Today’s lecture

• What does document management entail?

• Thinking more about records as particular kinds of documents to manage

What is document management?

Document management is the efficient and effective storage of recorded information in the form of documents so that it can be used in our actions and thinking, and provide knowledge about past actions and thinking.

Records are particular kinds of documents.

But first, revisiting a key term

According to the Commonwealth Evidence Act 1995, the term document encompasses:

'(a) anything on which there is writing; or
(b) anything on which there are marks, figures, symbols or perforations having a meaning for persons qualified to interpret them; or
(c) anything from which sounds, images or writings can be reproduced with or without the aid of anything else; or
(d) a map, a plan, drawing or photograph'

(quoted in Kennedy & Schauder 1998: 7)

And another: records (information byproducts)

‘The critical characteristic is that a record has to be linked to doing something – it is inherently transactional in its nature’

(Reed 2005: 102)

And now, a story

On 4 March 2005, an Italian journalist held captive in Iraq for 30 days was released into the custody of two Italian secret service agents.

Documentation concerning what happened in the following hours continues to be disputed by a range of parties, including the Italian and US governments.
**Records management**

‘Recordkeeping systems capture the content of documents, re-present their structure, and link related documents together. They retain the information content and structure of records in reconstructible relations, and make audit trails about their subsequent management, access and use’

(McKemmish 2005: 9)

**Goals of records management**

- ‘Define the recordkeeping needs’ of the unit
- ‘Develop business rules and standards to support the creation and capture of complete and accurate records’
- Develop systems and controls to ensure the capture of complete and accurate records’

(Kennedy & Schauder 1998: 14)

**Making documents evidential**

- Evidence – i.e. what happened?
- Legal view – (but it is more than this)
- Transactionality – what activity was taking place?
- Identity – who was involved in the activity?

**To be evidential,**

documents need contextual information!

- What happened?
- Is there compliance with legal requirements?
- What activity was the transaction part of?
- Who was involved in the activity and transaction?
- What is the nature of the recordkeeping system in which the documents aggregate?
Records …

Set down or register something in a persistent form (even if they persist for only a short time)

Are ‘fixed’ (although copies of them can be drawn down in fluid form for further use)

Records …

• Have evidential qualities
• Are retrievable in their original state
• Provide information that we want to memorialise

Records need to be reliable, to help us to

• ‘understand what has been done previously in the course of completing certain actions, • check if something was done correctly, • answer questions asked subsequent to the actions that took place, • justify actions, • provide precedents for acting consistently, • provide assurance to people external to the action that those actions were appropriate, • enable external scrutiny to show what happened in particular instances, and • enable the information content of the record to be reused as required’ (Reed 2005: 106)

Paper versus electronic storage

There are advantages and disadvantages with both media:

‘For the first time in 3,500 years of archival activity we produce records that do not exist to the human eye – unlike Babylonian clay tablets, Egyptian papyrus, Roman and medieval parchment, modern paper, even microfilm’

(Cook, quoted in Liu 2004: 280)

Capture strategies include

Placing documents in a transactional sequence in a file, electronic directory etc. which cannot be rearranged without there being evidence of this

Capture strategies include

Registering documents during action processes which provides evidence of the existence of records in a recordkeeping system and the sequence in which it was placed / used within that sequence
Capture strategies include

- **Workflow control** which can provide evidence of:
  - Where documents are located
  - Action outstanding
  - Actors involved in transactions
  - When action took place
  - What recordkeeping transactions have been undertaken on the record

Business record aggregations

Aggregations include files, folders, dossiers and series.

NB. Business records depend upon the quality of the means by which a record is captured.

A record in aggregated form

A record in aggregated form can be both fixed *and* fluid because it can grow and:

- be used in different transactions
- used in parts

Main types of record aggregations

- **FILES** arrange and classify documents and hold them together (physically or otherwise)
- **DOSSIERS** are similar to files but usually a bundle of documents on the same subject – a person or object
- **SERIES** are documents ‘similar in form and used repetitively for the same kinds of administrative purposes’

(Reed 2005: 109)

The records life cycle model

- **Creation** → **Distribution** → **Use** → **Maintenance** → **Disposal**

It has long been common to say that records pass through a particular life cycle:

- creation
- distribution
- use
- maintenance
- disposal

(Kennedy & Schauder 1997: 9)
Criticisms of the records life cycle model

as document-centred rather than use-centred

‘By placing disposal, including the identification of records of continuing value, as the last stage in the records’ life cycle, a life cycle model does not emphasise the need to design systems which ensure the capture of these records of continuing value in the first place’

(Kennedy & Schauder 1997: 10)

Some see the process as even simpler

http://www.thepapertiger.com/tutorial.html

A different model of records life cycle

Sees three stages through which records can move:

– Active
– Semi-active
– Inactive

Active

‘The active stage of a record is when it is initially created, for example, when a file is made up or a memo is transmitted using electronic mail. The record is required quite frequently by the records user. It is therefore necessary for the record to be stored close to the work area of the branch, section or agency.’

(State Records NSW 1996)

Semi-active

‘Semi-active. As time goes by, the need to use a particular record diminishes. The records user may environment in which it operates. It is at this stage where the record is semi-active or semi-current.

‘Semi-active records may be stored away from the work area at an off site storage facility, and activities such as appraisal and sentencing are often carried out at this stage in the records life cycle model.’

(State Records NSW 1996)

Inactive

‘As more time goes by, the administrative value of semi-active records diminishes even further, to the extent that there is no need on the part of the records user to refer to them.

‘It is at this stage that records are disposed of. Most records are destroyed, while a small percentage with continuing value are retained as archives.’

(State Records NSW 1996)
The records continuum approach encompasses …

‘the whole extent of a record’s existence. Refers to a consistent and coherent regime of management processes from the time of the creation of records (and before creation, in the design of recordkeeping systems), through to the preservation and use of records as archives’.

(Standards Australia 1996, quoted in Kennedy & Schauder 1997: 10)

Further reading


