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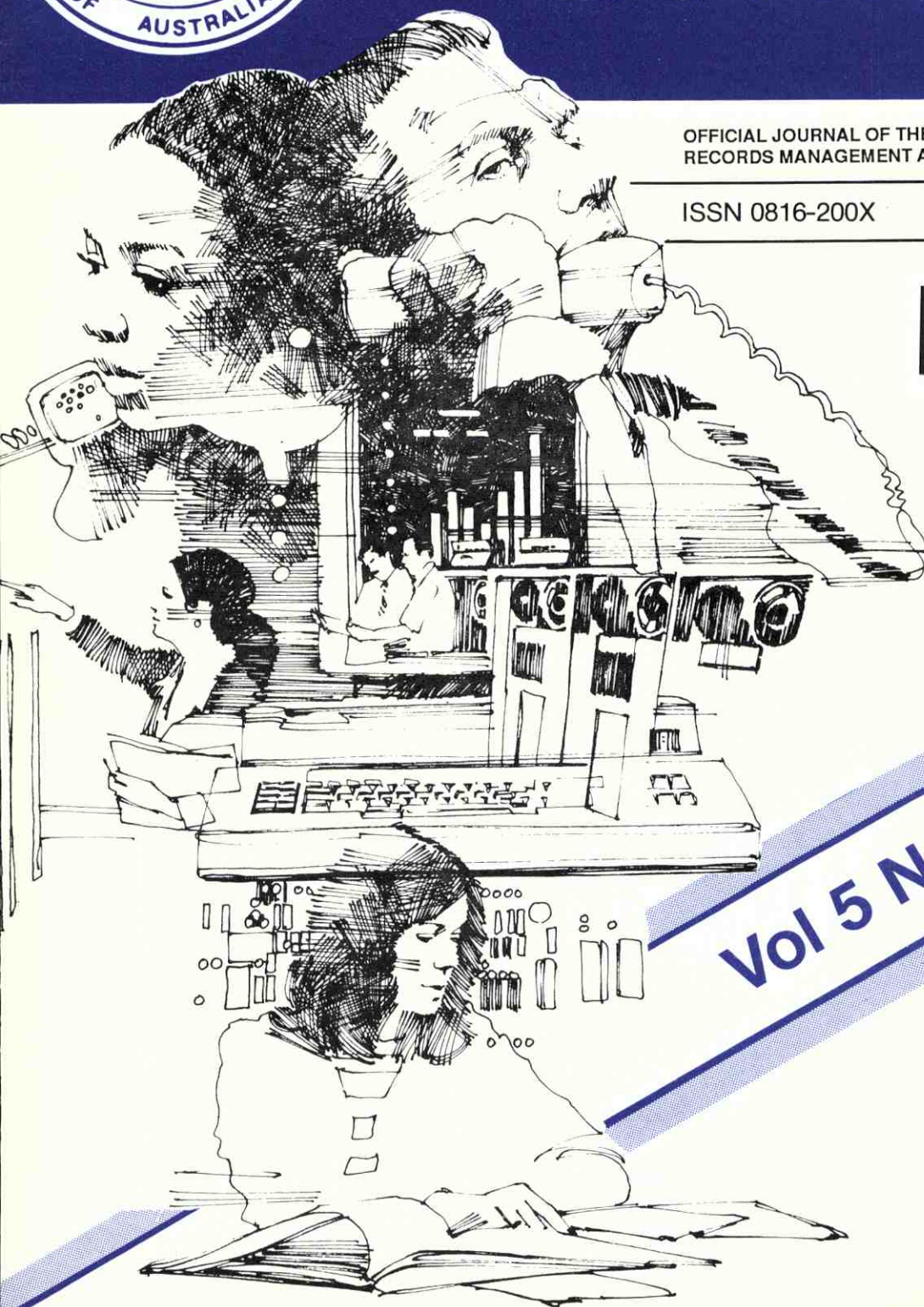
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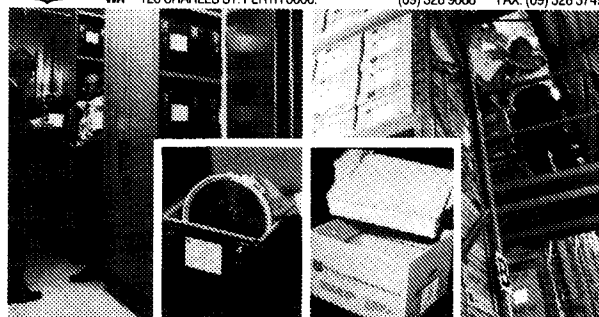
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THE NEXT EDITION OF **INFORMAA QUARTERLY** WILL BE PRODUCED BY THE VICTORIAN BRANCH.

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This **Informaa** has been divided, quite coincidentally into three distinct areas. There are a number of articles of a theoretical or speculative nature, designed to stimulate thought and provoke discussion. These appear under the heading of "Food For Thought".

"Technical Papers" contains commentaries of practicing Records Managers, relating their experiences in various areas. Papers of this kind are always well received, as it is in sharing our adventures and ordeals that our bank of knowledge grows and we draw strength from the achievements of our peers.

"Professional Reading" is headed by an excellent article by Joyce Kirk on the value of developing professional reading habits and is followed by three reviews; one of a new journal and the other two of new books in the field of information management.

Enjoy!

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EDITORIAL

The **Informaa Quarterly** runs into its sixth volume in 1990. It has appeared at regular intervals over five years, and has thereby reached a certain level of maturity as a periodical. Perhaps now is an opportune time to review the **Informaa Quarterly** as the public face of the R.M.A.A.

The Association too has matured as a professional organisation and it has continued to grow steadily since its beginnings in 1969. So another way of approaching a review of the **Informaa Quarterly** is to ask whether the periodical accurately reflects the objectives and concerns of the Association.

One of the ways of bringing a stronger identity to the **Quarterly** may be to establish editorial and production policies. The passing of these responsibilities around the State branches means that there is no consistent approach to editorial and production matters. It means too that forward planning for the **Quarterly** cannot occur. So themes cannot be developed for different issues, nor can issues which have links to National Conventions or State events.

Any review of the **Quarterly** should address the following questions:

- i is the time right for the appointment of a permanent editor of the **Quarterly**?
- ii is it also the right time for the appointment of a production manager?
- iii what should the **Quarterly** house style be?
- iv where do we want **Informaa Quarterly** to be in the year 2000?
- v how can we encourage the reporting of research in the **Quarterly**?
- vi does the **Quarterly** need an editorial board to select articles for publication?
- vii should we have a national newsletter as a companion volume to the **Informaa Quarterly**?
- viii should the Federal Council of the R.M.A.A. establish a Publications Board to oversee **Informaa Quarterly**, a national newsletter and conference and seminar papers.

It would be timely if the answers to these questions could begin to be discussed at the National Convention in Perth, or by response in the following issues of the **Quarterly**. The next edition is to be produced by Victoria in February.

It is in dialogue and discussion that we grow!

Editorial Committee

NSW BRANCH PRESIDENT'S INTRODUCTION

It is with pleasure that I introduce this edition of the **Informaa Quarterly**. The NSW Branch Editorial Committee has worked hard to produce a quarterly magazine for the Association based upon excellence; the editorial, you will note, poses many issues for consideration. Should the nature of this magazine/professional journal change??

Other articles include: Book Reviews, Bar-coding, Automation, a recommended professional reading programme and Disaster Recovery.

I am sure you will find this edition both enjoyable, informative as well as instructive.

FIONA E MEYER
President
NSW Branch
October, 1989

Volume 5 Number 4: Editorial Committee

Wendy Duggan	Pam Camden
Annthea Love	Joyce Kirk
Fiona Meyer	Mary Hooker
Anne Robinson	

Design & Layout:
Jenisis Design (02) 636 4376

Typesetting & Printing:
Graphitype Trade Printing Services,
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1988 Convention Papers

Papers from the 1988 Canberra convention are available from ACT RMAA.
Contact Kate McCarthy

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

Recently when seeking promotional material on the RMAA from our Branch Secretary I was told the "mini file" had superceded the published pamphlets and I was subsequently given a bundle of "mini files". My initial reaction was to think that it was nice to have a major vendor sponsoring the Association. Having handled the item and browsed through it I found myself becoming most concerned about a number of matters which I shall touch upon below. Before doing so I wish to state clearly that no criticism of Unifile is intended.

1. the "mini file" is bulky and when one's brief case is already bulging to the limits it is not easy to carry even 2 or 3 of them to have them available when the occasion to promote the association presents itself. Consultants and vendors play a prime role in promoting the association and bulky items will only discourage them from keeping promotional literature on hand.

2. the public tends to associate records management with paper shuffling and filing. We have done nothing to dispell this association by producing our promotional material in paper file format. We have locked ourselves into a form of technology in much the same way as we did with our logo which is supposed to represent two four drawer filing cabinets (now regarded as space inefficient) standing side by side.

3. the fact that records managers also must now, or should, address the management of non paper records tends to be implied rather than directly stated and it is only on the back cover of the "mini-file" that the RMAA definition of a record is given.

4. reference to correspondence control appears to have been taken from an American textbook and does not include its further development in Australia where it has to do with allocating and monitoring action response times and workflow routes.

5. the pages in the "mini-files" that I now have are somewhat irregular and there is not a neat edge to the file.

There is no doubt a role for the "mini-file" as a promotional item but I would like to see the Association maintain a professionally presented, comprehensive foldout brochure as its prime promotional publication.

Marita D. Hoo, MRMA.

Dear Mrs. Camden

RE: NOVEMBER INFORMAA

I recently received the June '89 INFORMAA and noted (yet again) that only a minority of the contributors gave information about their experience, qualifications, area of interest, etc.

For example, the reader knows little about Rosemary KACZYNSKI or D. SETO.

Accordingly, I urge the NSW Branch to include a synopsis covering the background, qualifications, etc. at the beginning of their individual articles.

I am sure you will agree that the National journal needs standards and not just in advertising!

Yours faithfully,

Kenneth J. Ridley ARMA August 20, 1989.

QUARTERLY INFORMAA National Advertising Manager

Mr. Bill Williams, Victoria Branch President, has been appointed National Advertising Manager for the Quarterly Informaa. All advertising will be arranged and co-ordinated by Mr. Williams. Companies and branches are asked to contact Mr. Williams on:

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TECHNOLOGY – MASTER OR SLAVE

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Hon Barry Jones M.P.
Minister for Science and Technology

*This paper consists of extracts from the Keynote Address given by Hon. Barry Jones at a Seminar entitled **Technology - Master or Slave?** held at the Holroyd Centre, in 1988. The Editorial Committee felt that the timeliness and relevance of Barry Jones' comments should be shared with the wider audience. Hence, we have decided to publish it in this edition of the **Informaa Quarterly**, as a lead in to the "Food for Thought" articles which follow. We hope you enjoy Mr. Jones' comments as much as those who attended the Seminar.*

Every great civilisation in the past contributed to the knowledge of mankind. Each stored and passed on their knowledge on some medium, from the baked clay and stone tablets of the Babylonians, to the papyrus rolls of the Egyptians to paper as we know it today from the Chinese. History will judge our Civilisation on our technical innovation in dealing with the recording of our knowledge for posterity.

The 'Electronic Revolution' has created both a problem and solution for information management. We have on the one hand an explosion of information and on the other a technological answer to the management of that information. The words from T.S. Eliot spring to mind

'Where is the Life we have lost in living?

Where is the wisdom we have lost in Knowledge?

Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?'

(Choruses from *The Rock*)

We cannot afford to lose the knowledge inherent in our information storage.

The formation and development of the Records Management Association of Australia (RMAA) in itself reflects the information industry's need to keep abreast of and address the dramatic issues which have confronted the industry since the Association was formed in 1969. The impact of technology in the fields of records and information management since 1969 has been remarkable. The changes which technology have imposed upon the industry together with the demands management has placed upon it has surpassed the ability of many to grasp the significance of what is happening. The image of the traditional filing clerk has changed dramatically.

The development and objectives of the RMAA are strongly linked to the strategy of maintaining a knowledge about information management at both a cultural and economic level. A major

element of that strategy is to improve significantly the knowledge of the people working in the field and to promote the principles and practices of records management.

The key to competitive success in the information economy is to work smarter, not just harder. The prime ingredients of labour, capital, technology and information resources must be acquired, used and effectively deployed. In the past, productivity improvement concentrated only on labour, capital and technology whereas today we must add an information based path to productivity improvement in order to remain competitive in national and international markets.

It is very evident that information management will have a profound effect on business. It must be understood however that this will develop over a period of time and will cause us to reappraise our understanding of management, competition and productivity.

Very few politicians and economists have devoted time and effort to the 'information explosion'. It is ignored in our parliaments while copper, coal, cars and cattle are directly represented in our cabinets, computers and communications generally are not, at least not at the highest levels. The Information Revolution is never raised as an election issue - but it has a unique capacity to change work, personal capacity, leisure and quality of life, far more than the staples we refer to constantly in political debate. Most of our leaders are distinctly uncomfortable with the Information Revolution and deal with it by ignorance, evasion and avoidance. In our political culture we are happier in dealing with issues of the past and most uncomfortable with the issues of tomorrow.

I believe you hold a vital key to the 'information explosion' as records managers. Samuel Johnson once said that 'Knowledge is of two kinds. We know a subject ourselves, or we know where we can find information upon it' (p.365, 18 April 1775).

At the risk of over simplifying, I believe that Records Management needs to be able to answer two basic questions in order to do its job properly. The first is 'What have we got on questions can be answered virtually immediately with 99% accuracy then the information needs of an organisation are met effectively.

This does beg the question of resources. Information management to achieve the above objective cannot demand unlimited resources. The use of technology does not necessarily make us more efficient. We have to rethink how we do our

job best and how the use of technology can assist. The evaluation process between use of human and machine resources needs to address not only speed but also such factors as repetitious, boring tasks. We must work smarter and make technology work for us. Record managers have to justify and compete on a corporate basis for resources from management. To prove the value and ability of accurate and timely information is the yard stick by which adequate resources will be allocated.

Some of the new advances in technology which are here will have a profound impact on the information revolution.

An iron law of computing says that no matter how much memory you have, its never enough. With the continuous development in chip technology and ever descending costs the 1 megabyte chip is now a reality which means that future memory will not only be abundant, it will also be a great deal more affordable.

The other law of computing is the one which says that your disks are never big enough. The first floppy disks accommodated about 100KB of data. Now they routinely hold 1.2MB and above.

An exciting new technology for increasing mass storage capacities is just now beginning to have an impact. It is based on the compact disks which hi-fi buffs use and it is called CD-ROM. A CD-ROM disk is essentially a compact disk on which data, programs or text has been pre-recorded and the contents read by a low powered laser.

Although this a read-only device, computer manufacturers, software houses and publishers are excited about the potential of CD-ROM technology. The reason is very simple, a single compact disk can hold up to 600MB of data. Early applications are already out in the form of encyclopedias and other reference works. But the potential is limitless.

Also making its presence felt - though at a considerably higher price - are read write-laser disks WORM (Write Once Read Many). These systems should be of enormous benefit to records management systems both now and in the foreseeable future. Imagine the ability to store 210 000 A4 pages of data on one 12 inch optical disk. This technology will have a profound impact on archives, Registers such as Births, Deaths and Marriages and Motor Vehicles, etc. No longer do we need to talk of kilometer shelving for paper file storage with its associated problems of paper decay, pest investment and fire hazards. The ability of large mainframe computers to do free text searching using the newer 4th generation database languages coupled with laser disks means that huge amounts of information can be interrogated rapidly and in search parameters determined by the user.

Trevor Barr in his book *The Electronic Estate* puts

it aptly:

"The development of the information society has been technologically driven, with concentration heavily on the means and techniques of distribution of ever-increasing quantities of information. New technologies ought to be means to ends, and the ends need to be debated and understood before we embark on change". In the information economy, there needs to be a premium placed on managing information and not just automating information. If we have perhaps learned one lesson during the early phases of our usage of computers it is that the automation of information was a mixed blessing that could be compared with the introduction of copying machines. Where the technical ability exists to copy everything and anything, the use of judgment in deciding what needs to be copied and why it needs to be copied becomes critical.

Similarly, as records managers you need to examine the ability to handle more effectively the large volumes of information which is thrust upon business in the information economy.

Record managers will not succeed just on their ability to gather and store large amounts of information. That is the first step in the building block. Rather, the accurate and timely delivery of that information will be the greatest challenge.

Whilst the technology has played the trigger role in dealing with the information challenge, it is people who are involved. People make the decisions about information input, output, etc. This 'soft' area, is far less quantifiable and identifiable than numbers of terminals and gigabytes of data. We tend to lose a sense of perspective when we deal with technology. It affects people.

Paul Strassman's *Information Payoff: The Transformation of Work in The Electronic Age* concludes:

"The payoff from the billions of dollars that have been invested in hardware and software, from the millions of electronic work-stations that will have been put into place by the end of the century, must come from people. The crucial decisions relate to organising, educating, training, designing, monitoring, measuring and thinking".

In this regard I believe that the RMAA has a vital and dynamic role to play in developing policies that create an environment in which the information explosion can be harnessed.

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"LOOK, DAD, OUR EDDIE IS THE ONLY ONE IN STEP"

A Personal Observation

J. Eddis Linton

Eddis Linton is a Fellow of Records Management Association of Australia, and also of The Australian Institute of Management and The Commercial Education Society of Australia. He is a CRM and an Associate of the Institute of Management Consultants in Australia. He is also a Life Member of the RMAA and one of its founders. These days he is a private consultant in RM.

I have just finished reading a very recent book titled RECORDS MANAGEMENT HANDBOOK (I). This has been written by two Americans and two Britishers, each of whom are members of the Institute of Certified Records Managers of the U.S.A. (CRM).

I found the experience interesting, informative and puzzling at the same time, because it has left me with the strange feeling that for the last thirty years I have been marching to the beat of a different drummer. I have been firmly convinced for all this time that the most important aspect of records is *information*, the placing into order for future retrieval of the stored communications of our fellow humans, that it is the *content* of records that is of paramount importance, not the containers and covers we keep them in.

As one who devotes all his time to classification and to ways to improve this process, I naturally, on receipt of a new book, go straight to the index to see what others have written about my personal obsession. (I hold an unshakable belief that in the office we will only achieve almost perfect retrieval if we all use a common standard language when describing or asking for documents containing information). So I went to the fairly comprehensive index in the back of the book. There were no entries under classification, indexing or thesauruses! Hence my personal puzzlement. Perhaps I and the many converts to my way of thinking have been wrong all along. Perhaps what I call records management in Australia means something entirely different in England or the U.S.A. They used to call me John the Baptist in Melbourne because for years I was a lone voice crying in a wilderness of Confusion, but these days in this country I feel I have many peers who think the same way as I.

Perhaps this is an isolated instance, I thought, so I went to several other books in my personal library. At least two of these have been used as texts for our courses. Here I think I got to the root of the problem. It is one of the lack of a common terminology throughout our discipline 'Classification' seems to have a different meaning in different places. In the American books it is certainly synonymous with what I call sequencing, hence we see headings such as 'alphabetic

classification', 'geographical classification' and 'numeric classification'. Their concept also seems to include the methods of referencing for retrieval.

Classification to me is a mental process. It means setting up classes of information. Many of these classes are common to most organisations, many are discrete to one industry or even one organisation, but wherever they are found their meanings must be clearly defined as to their boundaries, with a listing of the concepts included within each one and equally importantly, of the concepts that are excluded from each class in our system. The tool that helps us achieve this mental sieving of our thinking we call a thesaurus. Nowhere in the literature I examined is there any mention of such a mental discipline.

In addition, I believe we must also use this tool, where appropriate, to set standard choices for each descriptor attached to the name of a class to form a file title, so that a file title becomes a string of indexing terms that will help us to retrieve the file we seek. The puzzling thing about this is that if it works so well in practice it is totally ignored in all the books.

Professor Cherry during a visit to Sydney from London in the sixties remarked that peoples' ideas are like railway lines set in concrete, and that although two tracks can get close together, they rarely merge. Perhaps we do not question sufficiently our present ideas and why we accept everything that is written in a book, especially when it is set as a text for a course. In this respect, our educators have a grave responsibility to see that outmoded thinking is not perpetuated. We, as individuals must make sure that we do not allow our own ideas to become set in concrete.

One of the problems we face in universal adoption of any software package, simply because some supplier has called it a records management program, is that it may not contain or even ignore some of the basic precepts of our discipline. Such packages should not be chosen on the basis of price, strong advertising, and persuasive salesmanship. We must know who designed the package and their qualifications for doing this. Records management is far too important to be left in the hands of facile programmers without any real records management experience. The records software of the Brisbane City Council works so well because a first-class records manager with many year's experience was responsible for its specifications.

I would like to see much more debate on this question of classification and the use of a thesaurus versus alphabetical arrangements, still so common in our midst. Should we accept such comments as that by Maedke *et al* in their book

'Information and Records Management' (2) "The subject classification system is difficult to develop and administer, and therefore can be very costly, time consuming, and a source of constant criticism." (p.118). Surely any student reading this will be prejudiced against any classified system, yet we have used this book in our TAFE courses.

What is overlooked by such writers is that arranging customer files in alphabetical sequence is NOT classification but sequencing. The class of information is 'customers' an easily recognisable group of records that we can identify.

Each time I read the sections of these books which cover the organisation of information, I feel as though I am visiting Luna Park again and jumping on the merry-go-round, but Luna Park has been closed down for ages.

In my own group of peers, I will continue to march to the drummer who gives me satisfaction,

secure in my conviction that what I do works in practice. Let others march with the goose step, or in slow time if they wish. The important thing is that our Association stands up to be counted and specifies acceptable principles on which software should be based, otherwise we will cease to have much relevance in the regulation of our discipline's technology, leaving it, by default, to either the computer programmers or the librarians to decide our future directions.

Above everything else in our Association, education must be our main objective. We must make sure that we have an input into all courses and that that input expresses the technological philosophy of our organisation.

(1) Penn, Ira *et al.* RECORDS MANAGEMENT HANDBOOK. 1989. Gower Publishing Company Ltd. Aldershot. England.
(2) Maedke *et al.* INFORMATION AND RECORDS MANAGEMENT. 1981 2nd Ed. Glencoe Publishing Co. Inc. Encino. CA.

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TECHNOLOGY - WHO'S LEADING WHOM?

Wendy Duggan ARMA

Wendy Duggan is a senior consultant with Records Archives and Information Management Pty. Ltd. Wendy has spent in excess of ten years in the information delivery industry, principally in the area of Local Government. Her special interests lie in the area of systems design and training in records management. Wendy has been involved in the RMAA in New South Wales for the past five years, and is at present Vice President of the Branch Council, and Chairperson of the Status and Standards Committee (NSW), Education Committee (NSW), and the Editorial Committee, *Informaa Quarterly*.

For many years and for a variety of reasons, practitioners of record management could not gain access to computers to manage their collections. Suddenly an identifiable market was perceived and there was a rush to computerise. Now there is a multitude of RM packages available, but none, it seems, could be classed as the definitive package. Why has the market developed this way? How much responsibility should we as an industry accept for this situation? Will this change and if so how?

This paper poses more questions than it answers. In fact, there may not be any answers at this point in time. It is however, time we contemplated the development of automation in our industry and analysed the trends to date. From this introspection, we may be able to chart a more positive path to progress in the future.

For much of the last two decades the processes involved in records management were performed manually. As the growth of paper records continued unabated, Records Sections struggled to keep abreast of the workload. Some records personnel perceived that automation of many of the processes would not only allow faster processing but give them better control of their systems and allow them to offer enhanced information delivery services. It sounds simple doesn't it? Let's write a programme!

However, this awakening to the potential of automation occurred at the peak of the rule of the technocrat. Large Data Processing Sections had sprung up to tend the great mysterious beast, the corporate mainframe. The rituals which were necessary to sustain and exercise the beast (all performed in a strange dialect) added to the mystique surrounding Data Processing. At that stage the technocrats decided what would and would not be automated. For an application to run on "their" computer it had to be high profile and capable of impressing management with their indispensability. It is no surprise that no one wanted to know about 'filing'. No one could

perceive an identifiable market, so each application was seen in isolation and costed accordingly. To write a package from scratch for each application obviously involved much more development time than if a package could be written that would be suitable for more than one user, so spreading the development cost across all the potential users.

A few organisations did proceed to write their own software. Most of these applications used full text retrieval methods, with all its attendant expectations and uncertainties. At that time, failure to address all the complexities of full text retrieval had further frustrated reliable, complete retrieval of information. Management often confused the matter by believing that if all the text of documents was entered onto computer, then information would surely be easy to retrieve and lost files/documents would be a thing of the past. This approach tended to sidetrack the industry for quite some time, failing to identify the essential elements needed to control the records of the organisation. However, if this attitude allowed entry to automation, most RMs grabbed at it.

Another early approach (still used by many today) was to get a library package and adapt it. This 'tight shoe' approach satisfied some of the requirements of the records sections but failed to recognise the essential differences between records management and librarianship.

The advent of end-user computing power in the form of Personal Computers (PCs) radically changed the scene. Packages were developed to run on PCs or to be networked. These packages have been formulated in a more co-operative environment and it shows! Programmers have obviously begun to **ask** rather than tell. However, it appears that they struggle to determine exactly what is required to satisfy the Records Managers of today.

In this willing environment we still do not have a state of the art "off the shelf" package. Each package has its own strengths and weaknesses. One may be strong in language control but be poor in the archival area. This of course is very frustrating. It appears that if one of each package was acquired and by some magical process they could all be married together perfection may be reached.

This inconsistency can be attributed to a few factors.

Often a package is commissioned by and written for a specific organisation or industry and then marketed in that format.

We, as Records Managers, cannot agree and clearly define the basic principles underlying our particular discipline. Many programmers must have been confused by asking more than

one of us what are the essentials of records management. This has also bedeviled educators trying to formulate syllabi. $A = B$ but on the other hand it may $= C, D$ or X depending on whom you ask!

We (RMs) often have not decided exactly what it is that we want or what functions a program must perform. There can be a tendency to take a 'fairy godmother' attitude to technology, presenting a pumpkin and expecting a space shuttle without the necessary disciplinary input from us.

So, maybe quite a bit of this present situation is directly attributable to us. But before we plunge headlong into deep depression, let us analyse some of the factors which have contributed to our delinquency in this area.

ORGANISATIONAL POSITIONING.

In the past (and often still today) Records Managers have not been considered as true middle management. As a result, the necessary management training has not been offered, and participation in available courses has been denied. This lack of recognition has also blocked participation in internal middle management committees which further enforced the perception of the records manager as a line supervisor rather than a manager. The lack of middle management positioning in the organisation diminished our ability to negotiate for recognition and resources. Today this is changing rapidly, with the accompanying growth in confidence. We have taken training into our own hands. Essentially we had lacked the backing and determination to rise above the organisation's perception of where we belonged.

COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS.

Many Records Managers were unaware of and unskilled in communications skills - written, spoken and non-verbal. We were operators, too busy to write reports and play corporate games. This too is changing but perhaps not fast enough. Some Records Managers still cringe at the thought of having to write and present reports to management! This hesitancy and lack of confidence in our report writing skills often inhibited our ability to adequately document our specific requirements.

ANALYTICAL SKILLS.

Being immensely practical and generally too busy to do other than learn on the job, we tended to overlook applying the analytical skills we developed in solving operational problems, to analysing systems. Because time pressures prevented the allocation of quality mind-space to analyse what we did, why we did it etc, we could not adequately define our needs. This of course was compounded by the lack of defined and enunciated principles, as stated earlier. The combination of not applying analytical skills and not

having defined tenets, affected our ability to adequately evaluate packages when they did appear. Could we properly devise evaluation criteria to help distinguish between essentials and 'bells and whistles'? Some of the excellent papers delivered at National Conventions over the last few years have heightened our awareness of the necessary procedures.

TECHNOLOGICAL SKILLS.

Prior to end-user computing, very few people had sufficient technological skills to allow them to understand or contribute to the formulation of programme specifications. It is probably fair to say that as an industry we have been slow to improve our technological skills. The New South Wales TAFE Associate Diploma course will address some of these problems, by including a systems stream in the syllabus. Developing technological skills need not include becoming a computer programmer. We must continue to use professional programmers. We must, however, be sufficiently conversant with technology to manage the project to achieve our objectives.

LACK OF CONTROL.

Records sections are corporate service centres. As such they are often forced to compromise. If there is no control over the hardware selection, the choice of software packages is limited to those which will run on the corporate computer's operating system. It is a big decision to opt out of the corporate system - will organisation wide access be denied to users? - will separate resources be allocated to maintain and upgrade a separate system?

In Local Government there has been a growth in turnkey corporate information systems solutions. i.e. one supplier tenders for the hardware and software. These large Local Government systems are usually based on the common need to develop a database of land information. The growth of these systems has locked many Local Government Records Managers into making the best of some truly atrocious records management modules, which often defy any hint of accepted and acknowledged records management practices. Fortunately many PC packages are now being programmed to run on a number of operating systems, which will allow greater choice and will not automatically lock the Records Sections in because of hardware imperatives. Many of these programmes are capable of being downloaded onto different computers and running alongside the turnkey systems. There is a need for some programming to ensure that the information on the two databases are accessible through both systems, but this investment is well worthwhile in order to avoid being forced to use an inadequate Records Management module.

So, where have we been and where are we going? Perhaps in the past we have not been in a

position to successfully lead technology based solutions to our destination. However with growing expertise and professionalism the present generation **must** take the lead. We cannot afford to be led into expensive, technological dead-ends. Continuing education in the form of formal courses, conventions, seminars together with learning from each other will help us to develop and use all the skills necessary to set the benchmarks. Surely the burning issue for Records Management as an industry is to formulate and enunciate the principles by which, at present, we intuitively operate.

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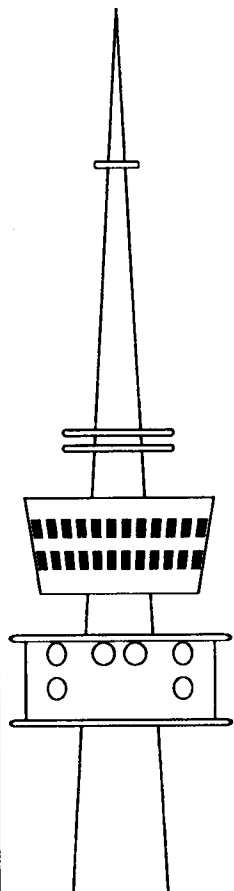
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SOFTWARE APPRAISAL: THE ISSUES AND A METHODOLOGY

Fiona E. Meyer

BA (Hons), Dip. IM (Archives), MBA, ARMA

Fiona Meyer is a senior consultant with the DMR Group, Australia. She has a background in public administration, information technology and marketing. She is a specialist in system design and has considerable experience in marketing information systems. She has been involved in the RMAA since 1980, first in Victoria and then in New South Wales. She is the current President of the New South Wales Branch.

INTRODUCTION

This paper is based on the first part of a larger document which will be presented at the 1989 National Convention. It highlights some of the issues and presents a survey and appraisal methodology which may be used to assess Records Management software. The paper is structured as follows:

A Survey and Appraisal Methodology

1. Functional Requirements
2. Hardware and Operating Environment
3. Background of the Supplier Company
4. Training, Support and Education
5. Other Issues
6. Evaluation Process

Appendices

A Software Factor Evaluation

A SURVEY AND APPRAISAL METHODOLOGY

This paper presents five broad categories of issues identified for the evaluation of Records Management software in the Australian market place.

1 FUNCTIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Software functional requirements are based on the analysis of the user specifications and system requirements. These issues concern what the system looks like and how it operates. Critical functional activities for a records management system cover the traditional activities: creation, classification, indexing, retrieval, management, document control and disposition. In the software environment, these may be specifically identified as:

- Indexing system
- File numbering conventions
- Classification structures
- Inverted file indexing techniques
- Sorting and thesaurus capabilities
- Language control
- User friendliness
- Bar code interfaces
- Document identification and so on

There are an infinite number of criteria which can be used to assess the performance of software from a functional perspective. Each can be systematically tested by controlled examination.

However, it is useful to identify the functional requirements, relevant to the business and then divide them into two lists: those which the system must have in order to fulfil the requirements, and those which are "nice to have" but not mandatory to the system.

Functional requirements are only meaningful in the context of user specifications. It is impossible to prepare a definitive set of functional requirements that would be ideal in every environment.

2 HARDWARE AND OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

The hardware environment issues are concerned with the identification of the system constraints or boundaries. These hardware, software and operating environment requirements are written from the broader context of the organisation's total information strategy. Communications facilities, local area network requirements, software upgrade path, communication protocols and so on would have to be taken into account.

These sorts of issues are considered in concert with the functional requirements. It is not possible to have a records management system fulfilling all the functional requirements and then not being able to run in the chosen and selected information environment of the organisation.

Generally, it is well advised to document the environmental issues from the total information systems perspective. It is recommended that information systems specialists be consulted in this process.

3 BACKGROUND OF THE SUPPLIER COMPANY

The background of the supplier company is critical to the selection of the right product for an organisation. Products that are too new are often released on to the market in a fragile condition. They may be full of 'bugs' or with inadequate documentation or training requirements. Software houses must be able to support their products.

On the other hand, a product that is too old in the market place and that is not fulfilling a major part of the revenue flow is often not being supported with significant research and development funds. The product in those circumstances is very likely to be left standing still from a development perspective. Of course,

these are two ends of the spectrum and to hat end there are many organisations in between.

It is very important when selecting software to ensure that the company has been in business long enough to be able to support the product when times get rough or when implementation gets hard. The product needs to be a significant part of the existing revenue of that organisation to receive adequate research and development funds. The integrity of the company, its financial viability and its product support history are all part of the analysis of the background of the organisation.

Issues such as Australian ownership are important not only for current account deficit reasons, but also from the perspective of training, documentation, education and implementation.

4 TRAINING, SUPPORT AND EDUCATION

Training, support, education and implementation introduce many issues. Many suppliers comment that their products are so easy to use that documentation and training classes are not required. This supposition must be challenged. It is imperative, in fact, absolutely mandatory that a software house supply the following services as part of the product:

- System documentation from the user perspective.
- Software support documentation.
- Training Procedures.
- Support access structures such as 008 numbers and help line facilities.
- Education development work.
- Installation programs.

Computer systems exist of boxes, software, data and what is generally called support, education and training. The benefits of the investment are only achieved with staff receiving adequate training, installation assistance and support.

This support is essential in the modern and mature market place and it is recommended that any purchasing organisation thoroughly examined the training support and education facilities that are promoted and funded by the supplier organisation.

5 OTHER ISSUES

Finally, there are the qualitative comfort zone issues which determine a confident purchase decision. The suppliers' performance history in the market place is a key area for examination. The company needs to have established a good relationship and ongoing commitment to its client base and the product area. This is reflected by the employees, their qualifications, credibility and familiarity in the particular industry.

A good way to research this is to speak with users and user groups. User groups provide a vehicle for client comment and sometimes become a forum for research and development. In fact, a bright software company will set up a

user group as soon as they have a product to provide a good and cheap research and development forum without having to hire an expert. It is also a sure way to ensure that the product will actually meet the market needs. These are invaluable sources of customer comment.

In the final analysis, speaking with users is the only way to test a system. There are lots of questions which can be asked which are vital in the assessment process, but which cannot be surveyed in a tender process; such as:

- How long does it really take for help line calls to be answered?
- What type of assistance do you receive?
- How useful are the helpline staff?
- Have you ever had a system crash?
- How much does the technical assistance cost?
- How long did the technical assistance take?

Never assume that everything is going to be smooth and easy; with computer systems and implementation of software, nearly everything possible may go wrong. A good records manager will plan and take all of this into account and will be able to manage their way through the process. It is thinking about the difficulties in advance and having strategies and mechanisms in place that provides for the successful implementation of any system.

6 EVALUATION PROCESS

The categories identified above could easily be developed into a survey of at least 45 questions. However, the identification of the accurate issues around which to evaluate a product determines the effectiveness of the evaluation team. The stages in a survey and evaluation methodology may be summarised as:

- Establishment of User Specifications
- Identification of User Requirements
- Evaluation of mandatory requirements
- Development of list of optional requirements
- Ranking of the various priorities

From this point, various methodologies may be employed to identify high and low priority features. For example, key word indexing and bar code interface might be a very high priority, however, the ability to identify specific documents might be a low priority. Both of course might be mandatory requirements. On the other hand it might be useful if there is a library package that interfaces with the records management package and so this requirement might feature on the optional list.

Once this type of ranking has been achieved, a weight value can be factored with the ranking. Appendix A identifies a sample chart of various requirements with their values. It is a simple matter to then go through each of the various software packages and provide a ranking for certain criteria and factoring them out. For example,

if a piece of software has items 1, 2, 7, and 8, then they receive the points in accordance with the ranking that those features have been given. If they don't have the feature, then they do not score the points. The evaluation team can then add up the points and work out exactly the basis of the total number of points of the piece of software that best fits the requirements.

Of course this process will only assist you in

determining the top two or three software packages. An informed judgement will be possible once the qualitative issues identified in Section 1.5 are taken into account. Finally, ask the supplier to allow live system testing for a limited period. This will confirm your assessment before you enter into a long term commitment.

APPENDIX A Software Factor Evaluation

Example of Point Evaluation*

Mandatory Requirements	Ranking	Product 1	Product 2	Product 3
Keyword Indexing	6	-	6	-
On Line Thesaurus	5	2	2	5
Bar Code Interface	2	2	2	-
Australian Made	1	-	1	1
MS DOS Environment	4	4	4	4
Multi User System	3	-	-	3
Totals		11	18	13

The highest ranked number is allocated to the most desirable feature, that is, Keyword Indexing: 6. According to this evaluation, Product 2 is the best fit with the user mandatory requirements by ranking.

* The data is not based on an actual product or survey.

THESAURI - THE ESSENCE OF INTELLECTUAL CONTROL?

by
ANNTHEA LOVE ARMA, AALIA

Annthea Love has been involved in the information industry for over ten years. She has been employed as a Records Manager with the University of Western Australia, Kuring-gai Municipal Council and Capita Financial Group Pty. Ltd. Annthea is now a senior records management consultant with Records Archives & Information Management Pty. Ltd., an independent consulting group. Annthea has been involved in the RMAA for over six years. She is a NSW Branch Councillor and currently the Branch Treasurer.

Introduction

Intellectual control is a term used by records managers to describe the tools used to assist them organise information in a predetermined way and to ultimately retrieve it. These tools can consist of many elements such as classification manuals, thesauri, indices, archival controls, retention schedules, etc.

To remain effective, the tools of intellectual control, are maintained by the records manager who must ensure that they remain uncorrupted and updated. They are as essential in a decentralised records systems as in a centralised system. Intellectual control consists of the processes which unify the records system into a cohesive whole. They assist both users and records staff to name records, to archive them and to ultimately retrieve them.

It is the objective of this article to examine one of the tools of intellectual control, the thesaurus, and to illustrate why it is one of the most essential elements of intellectual control, if not its essence.

Development of Thesauri

The Thesaurus as a retrieval tool was first introduced in the fifties to assist users of special library collections to form search paths to enable them to interrogate large computerised databases to retrieve information on a particular subject. Search paths reduce the expensive computer time required to retrieve information, by manually narrowing searches prior to data base access. Most special and academic libraries continue to use thesauri to access data bases of information on specialist subjects. For example, the ERIC thesaurus which is used as a retrieval tool to access journal articles on education.

Thesauri used by records managers differ from the research tools from which they have grown. Unlike the research thesaurus the records management thesaurus is used to **name** source material, whereas the research thesaurus is used only to retrieve already titled docu-

ments such as books and journal articles. Naming protocols for the titling of documents in a records system lies with the users of the system, with guidance from the records manager who ensures that consistency is maintained in the system. To achieve this consistency a thesaurus is required. The thesaurus is used by users and records staff to both create file titles and retrieve information. Like the research thesaurus the major function of the records management thesaurus is to act as a retrieval tool. For this reason consistency in naming documents is such an important factor at the creation of file titles.

Thesaurus Creation

Thesauri are notoriously tedious to compile as the creator requires, not only a good understanding of the subjects included in the thesaurus, but technical skill in thesaurus creation.

Thesauri utilised in records management systems are not mere alphabetical word lists of synonymous terms used by various organisations, as some of the creators of records management software would have us believe. The thesaurus is an alphabetical list which outlines the meaning of terms, as they are used in a particular context, and their relationship to other terms in the subject hierarchy. The thesaurus also lists words which must not be used in file titling, that is non preferred terms. By accessing these non preferred terms the user is led to the correct, or preferred, term used in creating a file title.

Building the classification order is the first step in creating a thesaurus. This is performed by a technique known as facet analysis. Facet analysis involves the examination of a subject to determine the various aspects, or facets, of a subject. Under the main facets, sub facets are selected to further define the main facet. To create the thesaurus these facets and sub facets must be placed in a hierarchical sequence.

Using an example where the subject is **Sports**, some of the hierarchies could take the following structure:

- Sports
 - .Ball Games
 - ..Rugby
 - ...League
 - .Skiing
 - ..Downhill
 - ..Cross Country
 - ...Trails

Once the hierarchies of a subject have been outlined the thesaurus can be compiled using the standard abbreviations to show the relationships between the terms in the hierarchies. These

abbreviations are:

SN Scope Note
UF Used For
BT Broader Term
NT Narrower Term
RT Related Term

Using the above example and the standard abbreviations, the entries in the thesaurus would be:

BALL GAMES

BT Sports
NT Rugby

CROSS COUNTRY

BT Sports - Skiing
NT Trails
RT Downhill

DOWNHILL

BT Sports - Skiing
RT Cross Country

LEAGUE

BT Sports - Ball Games - Rugby

RUGBY

BT Sports - Ball Games
NT League

SKIING

BT Sports
NT Cross Country Downhill

SPORTS

NT Ball Games Skiing

TRAILS

BT Sports - Skiing - Cross Country

To assist the user of the thesaurus other entry points to the subject hierarchy can be included, such as a **used for (UF)** entry. For example, an entry under:

BALL GAMES
UF Games - Ball
BT Sports
NT Rugby

GAMES - BALL

Use **BALL GAMES**

The addition of scope notes (SN) assists the user by determining the meaning of a term as it is used in a scheme. For example:

TRAILS

SN Paths used by cross country skiers, which have been included in the Cross Country Skiing Brochure.

BT Sports - Skiing

To further assist the user of the thesaurus related entries should be shown. These must be fully cross referenced to each other.

Our simple example above now begins to look like this:

BALL GAMES

UF Games - Ball
BT Sports
NT Rugby

CROSS COUNTRY

BT Sports - Skiing
NT Trails
RT Downhill

DOWNHILL

BT Sports - Skiing
RT Cross Country
Games - Ball
Use **BALL GAMES**

LEAGUE

BT Sports - Ball Games - Rugby

RUGBY

BT Sports - Ball Games
NT League

SKIING

BT Sports
NT Cross Country Downhill

SPORTS

NT Ball Games Skiing

TRAILS

SN Paths used by cross country skiers, which have been included in the Cross Country

Skiing Brochure.

BT Sports - Skiing - Cross Country

The entries for each subfacet can become quite long, although in reality it may not be necessary to show all relationships between terms which are parts of the same facet, such as the related terms above under **CROSS COUNTRY** and **DOWNHILL**.

In records management the facets are known as **keywords** and the sub facets as **descriptors**. Keywords and descriptors can also be used for any word which is used as an access point to the information required. These access points are not necessarily part of the file title as outlined in a hierarchical classification scheme. For this reason the term facet and sub facet are used above to describe the structure of the thesaurus.

In a records management system the person creating a file title accesses a term in the thesaurus. If the term is not a banned term and it is suitable for use, the user chooses the broader term as the keyword and any relevant descriptor listed under that keyword to compile the file title.

For example, to create a file on Rugby League, users may look under **RUGBY** and the thesaurus will show them that the broadest term is **SPORTS** with a broader term **LEAGUE**. Users then take

the broadest term SPORTS as the keyword, the first descriptor as LEAGUE and the second descriptor as RUGBY. All of this information is contained under the entry RUGBY.

To use a thesaurus to create file titles these additional hierarchies are shown under the broader term to the broadest term, or keyword, in the thesaurus, as shown, in the above example. This differs from the standard database thesauri which does not have this extra level of information as its prime purpose is to assist the user create search paths.

A thesaurus must be based on a classification scheme and an outline of this scheme should be included with the thesaurus. This enables the records staff to see at glance how the thesaurus has been compiled. It also assists them to update the thesaurus by allowing them to identify where an additional term will fit in the hierarchy.

The Importance of Thesauri for Records Management

Records management thesauri should be designed around the in house, specialist language used by the personnel of an organisation in the performance of their duties and it should continue to reflect the current usage of this language to ensure that documents do not become alienated from them by the classification system. As the functions of an organisation develop or change, so too should the thesaurus and classification scheme. Users of the scheme should alert the Records Manager to any of these changes to enable the thesaurus and classification scheme to be kept up to date with an organisation's functions.

It is essential that the organisational thesaurus keep up with the functions of that organisation as the thesaurus will be used in many instances, other than in file creation, to enhance the retrieval of information. For example, the keywords and relevant descriptors can be used as headings for reports and other items, such as procedures. This ensures that information is correctly classified and placed on the correct file and makes retrieval of the information a relatively simple task.

The Thesaurus provides a lead in to the corporate language used in file titling and ensures consistency of language in file titling and file structure throughout an organisation.

The use of a thesaurus at the time of file creation will provide the following benefits for an organisation:

- It provides greater efficiency in file retrieval as all file titles containing a particular term will appear when that term is accessed. This simplifies searches on the computerised data base as terms from the thesaurus will be used to access required information. Terms from the thesaurus can also be combined to create search paths which will

narrow the user's search. This will not only save time, but result in improved accuracy.

- All staff should be trained in retrieval of information as part of their induction procedures. This will include the use of the thesaurus for the purpose of file titling and retrieval. Should staff from one part of the organisation move to another, their initial training in records management need not be repeated as the same naming protocols for files will be standard throughout the organisation.
- There is a reduction in staff time for data base entry of file titles. Only the key terms, mostly chosen from the thesaurus, which make up the file title are entered at the time of data entry. This differs from free text entries where more key strokes are generally required because each entry must be entered in its entirety.
- Synonymous file titles are eliminated, as the thesaurus will lead the user to the preferred term.
- The thesaurus can be used to assist the titling of other documents in an organisation, such as reports and procedures.
- The thesaurus is capable of continuous expansion and can be updated continuously, by the addition of keywords and descriptors to the subject hierarchy.
- By structuring the file titles in a hierarchical sequence the thesaurus will assist retention and disposal of documents. All policy matters can be included in the one file for permanent retention as opposed to house-keeping material which would be kept for much shorter periods. Retention can be established at file creation by following the outline in the subject hierarchy which should be established to reflect retention periods.

Conclusion

In common language the specific meaning of a word is always dependent upon the context in which it is used. In special languages, such as those used in file titling and classification of documents a distinct meaning is assigned to a term. In this way the integrity of the language used in file titling is preserved by defining these distinct meanings of a term in its context in an organisation.

For example, the term GOLDEN HAND-CUFFS may mean the favourable remunerative conditions given to an executive to bind him to a particular organisation, in a large, prestigious, finance company, but it will have an entirely different meaning in everyday language. It is this specialist language that the thesaurus will support and it ensures that all staff know exactly what is meant, in the context of an organisation's

culture, by a particular term.

In addition, thesauri will establish naming protocols for file titles and other information which can be accessed consistently under a single term. It will determine which words are to be avoided when creating file titles, thus eliminating synonymous terms and reducing the creation of duplicate file titles.

For these reasons thesauri are the most essential elements of the concept of intellectual control. They may have grown to complement computerised databases, but they continue to be more reliable for the records manager than free text searching which does not provide the degree of assistance provided by the subject, hierarchically, based thesaurus.

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I FIND, I FILE, AM I A FOOL?

Peter A. Smith. M.R.M.A.

President

International Records Management Council

(A keynote address presented to the Archives and Records Association of New Zealand at the 13th Annual Conference in Wellington, New Zealand on 26th October, 1989)

To begin with perhaps I should clear up the inference of the title that I consider myself or those involved in the management of records, fools. I do however, sometimes wonder at the wisdom of choosing Records and Information Management as a career. The management of records within an organisation is exacting, demanding work. I am constantly amazed at the lack of acceptance and recognition by management of this vital resource, and those who work in this area. I do not wish to dwell on the trite statement that you are overworked and underpaid, or that you are not being given due recognition for your labours, instead I wish to be much more positive and suggest a slightly more aggressive approach. In fact I will be extremely direct and suggest that unless you are prepared to get off your backsides and help yourselves, you will NEVER achieve the recognition that you deserve.

Deserving recognition and not being able to command it is the reality with which you all have to live, so let's see if we can find a solution.

Other professions require, or should I say demand a standard of excellence of their officers, so why shouldn't the Records profession. I for one, think we should, particularly if we want our organisations to accept standards and professional ethics for the industry. It would be reasonable to suggest that we can't expect this to happen without it being formalised in some way. With the deluge of information that we are experiencing there needs to be some form of control by which the information can be channelled or directed so that it will be of use in the future.

Then how do we get this "recognition", - in simple terms, WORK FOR IT!

We live in an age when the emphasis on qualifications is much greater than hitherto known. Whilst I have always had some reservations about the value of qualifications alone without relevant experience, it must be noted that in order to attain true professional status and recognition, a high standard of education and qualifications need to be realised.

The courses which are currently being set up in Australia, will equip the students with knowledge of the techniques and technology that are very much a part of our industry. It is my

belief that it will be through this medium of education and qualifications that you will achieve recognition by your organisation and industry and the business world at large.

If then, we recognise that we must acquire these qualifications, how do we go about making the courses attractive enough to draw people into the world of Records and Information?

VARIABILITY TO COURSES

It may be that in order to attract and gain the interest of the younger generation, we may need to adopt a radical approach. We know that information is important to industry and government alike, but how do we change the "filing" image to make it "the" profession to be involved in. We need to teach the fundamentals obviously, but let's be flexible, realistic, factual and above all, relate the theory that is being taught to every day practice. How often do we come up against courses which regurgitate old hat, outmoded theories? The Department of Technical and Further Education in New South Wales is exposing an approach whereby they are seeking people from industry with experience in their field, to teach in those areas. In doing this these personnel bring with them a knowledge of what industry expects from students of the courses, thus reinforcing the need to update and keep up with the current requirements of the business world.

Records and Information Management these days, is alive and vital and this should be expressed in what we are teaching our students.

EFFECTIVE CONTROL

Stoner, Collins and Yettin in "Management in Australia", state that "all the management functions i.e. Planning, Organising, Leading and Controlling, are necessary for successful organisational performance". They say that establishing effective controls is important as it is the consistency with which managers are able to monitor progress and stay "on track" towards goals.

It is important to realise that information plays a critical role in the effectiveness of control within the organisation. When you think of the millions of pieces of information that are processed by an organisation each year, and the necessary controls that are needed to make that information meaningful, it should make the value of accurate and timely information abundantly clear to the organisation's administration.



INFORMATION REVOLUTION OR STORM IN A TEACUP?

In the blink of an eyelid, this cup of tea is about to render several irreplaceable documents illegible. Irreplaceable because they're the last remaining copies of the originals or, worse, the originals themselves.

You see, this cup of tea happens to be sitting on top of your current 'filing system.'

You might have some of the information

stored in your computer but probably not the parts that are often so vitally important — signatures and graphics.

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REPORT - CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

of the lowest cost methods of data capture, storage and retrieval and that includes graphics and signatures.

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LHV/R341

It is worth restating that for information to have value it must be:-

Available at the right time.

In the right place.

To the right person.

At the least possible cost.

Cost Effectiveness of an information system, however, can be difficult to determine because monetary value becomes a secondary issue if you are unable to produce the required information when it is needed. In other words, it may be "cost efficient" to install a particular system, but if this system does not allow the immediate access to required information then it is of little use to the organisation.

The concern that I have is that whilst management talk about controlling costs, budgeting, cost effectiveness and the like, very little is said about information control. Let's be realistic, most records centres, registries or sections, are usually staffed by people with little training or skills in the management of records and information. How can management talk about control in one breath while they turn a blind-eye to the lack of control and management in the records area? Information is a vital resource to any organisation and deserves to be treated as such. For maximum effectiveness the information centre of an organisation should be organised, staffed and controlled by professional records managers, who are both qualified technically and trained in the art of their profession. It is only then that management will obtain control, cost effectiveness and efficiency, and hopefully will begin to recognise the special skills of the Records Managers who play such an important role in their organisation.

PROMOTING THE IMAGE

John J. Tarrant in his book "Drucker: The Man Who Invented The Corporate Society" referred to Managers enjoying the privilege of having a computer at his or her elbow at all times and being able to punch data into the machine and out will come the answer. He went on to say that this as it may be, given a choice, the average manager would prefer to have a "Peter Drucker" or a similar person to cope with the difficult decisions as they arise. The manager could handle most chores, but the difficult ones need the reassurance of a mentor, in other words, the expert for guidance and direction.

You are probably one or two jumps ahead of me when I pose the question as to why management does not, in most cases, approach the records manager when they have a communications, information or records bottleneck or problem.

Without question, management will accept advice from the organisation's accountant, computer manager or stores and purchasing manager.

I ask you to think about this and take note of YOUR place in the hierarchical structure of your organisation, and how you could change this.

I call it promoting the image!

Professionals in all areas except the records area, promote their skills, academic achievements and professionalism. It is time for us to provide the same quality of academic formal education, in-house-training, seminars, conferences and opportunity to update our technical skills in order to be visible and accepted along with the other professionals.

We are the super management experts in our field but we cannot expect to be handed the recognition on a platter. I am reminded of another quote from Drucker which is a good example of what I am getting at.

Drucker was called in as a consultant by a company manufacturing glass bottles and at the first meeting he inquired about the type of business the company was in - the Board members were surprised at his ignorance but replied that they manufactured glass bottles for soft drink and beer. To which Drucker replied that he did not agree. He went on to suggest to them that they were in the packaging business - the light dawned.

Are we promoting ourselves in the best possible way?

Business is complex and tough, especially in to-day's climate, however businessmen and administrators never tire of hearing and reading about the things that will enable them to see a little more clearly in order to be more successful.

Obviously the availability of the right information at the right time enhances their chances of making a correct and considered decision. This does not happen by chance and only comes about by having well trained, qualified people to control the information resource.

TREADMILL OR TRAINING

The question we have to ask ourselves is whether we wish to remain a non entity on the "treadmill" or accept the challenge by making sure we do become qualified to carry out the functions that our jobs and the profession demand. In the process I am confident that we will set standards, objectives and a code of ethics appropriate for this dynamic and rapidly changing profession.

The obvious areas in which standards can be set are those of education and training. These are areas that we must get right if we are to achieve credibility and a purpose for the records and information industry. This credibility is not something that is unique to any one particular country, but must spread worldwide so that universal standards apply and gain recognition. Information and its control and use are universal, so the inherent problems that go with it are also

universal – therefore standards must also be universal.

If we in the developed countries set the example and the standards of education and academic achievement then, and only then, does the pattern of excellence spread to other countries who are endeavouring to formulate records management programs.

What we teach, and the syllabi we set must reflect that which industry and technology demand. Some of you may react to this by saying "It's too late for me" and perhaps you are correct – but take it from us you have the experience and you cannot argue that you did not obtain this experience the hard way. This experience is the foundation on which education and courses are built, so let's make sure that the syllabi we construct for future academic recognition are valid and industry oriented. We are the people in a position to lead and direct the future of our profession. Let's make sure that we get it right!

WHERE AM I GOING?

I believe in goal setting! And to this end I am of the opinion that it is important you ask yourself "What exactly am I trying to do?" And "Why?"

There is a marvellous book by Jack Cranfield and Harold C. Wells, titled "100 Ways to Enhance Self-Concept in the Classroom" which is full of practical, commonsense exercises and techniques and many quotations which enhance the description and make the point wonderfully – I will use some of these excerpts a little later.

Cranfield and Wells list 8 rules for responsible self-growth which I am sure also apply to records managers and the direction they are seeking.

- 1) Become aware of yourself.
– Ask yourself "What am I doing? Is it getting me what I want? If not, what is it getting me?"
- 2) Take responsibility for your situation.
– If you are not getting what you want, it is probably your fault and only through your action are you likely to bring about different results.
- 3) Look at possible alternatives.
– What other choices of behaviour are open to you?
- 4) Choose amongst the alternatives.
– What general things do you really WANT to work on? True personal growth happens when a person follows his immediate striving for a greater ideal, not when he feels driven by "should". (note the use of the word "want").
- 5) Affirm your decision.
– I can become whatever I want to. I can stand up for what I believe in rather than going along with the crowd.

- 6) Develop a plan of action.
– Map out the specific steps and plan the order.
- 7) Act! Now!
– At some point you must actually take the risk of "trying on" the new behaviour.
- 8) Evaluate the outcome.
– Evaluate the results of your attempts. Has it added to what you had? Have you grown?

You can certainly use this concept in your day to day functioning and grow and expand your thinking thus adding new experiences and rewards.

WISHING

Canfield and Wells say that dreams and wishes range from the simple to the fantastic. I have dreams, wishes and expectations like everyone here to-day. Some personal, some that I am expressing right now in the hope that these dreams might be recognised and accepted as normal, be used as motivation; a catalyst for future action. I sincerely hope so!

I quote from Lewis Carroll's "Alice in Wonderland"

"There's no use trying", she said, "One can't believe impossible things." "I dare say you haven't had much practice," said the Queen, "When I was your age, I always did it for half-an-hour a day. Why sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast."

Records Management NEEDS the dreams to be recognised – to become reality!

GOALS

I said earlier that we must have direction in what we wish to achieve – set ourselves goals. It is a very positive way to providing reinforcement and acknowledging that we have set up a contract with ourselves to accomplish that which we think is important.

We all need goals!

Lewis Carroll from Alice in Wonderland.

"Cheshire – Puss," she began, rather timidly... "Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?"

"That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the cat.

"I don't much care where...", said Alice.

"Then it doesn't matter which way you go," said the cat.

Goals are extremely important, aren't they!

CONCLUSION

I have spoken at length about ideals and standards.

I have spoken about ethics.

I have spoken about experience.

Continued on page 25

BARCODE FILE TRACKING – EFFICIENCY PLUS

Pam Camden, A.R.M.A.

The author is the Records Manager for Blacktown City Council. She has been the NSW Branch Secretary since 1986 and is a Federal Director of the Association. She is president of the Local Government Chapter and has been involved in many Branch activities.

Blacktown City Council employs over 400 indoor staff in its Civic Centre. We have around 100,000 active files with 5000 - 5,500 out of Central Records at any given time. There used to be thousands more than that out, however now that people know files can be located quickly they don't hold onto them as much as they used to.

A manual system using cards for file tracking was in use, and even when we started to input files onto the computer it was impossible to know how often a file moved from the original action officer because most of the time Central Records was not notified of the transfer.

The need to know where a file was at any given time was recognised, and investigations into the feasibility of barcode tracking was commenced.

Once the decision to use barcodes was made, all active files had to be input to the computer. This was done by transferring the information needed onto forms and sending these to a commercial computer house who transferred the information to a tape which was then downloaded to our mainframe. The other benefits derived from this were that our re-submit system, inward correspondence and Council Minutes were also computerised, and it is possible to zoom from any of these screens to the file screen, or vice versa.

When the data on all active files was input we ran a tape and sent it to a commercial printer to print our first batch of barcode labels. They took around 10 days to be printed, and we started the massive job of attaching them to the relevant files.

While these functions were being carried out we were also assessing the equipment we would need, and working out our software requirements.

A decision was made to purchase 3 portable Epson touch screen units with laser guns. Four fixed readers were also purchased, as was a barcode label printer. We do not number our files sequentially and our labels for files need to be printed on demand. Our barcode location labels also need to be printed as required i.e. when staff move to another position, or leave and are replaced.

It was decided to audit the Civic Centre every second day (twice a week one week, three times the next) to assess the efficiency of the scans. It

was felt that staff would remember within a day who they gave a file to if it was required urgently, and this has proven to be the case. This rate of scanning the Civic Centre is considered to be more than satisfactory.

The scanning of the building, plus downloading takes three people approximately three hours. A printout is obtained after the download to obtain any messages. Messages could indicate that the barcode location is unknown (a new barcode label may not have been printed correctly, such as too many spaces, and the computer won't accept this). If this happens the label must be checked to see what is wrong with it, and the files must be input manually to update the marking.

There are over 150 terminals situated on the five floors of the Civic Centre and this number is expanding. Staff around the building have enquiry access to Central Records information, although they have no updating facilities. Barcode file tracking commenced in the last week of October 1988 and since then phone calls to Central Records for file markings have dropped dramatically. Staff have accepted the system and are using it.

The duties of two positions have been eliminated, the duties of two positions have been combined, and a position which previously required two people now needs only one. This means effectively that four people can now carry out other duties. The pressure which has been taken off the Section is absolutely incredible.

Blacktown City Council often has files subpoenaed, and before they go to Court they are photocopied, with the duplicate file being used as a working copy until the original file is returned. We are able to track duplicate files by placing the word duplicate into one of the fields on the file screen. The fact that a duplicate file is scanned is recorded on the printout after every audit, and this is checked to see if two files with the same number have been scanned. When two duplicate files are found, the original file is updated, and the photocopy is placed in inactive storage. The letters PA are placed after the word duplicate on the file screen and this stops the file being scanned as a duplicate, and also indicates we have a duplicate file if there is further Court action.

We have a bulking facility for the issuing and return of files, and the barcodes can be used for this. This has cut the time taken to record file movements dramatically. We also have a bulking facility for resubmits, and this can also be used with a considerable saving in time. The use of the bulking facility negates the need to go to each individual file screen to input information.

Our computer is maintained once a month and cannot be accessed for from two to three

hours. We are able to mark files in and out of the Section using the portable units, and downloading when the computer is functional again.

Barcode tracking of files really is Efficiency Plus. To know where a file is within a day or two has increased the efficiency of the Records Section. There is no longer any need to notify the Section when files are transferred as they are picked up in our regular audits. The use of staff on duties which were previously left, because we had no one to do them, has increased the effectiveness of the Section.

I really believe the efficiencies which have been gained have more than paid for the equipment we purchased, and this has taken just on six months.

The basic requirement of any information system is the need to find information quickly and efficiently. Since the Council relies on its files as a repository for correspondence, reports, memos and Council decisions, then it follows that knowing the whereabouts of that file is central to the efficiency of the whole system. The Inward Correspondence Register, Outward Correspondence Register, Minute Index etc become very efficient management tools in the information process, when the location of the information sought can be provided with great accuracy and speed.

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I have spoken about knowledge and how we acquire it.

I have spoken about qualifications and their importance and the importance of a sound structure to the curriculum.

I have spoken of my dreams, and yours.

I have spoken about FINDING, FILING, and I posed a question for myself that perhaps I was foolish to become involved in the field of records management.

I have answered my own question and know that to be part of something as exciting, ever-changing and rewarding as this profession is – is NOT foolish.

I will continue to give back and share some of the excitement and experiences that I have known and, yes,

I WILL CONTINUE TO DREAM!



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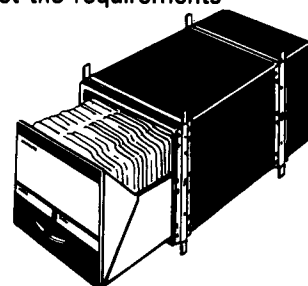
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RAPID TRANSIT RECORDS MANAGEMENT

Mary Hooker ARMA

Mary Hooker (ARMA) was a teacher in Queensland and in British Columbia, Canada. She began working in Records Management on the Rapid Transit Project, B.C., Canada. In 1984 she moved, with her family, to Sydney and became the Records Manager for the Managing Contractor on the Darling Harbour Project. She is presently Records Manager for Ku-ring-gai Municipal Council, Sydney.

In the late 1970's the Government of the Province of British Columbia, Canada, decided to construct, in Vancouver, a Rapid Transit System which was to consist of 21.4 km of guideway. The project began in 1981. A Crown Corporation of the Province of Ontario, Metro Canada, which had developed the technology for the linear-induction motors to be used in the passenger cars in the system, and for the guideways (tracks) to carry the cars, was appointed as the Project Manager. Consulting, design, engineering and construction firms were awarded contracts totaling \$850,000,000CDN.

For the first two years each of these companies worked independently. Then in July, 1983, they were amalgamated into the Joint Project Office which was answerable to British Columbia (B.C.) Transit, a Crown Corporation set up to supervise the Project. It was decided that a system of Records Management would be implemented to incorporate both B.C. Transit and the Joint Project Office. A Records Management Consultant was appointed and a system of records keeping adopted.

At this time, I had decided to re-enter the work-force after a period of child-rearing, and joined the Joint Project Office. One of my first duties was to help sort through, catalogue and store a huge pile of documents and papers, the result of two years of haphazard records keeping, that had literally been dumped at the Records Manager's door. After several weeks of sifting and sorting and learning some of the ins and outs of Tender and Contract documents, the great pile was organized and stored. Then I was offered a permanent position in the Records Department. And so I entered the often chaotic, always interesting world of Records Management on a major construction project.

The Records system adopted by the Joint Project Office was document based rather than file based. The Records Department was sent, daily, the originals of all incoming documents, plus copies of all those generated internally. Each document was stamped, on receipt, with an unique number. Then each document was indexed. The following information was entered onto an indexing sheet – (a) the unique number,

(b) date of the document, (c) date the document was received, (d) name of author, (e) name of receiver, (f) keywords from the body of the document which were entered into a "Thesaurus", (g) type of document – letter, memo, report etc, (h) any relevant reference numbers, drawing numbers. This data was entered into the computer and each category was used as a searching term. The main advantage of this method of records keeping was seen as fast retrieval of any document. However, as time went by, it was found that there were also disadvantages, namely:-

(a) because the system was document based, each department had to keep its own working files and the Records Department was really used as an in-active storage area.

(b) it was time-consuming to attempt to 'create' a file using an indexing term search as not only did the documents have to be identified, but each one had to be retrieved and photo-copied as no documents left Records.

(c) the indexing was time-consuming as so much information was taken from each document.

(d) the amount of data held on the Project's main-frame, which was not very adequate anyway, soon became so huge that it slowed the system down to such an extent that Records Staff were only allowed to set their searches and reports to run at night – hardly adequate when a client is waiting for document "right now".

In order to compensate for these shortcomings, the lack of staff (two Records clerks, a supervisor, and a Records Manager, who was not involved in the daily work at all), the great inpouring of documents (600-700 per day at the height of the Project) and for survival's sake, we adapted as follows:-

– all working documents dealing with design and construction contracts (and this was the majority of documents) were not indexed but were filed according to the contract number.

– only documents of an administrative nature were indexed. Even so, at the end of eighteen months this amounted to almost 80,000 documents indexed.

– searches were done manually using our indexing sheets and surprisingly we became quite efficient at this – even sometimes faster than our poor overloaded computer.

In retrospect, and given that the Records Centre was never meant to house active files, the main drawbacks to the system were:-

(a) lack of staff to do the indexing required

and

(b) lack of computer power to hold the data.

As a method of retrieval it certainly had potential but was not resourced properly – a not uncommon problem in Records Management.

1992 NATIONAL CONVENTION

Sydney Darling Harbour

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REPORT on the 2nd INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF THE IRMC and the

6th NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE RMAA

The failure to solve the pilots dispute in time for the scheduled dates of September 25-28 1989 for the above Conventions, forced the Conventions Committee and WA Branch Council in consultation with the Federal Council of RMAA, to make a decision to post-pone the Conventions until December 10-14 1989.

The decision proved to be popular in that of 230 registered delegates at that time, 180 replied within a few days that the new dates were suitable.

Of 31 speakers, 29 quickly indicated that they could reschedule and so the programme was kept intact.

The exhibitors were equally supportive in that 23 of 27 on the original list said they could make the change.

This response was very encouraging to the organisers and committee and although it has been a massive task, the Conventions are almost back on track.

Two new speakers have been added to the programme and a new Circular and Registration Form has been printed and distributed for new delegates only.

While the airlines situation is still not clear, it is improving and delegates are requested to make enquiries regularly.

Although this has been a difficult time for all concerned, help to make this a great Conventions and overcome the obstacles and get to Perth for December.

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A FIRE STORY

Sandra Finn

Records Manager, Great Lakes Shire Council,
Forster. N.S.W. 2428

This story is one which you might read as an example in a text book about what could happen to you. It did happen to me. I hope it is not too long and boring, but so many people have asked me what did happen and how did we start again that I felt the best way to explain was to put it to paper.

During the night of 15th June, 1988, a person or persons unknown broke into the Records Section of the Great Lakes Shire Council at Forster, N.S.W. through a window and started a fire in the back part of the office. This much was established by the Police and Fire Department officials after investigation. There did not appear to be any attempt at vandalism in the normal sense of pulling things off shelves and out of drawers, as that part of the office not completely burnt was in the same state as it had been left the previous evening, except of course for the ashes, water, and smoke. It appears to have been the work of an arsonist. No person has been apprehended for the offence to date.

I would like to relate to you my experiences as a result of this fire as the Records Section was the most affected part of the building and this is my area of control. The Computer Room next door to Records escaped total damage as the fire spread through the ceiling and most damage in the Computer Room was as a result of water, heat and smoke. Another section which suffered a loss, even though indirectly, was the new library. The Records Section was temporarily storing approximately 9,000 books for the library which were to be transferred to the new building the following day.

On the morning of 16th June, 1988 (Thursday) I was called to the telephone at approximately 6.15am to be told by the Shire Clerk/General Manager that there had been a fire in the Records Section of the Council. He warned me that it was a bad fire and to expect a lot of water damage. On the strength of that information, I rang a friend and asked her to send me a copy of the article written by Wendy Duggan about what she did when she had to recover water affected records (*Informaa Quarterly*, Volume 4, No. 1 - February 1988). However, nothing could have prepared me for the absolutely devastating effect of seeing the walls blown out and mountains of ash and rubble where once there had been shelves full of files. Burnt wires and insulation were hanging from the ceiling and the RSJs were bent from the force of the heat.

The rest of the building was intact but the fire had raced through the ceiling causing mainly

smoke and water damage, making the areas uninhabitable. The new Library building adjacent to the Administration building was undamaged although there had been an attempted break-in.

What happens to normal business when a fire occurs? Well, there's no power, no 'phone, no fax. People appear from all directions, still expecting to pay their rates, seeing about their building application, wanting a driveway inspection, and much put out by the inconvenience caused to them. In our case, tables were set up in front of the building and Telecom immediately provided about six emergency telephones. (Telecom were on hand because they were in the process of installing a new PABX system - the old and the new systems were lost in the fire). Selected staff attended to telephone enquiries. The Shire President called a meeting of all Department and Section Heads to decide on immediate action, there being no disaster plan. Each Department Head reported on the situation within their own department. I left the meeting while discussion continued on where each department should be relocated. The end result of this meeting was that the technical departments moved into the new library building, the library staff moved to rented premises in a shopping complex and the administration sections stayed in that part of the building not burnt - namely the Council Chamber, committee rooms and large foyer area. The direction from the Shire President was that the Council would resume normal operations on the following Monday. I must say that at the time this seemed an unreasonable request!

After allocating tasks to my staff, I set off back to Records with the Assistant Records Manager. We donned gum boots and helmets and inspected the area thoroughly. My first thoughts were to see what, if anything, could be saved. The only shelving still upright was attached to the wall and this contained the remnants of our general filing system, a charred, smouldering mess. At first, I thought there was a slim chance that we could save some of the files, possibly some of the more important matters currently being dealt with by Council. I ordered some bulk bins to be placed as near as possible to the Records Section and organised help from a team of outside staff. I got them to pick up anything resembling a 'whole' file and place it in cartons and thence to the bulk bins. We managed to fill a few bins, but the exercise was hampered by the Police who were anxious to clean out the area. Their method was to shovel everything in front of them and as a result picked up all the mud and slush with anything that may have been of value.

Their need was to ensure that the immediate danger of the area was lessened and of course to ensure that there were no bodies buried under the rubble. I might add that at this stage rain poured down and just as we would try and move a box of our rescued files into the bulk bin, they would get a soaking. It seemed we could not win. We shut the lids on the bins and left them until we had time to come back and go through the files individually. The Deputy Shire Clerk and I did this on the following Sunday afternoon, three days later. We were only able to save about a dozen files of any real value. These were placed individually into plastic bags and boxed to keep them from drying out, causing the pages to stick together, while they awaited recovery.

In the meantime, Records staff gathered up anything they could in the way of stationery and transferred it to a room I named the Records Recovery Room. This room had been used as a printing room previously and had a tiled floor, sink area and a large table, all of which were well suited to cleaning and sorting damaged records. There were three items which I pulled out of the rubble, all in bad condition, but I carefully transferred them to the Records Recovery Room to await recovery. There were –

1. The file movement cards (mark outs or book outs).
2. The disposal/microfilm index cards (which indicated all file disposal or files microfilmed).
3. The file sorting bin (used to pre-sort daily filing into alpha order prior to attaching to files).

Towards the end of the first day I checked out the Records strongroom. It had been opened earlier by a senior officer concerned that there may have been records on the floor which had been damaged. When I opened the door there was quite a lot of smoke present and the floor was very wet. Water had obviously entered under the door. A deep crack had developed in one wall and some water could also have entered through it. However, the contents of the strongroom appeared to be in good condition. I checked the outside of the microfilm drawers for heat or dampness, and while they were warm, there was no sign of moisture. I locked the door and asked that sandbags be placed against the door to prevent any water entering as it was raining heavily and water was building up outside the door.

As you can probably imagine, the whole place was in a turmoil. It was hard to get help in Records, each department having to look after its own problems. There were police, firemen, electricians, plumbers, Telecom, technicians, and carpenters, everywhere. Once the decision had

been made as to whom went where, the place became alive with people moving. All the furniture had to be cleared and cleaned before it could be moved, chairs were whisked away to be steam cleaned. Temporary walls started appearing to close off parts of the building, and equipment of all kinds was piled into the foyer to await assessment by the insurers. It was a mess!

During the very early hours of Friday morning I wrote out lists of things to be done later that day. One of the first things I did was to draw up a plan of the Records Section. This proved to be invaluable to the Fire Chief and Police as they were able to determine where everything was before the fire. My personal need of the plan was so that I could make a list of what had been lost in the fire. It was necessary from the insurance point of view, but also from a records disposal aspect. I listed each row, bay and shelf as memory allowed. Of course, in retrospect, a plan of records shelving showing location and contents should have been kept in the strongroom. The other lists consisted mainly of directions for staff to follow during the day – contacting stationery suppliers to provide urgent orders, contacting Post Office and DX to hold mail and organising replacement photocopyers.

The Records Section was allocated the main part of the Council Chamber as its new home because it could be locked off from the rest of the building and was therefore considered reasonably secure. As it was also to become the home of the strongroom collection there was a definite need for security.

The next couple of days were spent tripping backwards and forwards between the old and new Records Sections and the recovery room. Furniture was scrounged and stationery supplies started coming in. Records staff began setting up our bits and pieces. Some staff were set to work in the recovery room, firstly trimming charred edges off the filing from the file sorted and then hanging it out to dry. We had set up a 'clothes line' using string around our large table and hung out the filing with small bulldog clips. As soon as we were able to obtain photocopyers all the dried filing was copied and then thrown out. I should mention here that it was not possible to have staff stay in the recovery area for long periods because of the cold and smoke fumes.

Other staff were put to work transferring information from the file movement cards. The cards were very wet and charred. I was worried that if we did not soon transfer the information we would lose it altogether, as the ink had run in most and some were barely decipherable. There were thousands of cards, so we transferred the file number and last marking only, in list form. A card existed for each file within the system including each part and any microfilmed files. From these we were able to restart files using the next part number, once we had established whether any part or parts were still in existence.

Before we started a file we checked the lists to establish the last part number and then made up a new file cover and file movement card showing the next part number. On each file we made we added the words – "Previous sections destroyed 16 June, 1988" or Previous Section/s exist". This was specifically aimed at users so that they would know what information was available on a particular file. Our first task on opening day was of course to do an inventory of all general files so that we were aware of what had survived the fire.

Over the weekend I also wrote up a new set of procedures to distribute to each department. It was necessary to institute some quite different procedures and it was essential that staff knew what the situation was in regard to Records. One of the requests I made was for staff not to transfer any file until the inventory had been completed.

Monday morning arrived all too soon and we all went flat out to inventory each desk. Next was processing of three days mail as soon as it was collected. This had to be done manually, as our computer system was down. However, all information on computer was saved, so once we were back on line we were able to use all our programs.

Processing the mail was quite a task. We found a print-out of our file list and this was our only way of identifying previous files. As we use a computerised keyword system we were unable to access this system, so had to rely on a subject list and memory. Each piece of correspondence meant the creation of a new file. We checked the list of files to see what part it was up to, made up a file cover, a file movement card and a house (a manilla folder with the identifying file number written on it) to place on the empty shelves. As well as this, each item had to be written up in our correspondence register by hand. We used a form with exactly the same information detail as our computer printout and photocopied the report for each department. We did not have our usual rubber stamps for incoming mail, so had to handwrite the date received.

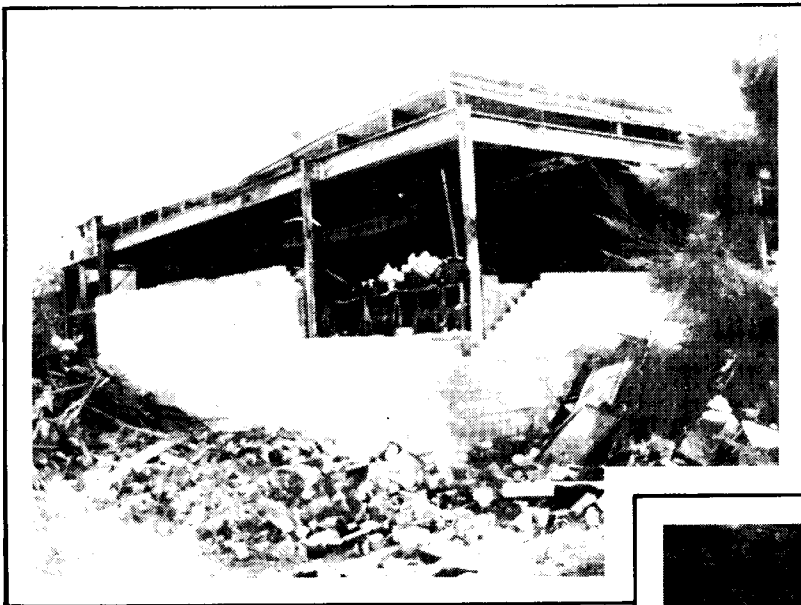
Requests for information came from all directions as people were concerned about what information had been destroyed. I might mention here some of the records which were lost: all general subject files except those on action officer's desks and a few on microfilm – (these in some instances were originating files, for example, commencement of water and sewerage schemes); all foils and plan copies of proposed subdivisions, all inactive records for Accounts, Rates, Administration, Health and Building, Internal Library books for Administrative sections, old Town Committee files and quantities of stationery, brochures, photocopy paper and microfilm equipment.

Each day I made a special trip back to check out the strongroom. To do this I had to don helmet and boots and take a torch as there was no

electricity. By Monday I began to worry about the moisture content of the strongroom. It was becoming quite clammy inside as a result of the excessive heat and the water that had come in under the door. I could not walk out and leave the door open at any time because the strongroom was now out in the open. My main concern at this stage was that the microfilm records would be damaged and that mould or mildew would soon grow on many of the old minute books and rate books.

On Tuesday I became convinced that I had a problem, the strongroom was like a rainforest. Six years of building applications were stored within the strongroom and of course the plans absorbed so much water, they felt like wet blotting paper. Everything was damp to touch. I contacted Helen Price of Conservation on the Move and she suggested that I contact the State Library Conservator, Alan Howell, which I did. When I described the conditions he confirmed that I should evacuate the collection as soon as possible and suggested methods of tagging any areas showing signs of mould or mildew. I arranged for a team of people to start the next morning and for cartons, trolleys, and lighting, to evacuate. This was an enormous task. It was difficult enough because we had to move everything through an obstacle course, around the building from the outside and then back through another obstacle course inside. I had to supervise very closely the men moving the collection as they were none too gentle and some of the records, dated back to 1906. We had to box and seal all staff records and other confidential records to ensure their security in the move. Once the strongroom had been emptied all the shelving had to be dismantled and re-erected in the new Records section in the Council Chamber. This exercise ended up taking three days. During that period our strongroom collection lay in bits and pieces all around the room. This helped in a small way, especially with the Building Applications as the plans dried out quite a bit in the drier climate.

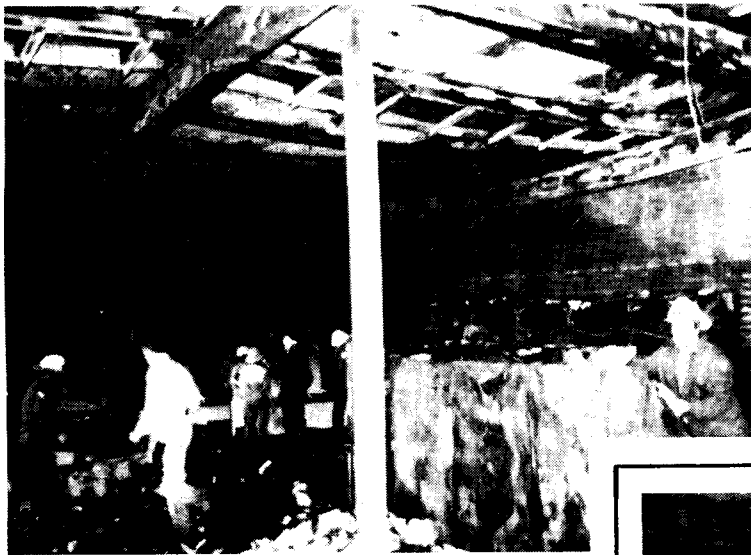
Following Alan Howells suggestion, we purchased a dehumidifier and installed two large fans for air circulation. I was able to have the shelving put up in an almost 'replicated strongroom', so that the dehumidifier was placed in the centre. The bucket in the dehumidifier holds seven litres and in those first days we emptied it every day. The microfilm appeared to have some moisture present, but I sent samples from each drawer to a professional photographic firm for analysis and the report was favourable. Some had slight marks which had no bearing on their life, while others had 'Newton rings', not caused by the fire. Alan Howell and Jill Gurney drove to Forster the following weekend to bring a Recording Thermohygrograph which they lent to us. They took sample readings and found that there was still a lot of moisture in the collection.



1) Great Lakes Shire Council Fire.



2) Surveying the damage.



3) What a disaster!



4) Where to start?

By the way, we keep the dehumidifier going in the strongroom all the time now. It is amazing how much water is removed even now. I would recommend the use of a dehumidifier in any records strongroom particularly in coastal areas or areas of high humidity.

I found it necessary to employ two extra staff, one to do the recovery work and one to reconstitute the Council minutes for the previous two years. The reconstitution of the minutes was done by a previous Records Clerk and she collected business papers from Council Officers who had kept their own sets within their own sections. These minutes formed the basis for many files. Many hours of overtime were necessary in the first few months and many staff became ill, some because of the prevailing conditions. For example smoke stays in a building for a very long time.

Nothing waits of course, so even though we had little history to provide, we still had to meet the daily demands of a Records section. Providing information was a problem. It usually meant searching the minute books, and as our minute books has never been indexed this was a very time consuming task. We had to request back-dated correspondence, reports and sundry information from many government departments and also from solicitors and developers.

Planning the new Records section was a challenge. The basic layout was the same as previously, with some minor changes. The shelving desks, fittings, equipment, had all to be ordered and installed. This was a constant job, keeping in touch with suppliers and making sure that they fitted in with the builders, electricians. I found that with almost everything that had to be done, it was necessary to be there to ensure that things were put where I wanted them. When it came to the installation of the shelving, I actually chalked the floor exactly where the shelving was to go. The same method worked for having 'phone points installed.

Looking back now, I think that we were very lucky in lots of ways. This is still not apparent to a lot of people in my organisation, but if the fire had spread beyond Records to the technical departments for example, we would have been much worse off. On the morning of the fire I walked through the building to inspect the damage. I noticed the compactus holding all the Development Applications in Planning Department wide open, in other departments drawers were left open, vertiplan cabinets were left open. A fire through the Engineering Department would have destroyed all the water, sewerage, road and other design plans. Imagine not being able to find sewerage lines in a breakdown situation. The consequences could be enormous!

So, what has changed since the fire? First of all, the building now has a very efficient alarm system, something which ought to have been

installed in the original building, but wasn't probably because of the cost. Secondly, smoke detectors have been installed in Records and in the Computer room. No sprinkler system, but the alarm system detects movement even very slight, so is supposed to detect fire movement also. Thirdly, fire equipment has been installed, but so far no drills! I have made certain that all my staff know how to use the fire equipment and have instructed them in exiting the building.

The Records strongroom was extended to almost double the size to allow for natural growth and for the storage of more record types. The floor level was raised above the level of the floor in the rest of the building. An additional strongroom was built adjacent to the Accounts section to accommodate accounts records, including inactive records. A fire proof area has been provided for the computer installation. This is almost a vault, except that it has a fire door in place of the usual vault room and has smoke detectors in the ceiling.

There are many lessons to be learned from an experience such as I have related. Apart from the obvious physical aspects such as alarm systems, smoke detectors and fire proof storage, there are those directly related to records management:-

- documentation of all record types held by an organisation is essential.
- vital Records Program to ensure that vital and permanent records are protected against the hazards of nature and man-made hazards.
- a plan of records storage areas showing location and contents.
- a disaster plan should be produced for the organisation or at least for records.

Most of us are aware that we should do these things, but somehow everyday matters use up all our time and we put them off. Our insurance policy covered the replacement of everything, so we have replaced the building, our furniture, equipment, stationery, books, but the one thing we cannot replace is the information contained in the files that were burnt.

The Records staff of Great Lakes Shire Council have had to cope with many changes over the past year and as can be expected with any change many problems arose. The return to the 'new' Records section was very much appreciated by the staff. Some settling in period was required to arrange all the records acquired over the eight-and-a-half months that we were in our temporary home, but now Records is back in operation looking forward to the many challenges it faces.

DEVisING A PROFESSIONAL READING PROGRAMME

Joyce Kirk

BA, DipEd, MA(Lib), MIInfSc, ALAA, ARMA

Joyce Kirk is Senior Lecturer and Assistant to the Head, School of Library and Information Studies at Ku-Ring-Gai College of Advanced Education. She has been involved in education for information professionals for ten years. Her research interests lie in the areas of information user behaviour, the provision of information services and career planning. Joyce Kirk has published in national and international journals and presented papers at conferences in Australia and overseas.

There are several ways of maintaining awareness of current trends and developments in records management. These include participation in national conventions, seminars and meetings held by the Records Management Association of Australia (RMAA) and its State branches, meeting colleagues informally, receiving mailings from trade contacts, joining RMAA and related organisations such as the Australian Society of Archivists, the Australian Library and Information Association and the Australian Computer Society, and reading special supplements or sections in the weekly and daily press. Records managers also need to have up-to-date information about the fields within which they practice. Some of these fields are finance, local government, banking, educational administration, health sciences, local, state or federal government, small business, trade and human resource development. These fields of practice will have an impact on the conferences and meetings which records managers attend, the associations they join, the networks of professional colleagues they develop and the material they read.

One particular type of publication which is invaluable as a source of current information about records and information management is the periodical, defined as "a serial appearing or intended to appear indefinitely at regular or stated intervals, generally more frequently than annually, each issue of which is numbered or dated consecutively and normally contains separate articles, stories or other writings ...". (Young, 1983: 166). Periodicals are available through subscription, purchase, or as a benefit of membership of an organisation. *The Informaa Quarterly* is a typical example of a periodical. It has a unique title and each issue is clearly identified as part of a series of issues. It appears regularly each quarter and has done so over a period of time. As well as being a periodical it is also one of the benefits of membership of the RMAA.

Periodicals are important for information and records managers because of the purposes they

serve. Not only are they invaluable sources of current information because of their frequency of publication but they can be a source of continuing education or professional development. Once a records manager has identified some professional development goals, it is then possible to select several periodicals which will form the core professional reading for that records manager. Some goals might be

- to increase my knowledge of automated systems

- to enhance my abilities in implementing automated systems

- to introduce automation into the records unit

- to evaluate the impact of automation of the records unit or the entire organisation.

The core periodicals selected should assist the records manager to achieve these goals over a period of time. The records manager will probably use a range of strategies for achieving these goals, and an important one will be reading periodicals. Other strategies are likely to include gathering information from system suppliers, attending seminars and workshops on managing change in organisations, reading reference books on personnel management, exchanging information with colleagues, visiting other records units, seeking opinions and advice from mentors in the information profession, and interviewing potential systems users in the records manager's organisation.

Periodicals also provide information which can improve a records manager's performance. This is particularly so for those who look for professional development opportunities in their current employment. Periodicals can also be a change agent, not only for records managers themselves, but also for their organisations. Through periodicals, innovations are introduced, discussed, elaborated and sometimes evaluated. Innovation occurs at both theoretical and practical levels. One immediate example comes from the area of Freedom of Information legislation, which has its origins in theories on the role of the state in relation to the rights of citizens to know what information about them and their activities is being collected and stored. Central to these theories are assumptions about human nature and about society. At the level of records management practice in a democracy, government agencies, as instruments of the state, need to ensure that relevant information can be accessed and retrieved on behalf of citizens. The legislation also recognises that government agencies are accountable to citizens for the decisions they make. The periodical literature on freedom of information as a concept and as

legislation is quite extensive and it has helped to bring a new perspective to the purposes of record-keeping by government agencies, to the functions of some records units and to the roles of some records managers.

The content, or types of articles, in information and records management periodicals is varied and different periodicals are characterised by different proportions of content. Some articles focus on news. These usually report events, such as meetings and conferences, notify changes of personnel in associations and organisations, and advertise conventions, workshops and product displays. Some of these articles list items of professional reading on certain topics. Other news articles might reprint legislation of interest to readers.

Some articles will be task-related. For example, authors might describe how they approach certain aspects of their work as records managers. There may be testimonials written about individual records managers or the units they manage, or about the records programmes in particular organisations. The focus in these articles is not so much on events, but on current practice or the application of information management principles to records. It is not unusual for the reporting of successful practice to overlook some of the difficulties faced by records managers.

There are also substantive articles dealing with trends and developments as well as issues confronting records managers. Some of these articles often report the results of research or investigations which increase or refine the body of knowledge on which records management is based. Other articles analyse and draw together developments from several areas and apply them to information and records management, or they may critically evaluate ideas and trends from a records management point of view. Examples of analytical and critical articles are state-of-the-art reports which restructure and repackage research reports, and opinion papers which are not objective in the way that research reports are. Opinion papers are frequently speculative and outline trends which might occur or which their authors feel should occur. Although these papers are not objective in their presentation, they should conform to the requirements of rigorous argument and present evidence as the basis of the opinions expressed. The more carefully argued articles which explore issues often present different views and seek to explain the basis for those different views.

Articles in periodicals which are neither reports of research or current practice nor substantive opinion papers include book reviews, advertisements for products and services, and classifieds. These articles sometimes feature photographic illustrations and sufficient detail for further enquiries to be made by interested readers.

It is unlikely that any one periodical will carry all the types of content described, yet it is essential that records managers read research reports, speculative and opinion papers, book reviews, product announcements and news items if they wish to remain in touch with current developments. Each type of article has a different purpose, but all types will assist records managers to build on their present levels of knowledge and skills, and to increase their effectiveness as information professionals.

The publishers of information and records management periodicals fall into two broad groups. National general interest periodicals are usually published under the auspices of professional associations, both in Australia and overseas. Some examples are the RMAA's *Informaa Quarterly* and ARMA *Records Management Quarterly* from the United States. Publications from other information related associations may be useful to records managers. Examples are *Archives and Manuscripts* from the Australian Society of Archivists, *Australian Library Journal* from the Australian Library and Information Association, *American Archivist* from the Society of American Archivists, *Journal of the American Society of Information Science*, *Journal of Information Science* from the Institute of Information Scientists in the United Kingdom and *Aslib Proceedings*, published for the Association for Information Management also in the United Kingdom. Because these periodicals are official publications they often emphasise the views of their parent associations and the range of articles in them tends to be limited.

Some periodicals are published commercially, either by general periodical publishers, such as Peter Isaacson in Australia, or by large scholarly or book publishing companies, such as Ablex, Wiley, or Butterworths. In order to remain viable, these periodicals often carry advertisements and feature book reviews. Their articles are often broadly based and sometimes provocative. Examples are *Modern Office* and *Office News and Automation* published in Australia, and *Information Management Review* and *International Journal of Information Management*, both published overseas.

In deciding on which periodicals to include in a professional reading programme, records managers will need to consider their goals for professional reading and the range of articles they need to read to reach their goals. As a next step, records managers may want to visit libraries which specialise in collecting information and records management literature as well as the literature pertinent to their fields of practice. Useful starting points are the libraries of those TAFE Colleges and universities which offer courses in information and records management as well as the libraries within their own organisations. Records Managers may also want to exchange information about professional

reading with their colleagues.

Having identified the periodicals which are essential reading, records managers will need to consider ways of securing access to them, either by personal or institutional subscription or purchase, or by initiating or using a current awareness service within their organisations or the libraries in their organisations. The final step is to begin reading in a systematic way so that reading time is used as effectively as possible. The outcome of a professional reading

programme should be a records manager who is better able to anticipate and evaluate trends and developments in records management. The benefits of a professional reading programme should be felt by both the records manager and the organisation in which he or she practices.

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BOOK REVIEW

RECORDS MANAGEMENT JOURNAL

Reviewer: Marita D. Hoo, MRMA

A recent addition to the records management literature is the *Records Management Journal*, a quarterly journal published by ASLIB (the UK Association for Special Libraries). It states that it aims to "cover a variety of managerial topics in addition to the more familiar specialised topics pertinent to records management". It intends to include articles from authors "around the world".

The first issue included articles from a Canadian and a Nigerian author, as well as the first of what is intended to be a series of letters from an ARMA correspondent detailing North American records management events and issues. Perhaps our Association should seek to contribute a similar letter. It is proposed that a regular contributor of articles will be Ralph Cornes who will address the management of

electronic information and records. This is obviously to be welcomed although I could not find reference to his credentials.

Disappointingly there was no reference in the first issue to the forthcoming events including the RMAA/IRMC September convention. Perhaps we shall see such entries in future issues for which a call for abstracts of articles etc. did appear.

Both the presentation and content of the *Records Management Journal* are of professional standing and in keeping with the quality publication one expects from ASLIB. Priced at £60 (Aust \$132.10) to overseas non-ASLIB members, the publication becomes somewhat expensive for individuals but, should it continue its present standard, it is one well worth pursuing through library services.

RECORDS MANAGEMENT JOURNAL, Vol. 1, No. 1, Spring 1989.

ASLIB, Information House, 26-27 Boswell St., London WC1N 3Jz, England.



**Central
Land
Council**

The Central Land Council is a statutory authority established under the Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act 1976 to represent traditional landowners in the southern part of the Northern Territory.

REGISTRY TECHNICIAN

(Position Number: 5011)

This position is challenging. We are looking for a person who will adapt well, to a cross cultural setting, will use their initiative to solve day to day problems, and maintain a good sense of humour.

The position involves training Aboriginal people to take over management functions within the Information Services Unit. Our need is for a person with good communication skills and an interest in preparing Aboriginal people for information management responsibilities.

DUTIES

- Co-ordinate output to all registry systems including assigning correspondence, and simple indexing.
- Maintain registry systems including creation, circulation, resubmit, merging and disposal procedures. Maintain audit systems.

- Maintain CARMS records management software and generate reports as required.
- Under direction provide assistance to key secretarial staff at unit level.
- Maintain a confidential and physically secure service.
- Oversee, fax, telex and electronic communications.
- Provide training in basic registry procedures to other staff in the Information Services Unit.

QUALIFICATIONS:

An appropriate records management qualification and/or registration with a recognised records association. Extensive experience in a registry setting preferred.

BENEFITS:

- Salary within the range of Administrative Service Officer Level 2 (\$21,032 to \$23,504).
- Five weeks annual leave with airfare assistance.
- Contract employment of up to three years, renewable.
- Relocation on appointment.
- Temporary housing assistance may be available.
- Conditions similar to members of the Australian Public Service.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Mr. Bob Broughton (089) 52 3800.

Written applications providing full details of personal, educational and employment history with the names and telephone contacts of three professional referees should be addressed to:

Director
Central Land Council
P.O. Box 3321

ALICE SPRINGS N.T. 0871

Applications close 30th November 1989

BOOK REVIEW

MANAGING LAWYERS' INFORMATION

Peter Moore LL.B., Dip. Archiv. Admin.

Sydney, Blackstone Press, 1989.

ISBN 1-875114-04-1.

Reviewer: Wendy Duggan ARMA

This new release on managing information in a legal environment is a concise, well written addition to the literature on information management techniques. The author is qualified in both the law and archives, and has built a successful consulting service advising the legal profession, in particular, on management of precedents and opinions.

The book is the result of a series of seminars, conducted by the author in the context of continuing legal education for the legal profession. As such it is written for legal practitioners themselves, more than for support staff. Indeed the layout of the book is intended to resemble the form of a legal brief.

If one reads the book from cover to cover, expecting a dissertation on the finer points of records management, it can at times seem simplistic and repetitious. However, the book is not intended to be read in this manner, but to be an-often-referred-to manual. In this context the repetition is forgivable, as some points must be repeated under various topics in case that chapter alone is consulted.

The author spends much time analysing the nature of information generated by and required

by legal practices. He does not restrict his analysis to information in paper format, and indeed spends little time on the management of paper records *per se*. However, the author does encourage legal practitioners to understand and actively manage the information they generate and require. To his credit, Mr. Moore exhorts lawyers to embrace technological solutions, but to retain control of the direction of these solutions, so that their practice is not driven by the ubiquitous legal accounting package. Mr. Moore contends that if lawyers understand their information needs, they are better placed to manage the means of handling information within their practices.

To a large extent, the book avoids lengthy and technical discussions on such things as language control, but contains excellent, simple explanations of the need for sensible classification of information by using a thesaurus.

As a records management practitioner rather than a legal practitioner, the simplistic approach could become frustrating. However, clearly this book is not intended for this audience. Rather than preaching to the converted about the joys of sound information management, Mr. Moore has directed his advice to those who are in a position to implement such practices.

This book should prove an invaluable aid to office administrators, legal practitioners and support staff in legal offices. It is the first in a planned series. The other title available at this time is "Managing Precedents and Opinions".

BOOK REVIEW

RECORDS MANAGEMENT HANDBOOK **Ira Penn, Anne Morddel, Gail Pennix and** **Kelvin Smith**

Gower Publishing Company Limited,
Hampshire England, 1989.

Reviewer: Barbara Reed, BA(Hons),
MA(Hons), Dip.Archiv.Admin.

Barbara Reed is a senior consultant with Records Archives and Information Management Pty. Ltd. Barbara has extensive experience in the information delivery industry, as a practising Records Manager and Archivist, but principally as an independent consultant. Barbara's commitment to the entire information delivery processes viewed as a continuum have involved her in all areas of the industry. Barbara has been an active member of the R.M.A.A. for many years and was a Branch Councillor until 1988.

This book has already raised a few hackles in the Australian records management community. We are so eager for new texts on records management, which as the authors so rightly point out is a growing and dynamic area of activity, that we pounce on any new text with avidity, only to be perturbed when it doesn't completely fulfil our own requirements for records management guidance.

Perhaps the reasons for this disappointment come from our different perspective of what records management is, rather from any faults of this or any other book. The definition of records management must be central to our understanding of the tasks we perform and our relation to the other information professions and it deserves further exploration. Similarly it would be unfair to review this book without first attempting to define the different roles of records management which seems to be current in the United States, England and Australia and then to place the review of the book within its appropriate context.

Contemplation and discussion with my colleagues over the past year have begun to clarify ideas that perhaps records management in Australia has quite different emphases to records management practiced in America.

In Australia, records managers place the strongest emphasis on the creation of records. We have taken the life cycle concept to heart with the belief that if you manage the creation phase correctly, the remainder of the life cycle becomes a logical and easy management progression. We stress the importance of indexing and classification of information. In practice, and increasingly in our literature, we explore notions such as keyword classification, thesaurus construction, development of records management software

which will control vocabulary in file titling and emphasise the importance of control of the official record of an organisation in a centralised or decentralised environment.

With no direct experience, other than published works and listening to overseas visitors whenever occasion permits, my impression is that the American concept of records management approaches records management from a different part of the life cycle. The stages of storage and maintenance seem to be the point at which American records management practice begins, perhaps due to the personal filing systems which seem to be the norm. This places the role of records manager into a more passive mode, not really able to exert control over the creation stages of information systems, but left to manage the results of the various records systems. Thus perhaps the emphasis on surveys or inventories, non-current storage management and vital records programmes, to be found in American texts, might be placed in context.

With the exception of forms and directives management which seem to be a particularly American emphasis, many of the tasks outlined in American texts are undertaken in Australia by our archival profession. Perhaps the unnecessarily defensive positions which the records management and archival professions habitually demonstrate towards each other, can begin to be better understood in the light of local experience being confused by overseas texts which muddy our ideas of what tasks each constituent part of the information continuum should undertake.

It is interesting to speculate how the British experience fits into these defined roles. As an ex-colony, Australia inherited the registry system with its detailed registration procedures. We should therefore have a great deal in common with the British experience. Yet it seems that little resources have been allotted to the control and improvement of the current records systems in Britain. Records management seems to be a newly developing area in Britain and its emphasis seems to be similar to the American emphasis, with management of non-current records taking precedence over the development of efficient mechanisms for the retrieval and management of records in their active phase.

If these reflections are accurate, then it would appear that Australia has a great deal to offer other countries from our own practical experience with wrestling official records systems out of the rigid nineteenth methods of control and working to develop improved retrieval mechanisms. However, we still have a long way to go before we can make any claims to have got the management of active information right.

It is in this context that Australian records managers should approach *Records Management Handbook* by two American and two British authors. This book does not reflect the Australian interest in the establishment and management of systems of information retrieval for current records systems.

Given that this is the area of greatest interest to Australian records managers, it is inevitable that we will first turn to the chapter on the Management of Files. It is unfortunate that this chapter is one of the least appealing in the book. Undoubtedly the lack of sophistication in the mechanisms proposed in this chapter reflect the way things are currently done in Britain, but we will all find argument with statements such as "To a large extent the referencing system will dictate the classification and arrangement of files in the registry." (p. 130). Similarly the treatment of file movements is simplistic in recommending file transit slips, there is no analysis of notions of controlling vocabulary and the discussion of records management software leads to the belief that is really only suitable for the management of non-current records.

While our particular interests may not be emphasised in the *Handbook* it would be a great mistake to dismiss this book. The authors explicitly state that this book does not cover every facet of records and information management and that the decisions on what to exclude were based on what was felt too available in the literature. The *Handbook* was not written as a teaching tool, but rather is aimed at the practitioner.

Written by authors from two countries with different environments for records management, the book does include some compromises, as for example the inclusion of Forms and Directives Management for the American records manager, and some explanation of the Registry systems for the British audience. However, undoubtedly because of the more developed records management practices in America, the book has an American ambience and it would be interesting to see how effectively many of its techniques are applied in Britain.

Some of the inevitable difficulties that the attempt to provide a text appropriate to two different audiences is clear in a statement such as "it is our duty in this book to tell people the correct way of doing things, rather than merely to reiterate the wrong way currently being done" (p. 180). There is also the odd confusion about terminology with, for example both inventory and survey, and retention and disposition schedules being used synonymously.

The *Handbook* is divided into six major parts, which begin with an introductory section and a section on establishing a programme. The life cycle stages are then discussed - Creation, maintenance and use; Appraisal, scheduling and storage, followed by Ultimate Disposition. The

sixth part deals with The Future. An introductory section links the chapters included in each part.

The introduction to records management and chapter on establishing a programme are both well written and interesting. The pros and cons of cost justifying records management are presented with great pertinence and the statement of the importance of records management as a management tool can be read with great benefit by all practicing records managers. The emphasis on including information in all its technological formats in the records management programme is also well stated, although more practical advice about the how to actually achieve this would have been welcome.

Despite this, practical advice is the hallmark of the *Handbook*. It takes the reader step by step through the necessary to have certain controls and then discusses various options for establishing those controls. The book succeeds best in those chapters dealing with practical planning and implementation aspects of the programme. Particularly impressive are the chapters on The Information Survey and Disaster Planning and Recovery. The detailed treatment given to establishment and control of an inactive records storage facility in the Chapter on Records Storage is the best I have encountered in the literature.

Aspects of management theory as applicable to management analysis tasks are outlined briefly as the subject is too large for comprehensive coverage which is done in many other texts. However records managers will find helpful directions on how to cost various aspects of programmes such as direct labour costs, overhead costs, annual equipment costs and the like.

The Australian experience precludes detailed comment on the chapters on Reports and Directives management. The chapter on Appraisal and Retention Scheduling outline the basic tenets of appraisal according to Schellenberg's doctrines. It is to the credit of the authors that they tackle in general terms appraisal of case files or particular instance papers and raise the necessity to deal with machine readable records according to established appraisal criteria.

A Chapter is included on archival control systems but Australian records managers would be better advised to read local texts with their emphasis on series concepts of control rather than enter into the complex record group/class concepts outlined here.

The authors present a positive picture for the future of records management under a broader umbrella of information management within organisations. They emphasise the necessity of a flexible and receptive attitude towards new technologies and methods of managing information.

The *Handbook* seems to be an unnecessarily large book with an A4 page size. The presenta-

tion of the text is not enhanced by attractive graphics or photographs but consists mainly of solid text. The tables included in the book are not assisted by the size of the pages and tend to swim in the page. Quite a few sample forms are included. An index is provided to the *Handbook*. Appendices on Steps to the selection and contracting of services, products and consultants and Organizations Relating to or of Interest to Records Management are included as is a brief section on Selected Readings.

Priced at £29.50, the *Records Management Handbook* contains a great deal of interest to Australian records managers and archivists and should be read with interest by all.

This *Handbook* is not yet the text that Australian records managers are waiting for. Our emphasis

on the management of current information for ease of retrieval by current users and easier management throughout the remainder of the record life cycle does not seem to be adequately addressed in records management texts. Perhaps such a thing will never appear without our direct involvement. It appears that we have something positive to offer the local and perhaps international community. Who knows, perhaps in the future we could export our theories in this area and generate as much interest as has been created in archival arenas with the much acclaimed "series system" of control enunciated by Peter Scott and his colleagues at Australian Archives.

NATIONAL CONVENTION

This space is reserved for commentaries on how wonderful the National Convention was.

It also contains many photos of participants having a great time!

This was the plan but due to circumstances beyond anyone's control the Convention has been postponed.

Oh, well - See you in Perth in DECEMBER!!!



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