or several) to cover the item. This is how the Archer Control Standards library has changed and grown over time and remains the most complete resource of its kind in the industry.

How do I keep my library up to date without losing changes I’ve made?

So you’ve decided to modify one or several control standards to dial them into your organization’s unique needs (something we highly encourage). Maybe you’ve also added new internally defined standards. What happens when we release a new version and how can you integrate the update into

your library without losing the changes you've done internally? This is where the reference fields can come in handy. Although the update file will contain both the production and reference fields, you don't have to import both. You can optionally import only the reference fields and leave the production fields untouched (or vice versa). The reference side of your library stays in sync with the latest & greatest without overwriting the production field modifications you've made. Customers typically use this approach as both a parity mechanism to keep their libraries current and also to drive a change management process. Anything in "production" relative to ongoing operational objectives could be subject to a review process prior to adopting updates. Isolating the updates to the reference fields provides an ability to facilitate this review & approval process. The changes can then be migrated across to the production fields afterward.

What are some tips for supporting a change management process around content updates?

Great question! Change management is all about facilitating impactful changes to the organization in a controlled way. IT war stories about disrupting the business with an unscheduled or poorly planned system change are all too common. It's why we have maintenance windows, peer review, and executive approvals. It's also why the change management process is so heavily scrutinized in audits. So why should the policy and control environment be any different? The answer is easy...it's not.

Here's a simple approach to bolstering content change management that builds upon the concepts we've covered so far. Let's assume the production fields on the General tab contain the statements currently in operation; in other words they're gospel. Now there's an Archer update to the Control Standards library and you import that into the reference fields only. For any standards that changed, the production and reference field values will no longer match. With a little creativity we can easily use this disparity to drive reporting. The following approach is what I personally use to help maintain the master copy of the Archer Control Standards Library and ensure things match before we package them up for release.

First we need a way to detect the differences and I chose to create a simple values-list field called "Archer Reference Check" to do this with two possible values: "Match", and "Variance". I only have two field options checked, "Search Results" so I can query & report against and "Calculated Field". Here's the formula I entered:

IF(AND([Standard ID]=[Archer Standard ID], [Standard Name]=[Archer Standard Name], [Statement]=[Archer Control Standard Statement]), "Match", "Variance")

This simply compares each production and reference field pair to see if they match and sets the value accordingly. I chose to put the field on my layout but this is strictly optional. Here's the same standard from earlier with our new reference check field in place (Figure-2).

▼ Primary Content Fields			
Standard ID:	ATCS-001		
Standard Name:	Mission and Purpose of Information Security		
Statement:	The mission of Information Security is to protect the confidentiality, integrity and availability of the Company's information infrastructure and resources through the establishment, implementation and management of the Information Security Program. This involves creating, administering, and overseeing policies to ensure the prevention, detection, containment and correction of security breaches. The purpose of the Information Security Program is to ensure that management, Internal Audit and regulators are satisfied with the security controls that the Company has implemented, and that clients and business partners are confident their information is adequately protected.		
Classification:	Preventive	Grouping:	Information Security Responsibilities
Type:	Administrative	Published Date:	10/2/2009

▼ Reference Content Fields			
Archer Standard ID:	ATCS-001	Archer Reference Check :	Match
Archer Standard Name:	Mission and Purpose of Information Security		
Archer Control Standard Statement:	The mission of Information Security is to protect the confidentiality, integrity and availability of the Company's information infrastructure and resources through the establishment, implementation and management of the Information Security Program. This involves creating, administering, and overseeing policies to ensure the prevention, detection, containment and correction of security breaches. The purpose of the Information Security Program is to ensure that management, Internal Audit and regulators are satisfied with the security controls that the Company has implemented, and that clients and business partners are confident their information is adequately protected.		

Figure-2

Let's test it to make sure it's working properly. By making a change to the Archer Control Standard Statement field I can simulate importing a library update.

▼ Primary Content Fields			
Standard ID:	ATCS-001		
Standard Name:	Mission and Purpose of Information Security		
Statement:	The mission of Information Security is to protect the confidentiality, integrity and availability of the Company's information infrastructure and resources through the establishment, implementation and management of the Information Security Program. This involves creating, administering, and overseeing policies to ensure the prevention, detection, containment and correction of security breaches. The purpose of the Information Security Program is to ensure that management, Internal Audit and regulators are satisfied with the security controls that the Company has implemented, and that clients and business partners are confident their information is adequately protected.		
Classification:	Preventive	Grouping:	Information Security Responsibilities
Type:	Administrative	Published Date:	10/2/2009

▼ Reference Content Fields			
Archer Standard ID:	ATCS-001	Archer Reference Check :	Variance
Archer Standard Name:	Mission and Purpose of Information Security		
Archer Control Standard Statement:	Hello world. Here's an update to this Control Standard.		

Figure-3

Presto! We get a variance value in our reference field. Something to keep in mind is that the priority of the calculation can vary based on system and other configuration variables. Also remember that Archer will compare the raw field data which could include embedded HTML. In the example above, suppose one of my field values was enclosed in HTML paragraph tags but the other wasn't. The fields will look identical on the screen because the browser renders those tags in the display. However since the underlying field data values are technically different due to the embedded HTML the calculation will correctly regard this as a "Variance". If you edit the record and click the HTML button to bring up the HTML window you can adjust the embedded HTML content.

Another thing I chose to do is checked the box to show this field in the navigation menu so I can quickly navigate & filter for results or save that as a report for future reference. (Figure-4).

Navigation Menu

- Administration
- Archer Content Master
 - Authoritative Sources Master
 - Control Standards Master
- Advanced Search
- Display All
- Data Import
- By Archer Reference Check
 - Match
 - Variance
- By Classification
- By Grouping
- By Type
- Reports
 - Global Reports
 - 4x_5x_Control Standard Import
 - Mapping Counts - Detail
 - Mapping Counts - Summan
 - QC_Variance Check

Control Standards Master

New Modify Save Reports Delete

11/19/2013 12:30 PM
Archer Reference Check : Contains Variance

Search Results

Drag a column name here to group the items by the values within that column.

Standard ID	Standard Name	Statement
ATCS-001	Mission and Purpose of Information Security	The mission of Information Security is to protect the confidentiality, integrity and availability of the Company's information infrastructure and resources through the establishment, implementation and management of the Information Security Program. This involves creating, administering, and overseeing policies to ensure the prevention, detection, containment and correction of security breaches. The purpose of the Information Security Program is to ensure that management, Internal Audit and regulators are satisfied with the security controls that the Company has implemented, and that clients and business partners are confident their information is adequately protected.

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Multiple ways to filter and report

Figure-4

So what else can you do with this? Well the short answer is all sorts of stuff. For my purposes I only needed a simple way to ensure everything matched. But you could expand on the basic formula above to return a more granular result such as the particular field causing the variance. You could apply additional access control and do things with permissions and show/hide rules. You could define customized reports to drive prioritized review and approval work queues for different stakeholders and use Data Driven Events to set up alerting. And you're not limited to just Control Standards. You can apply this same concept to Policies and Control Procedures which also have reference fields. Or you could create your own reference field model in any other core application or custom application you've designed.

So feel free to pick up where I left off and take it to the next level. Any other feedback, tips, tricks to share? I'd love to hear them!