Making Your Records Management Program Successful

By Fynnette Eaton and N. Robin Wilson

IIMC Records Management Technical Bulletin Series • 2012

Records Management Technical Bulletins

This publication, one of sixteen bulletins in the *2012 Local Government Records Management Technical Publication Series*, is a joint effort of the Municipal Clerks Education Foundation (MCEF), the International Institute of Municipal Clerks (IIMC), and the National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators (NAGARA). Funding for this project was made available, in part, by a grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.

The Municipal Clerks Education Foundation (MCEF), established in 1984, is a tax-exempt, nonprofit foundation under Section 501 (C)(3) created to raise funds for its partner, the International Institute of Municipal Clerks. IIMC uses these funds to promote, train and educate Municipal Clerks, making them proficient in the services they provide for the citizens of their community. MCEF is a diverse team of volunteers who are passionately committed to helping IIMC pursue its educational objectives.

The International Institute of Municipal Clerks (IIMC) is devoted to advancing the professionalization of the Office of Municipal Clerk and improving the efficiency of municipal government. The IIMC provides its members with educational, conference, reference, research, and informational services designed to keep them informed of changes in the professional community.

The National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators (NAGARA) is a professional association dedicated to the improvement of federal, state, and local government records and information management programs and the professional development of government records administrators and archivists.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

NATIONAL HISTORICAL PUBLICATIONS & RECORDS COMMISSION

The National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), a statutory body affiliated with the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), supports a wide range of activities to preserve, publish, and encourage the use of documentary sources, created in every medium ranging from quill pen to computer, relating to the history of the United States.

Preface

Like every organization, local governments create and maintain large quantities of records. Many of these records not only are of great value to the local government, but also are of concern and essential to the citizens of the community. Federal and state-mandated program requirements, changes in growth and development patterns, expanded service needs, the use of computers and other technologies for creating and using information, and the proliferation of copies in various formats, have all contributed to this enormous accumulation of records. Each publication is intended to make available to local governments the basic principles, policies, and guidelines that should be followed in establishing a sound records management program and in carrying out sound records management practices.

The series is intended for local officials, with limited resources, who lack formal records management or archival training but who have custodial responsibility for records. These local governments include townships, villages, cities, counties, school districts, and other local political subdivisions and special-purpose districts. Each of the following publications in the series includes a bibliography that refers to other reading for more detailed information and guidance.

Overview:

Starting a Records Management Program, The Daily Management of Records and Information, Making Your Records Management Program Successful, Managing Records on Limited Resources, Funding Your Records Management Project

Creation, Collection and Storage:

Identifying and Locating Your Records, Establishing Records Retention, The Selection and Development of Local Government Records Storage Facilities, Developing a Records Storage System

Preservation, Promotion, Use and Access:

Archives for Local Governments, Protecting Records, Using and Storing Microfilm

Care, Management, and Preservation of Electronic Records:

E-Mail Management, Selecting and Using Document Imaging Systems, Managing Electronic Records, Preparing for E-Discovery

Copies of these bulletins are available on the IIMC and NAGARA websites.
IIMC at www.iimc.com • www.nagara.org

Acknowledgements

Meet the Author: Fynette Eaton

Fynette Eaton served as a government archivist for more than 30 years, dividing her time between the U.S. National Archives and the Smithsonian Institution. She has been involved with the management of archival electronic records for more than twenty years, as an archivist and then Branch Chief for the Technical Services Branch of the Center for Electronic Records (where she was responsible for the development of the Archival Preservation System at NARA) and as Director of the Technical Services Division for the Smithsonian Institution Archives, where she developed an electronic records program for that Archives that included identifying a standard for records management application for the Technical Reference Model for use by Smithsonian Institution offices. In 2003, she joined the Electronic Records Archives Program as the Change Management Officer, where she developed a change management program for the ERA system that is being built to preserve all types of electronic records created by the U.S. federal government. She retired from NARA in January 2008. Since then she has worked as a consultant, helping federal agencies schedule electronic records systems and review the recordkeeping requirements for systems under development. She is an adjunct professor for the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee teaching online classes dealing with archives and records management. She has a B.A. and an M.A. in History from the University of Maryland.

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N. Robin Wilson is an administrative professional who has combined training, workplace experience and advocational participation in the Records and Information Management field, beginning in the 1980s. She has been continuously involved in the changing information management environment through research, process analysis and collaboration with public sector organizations. Ms. Wilson served as Assistant Records Manager for the Federal Trade Commission (2007 – 2010) assisting with policy and procedure development, a document management system migration from legacy systems, the implementation of a legal document e-filing system, and Sharepoint use planning. As institutional records manager for Idaho State University (2000 – 2007), she lead the effort to establish their first centralized records and information management program. During this period, she helped establish Idaho's initial state records program guide and retention schedule for Higher Education. She has participated in national work groups addressing electronic records management and e-discovery cost avoidance. Ms. Wilson has presented RIM concepts in the classroom, at NAGARA and ARMA conferences and to community archives groups. She held appointments to the Idaho State Historical Records Advisory Committee (2002-2007). Previously, Ms. Wilson functioned as a FOIA and Privacy Act specialist for a Department of Energy facility, the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP), as a contractor. At WIPP

continued on next page

Meet the Author: N. Robin Wilson *(continued)*

she prepared disposition and appraisal documents for NARA review for unique records series, established the WIPP Public Reading Room and participated in the RCRA Permit hearings process as litigation research support. In 2012, Ms. Wilson returned to ISU, in the Office of Research, providing paralegal and management assistance to the Director of Intellectual Property Policy Management and University Partnerships.

Ms. Wilson earned a bachelor's degree in Business Administration-Management in 1988 from the University of Texas at Austin. In 2005, she completed a Masters of Public Administration in Administrative Law at Idaho State University. She completed a paralegal certificate program through Weber State University's collaboration with the Center for Paralegal Studies in 2012.

A native of Texas, she is lives in Pocatello, Idaho; Ms. Wilson is married to Dr. Terry Lay, retired Data Integrity Officer for ISU.

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Julian Mims is a career archivist, records manager and educator. He directed the local records program at the South Carolina Archives from its inception. He was in charge of the Long Island office of the New York State Archives and Records Administration (NYSARA). As a Vice President and Award of Merit winner of ARMA International, he helped to found a record ten ARMA chapters. Dr. Mims is the author of the International City/County Managers Association (ICMA) best-seller, *Records Management: A Practical Guide for Counties and Cities*, and was editor of ICMA's *Electronic Records Management*. Earning a doctorate from the University of South Carolina in 2001, he has taught at six colleges and universities.

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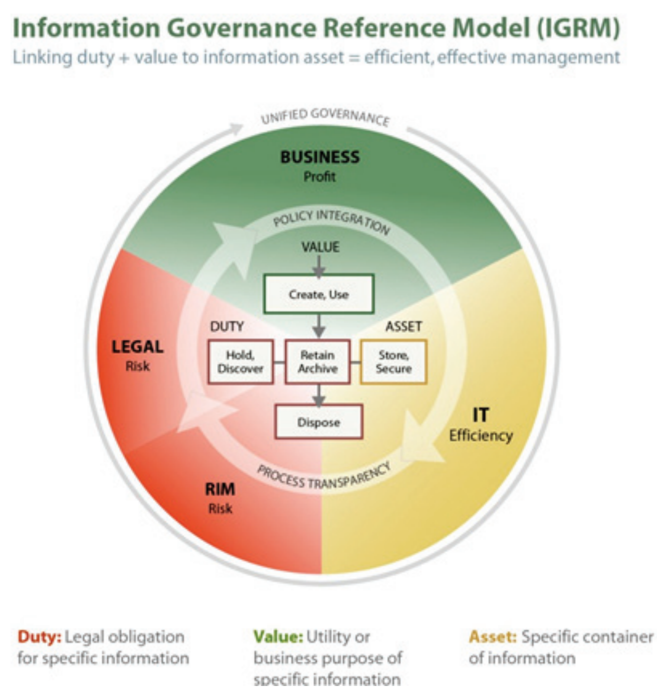
Table of Contents


Information Governance Reference Model (IGRM)
Linking duty + value to information asset = efficient, effective management
UNIFIED GOVERNANCE
BUSINESS
Profit
POLICY INTEGRATION
VALUE
Create, Use
DUTY
ASSET
LEGAL
Risk
Hold, Discover
Retain Archive
Store, Secure
Dispose
IT
Efficiency
PROCESS TRANSPARENCY
RIM
Risk
Duty: Legal obligation for specific information
Value: Utility or business purpose of specific information
Asset: Specific container of information

I. INTRODUCTION

This bulletin assumes that you are responsible for, or part of an effort toward maintaining records of a public agency (city, county, tax district). This overviews processes/ concepts needed to form/continue a successful records management (RM) program.

This will help organize your thinking about agency records. This overview applies whether you have inherited an existing records program or if you have been assigned to establish a new one. It will also help those who want to understand what "ought to be done". If managing records seems overwhelming, do not despair; others have confronted these challenges.

The following best practices will lead to Records Management Program success, through

- A discussion of the roles/relationships that equal program success;
- Five critical activities to pursue;
- A step by step roadmap for success; and
- A resource Appendix.

II. Relationships

Public agencies represent a wide variety of organizations with many different functions and missions. Because people in an agency are at the core of all records – from creation to destruction, understanding the roles/relationships within your agency is important to establishing/promoting effective records management.

1. Role/Impact of Agency Staff

A fire department doesn't look like an elementary school, yet each is a public agency—both founded as a function of government. As part of state government, cities and counties share common responsibilities: to conduct government business, protect citizen rights and maintain the necessary systems, resources and infrastructure. Staff roles include stewardship of resources—this means records—the documentation of agency efforts.

Virtually every aspect of day-to-day operations of a public agency leads to staff creation and receipt of records. Knowing your co-workers, management and reporting lines are all key to understanding who is handling records.

A. Find Out Where and Who – Organization and Authority:

Common Forms of State and Local Government

Council-Manager form—where the Council hires the Manager. The Council has the policy, ordinance and appropriations authority; while the Manager acts as head of administrative operations. This form is used by both cities (villages, townships) and counties (also called commissions, aldermen, freeholders, parishes).

Mayor-Council form –where the Mayor is appointed by the Council (primarily a ceremony representative of the city), while the Council is elected and has both the administrative and policy authority; used primarily by large cities.

Who has decision-making authority related to the Records Management (RM) program?

Are you that person? If so, to whom do you report?

Is the decision-maker your supervisor, or is there someone in between you?

- If you do not report directly to the decision-maker, can you meet with him or her directly, or do you have to relay information and questions through your supervisor or another manager?
- Where in the agency is the RM Program leadership located?
- Is it the primary RM office, or a subdivision of a larger program?
- Is there a RM panel, advisory committee or working group planned or in existence?
- What authority does this group have to define RM policy and procedures?
- Has this authority been published – in a memo or a manual, for example?

If no panel exists, consider forming such a group. It can be a strong resource for both information gathering and distribution of new or revised policy and procedures. This is especially true when such a group includes managers.

B. How Internal Relationships May Impact RM Program Success

Relationships within your agency can ease RM Program startup/maintenance. Be sensitive to the differences between working with elected, appointed and hired personnel. If the records management function is positioned within the office of an appointed official, such as a mayor, challenges related to the turnover of the appointed mayor will be a factor in success of a RM program. If the program is positioned within an elected official's office, as with some city or county clerks, the RM role may be a mandated responsibility impacted by the election cycle.

In response to the importance of public records management, some agencies have established hired RM positions that report to the clerks or city managers, thereby stabilizing the effort to maintain public files and records.

C. Networking and Teambuilding

Become familiar with your agency's structure and the formal authority assigned to specific positions. Find out the limits of your own authority, too. Finally, get to know those staff who have "institutional" knowledge, whether they are file clerks or supervisors; these people will know who gets things done.

During the initial phase of an agency-wide records management program, make networking and teambuilding (sometimes called "coalition building") a part of everyday life of the RM Program. Start out by working with section secretaries, staff assistants and mid-level supervisors, for example. This has often produced significant results, especially in the determining "where the skeletons are hidden," those stashes of records that should be housed more centrally, or are well past their destruction date. Opportunities to combine networking with records management can come about indirectly.

By approaching facility operations personnel during an annual physical inventory and volunteering to help with the walkthrough, one records manager (one of your authors) was able to locate abandoned file cabinets that contained sensitive records. She assured facility operations staff that her office could remove these and other records found in the course of their work, relieving them of that responsibility. Ongoing calls to her office resulted from this approach, whenever "orphaned" records were found.

Such team building boosts your RM program.

Each contact is an occasion to share information about records. Explain to staff how they play a part in stewardship and program success—demonstrate that records management will make their work easier.

III. Five Critical Elements for Program Success (Activities)

Establishing a viable records management program in local government almost always is a daunting task. To have a successful records management program, five critical elements spell success.

1. Securing Executive Support

The first, most important element for program success is to develop and secure executive level support. The actual level, or position, of this person (or persons) must be identified as early as possible.

Find out the following:

- To what department will Records Management report?
- Who will make final decisions about policy, procedures and budget?
- Is this decision-maker in the same department where budget decisions are made?
- Is the decision-maker in your department?

Especially if you are new to your agency, a review of its organization chart is always beneficial. If you just inherited records management duties, consider what you already know about your agency – who has official authority? Are there others who have influence that can help? These are often entirely different people.

Why does Executive Support matter to your success?

The decision-maker(s) must support the concept/execution of the records program. They are often the means for issuing updates to how records are managed. This manager or his/her supervisor may present your justification for the changes, improvements or expenses of instituting a RIM program to other managers and to staff.

This is not one-time outreach — maintain the support of this decision-maker across time — you can expect to go back to this person numerous times. Be prepared to explain the program repeatedly, due to change-over of management at that level. Without continuing management support your program will not grow and deal successfully with the constant organizational and technology changes that face public agencies today.

2. Communicate, Communicate, Communicate

The second key element is establishing and maintaining communications throughout your agency. Communication is key to RM program success. Some form of constant communication with managers, staff, stakeholders (other agencies, divisions), is necessary to succeed. Too many times, programs fail because there are misunderstandings and misinformation about the purpose of the program, what it is intended to accomplish and what impacts can be expected. These communications need to be meaningful, ongoing and two-way—not just issuing directives, but encouraging participation.

When communicating records management concepts, be aware that many terms have different meanings to different people.

Ex: While "file" may mean a paper folder with paper inside to some, from an IT perspective a file is a term for a single unit of electronic information saved in a computer systems using a specific software, with "folders" being the term for the locations used to organize the individual e-documents within a computer hard drive or network.

Why communicate? Why encourage feedback? Involving the people who will be using your services, whether internal or external, will help gain needed support for your program. By seeking their input, asking what services they need and how they would like to meet those needs, you create a forum for their participation in a program that they helped define, thus ensuring greater buy-in and support as policies/procedures are articulated.

A Cautionary Tale from Wiio's (Satirical) Laws of Communication

If a message can be interpreted in several ways, it will be interpreted in a manner that maximizes the damage.

"This Murphyistic remark is a warning about the very real possibility that ambiguities will be resolved in just the way you did not mean. … this does not mean the worst misunderstanding you can imagine; rather, something worse -- an interpretation you could not have imagined when you formulated your message."

3. Involve End Users/Internal Clients

Undoubtedly any agency has a wide range of stakeholders and clients whose records need managing. Consider their diverse needs as the program is developing—all agency divisions should be involved: legal, finance, human resources, facilities and technology. It would be difficult imagining how a RM program can address electronic requests for records without involving your agency legal and IT departments.

Communication Formats

How best involve stakeholders? What forms of communication should start a successful program? Which will be most effective depends on agency size and mission. If you are a city water department, with fewer than 100 staff, for example, your approach can differ substantially from someone tasked with starting a records program for an entire municipality of 30,000 people. Consider how other initiatives have been started in your agency. What worked, what did not?

Common communication approaches include meetings with your supervisor and/or the decision-maker (if they are different people), followed by issuance of a memo to all personnel briefly announcing (and endorsing!) the start of a program. Then, hold a series of face-to-face sessions with other supervisors to start the communication ball rolling. Be respectful of staff time, but be persistent, until all offices have been contacted. Don't be afraid to tailor the message to your audience—secretaries have different concerns from firemen, HR staff interests vary from IT. Consider circulating a one-page survey then share the results. For larger agencies, think about meeting with high-level administrative staff and have them brief their managers, with plans to answer questions in writing. Open communications will develop support for planning, as agency needs are identified.

4. Proceed by Stages/The Action Plan

Not all communication will be verbal or face-to-face. People take in information in many ways; talk to some folks and give reading materials to others. After the initial contacts, respond to common questions that will emerge. Expect to repeat this process as the program progresses. Use meetings, flyers, memos, and web pages. Next, write an Action Plan. This is a major communication device; many action plans include a communications plan. During the development of a RM Program, a shared action plan will assist in strengthening program support by senior management and users, and will provide all involved with a sense of direction.

The Action Plan

When developing the RM Program Action Plan, keep in mind that you will need to write it down, share it with others and follow it. This may seem like commonsense, however, many programs fail because of perceptions by stakeholders that they are being kept in the dark—their resistance can be the program's undoing.

Think of the Action Plan as the roadmap that stakeholders will follow, support and want to see implemented. Do not get too attached, however. Adjustments to the Plan will be necessary, due to unforeseen changes and the necessity to keep it current. Communicating needs for these changes and providing a rationale will show that you are still moving in the direction you are promoting, having sought their agreement and support.

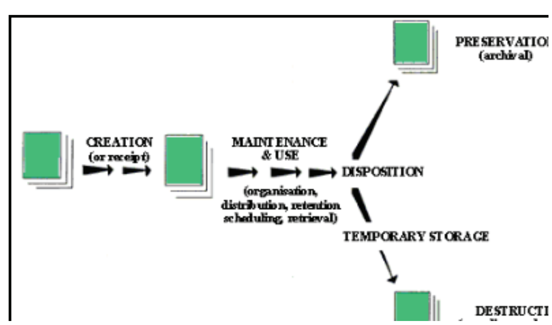
Even when setback occurs, like postponing a scheduled records destruction date because of a sudden cancellation by a shredding vendor, they are an opportunity to share program planning with stakeholders. Tell them what happened, then reschedule their service. Communicate.

5. Provide Training

A fifth critical element involves training necessary for successful implementation of your program. Whether the program leads to new file folder labeling, or a new type of software implementation to assist in management of electronic records created by your local government, training will assure that staff/managers can successfully work with change.

Develop training in new tools/processes. Some considerations:

- Training should be geared to each user when practical (managers don't typically want the level of detail that support-staff need).
- Offer various formats of training to meet user needs –manuals, web-based tutorials, classroom briefings.
- If a small agency, a more direct approach may be fine initially. However, people need reminders/refreshers—something in writing can be distributed repeatedly.



IV. Roadmap for Success (Resources)

1. Five Active Elements – Things You Need

Establishing successful programs within public agencies, large or small, involves gathering resources. In Section III, five critical activities were described: Securing Executive Support, Communicating, Involving Stakeholders, Sharing an Action Plan, and Providing Training. This section presents resources needed to initiate or support those activities: Policies, Procedures, Tools, Technology, and Organizational Knowledge.

A. Policies

Your agency initiated a RM Program. You secured executive support and developed the beginnings of an Action plan. Now a Records Management Policy is needed. No "one size fits all" for policies, but there are common elements.

First Step—Get to know the legal environment of your agency, its legal role(s) and mission.

Many states' law or code specifies how records shall be maintained. Others have broad or vague rules. Understanding these rules will apprise how strictly they guide policies for your agency's RM program.

Many municipalities (in their charters) have committed to maintain sufficient documentation of operations, in order to provide legislators with data on expenditures and programmatic progress across time—this means record-keeping.

Examples:

A county department that receives licenses or permits operates under a county regulation that says what sort of information must be recorded each time a license is issued.

Sales taxes are taken in by businesses and then paid into various agencies, state, local and county—records required for these transactions are often spelled out in state law.

By reviewing types of records your agency is required by law to create, accept and maintain, you will discover:

- whether a higher authority already directs how long to keep a record (and what information it includes) and
- "who said so" so that you can reference them as a source.

Second Step—To whom will the RM Policy apply?

During the meetings necessary to acquire executive support, you perhaps were told who should participate in the agency's RM Program. If not, then ask—you will use this answer when asked this question repeatedly by staff who resist a program—"who says so?" Ideally, the policy will apply to all personnel equally.

Third Step—Write the Policy

Include in the body of the policy:

- who has to do what and when;
- what authority is the basis of the policy (law, code, ordinance)
- the effective date of the policy;
- people or contacts to address questions or concerns.

> "A POLICY is a predetermined course of action established as a guide toward accepted business strategies and objectives" whereas
>
> "A PROCEDURE is a method by which a policy can be accomplished; it provides the instructions necessary to carryout a policy statement".
>
> Each procedure has an action, decision, or repetitive step. Additionally, there is always a starting point (initial conditions) and an ending point (goal).

Resource Tip:

Try an internet search for another agency like yours and see if they have a policy in place that you can use for a template. Also, check out their procedures, handbooks and forms. Reach out to that records management operation – they are likely to be flattered to hear from you.

Remember that many others have covered the "getting started" phase of a RM Program before you.

B. Procedures

Procedures are the directions and explanations necessary to apply the policies agreed upon by your organization. While many agencies establish both policies and procedures within the same document, be sure to provide detailed descriptions of the actions and expectations for the handling of records.

In the procedures include:

- definitions of records in terms of the rules or regulations that apply to the work of your agency;
- describe the general characteristics of a final file, or set of documents needed to document the activities of your agency;
- designate storage methods for records during their lifecycle;
- indicate the preferred media or format for final versions of records;
- establish a file plan (file name styles, labeling for paper file folders, electronic file and folder names).

Process Tip:

Detailed instructions can be included in office-specific manuals, ex: drivers' license bureau files versus residential property tax files.

- list the steps to handle records across time;
- outline the steps for restricting a record/file if a legal hold becomes necessary;
- provide directions about storage location and supplies (boxes, CDs), and who to contact with questions.

One agency's records management procedure will not fit all others. For examples visit other states and agencies like yours by checking COSA's Resource Center.

Tools

Your records management program has, or will have, developed policies and procedures, such as file plans, retention and disposition schedules, as well as disaster plans, and a preservation plan for vital records (see the relevant Bulletins). All of these items can be considered tools for ensuring a successful program. These tools should be shared and maintained. Benefits of communicating about these tools and sharing them cannot be overemphasized.

Placing these policies and plans on an internal website is one excellent way of ensuring their availability to staff and stakeholders. Describing the purpose of these tools, alerting staff to their availability and providing links in your staff newsletters will encourage staff to take advantage of the information that you have created for them.

Other tools to consider include templates or forms for common records activities, such as retrieval requests, destruction approval, transfer forms and related samples for email and letters. It takes time to create and capture guidelines, but this is essential. In support of new recordkeeping roles, consider providing sample phrases for position descriptions—statements of duties relating to record keeping. Another tool could be a presentation to provide training in records management for in-house use.

Technology

Technology is another active element for records program success. This topic is explained below.

Organizational Knowledge

"Organizational Knowledge" is mentioned here to remind you to consider what you learn—about your agency, its layout and management—as you put together your tools for success. An inaccurate, or incomplete, understanding of your agency will make helping to manage its information extremely difficult and can make proposed solutions fail.

People Resources - Relationships You Need

Be aware that the Active Elements previously discussed are not stand-alone resources for the roadmap for success of a RM Program – people and relationships are the other essential components. While it is hard to generalize about the people assigned to work with records, there are common characteristics that draw them to this work (ex: county/city/

court clerks; registrars; assay loggers) and that give managers the notion that a particular staffer is "just perfect" to manage agency records.

Often those assigned RM responsibilities are appointed because they understand records, having spent hours and days in relative isolation keeping track of documents, files or data. From the record side of an agency, this can be a strength but it can also mean years of experience in the file room or in some other fairly isolated office where the new records manager had more contact with the public than with the people in their own agency.

What does this mean for the success of the RM Program? It means there are a few more resources that need to be gathered.

Understand Records Management's Situation Within Your Agency

At the start of this bulletin we discussed the need to acquire management buy-in in order to establish a RM Program. As part of the Roadmap Resources, take time to determine just where in the agency the RM Program will be operating:

- what is your manager's or approving official's perception of the reporting line for records policy decisions;
- where does RM Program funding come from; and
- who may be opposed to the program and the changes that are likely to result.

Discover Key Personnel (Don't Plan to Work Alone)

Find out which senior staff or the most active participants in the RM Program are/will be. They are the personnel whose help you need. They are most likely the:

- Records creators (license bureau, permits office, payroll, people who write letters, send official notices, who issue titles, accept tax payments)
- IT and Computing staff (network technicians, webmaster, Chief Technology Officer or Chief Information Officer – may be IT Director in smaller agencies, IT liaisons in offices/divisions)
- Budget Officer or Chief Financial Officer, head of accounting and departmental accounting/financial technicians, Grants officer, Acquisitions or Contracting Officer
- Physical Plant or Building Manager (these folks have keys to the closets and cabinets)
- Security, General Counsel and Human Resources

C. Reach Out to Key Personnel

Good relationships with the people noted above will play an important role in the RM Program's success. You will need to be honest, as mentioned in the communications section, with yourself, your manager(s) and with key personnel if you expect to have their cooperation. Bear in mind that your responsibilities for records is not their primary task. Each of us has been asked to "do more with less" in recent years, so be sensitive to demands already placed on the people you approach.

Consider contacting Key Personnel (refer to the Action Plan) in the order of their importance. Discuss the Key Personnel and the fact that you want to contact them in advance with your supervisor. Depending on their management style, they may feel that they should be the one making the first contacts instead of you. Do not assume that your decision-maker/supervisor lacks confidence in you.

If this proves to be the case, ask if you can attend the first meeting with them so that you can be introduced, or if they can mention you as wanting a second meeting. These introductions can be very effective. They establish the support of your manager in the minds of the Key Personnel, the importance of the program and place you firmly in their minds as a person they will be hearing more from in the future.

Schedule time to meet these people (you need to build relationships). It is better to make first contacts (especially if you don't have a manager's introduction) by phone, if not in person, rather than in writing. It is a common observation that an email or memo is too easily ignored or overlooked due to other priorities.

If Key Personnel cancel or otherwise do not cooperate with your requests to meet, be sure to ask why. People want to know you appreciate their importance to the agency—by asking "why" you demonstrate that you are aware of their work, as well as yours. "Is there a reason this is a bad time for us to meet? Are you on a deadline? Is someone from your office out on leave? Then let's try after they get back."

Be prepared to acknowledge their workload and issues, but also mention that you have deadlines, too. Make notes of calls /email, so that if you do not make headway, you can approach your boss with facts, not feelings, about your requests to meet.

- Send out broad distribution emails, flyers, FAQs (see the earlier Communications) in advance of meetings. Consider asking the people you are scheduled to meet if they would like to see a set of questions you'll be asking in advance, so they have a chance to think about them.
- Remember the RM Program is not your personal property, nor are the things you will ask about due to curiosity. Co-workers who have little or no experience in working directly with you may feel your questions about what they do, what information they gather, files they keep, are "none of your business."

Take this time to point out that the information you are gathering is for the agency, to help identify its problems and successes. Then explain a bit about records management. Consider having handouts that you've developed earlier, and assure them that they will have an opportunity to influence the direction of the RM Program by participating. Literally, the more you can identify for your Key Personnel how the program will benefit them if they will participate, the better.

Records Managers report many different experiences with this start-up phase of meeting their Key Personnel. One tells of her early days on the job and how she improved her success in dealing with agency staff. In order to establish which offices created which records, she met with division secretaries on an appointment basis.

She received a persistent response to the question "what records do you keep or create?"— it was "I don't have any records". "What?!" this records manager thought. As it turns out, these staffers didn't realize the significance of many of their documents – to them their files were all copies kept so they could do their work, they were not records.

Building on this understanding, the records manager changed her tack and began asking the secretaries if they could help her complete the agency's official set of records, since they were the ones who had the documentation. Eventually she added information to these sessions about records management best practices that the agency was instituting. By acknowledging the importance of the secretary's work, the records manager made them participants, while opening the doors to necessary fact-finding.

Meetings with agency managers or programmatic representatives leads to other tales, most often of their annoyance at being disturbed and sidelined onto details (like records management) of little value to their work. The common thread in success stories revolves around the records manager making an effort to pre-identify the specific kind of information needed (or action to be taken by) from a particular division head, manager or team leader.

If possible, ask for a meeting of related managers or representatives (ex: all of the IT section heads; all of the division accounting clerks) by approaching their supervisor(s).

The benefits of these joint meetings are:

- more effective use of their time and yours,
- a chance to promote the idea that records management practices apply to all personnel in their roles, and
- providing managers or representatives with an opportunity to discover they have common concerns while ensuring that no one person/office "gets a different answer."

These meetings are most appropriate for personnel who perform largely similar tasks in offices throughout an agency. This is especially true for agencies that have related functions in locations over a broad physical area, as with county extension offices, for example.

Such meetings are not a substitute for one-on-one or small office sessions for people who perform unique roles within an agency.

Remember that many of the people to whom you introduce records management concepts are likely used to doing their jobs in a certain way. Coming to them with new ideas and approaches to handling information and records can be, at the very least, unsettling, and at worst, outright threatening. It is essential to find ways to put co-workers at ease, when beginning to work with them regarding their records.

D. Fitting Technology into Agency Relationships (Everyone is not a Nerd)

The terms "technology" and "relationships" are not terms that most of us put together. However, information technology is too integrated into common agency operations now for anyone to consider public services without them. Since those of us who work for municipalities, counties, schools, and related public agencies must deal with technology at the same time that we do business with co-workers and the citizens we support, there is actually no reasonable way to separate ourselves from these machine-based tools.

By extension, this means records managers must find ways to relate to information technology in order to inform and guide our co-workers and managers.

If you do not feel confident in your understanding of computers, networked and free-standing, software and hardware (everything from monitors to printers), and interactive media such as the Internet, webpages and social media (personal data assistants, "Blackberries" and devices that permit text messaging), take the time to inform yourself. You may find enough detail to begin with by reading the other bulletins in this series. Discussions with your IT staff may work for you, as well.

Not everyone in your agency will need to know the details of how the computers and associated devices or software work in order to use them. But as the RM Program matures, be prepared to provide (or arrange for) briefings and FAQs about the systems in use (or coming soon), associated best practices and permitted uses, as well as how the various services of your agency fit into these technology resources.

Be certain to include contact information whenever releasing new or revised technology details.

3. Technology Resources – Information You Need

A. Background

Information technology is used by all forms of organizations, both public and private, to perform the business functions of those organizations. In the past, most local governments primarily created and used paper records; most agencies now employ a combination of paper/electronic records and associated systems to carry out their functions. This has resulted in the need for electronic tools to assist in the management of the information products (data, records) which agencies use. These systems range from desktop computers and scanners to networked servers with shared access capabilities. It is rare today for a public agency to utilize typewriters and copiers alone to take care of the daily business.

B. What's Available?

As the records manager for your organization you must understand types of technologies that help you successfully perform tasks. You require active support of the IT office, so cooperate with IT staff when determining the type of technology that best serves your organization. Having a good understanding of agency functionality will help ensure that systems and software support operations.

A constant stream of new information technology promises greater benefits to public and private organizations. Evaluating which ones to invest in can be overwhelming. Become aware of trends, such as "cloud computing," where software and e-record storage are both maintained on remotely managed servers accessed via the Internet.

Managing electronic information in the near future is essential. Social media products, such as wikis, Facebook, twitter and blogs, are increasingly being promoted (by their manufacturers) as resources for providing faster, more flexible access to information and records. Caution should be applied to decisions to invest meager funds into rapidly changing technology – unless your agency has a dedicated stream of money, like a filing fee, to pay for these innovations.

To inform yourself and IT personnel, refer to sound resources. For example, the National Archives is increasing its role in providing guidance to Federal agencies on how best to deal with new technologies and ensure proper management of records created with these new tools. Visit www.archives.gov and review the newest recommendations about electronic records management. Other bulletins in this series probe deeper into these technologies, providing many options for resources on software and systems.

While the task of organizing electronic records resembles its paper counterpart in certain respects—such as creating files or folders for the records of a particular activity—managing the electronic versions, or "e-records," can be daunting.

A few choices are essential to success with electronic tools:

- **File Plans**

  Paper file labeling is essential to organize records in that format; careful attention to electronic directory organization in a computer environment is also important. This involves central (led by records management) planning of file grouping, naming practices, and media labeling.

- **Use Common Software**

  Selection of common word processing, financial or spreadsheet applications can greatly improve records management success. It can also cut training, maintenance and upgrade costs if fewer types are employed.

- **Centralize Repositories (EDMS/ECM/RMA**

  Electronic Document Management Systems / Electronic Content Management/Records Management Applications)

Choose centralized electronic tools or computer systems that provide both "places" for e-records and data, as well as the means to organize, store and retrieve records.

C. Categories of E-Record Systems

Several categories of these electronic tools have evolved to deal with the increasing use of electronic methods for sharing information since the late 1980s.

Earliest electronic document management computer products organized, stored, retrieved, tracked, provided controlled access and managed electronic records. These *document management systems* by the early 1990s were termed *electronic document management systems* (EDMS).

Further software development in the late 1990s led to the reconceptualization and enhancement of the EDMS products to accommodate a greater variety of digital content such as web pages, blogs, wikis, video clips and audio clips. William Saffady has identified these expanded software products as *electronic content management* (ECM) or *content management systems* (CMS). The earlier document management functions, including digital imaging (scanning and OCR) and text retrieval, are now imbedded components of these more advanced systems.

Another category of computer software that organizes, stores and retrieves records is the *records management application* (RMA). The major difference between an ECM and an RMA is that RMA software provides records retention functionality. RMA software is designed to include tools used to identify records eligible for destruction in conformance with an organization's retention policies. These systems must be "taught" time frames, which, in most situations corresponds to an organization's file plan. This means that the RMA electronic repository is organized into folders based on a hierarchical folder/subfolder system. Refer to other IIMC Bulletins for reference to file plans.

Technology Review

Working with this broad understanding of records management technologies available in the marketplace, a few questions should be answered as early as possible in the process of starting your records program.

Process Tip:

Make a list by department or division of the software and computer systems (stand-alone or networked) in use, with the names of staff responsible for each.

First:

- What technology is currently used at your agency? Do these applications meet your needs?
- Are electronic and paper records managed by one or many systems?
- Who "owns" these systems? Individual departments or a central department?

Second :

- What types of records are currently being created, and with which systems or software? Examples:
- Are some documents created in word processing files, then printed to paper and finally scanned to pdf to combine them with other documents such as incoming letters or forms?
- Are budget spreadsheets created in one software package with payroll in a separate system?

Knowing what types of records are created, as well as what software/systems are required to create, store or retrieve them, will give you a foundation for understanding whether information technologies are duplicated, outdated or missing from the resources of your agency.

Technology Decisions

Decisions regarding technological solutions to managed public records should be based upon a few factors:

- The rules and codes that regulate your agency operations
- State mandates relative to computer systems that may be used by an agency. Some have defined the metadata to include when indexing specific classes of e-records, such as student academic, or birth records.
- The technology budget (if there is one).
- Additional funds, if available.
- What is the process for requesting and/or securing funds for the records program?
- Is additional funding possible for software purchases?
- Is staff available who can successfully install new equipment, systems and software? If you are a one-person shop, how can this be done? Consider hiring additional help (under contract) to ensure a successful implementation, so money for software or systems is well spent.
- Can the records program draw on IT staff to install and configure new technology?

4. Taking Action

Five critical activities are necessary. Follow the step by step roadmap for success. Additional resources in this or other bulletins address many issues you will face. These challenges may become opportunities for your agency.

Each organization has its own specific issues, but most issues can be handled with tools we have described. Emphasize the need to build a program around your specific agency. Have a solid understanding of your agency's role as well as the hierarchies that exist within the organization.

Networking with various internal groups can help develop and implement your records management action plan—these relationships will prove invaluable over time. Networking with other records managers in similar situations (or agencies) will add a valuable source of answers and support a RM program.

An important tool is record retention schedules. Other IIMC bulletins discuss these tools and their development. Applying these concepts can help an agency realize the full value of records management. This is a high priority when developing your records management action plan.

There are many details to ensure your agency's successful handling of records. Please share your successes (and challenges!) with NAGARA as we can continue to furnish positive information to our users.

V. Appendix

1. Resources

A. Websites

- ARMA International. www.arma.org
- Council of State Archivists – CoSA – http://www.statearchivists.org/index.htm
  There are a wide variety of resources available through this website, especially as a link to various state level records schedules for local government records at www.statearchivists.org/arc/states/res_sch_genlloc.htm
- International Institute of Municipal Clerks – IIMC – www.iimc.com
  For access to this bulletin and others in the series, as well as related resources.
- National Archives – www.archives.gov
  Visit our nation's archives website for information on best practices in records and archives administration. Resources abound but note that this site is updated often –use the search terms "records management" to find their latest location
- National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators – NAGARA www.nagara.org

B. Examples of City Code related to establishing Records Management Programs, Retention Schedule and related information management authority.

- **California, Monterey**
  "In order to manage our records in an efficient manner, streamline the paper flow, provide for document archiving, minimize the temporary storage constraints, and remain in compliance with the California Public Records Act, the City has implemented a Citywide Records Retention Schedule pursuant to Resolution No. 05-98 adopted by the City Council on June 21, 2005."

  "It is the policy of the City of Monterey to insure that its records are identified and protected as much as humanly possible from natural and man-made disasters. This policy applies to all employees who create, receive and maintain City records. The administrative procedures described below afford the City the most efficient and cost effective method for protecting City records and recovering records when disasters occur."
  www.monterey.org/en-us/departments/cityclerksoffice/recordsmanagementretentionschedule.aspx accessed 7/10/2012
- **Idaho, Boise**
  The authors provide this 6 page policy and regulation as one of many good examples of the authorization and role definitions referenced in this bulletin. Boise has a population just over 200,000 per the 2010 census. See City of Boise, Idaho, City Clerk webpage at www.cityofboise.org/Departments/City_Clerk/ and also www.cityofboise.org/cityclerk /060209/o-19-09.pdf accessed 7/10/2012

Section 1-23-01 DEFINITION OF CITY RECORDS

All papers, correspondence, memoranda, accounts, reports, maps, plans, photographs, sound and video recordings, files, microform, magnetic or paper tape, punched card, or other documents, regardless of physical form or characteristic, which have been or shall be created, received, filed, or recorded by any City office or department or its lawful successor, or officials thereof in pursuance of law or ordinance or in the conduct, transaction, or performance of any business, duty, or function of public business, whether or not confidential or restricted in use, are hereby declared to be records of the City of Boise City, and shall be created, maintained, and disposed of in accordance with the provisions of this ordinance or procedures authorized by it and in no other manner. Materials acquired solely for reference, exhibit, or display and stocks of publications shall not constitute records for purposes of this ordinance.

Section 1-23-02 CITY RECORDS DECLARED PUBLIC PROPERTY

All City records as defined in 1-23-01 of this Chapter, are hereby declared to be property of the City of Boise City. No City official or employee has, by virtue of his or her position, any personal or property right to such records even though he or she may have developed or compiled them. The unauthorized destruction, removal from files, or private use of such records is prohibited.

Section 1-23-03 POLICY

It is hereby declared to be the policy of the City of Boise City to provide for efficient, economical, and effective controls over the creation, distribution, organization, maintenance, use, and disposition of all City records through a comprehensive system of integrated procedures for the management of records from their creation to their ultimate disposition.

A. Periodically the City Clerk or their designee shall review or examine filing systems in each department/division, make transfers of records, arrange for disposition of outdated records and otherwise assist city officers in complying with the city records policy.

   (Ord. 5303, 04/ 09/1991)

B. Two copies of each final city report and study reproduced in Central Services is to be mailed to the Records Management Division for depositing at the City Record Center.

   (Ord. 5303, 04/09/1991)

Section 1-23-04 RECORDS MANAGEMENT DIVISION ESTABLISHED

There is hereby established a Records Management Division. The City Clerk is responsible for directing the Division and coordinating records management operations among the City departments.

Section 1-23-05 CITY CLERK'S DESIGNEE

The City Clerk shall name a designee, who shall administer the Records Management Division and shall be responsible for City-wide files management and the direction and control of the City's records disposition program.

Section 1-23-06 DUTIES OF CITY CLERK'S DESIGNEE

Section 1-23-07 RESPONSIBILITIES OF CITY DEPARTMENTS HEADS

All City department heads are responsible for the implementation and operation of effective file operations, records transfers and dispositions, and other activities in accordance with the provisions of this ordinance within their areas of responsibility. They shall designate records coordinators within their departments and provide the City Clerk's Designee the names of such designees.

Section 1-23-08 RESPONSIBILITIES OF RECORDS COORDINATORS

The records coordinator in each office and/or department is responsible for providing coordination between the City Clerk's Designee and personnel in his or her office to ensure compliance with the provisions of this Records Management ordinance. This responsibility shall include supervising the application of records schedules within the office or department.

Section 1-23-09 CITY OFFICES TO USE RECORDS SCHEDULES

All City departments shall adopt records retention and disposition schedules and destroy, transfer, or otherwise dispose of records in accordance with policies set forth by the records schedules.

C. **Examples of Public Agencies Approaching Records Management Program Development:**

- McLemore, Dustin Dru. A Model Records Management System for Texas Public Utilities: An Information Science Tool for Public Managers. An Applied Research Project. Submitted to the Department of Political Science, In Partial Fulfillment for the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Public Administration. 2008. San Marcos, TX: Texas State University.

  This thesis is a working model produced with the support of City of Austin, Texas and Austin Energy, a utility. It is overall one of the most coherent and objective analyses of the reasons for managing public information. It also clearly moves the reader through the logic and processes associated with agency assessment. NRW

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Sprehe, J. Timothy. “Business Matters: Exploring the Information Management Side of RIM,“ *Information Management Journal*, Vol. 42 (May/June 2008).

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New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers, 2008.

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One of a series of white papers on records management, especially e-records, to be found at
www.kahnconsultinginc.com/library-whitepapers-kahn-consulting.php

"The Electronic Discovery Reference Model (EDRM); How the Information Governance Reference Model (IGRM) Complements ARMA International's Generally Accepted Recordkeeping Principles (GARP®)."
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