



Siller Systems
Administration

02 9979 9974

siller@siller.com.au
www.siller.com.au



RM Tips

Security in the Cloud:

- ⇒ Ensure usernames and passwords remain discreet
- ⇒ Backup data stored on the cloud
- ⇒ Encrypt your data, if possible
- ⇒ Delete old information
- ⇒ Make use of double authentication options (e.g. third party tools that send SMS codes for authentication to your cloud site)

The Real Value of Information Classification

Article Read Time: 3mins

Just in case any of you have been recently questioning the role and value of records classification (as an intellectual rather than automated effort), I would like to recount the following.

I have recently returned from a trip to South-East Asia, which amongst many interesting and beautiful sights, sounds, tastes and smells, included a trip to Choeng Ek extermination camp/prison (near Phnom Penh) in Cambodia. Besides being a particularly emotional site, it revealed that the Khmer Rouge were meticulous record keepers.

As a quick recap (courtesy of Zoltan Istvan, the National Geographic Today, January 10, 2003):
From 1975 to 1979, Pol Pot and his Khmer Rouge soldiers killed 1.7 million Cambodians, or 21 percent of the population, according to Yale University's Cambodia Genocide Program.the killing fields (Choeung Ek is only one of thousands of other such sites in Cambodia) contains mass graves... for approximately 20,000 Cambodians, many of whom were tortured before being killed.

Keeping of records by the Khmer Rouge perpetrators was one important aspect of this story. They diligently recorded every detail of their prisoners, including photographing each. However, the other key point is the way in which the records were eventually used against the Khmer Rouge.

If those that were arrested by the Khmer Rouge were photographed they were automatically being categorised as enemies of the state - those people who would not fit into Pol Pot's vision of a pure agrarian society.

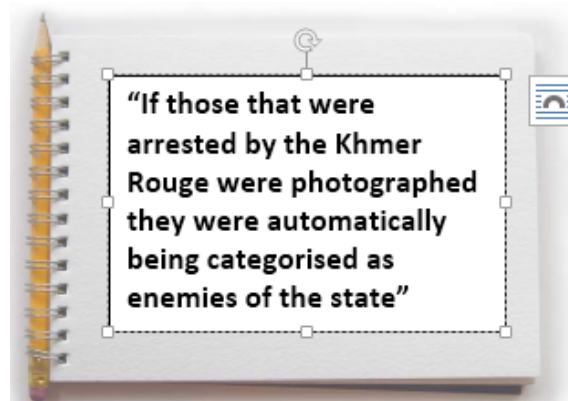
In the 1990s, long after the Khmer Rouge had been defeated and their records seized, information management professionals at Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam) added descriptive information concerning victim photographs, including their ethnicity. The fact that the photos were preserved and classified in this manner later played a major part in the case for genocide charges against Khmer Rouge officials.

There may be questions over the possible subjectivity of the action, but what better way to utilise information management skills but as a political power for justice?

Further references:

Caswell, Michelle. "Using Classification to Convict the Khmer Rouge," *Journal of Documentation*, Vol. 68 Iss: 2, pp.162 - 184

Caswell, Michelle. "Archiving the Unspeakable: Silence and Voice in Khmer Rouge Mug Shots," Doctor of Philosophy (Library and Information Studies) dissertation, University Of Wisconsin, 2012



Records Disposal: Development Scrutiny versus Implementation Neglect

Article read time: 3 mins

Developing a records disposal authority is a lengthy and involved process. Those writing such documents (which become legal instruments in Australian state, territory and Commonwealth jurisdictions), must have advanced research and analytical skills; they must be able to read and understand complex legislation, policies and standards; moreover, they must be able to communicate with organisational representatives, map business processes then categorise and appraise the value of resulting information. For government records disposal authorities, regulatory bodies such as the National Archives of Australia and corresponding state and territory agencies, diligently check organisational submissions to ensure that their required processes are followed and deliverables meet their standards. Within the private sector, careful checks are often made by legal and governance advisors.

The process to develop a records disposal authority, as many of you will know only too well, can take many months to ensure that the end result is accurate, complete and comprehensive.

When organisations embark on the development of a records disposal authority, they are committing to a considerable investment of time and resources. Naturally, a return on that investment is expected, and should be realised through the reduction of physical material and ability to rationalise digital holdings.

With all of this resource commitment during development and the expected benefits, it never ceases to amaze that the corresponding implementation resources do not match development resources. A well-constructed records disposal authority does not necessarily translate into a well-implemented records disposal authority.



Rather than ensuring that those implementing the disposal decisions are similarly skilled to those who have developed them, organisations will often relegate the process (records sentencing) to those least skilled and experienced. The result can be incorrect disposal of records.

In addition, a number of organisations do not implement their records disposal authorities for all information. Often it is restricted to registered, physical files which are an ever-decreasing source of business information today.

Capturing Digital Archives

Article read time: 5 mins

It is probably fair to say that most Government agencies are not in the business of information preservation – that's why we have National and State archive authorities whose skills, knowledge and expertise can be leveraged to assist agencies capture, manage and preserve records, including those that will eventually become permanent historical records of Australia.

With the proliferation of digital records, both born-digital and digitised records, the issue of preservation has become more significant than ever before. Whilst government agencies grapple with new and ever changing systems, application, databases, software....and multiple versions of each; there is an increasing strain placed on information managers to be able to identify, manage, sentence and preserve digital records to meet day-to-day business and operational requirements, let alone historical requirements. Compounding this are the results from a recent State

Records [survey on public sector attitudes and practices in relation to digital disposal](#) which identified that digital disposal in the public sector is problematic, difficult, time consuming and not managed well, if at all.

The Public Records Office of Victoria (PROV) commissioned a [report in 1996](#) to address the issue of ensuring the retention of and ongoing access to digital records now and into the future. The report, although somewhat dated now, provides a 'conceptual business case' for managing digital access and preservation issues and (broadly) makes the following recommendations for archival records.

Records should be:

- ⇒ 'frozen' into a 'representation format' which strips away reference to the creating program/system but retaining the form, content and structure of the record;
- ⇒ catalogued to enable retrieval and access;
- ⇒ stored in a management facility;
- ⇒ transferred to new management facilities (as required) when technology changes.

In order to access records, the information-seeker would then be able to browse the catalogue, retrieving and accessing the record in a relevant converted format necessary for printing or display.

With the development and launch of Xena (XML electronic normalising of archives) by the National Archives of Australia in 2006 (which does just that), it perhaps leaves little doubt that stripping away references to creating programs/systems and 'normalising' records is the direction in which we should be heading. However, the issues of records sentencing and transfer perhaps require closer consideration.

The harvesting of records into the archives collection has typically occurred when the agency no longer requires the record for business or operational purposes. With digital records, this may be some years down the track, in which time systems may have become obsolete, information has been 'locked' within legacy systems, inadvertently deleted or lost – generally inaccessible and unable for transfer. PROV's conceptual business case acknowledges this, and identifies that archival records are 'frozen' and captured shortly after creation. However, the determination that a record has archival status may not be easily determined until some time after creation. Therefore, any conceptual model would need to ensure the ability to 'defrost' records when it might later be identified that they do not meet archives selection criteria.



Considering this, perhaps a revised 'conceptual' model might 'flag' records proposed for permanent archives, and in doing so, records would automatically be transferred to the relevant archives authority at point of creation/capture by the agency (using a widget of some kind). The archive authority would then be responsible for 'freezing' the record and managing its long term preservation. For records that have clear-cut archival status, such as snapshots of an agencies website, records relating to the development of legislation, meetings of Boards etc., there would be little or no requirement to redress sentencing decisions. However, the 'flag' could be renegotiated and recommended for retraction by the agency, as and if required for records whose sentence could not immediately be determined.

Through the immediate and automatic capture and transfer of records from government agencies to the archives authority, agencies would be relieved of the burden to ensure the ongoing preservation of archival records and continue to use business relevant systems whilst being assured that the historical record is retained - a similar approach that can perhaps be seen with the recent launch of the NSW State Records' [OpenGov NSW](#).

As identified by Oliver Morley in his interview with Dr Andrew Foster regarding [challenges facing the National archives](#); any solution to capture government business records into the archives needs to be a seamless process in order for it to truly be successful. Perhaps only real success in capturing digital archives will be seen when archives authorities take the bull by the horns and manage the preservation issues on behalf of government agencies.

In summary, consideration needs to be given to:

- ⇒ increased utilisation of open source software within agencies to avoid potential issues associated with access,
- ⇒ preservation and transfer of information and data held within core business systems/programs;
- ⇒ more immediate transfer of archives to archival authorities, i.e. when a report has been published, meetings have been completed, projects are finalised etc. to avoid long delays in transfer and the potential issues that poses for agencies and the records themselves;
- ⇒ exploring opportunities for automated captured and transfer of readily identifiable archival records holdings.

References:

Foster, A (2011). *Challenges facing the national archives: Part 1 – interview with Oliver Morley*. Retrieved from <http://media.nationalarchives.gov.uk/index.php/challenges-facing-the-national-archives/>

Public Records Office of Victoria (1996). *Keeping electronic records forever: Records management vision development*. Retrieved from <http://prov.vic.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/kerf.pdf>

State Records NSW (2012). *For the record: managing records in the NSW public sector*. Retrieved from <http://www.records.nsw.gov.au/publications/for-the-record-ewsletter/for-the-record-december-2012>

Upcoming Training

Training dates for *Retention and Disposal of Public Health Sector Records* in 2013 are as follows:

- 16 May—Sydney
- 23 July —Queanbeyan
- 14 August —Sydney
- 9 October—Wagga Wagga

Note: SSA will also deliver in-house training courses on demand (minimum of 6 attendees).



Our Services

SSA offers a full array of information management services, including (but not limited to):

- records management systems performance and compliance reviews
- compilation of classification schemes/thesauri, disposal authorities, policy and procedure manuals
- information management training (including HP TRIM training)
- information management technology needs analysis, including software specification and evaluation
- information systems configuration, design and implementation
- a.k.a.® Training

To find out more about SSA's services (including our new services), visit our website at www.siller.com.au, email us at siller@siller.com.au, or contact one of our consultants on (02) 9979 9974.

If you would prefer to receive future newsletters electronically, just drop us an e-mail at siller@siller.com.au