

Records Management at the Movies

Rammell Consulting

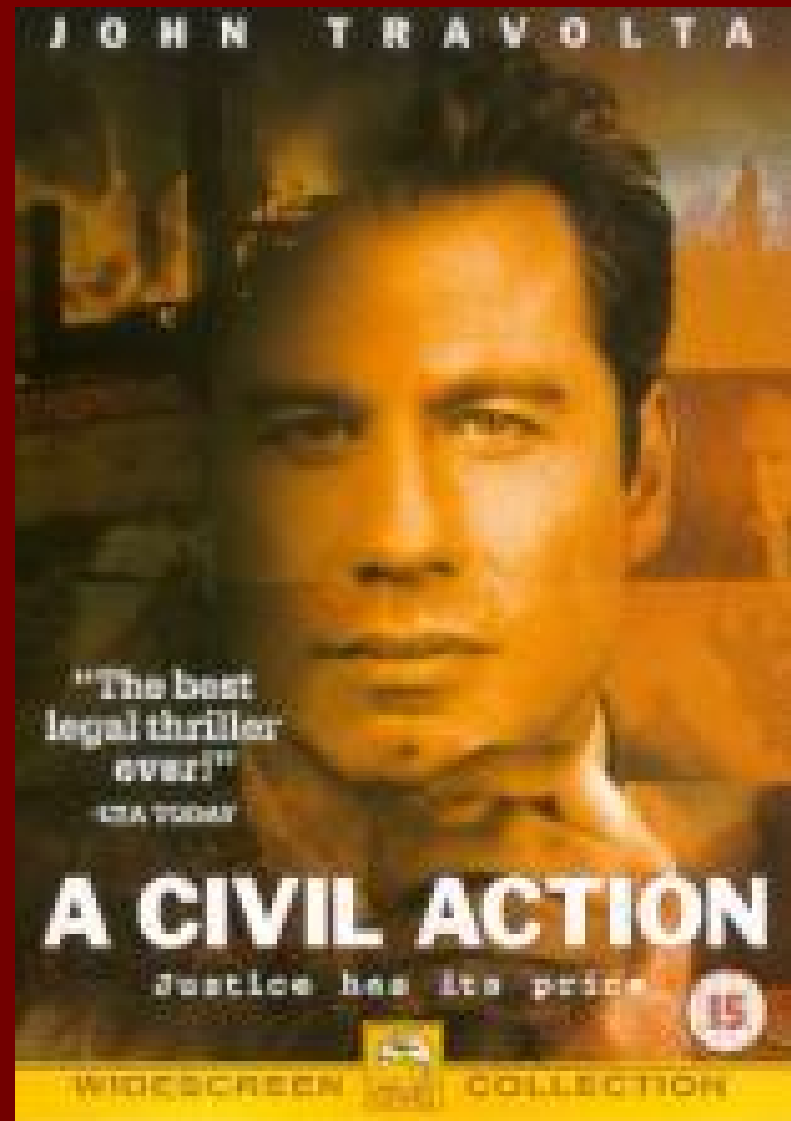
Organisational Effectiveness through
Records & Information Management

1984



The Orwellian classic

A Civil Action



The records from Travolta's case are handed over to the Environmental Protection Agency. A fork-lift moves records in a warehouse full of such documents.

A Few Good Men



The tower chiefs logs for Guantanamo Bay and Andrew Airforce base are used as evidence. These should log a flight that took place at a certain but Colonel Jessup somehow has them amended to save him from getting into trouble.

Alien 3



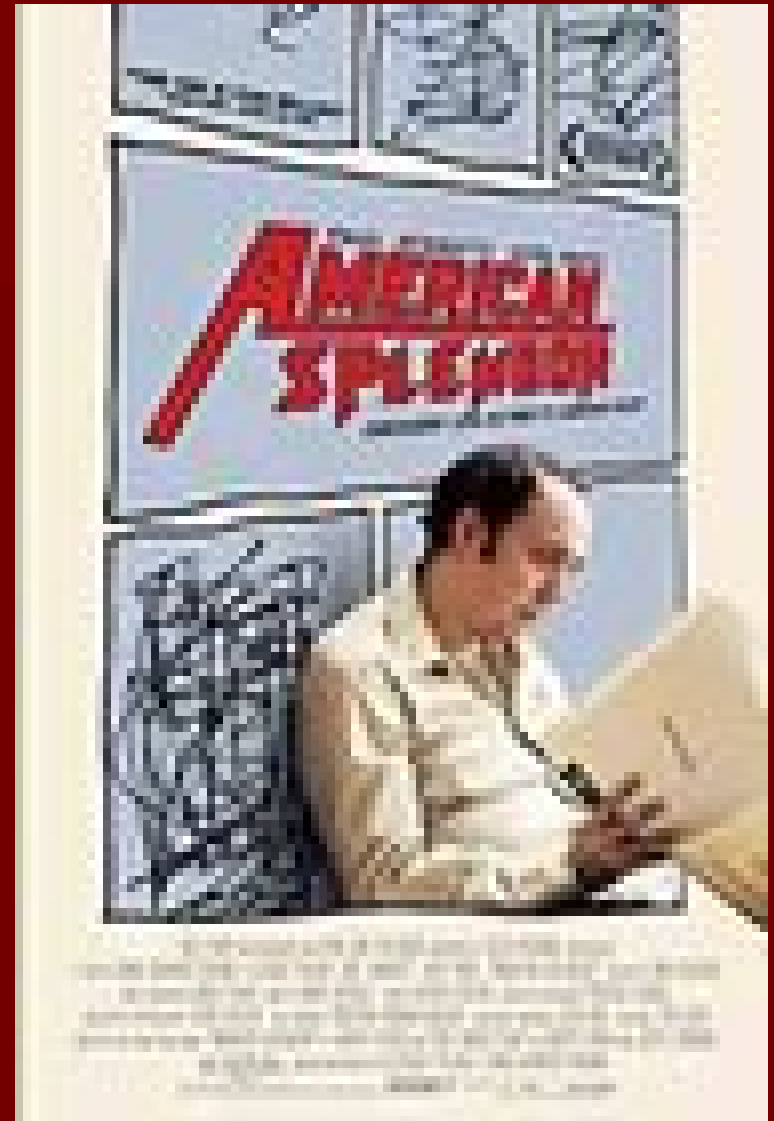
The plots centre around the mining company's secret defence contract agenda, which Ripley accesses electronically from the ship's records system. She also accesses the company personnel files.

All The President's Men



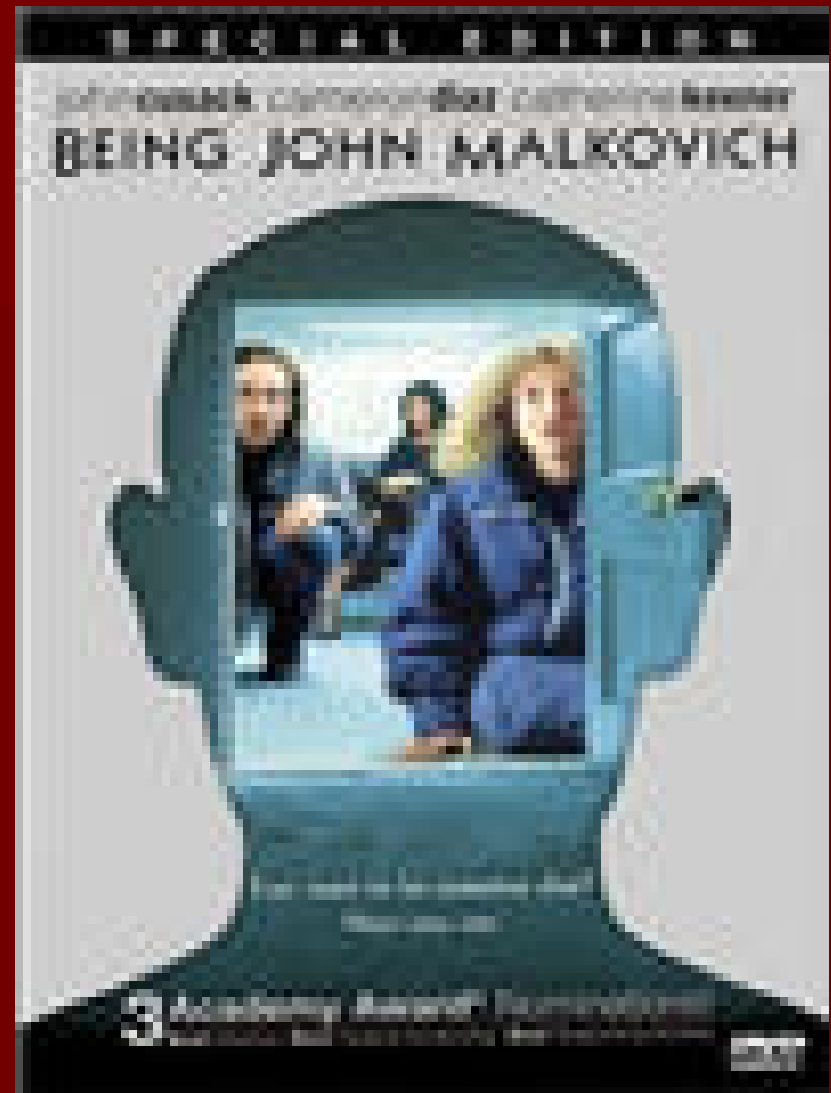
This film from 1976 stars Robert Redford and Dustin Hoffman, as reporters from the Washington Post who discover a link between the Whitehouse and the break-in at the Watergate building, leading to the downfall of Nixon. They investigate the destruction of official records being destroyed without authorisation to cover up the conspiracy. Cringe as Dustin Hoffman goes into a government record office and is brought some volumes by a very nerdy searchroom assistant. He then tears out the pages he needs as evidence, when the assistant isn't looking.

American Splendor



*The main character, Harvey Pekar, is a hospital Records Manager and part-time comic script writer. Many of the scenes are set in his *tidy* file room.*

Being John Malkovich



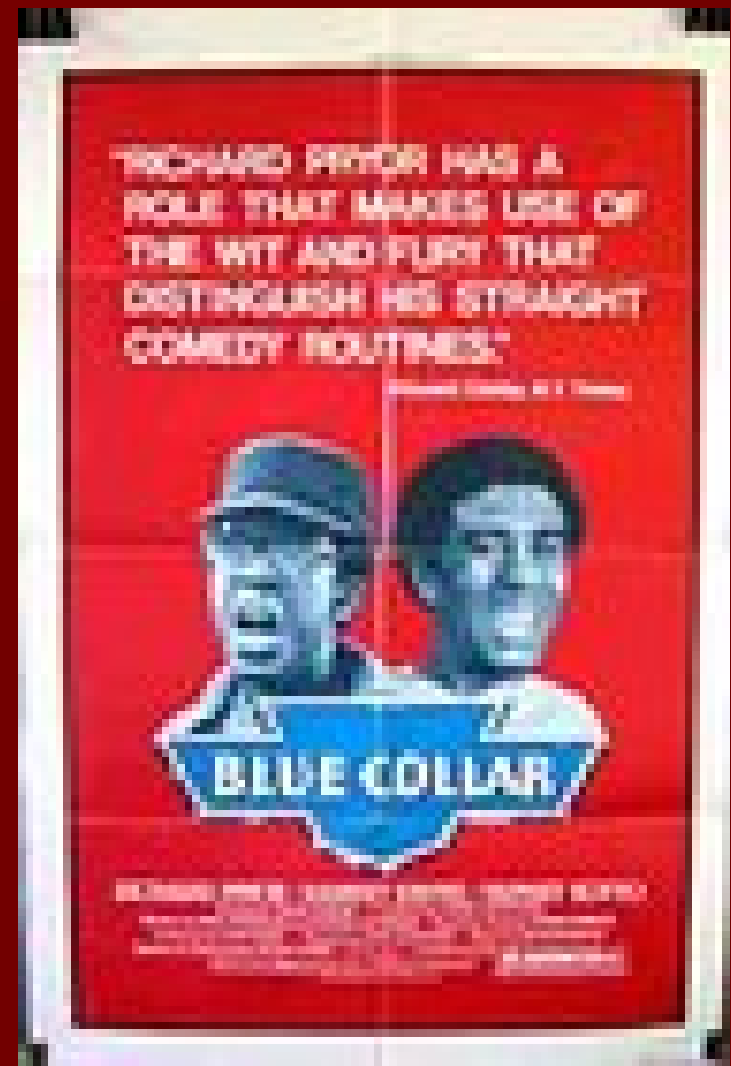
This included a records centre with an unusually low ceiling height (cheap rental value), where you could access the brain of JM via a portal hidden behind a filing cabinet.

Bladerunner



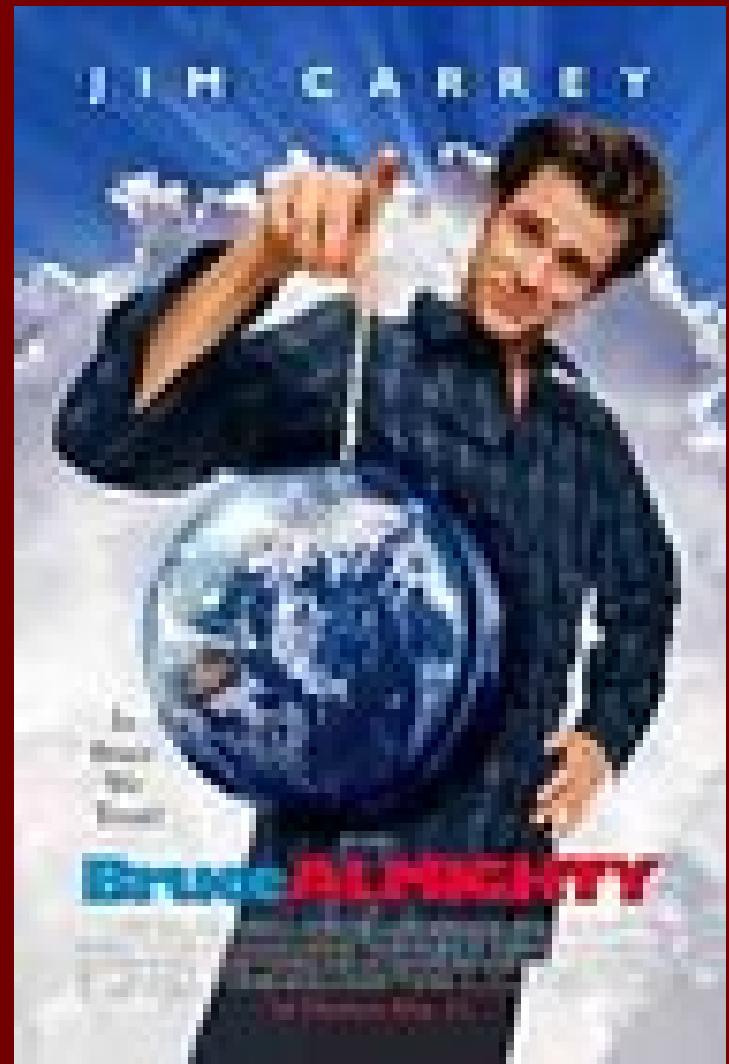
Are we human because we keep records? Will we have biometric records to prove that we are human?

Blue Collar



Paul Shrader's film where factory workers Harvey Keitel, Yaphet Koto and Richard Pryor raid their trade union office for money and find records relating to the unions involvement with the mafia.

Bruce Almighty



Jim Carey demonstrates just how much you can fit into a filing cabinet. He also has a records problem in managing prayer requests. The prayers have built up and he needs a system to manage them. First he tries stick-it notes, then filing cabinets, and finally opts for an email system on a computer called Yahweh.

Carlton Brown of the FO



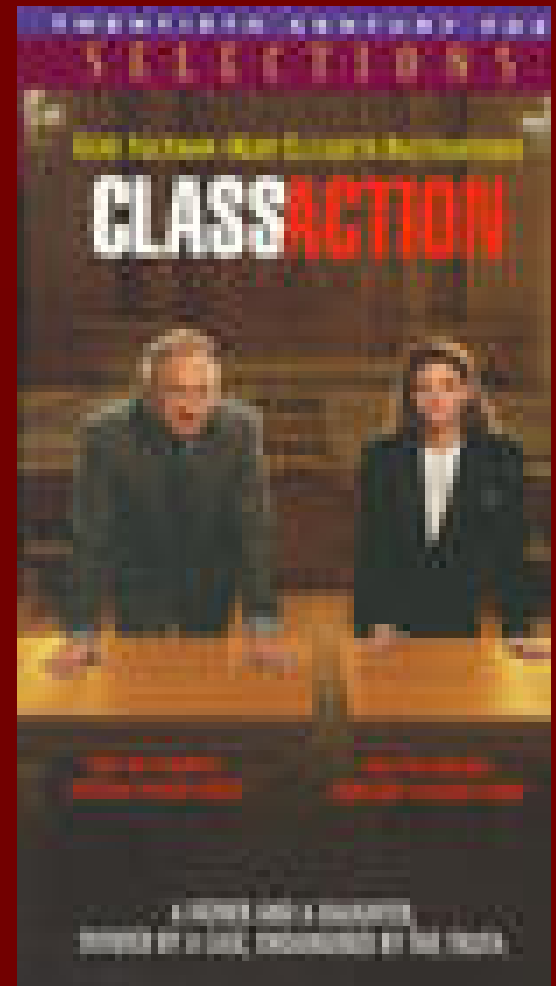
Classic 1950's comedy featuring Terry Thomas and Peter Sellers. The Foreign Office receives a letter from a colony they had completely forgotten about and have to ring down to Archives to retrieve its papers. The Archives/RM unit consists of cobweb encrusted cupboards with mice (located in, you guessed it, the basement) looked after by an ancient, shuffling records manager/Archivist - how not to keep your semi-current records!

Chinatown



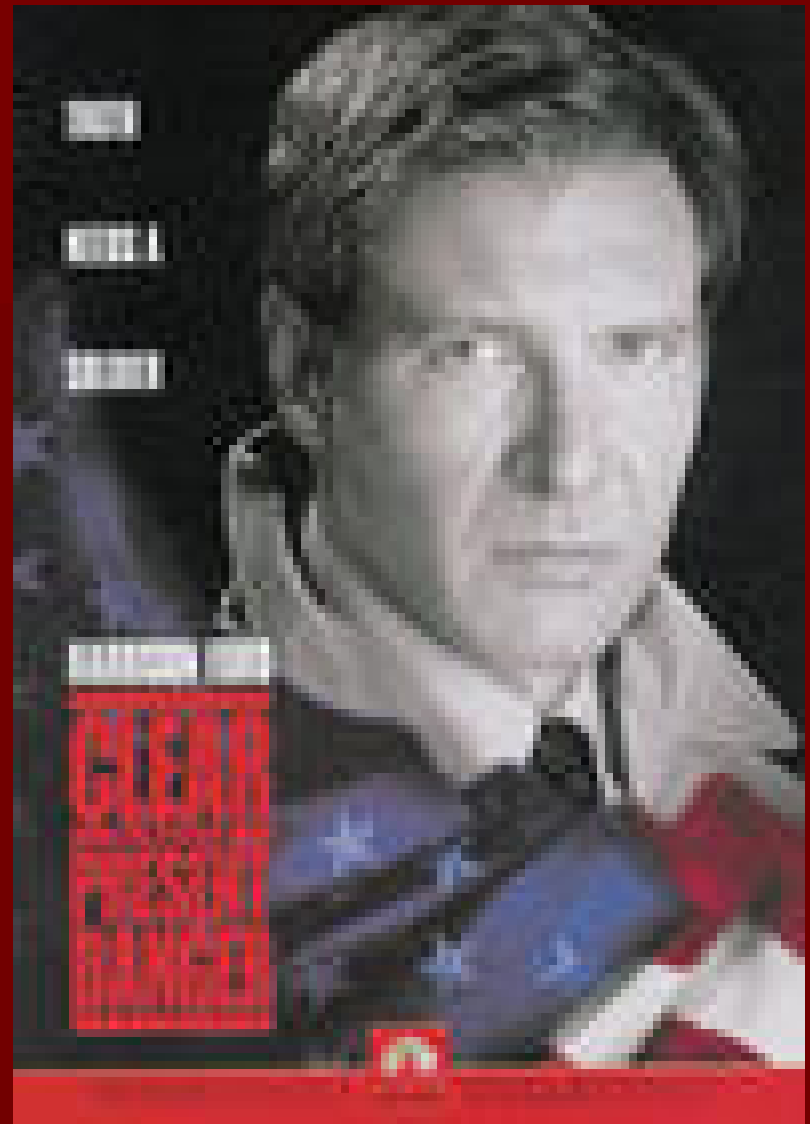
Jack Nicholson goes to the records office, borrows a ruler from the records clerk, and tears off a property deed while the clerk is not looking.

Class Action



This 1990 movie class features Gene Hackman. The film centres around evidence for a court case against a motor firm. Many scenes in a Record Centre & lots of records being dumped on solicitors to mask "the truth"! It includes a strong document production/litigation theme with tons of Iron Mountain boxes and the line by an elderly witness who said that he didn't have the document -- to get it you have to go to the mountain -- Iron Mountain!.

Clear and Present Danger



Demonstrates the difference between computerized research into records versus paper records and how a destruction schedule is not always respected.

Cold Case



TV series pulling out old case files and not using "Out Cards"!

Desk Set



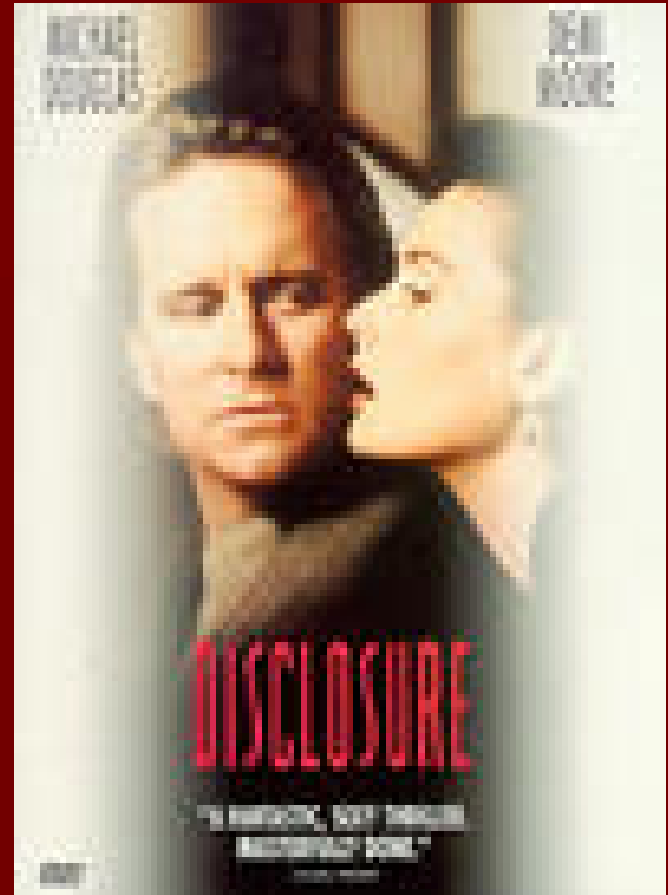
Two extremely strong personalities, Spencer Tracy and Katharine Hepburn, clash over the computerization of a TV network's research department.

Die Hard 2



Bruce Willis is looking for the plans for the airport cable raceways to get under the runway and he encounters the "file room" with the drawings in rolls "filed" in garbage cans...

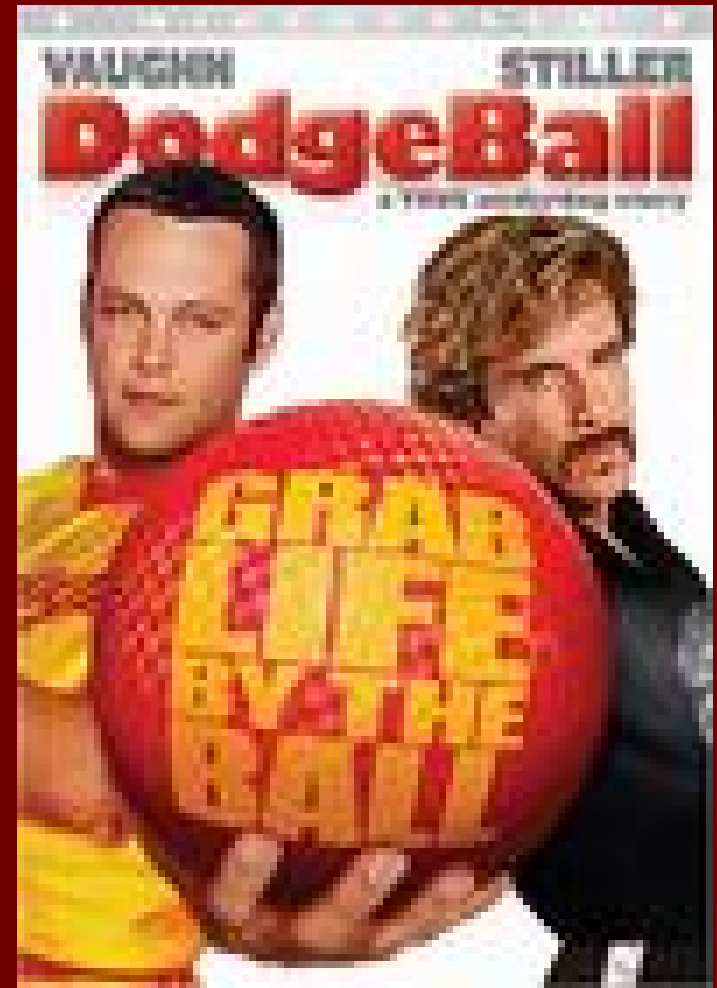
Disclosure



The film version of Michael Crichton's novel in which the electronic records of the computer company in which the action is set are visualised in their experimental virtual reality environment as a series of folders in vertical filing cabinets, the drawers of which are marked with topic labels and open on voice command. When the hero (Michael Douglas) enters the virtual reality space looking for 'files' he watches them physically disappear as the evil hard woman who is trying to destroy his career (Demi Moore) sits at her computer in real time and deletes them. He is able to recover the crucial deleted e-mails and other documents he needs by having them faxed to him by the recipient in the firm's Asian manufacturing plant.

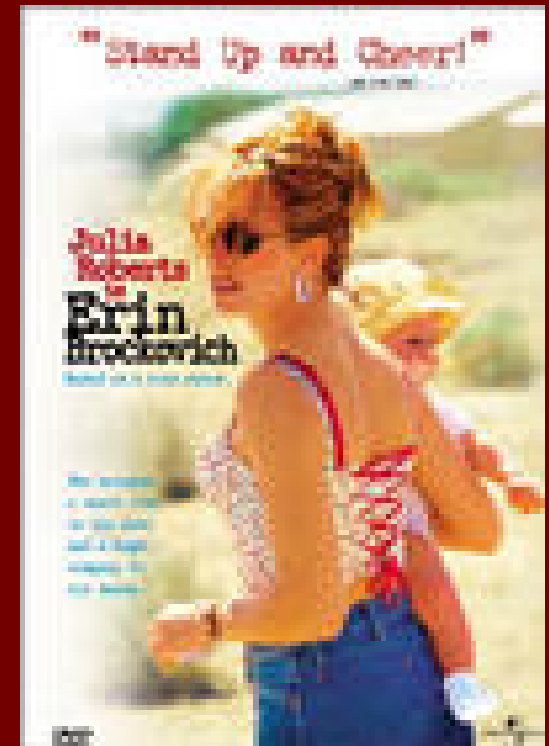
This gives him a hardcopy product and by passes the firm's e-mail system from which he has been maliciously excluded.

Dodge Ball



A brief mention of Freedom of Information

Erin Brokovich



The story is littered with references to the use and abuse of records (and very disorganised file rooms). and provides a very useful (negative) illustration of the issues around disclosure and retrieval of relevant records.

Enemy of the State



This film featuring Gene Hackman and Denzil Washington included the capture of a murder scene on a video used to record bird activity - demonstrating that over the lifecycle of the record, the content may have more value than that of original intent! Stolen identities and lots of Data Protection type issues - a good illustration of how records can be manipulated.

Enigma



Record access issues and secrets abound.

Fahrenheit 451



A bookless society where all books are burned (451°F being the temperature at which they catch fire)

Fatherland



Old Nazi records are key to the story.

Fellowship of the Ring



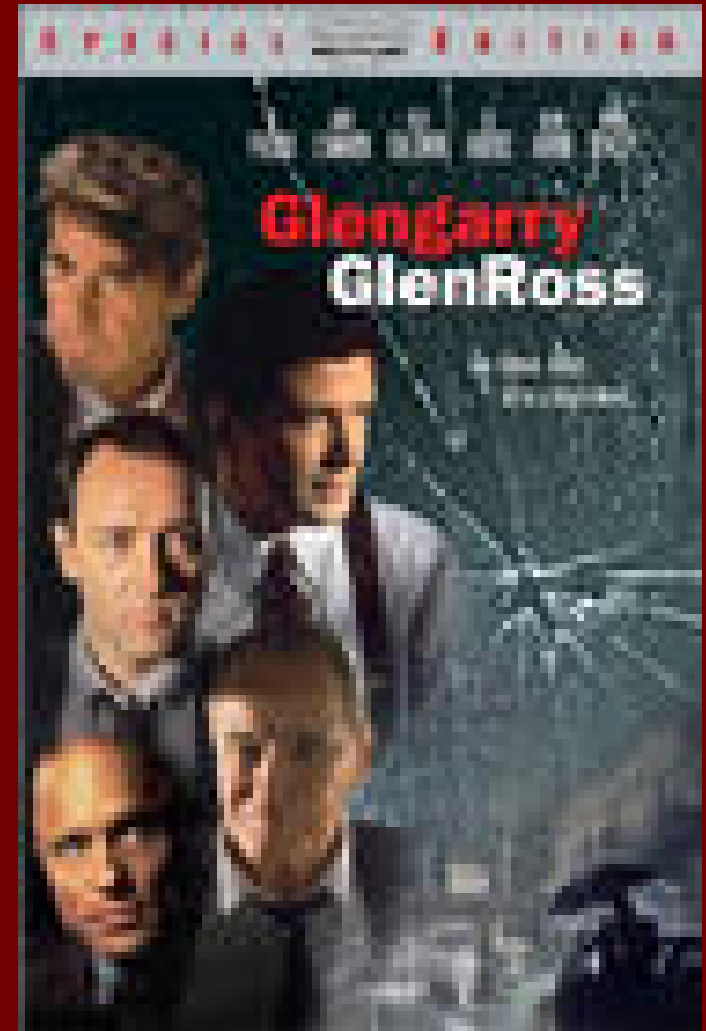
Gandalf goes to search some old documents in the Minas Tirith archives, where he sits in a gloomy, dank room (a basement probably!), surrounded by piles of dust and thousands of lit candles.

Goldeneye



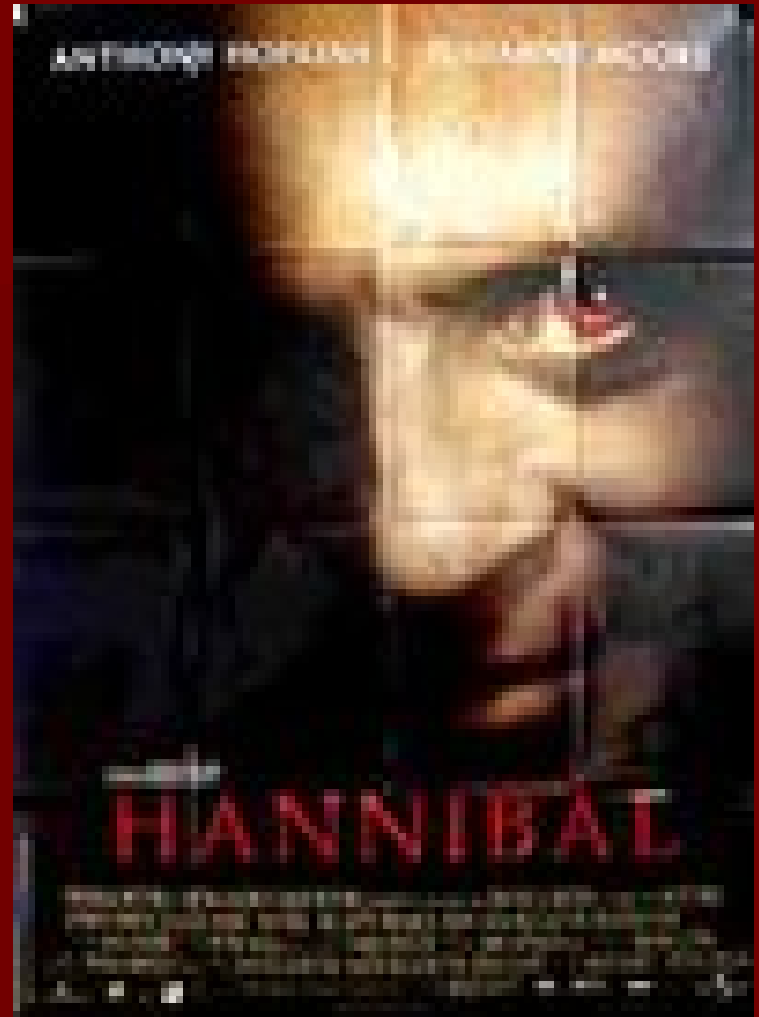
James Bond runs amok in a Russian filing room and the unsecured shelves and their contents go flying in particularly spectacular fashion.

Glengarry Glen Ross



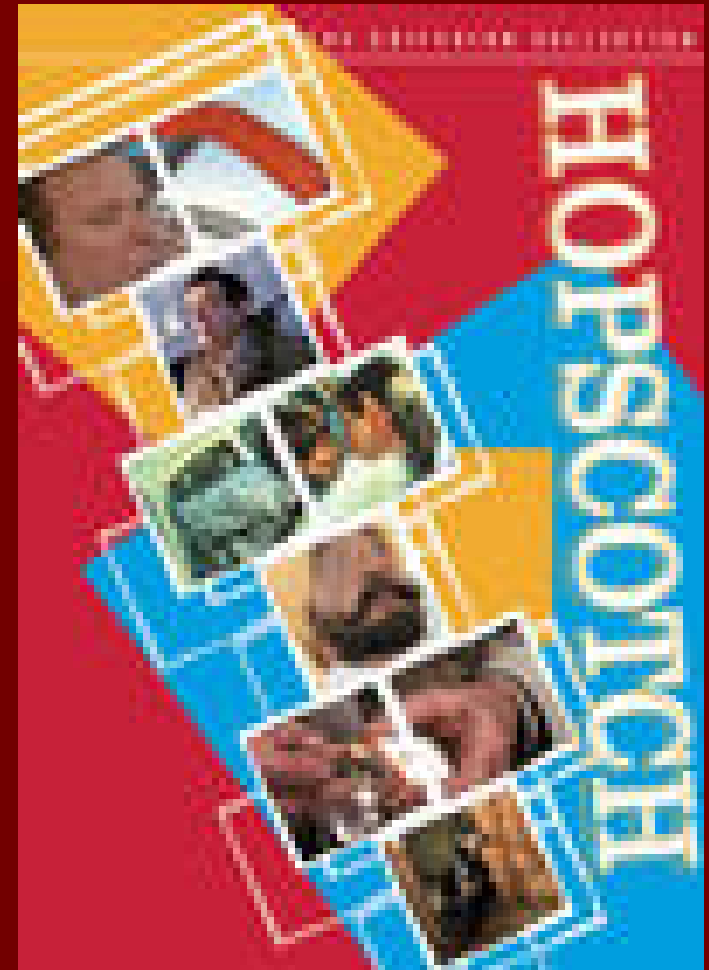
Having your records stolen by a member of your own workforce is quite a trying experience. The acting by Al Pacino, Jack Lemmon, Kevin Spacey and Alec Baldwin is a masterclass. You also get the atmosphere of a high tension office at work or ordinary people under extraordinary pressure.

Hannibal



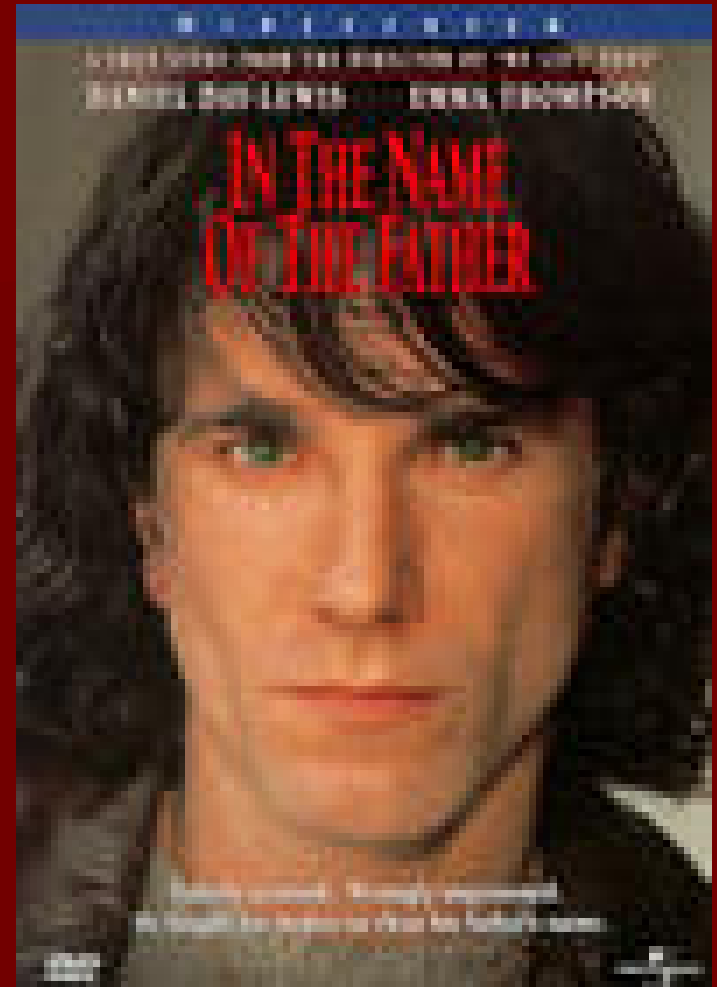
Patients files have been dumped in a filing cabinet in the old, abandoned hospital, providing Barney with an opportunity to sell Hannibal Lecter's medical files on the internet.

Hopscotch



Walter Matthau, a retiring CIA/FBI government agent, who successfully manages to shred his file while the records manager is distracted with talk of baseball. No formal tracking of files going out there either!

In The Name of The Father



A records clerk inadvertently gives the barrister (Emma Thomson) the wrong file, the one that reveals the suppression of evidence that resulted in a miscarriage of justice.

Insider



Russell Crowe walks out of his office with confidential information relating to the addictiveness of cigarettes. This story is loosely based on real events, but the film shows ordinary people working under extraordinary circumstances. The fax machine plays a vital role in this film as does email and the tension generated around waiting for information to come through is palpable.

LA Confidential



Russell Crowe and Guy Pearce destroy a records store by fighting after one of them has accessed some of the records. Guy Pearce also manages to find lots of information from files languishing in the basement.

Minority Report



A records management system of the future.

Napoleon



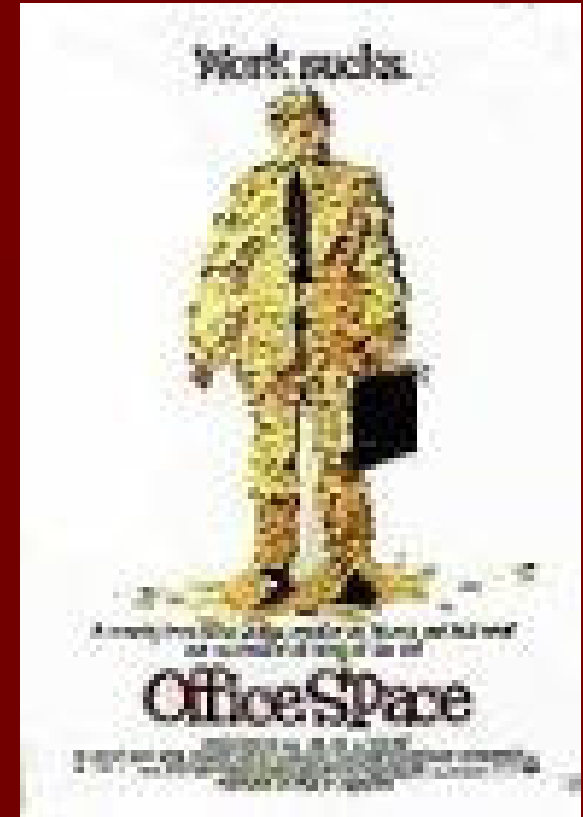
Kevin Brownlow's restoration of this silent film classic has a scene where the dramatic destruction of the state records is symbolic of the fall of the old regime.

National Treasure



Featuring the US National Archive and the Declaration of Independence.

Office Space



One of the minor characters is a records clerk responsible for collation and distribution of reports. During a reorganization, consultants discover that he was actually laid off, never told, and continued to be paid for 3 years.

Rather than inform the poor records clerk that he has been sacked, the consultants just remove him from the payroll. To add insult to injury, the records clerk's office is moved 3 times finally resulting in him being relocated to the basement with no lights & a can of bug spray to control the roaches.

One Foot in the Grave



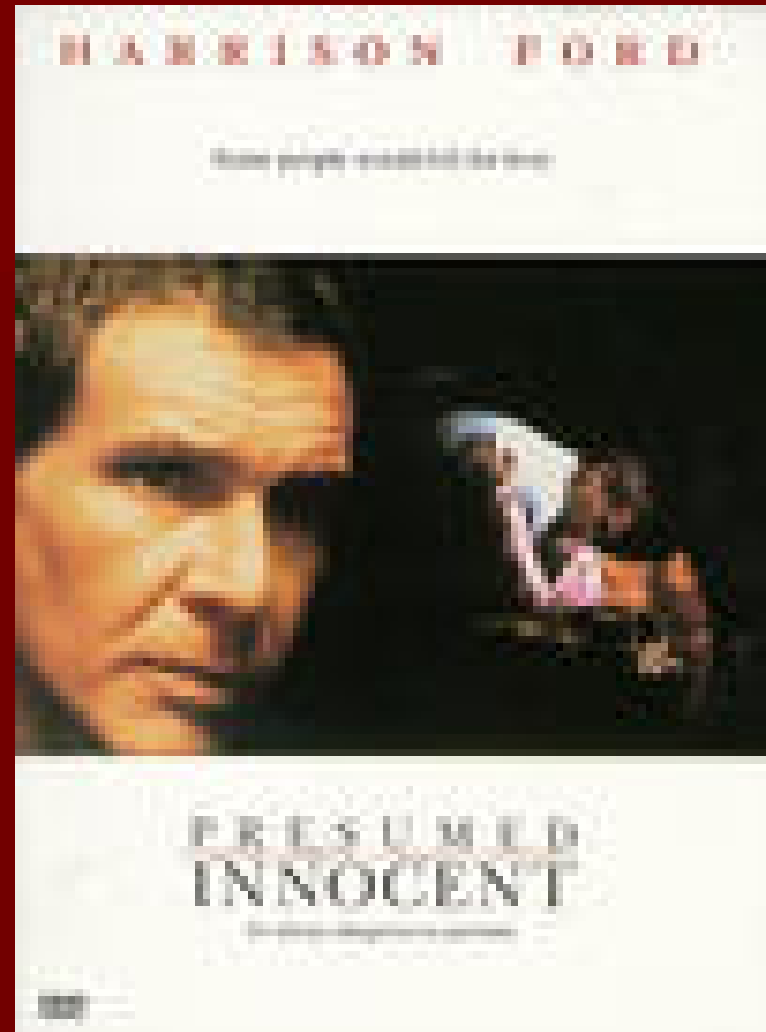
Classic British TV sitcom - Pippa sends Mr Meldrew a copy of Patrick's "Diary", instead of a copy of the letter to the "Dairy", revealing unfortunate confidential information and demonstrating the need for accurate data entry and security checks. In another episode, Victor fills out an order form incorrectly and ends up with 263 garden gnomes!

Passport to Pimlico



A deed (which has been misfiled and lost!) proves that Pimlico belongs to the Duke of Burgundy rather than to the British Crown.

Presumed Innocent



Harrison Ford plays an attorney accused of murdering a colleague and is seen packing files into an Iron Mountain box!

Serendipity



John Cusack traces Kate Beckinsale using the credit card records of a department store.

Spy Game



Robert Redford uses information systems, maps, press leaks, knowledge of records management, and amazing chutzpah to save Brad Pitt.

Star Wars Episode II – The Attack of the Clones



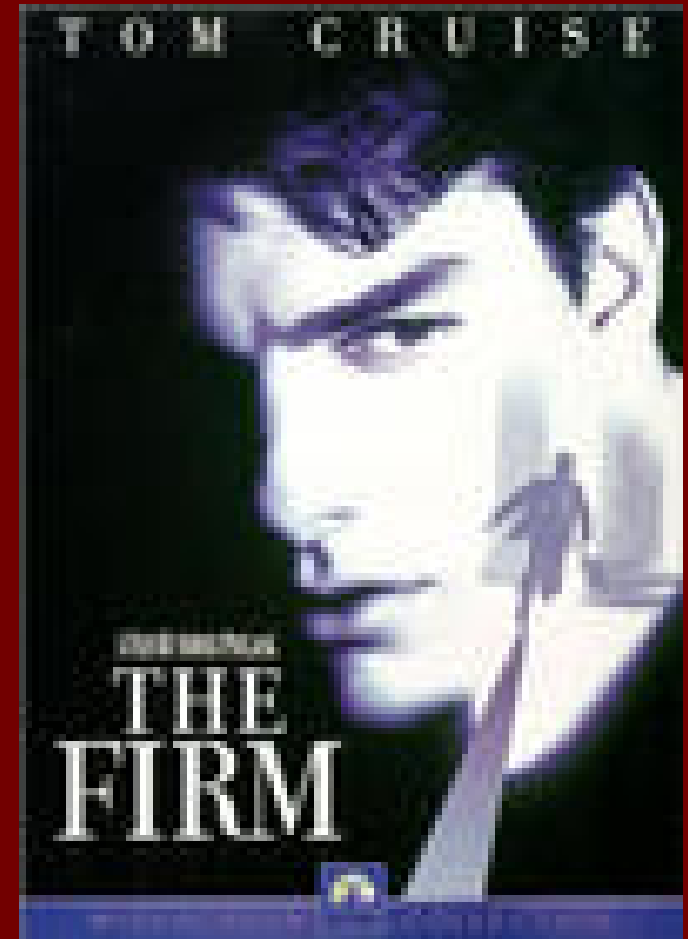
Obi Wan takes Luke Skywalker to try to find records of alien nations which have already been making clones. The lady archivist has sleek silver hair swept up into a bun and glasses on the end of her nose and is very wise and serene!. Obi Wan Kenobi looks at the Jedi Archives for a star system (Kamino) with no success and the archivist foolishly says to him something along the lines of "If the system is not in the archives, it does not exist". We all know that no records system is perfect! All the files were glowing electronic thing's on shelves going miles high up into the ceiling.

The Client



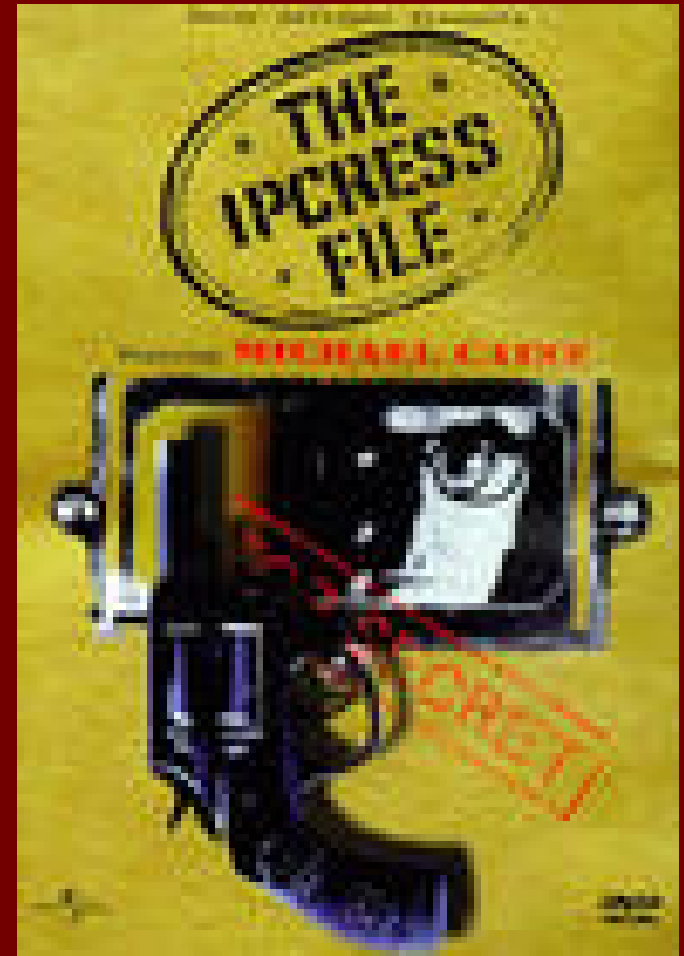
The John Grisham movie with Susan Sarandon, who accesses her personal records.

The Firm



*Tom Cruise gets the bad guy through his billing records.
Lots of lovely photocopying of documents in the
Caribbean that nails the baddies for money laundering.*

The Ipcress File



Michael Caine tracking down a missing scientist plus his file. Proper file keeping in this film with lots of grey metal filing cabinets regularly attended to by a chain smoking secretary.

The Package



Major Sergeant Gene Hackman has to visit his ex-wife Col. Joanna Cassidy who is in charge of military personnel records to track down the military files on Tommy Lee Jones whom he is chasing. The records management section is very clean and efficient (naturally!).

The Matrix (1, 2, and 3)



*Carrying information and records management issues to
the nth degree!*

The Rainmaker



Aside from the 'Stupid, Stupid, Stupid' letter, there is the missing annex from the claim handling file that requires the denying of all insurance claims.

The Pelican Brief



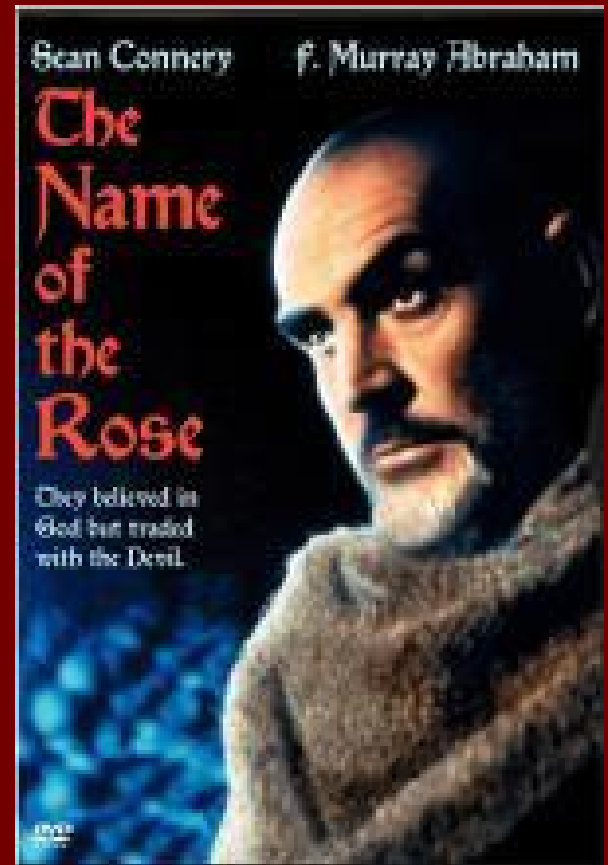
Considers what one can do with a little bit of research on Lexis Nexis™ and illustrates the dangers of allowing documents to fall into the hands of public officials.

The Ring



Noah Clay (Martin Henderson) gains access to a living person's medical files through deception.

The Name of the Rose



The library is arranged in such a way as to make it near impossible (unless you're the librarian) to get into, find your way around or any books or information that you might want, and then get out of it. The book's description of the library is somewhat better than that in the film that was made of the book, but even so, the film makes clear what a labyrinth it was.

Yes Minister



Various mentions in this classic British sitcom, for example episode 3.3 - The Skeleton in the Cupboard: The 30-year-rule is about to reveal the name of the young Civil Servant who made a complete mess of a defence contract.

For some reason Sir Humphrey seems nervous

With thanks and acknowledgements to members of the JISC-mail Records Management email forum:

| | | |
|---|-----------------|-------------------|
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