

Records Management and Information Culture: Tackling the People Problem

By Oliver Gillian and Foscarini Fiorella

Facet

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This book provides a qualitative analysis on the concept of information culture and collaborative participation from all users in managing their organisation's records. All organisations have an information culture, which can be described as the values bestowed to information and the attitudes displayed by the users within the context of the organisation. By determining this culture, records managers should be able to formulate appropriate game plans beneficial to the management of information for evidence and accountability. Complying with ISO 15489, the game plan requires involvement from all employees creating and using records. All of these contributors need to ensure their information can be captured and managed in the multiple information channels, systems and processes. When the information culture of an organisation can be championed by an individual at senior management level, incentives are provided to steer an effectively managed records management programme.

Information culture is determined by three factors which, in turn, impact on the records management programmes: the value bestowed by the organisation to its records; information-related competencies; and IT governance being IT infrastructure and trust in the organised recordkeeping systems. As an alternative methodology, the Information Culture Framework (ICF) proposed in this book focuses on three facets: corporate information technology, governance and architecture; employees' and management's trust in the organisational systems; and dealing with techniques to work collaboratively with IT colleagues.

The ICF is associated with the concept of the records continuum and provides an alternative approach to methodologies, such as the Australian DIRKS (State Records New South Wales' Design and Implementation of Recordkeeping Systems) being the precursor to ISO 15489. Records management solutions such as DIRKS are often viewed as overly complicated with rigid implementation processes. Resistance to the "only way digital records could be managed" (p. 42) are a reason EDRMS systems fail to be effectively implemented and maintained.

In the study, it is contended that the primary responsibilities of the records managers and archivists are the management of information as evidence for the purposes of accountability (p. 13). The records managers and archivists should not compete with the organisation's

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other information professionals. Greater emphasis should rather be directed towards fostering more collaborative partnerships. The overall goal should be the formulation of appropriate solutions, policies and practices that serve the interest of the organisation.

Information culture is influenced by concerns regarding issues such as privacy, security, access and control. IT professionals tend to mistrust the capabilities and competencies of archivists to manage and maintain digital information resources. There is a need for the archival community to be able to provide assurances on longevity, particularly with regard to the preservation of digital information. This provides the setting for the scientific approach undertaken by the InterPARES projects, at the University of British Columbia, concerning trust and the long-term preservation of authentic digital records.

Knowledge, skills and expertise of staff regarding information literacy indicate the importance of developing context appropriate training. ICF provides a broad perspective for the development of training that can meet the objectives and comply with international best practices. An example of available training programmes to enhance employee competencies when working with information is the Pacific Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (PARBICA) toolkit, with particular reference to Guideline 2: Identifying Recordkeeping Requirements. This is a valuable source that records managers should utilise to provide organisation-specific, contextualised recordkeeping training.

The discussion and case studies selected by Oliver and Foscari will resonate with practitioners who have undertaken records management projects. For individuals involved with training endeavours, the case studies describe situations that can be substituted with examples from their own experiences. Thus, as contended by the researchers, information culture is not limited to particular countries or nationalities but, rather determined by the dynamics of the organisation. Scholars new to the archives field will find the information valuable in providing perspectives into the dynamics encountered when developing, implementing and maintaining effective recordkeeping solutions.

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The Accidental Indexer

By Nan Badgett

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This book provides an excellent introduction to the profession of the indexer, aimed at those considering moving into this intellectually (if not always financially) rewarding field. It leaves the details of indexing techniques to other guides, of which there are