**MARITA KEENAN**

**Talking points — The Records Manager is dead: Long live (electronic) records management!**

1. The records manager as we know him/ her is only about 40 years old. Now that position is:
   1. at least changing and
   2. in many instances cases disappearing or
   3. evolving into more business strategic positions.
2. That is not to say that records management was new 40 years ago. On the contrary - scribes in ancient societies were the creators and also the managers and keepers of records. In the Middle Ages with the advent of the printing press, expansion of learning and literacy, banking and trade, increased bureaucracy in addition to scribes there was a growth in clerks, in librarians etc.
3. The position of registry clerk / officer grew substantially through the 1800s/1900s in businesses and government agencies. Theirs was a purely supporting role for the business and they worked with a reasonable limited and static classification system registering correspondence which came in and out of the organization, attaching it to file and tracking the movements of files as they passed from staff member to staff member. They also followed a regime for the destruction of files no longer required by the business or passed the files to be retained into the care of archivists.
   1. After Second World War business and government activities boomed and there was an explosion in office technologies – electric typewriters, photocopies etc - all of which meant there was an explosion in records created and received in the course of business. This in turn meant:
      1. there was a need for more complex classification systems for records both from topical and security perspectives,
      2. actioning matters became more complex and associated records needed to move faster .

1. Organizations felt the impact of information and records overload and sought out people with professional training in information handling (often librarians) to assist them address these issues and improve the management and processing of records.
2. Archivists were also feeling overwhelmed by the quantity of records being deposited and concerned about there arrangement for future retrieval and usage. ( circa 1970s / 80s)
3. Government State archivists in particular took the initiative endeavoring to set policies and standards for how records would be created, arranged and protected in government agencies in order to ensure records deposited in the Archives would still be in a condition and form to be accessible and managed over time.
4. In addition to and as a result of their initiatives a standard for records management was developed and adopted in Australia and later adopted by ISO. (ISO 15489).

1. We also saw special tertiary courses commencing in records management. They drew from librarianship and archives management predominantly.
2. Higher level positions were created in government departments and organizations for graduates to take on role of:
   1. Implementing and rolling out new classification systems and file (hard copy) management systems
   2. Implementing upgraded and expanded retention and disposal schedules
   3. Developing records disaster prevention and recovery programs
   4. Training staff in their records management responsibilities and how to use the new systems
3. Still businesses battled with keeping up with processing and managing records. Soon there were new IT solutions with the emergency of electronic document management systems and RMers were then tasked with rolling these systems out across organizations and training all staff in their role in not only creating records but in capturing them correctly in the systems.
4. The systems were expensive to implement and not always viewed favorably as staff did not find them particularly intuitive and saw them as an intrusion on their time. They were often seen as too prescriptive in terms of requirements from archival authorities and RMers. And of little direct business benefit.

1. Yet government agencies had met Archive requirements and had complied with their implementation as well as all the other records management changes including new classification and retention and disposal schedules etc. Business organizations had often followed suit too to some degree in the hope of better information control and as part of risk management concerns. It had been a costly business and senior executives questioned the business benefits to some extent.
2. With the systems in place, in their search to save costs, CEOs started to consider cost saving measures when it came to records staff as, after all, there was now technology in place which supposedly had automated and addressed the management and retrieval of records and met archival institutional requirements. They not only disposed of lower level records staff but stated to consider whether the highly paid records managers were still required.
3. Simultaneously the effort to distinguish between information and records had been seen as over whelming and the awareness quickly arose that not only are records to be found in EDRM systems but in line of business systems and in the world of organizations’ social media.
4. Some organizations, often commercial ones, are moving to treating all information from a retention perspective. This then has seen a move to records management falling within the information governance sphere or put another way records management has morphed into information governance. This trend is here too emerging in the thinking of some CEOs of government agencies.
5. There is a realization that RM functionality needs to be transparent and also embedded in line of business systems and addressed as far as possible in social media systems deployed in a business environment.
6. The record keeping standard ISO 15489 has been updated and the committee that developed it are drafting guidelines to support compliance for information architecture managers, RM in the Cloud and are considering RM in block chain technologies.
7. RM staff numbers have been reduced, RM responsibilities (as seen) passed to other management positions and we have also seen some courses in RM phased out or melded with other courses in tertiary institutions.
8. Rise of data governance now too. Data governance helps organizations better manage availability, usability, integrity and security of enterprise data!!!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. So – it appears that the role of the records manager is diminishing and or morphing. Is this happening or something like it happening in Singapore?
2. What are the threats and wins that can be seen around this happening?
3. What are the roles likely to take on RM responsibilities?
4. Are the people occupying positions to which RM is likely to be devolved adequately trained and knowledgeable about RM principles?
5. Is there evidence of changes in tertiary courses in this direction?
6. Is the RM profession in its now somewhat weakened state willing to let machines be records managers?
7. What is happening to archivists through all this?

REFERENCES

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Is machine learning the future of records management?

[IQ: The RIM Quarterly](https://search.informit.com.au/browseJournalTitle;res=IELBUS;issn=0816-200X)

[Volume 33 Issue 1 (Feb 2017)](https://search.informit.com.au/browsePublication;py=2017;vol=33;res=IELBUS;issn=0816-200X;iss=1)

Abstract: Passive records management may well be the future through the use of machine learning, but only if we are prepared to entrust the principles of record keeping to machines and let them become our records management experts.

<https://search.informit.com.au/documentSummary;dn=596682082826935;res=IELBUS>

Inglis, Nick

What is retention management? How will records managers work in the future?

Iron Mountain

<https://www.ironmountain.com/resources/general-articles/w/what-is-retention-management-how-will-records-managers-work-in-the-future>

RECORDS MANAGEMENT COURSES AVAILABLE:

Records Management for IM4L – Cybrarian Ventures Singapore – face to face

<https://www.cvpl.com.sg/records-management/>

Archiving and Records Management Course – Knowles Training Institute Singapore – face to face <https://knowlesti.sg/archiving-and-records-management-training-course-in-singapore/>

Electronic Records Management Course – AIIM – online

<https://www.aiim.org/enterprise-records-management>

Graduate Diploma in Records Management and Archives – Charles Sturt University – online

<https://study.curtin.edu.au/offering/course-pg-graduate-diploma-in-records-management-and-archives--gd-recmar/>

RIMPA Accredited Degrees and Diplomas – list of approved courses – Records and Information Management Professionals Australasia

<https://www.rimpa.com.au/events/education/rimpa-accredited-education/>

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