Siller Systems Administration

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Farewell Rhonda

Our long-standing Administrative Coordinator, Rhonda Newton-Brown, whom many of you will know from training bookings, accounts, etc. retired at the end of September. Her excellent assistance will be missed but she's left SSA's administration in the capable hands of Laraine Jackson who has worked alongside Rhonda for almost 15 years.

More Recordkeeping Failures – So What?

Article Read Time: 4mins
Author: Joy Siller

We're all aware of the recordkeeping failures that are highlighted in the media, inquiries and court cases with unfortunate regularity. Is it possible that we in the information management community are becoming complacent regarding these failures?

I can see little discussion from our profession regarding the recent inquiry into the Home Insulation Program (HIP). This is despite the Inquiry finding that the process revealed an "inadequate system of document management and recordkeeping by those involved in the HIP", and that to properly provide advice and record all key decisions, "it is necessary for there to be a system of recordkeeping and for that system to be enforced". Furthermore, the Inquiry stated that it was "evident that those engaged in the HIP did not keep detailed records of key decisions and how they were arrived at. Many claimed they were simply too busy to do so." (*Report of the Royal Commission into the Home Insulation Program*, Commonwealth of Australia, 2014, p.317 - HIP Report).

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Are we becoming complacent because we've seen so many of these problems and the resulting recommendations, but very little then changes in the organisations affected? Are the problems actually human problems rather than systems or procedural problems, and in our profession we don't have the solutions to human problems?

I was once asked during a presentation regarding training techniques how you train somebody who doesn't want to learn; I think I provided some glib response concerning the need to highlight the benefits to the individual concerned then, if that doesn't work, give up because some people are just untrainable! Unfortunately, failures in information management aren't limited to just one or two employees that can be singled out as difficult cases and forgotten.

In an attempt to be successful and avoid these constant failures, information management processes and systems need to be smarter and more adaptable to cater for the quirkiness of human nature, and this is where it all becomes tricky. Further research into business information management and human factors may be necessary rather than replicating the same standards and systems that clearly are not working particularly well.

Guide to a successful records disposal program: Disposal implementation (sentencing, culling and disposal) – bite the bullet and clean-up digital information

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In our previous Newsletter (Feb 2014), we discussed planning and initiating a 'records' disposal program within your organisation. Let's broaden the 'r' word now and think about implementing disposal for all business information.

For example, in a recent clean up of email, it was once again clear that proper classification of information was the key. The question is "What is *proper* classification". Certainly email contains messages that need to be kept for evidential and decision support purposes, but there's also many that are personal, cc's, and unsolicited advertising. To make this decision, it must be 'classified' accordingly, yet we don't usually have 'copies, 'personal', and 'unsolicited' in official information classification schemes.

Unfortunately, because in the records management field we are so focussed on 'records', we forget about the need to manage the whole range of information that passes our way. For some reason this didn't seem to be so much an issue with physical material. Now we cogitate over what to keep and not keep with digital information. To be honest, we need to be discerning and fairly ruthless; otherwise we drown in the digital sea.

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What makes digital disposal of information difficult for organisations?
- It's usually not neatly confined to a single system.
- There's so much of it. You expend time and effort cleaning up email, databases, and network drives, only to find them overloaded again in weeks or months.
- It takes time, and does management want to expend time and effort on something intangible?
- It's often not planned and properly managed from the outset.

Implementation of a digital disposal program needs:

- A successful, smooth start. What are the priorities? Are there any areas that are easier than others and consequently quickly covered off and used as examples of success?

- Careful negotiation and ongoing communication with the stakeholders (which is why it's better to start with the 'easier' areas).

- Allocation and monitoring of appropriate time and resources. This shouldn't be underestimated. There is no escaping the need for involvement of the creators of the information in the process.

- Maintaining statistics (who, when, how many) and reporting progress to management.

- Simplified classification and disposal rules that will not only lend themselves to time and resource efficient implementation but potential automation (if not immediately, then with future systems implemented within your organisation).

Remember: Digital disposal program means identifying material for ongoing retention (and proper management) as well as that which is due for deletion. This must be clearly understood by the organisation.

Who Influences the Development of Your Information Classification Scheme/Taxonomy?

A colleague and I recently commenced work on a paper to investigate this topic. It follows nicely from a previous paper that I presented at the ICA concerning the effects of organisational culture on information management compliance and practices. (International Council on Archives Congress Brisbane 2012 – *Business information management and organisational culture: Why do some "get it" and others don't?*).

The paper will hopefully give some insight into the reasons that even the most well-intended classification/taxonomy project has problems during development and/or implementation, or after a short business-as-usual period. It will draw on secondary research, practical experience and information research. Once again, it will highlight the need to consider human factors at play in such projects which may have more of an impact than methodology and structures.

Faceted Classification & Navigation

Sometimes, of course, methodology and structures may be holding your classification/taxonomy project back.

Ruth Butcher, our senior consultant, and I recently presented a workshop on the topic of faceted classification and navigation. It's not new by any means but it's always worth revisiting (as I've done frequently in the past 20 years) in an effort to encourage more of its use in business information management systems.

It appears that faceted classification (or more specifically faceted navigation) is starting to get traction with some systems design and interfaces, including SharePoint and OpenText.

No system of classification is perfect. This can sometimes be attributed to organisational peculiarities as mentioned in the previous discussion on the politics of taxonomies. However, research and practice indicate that a faceted approach includes the following advantages over more rigid tree structured classification and navigation. It is:

- more likely to facilitate the automation of classification and disposal.
- better suited to the touch screen technology of portable devices.
- easy to add more facets and terms (labels) within facets over time.
- able to let the user decide where they want to start to navigate.
- less likely to result in non-specific or nil search results as queries evolve progressively.

If we don't push for these alternative solutions in information management systems, little will change. There has to be a better way to encourage systems use and compliant practices.
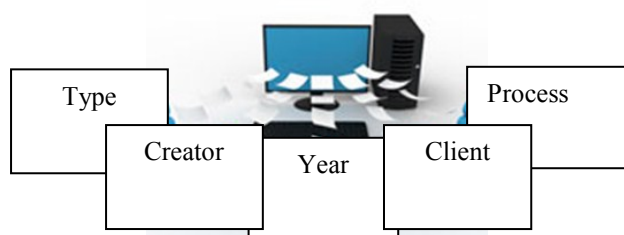
SSA's Services

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

- information management performance and compliance reviews.
- compilation of classification schemes/taxonomies, disposal authorities, policy and procedure manuals.
- information management training (including information governance fundamentals, disposal, and in systems such as HP TRIM, a.k.a.®).
- information management technology needs analysis, including software specification and evaluation.
- information systems configuration, design and implementation.
- HP TRIM/HP Records Manager implementation and support services.
- information management mentoring and locum services.
- onsite physical and digital disposal implementation.
- data migration (including network drives).

State Records training

See State Records website for information concerning scheduled *Retention and Disposal of Public Health Records* training (http://www.records.nsw.gov.au/recordkeeping/advice/training-and-skills-development/training-calendar

Tailored training

SSA also provides ad hoc and/or tailored information management training within client facilities or our rooms. Contact us for more details - siller@siller.com.au, (02) 9979 9974.

New training courses

To complement our existing range of courses, SSA will be introducing two new HP TRIM/HP Records Manager courses in early 2015:

- Information security implementation in HP TRIM – a practical workshop for system administrators covering NSW and Commonwealth information security policy requirements.
- HP TRIM and migrating legacy information.

Accreditation

SSA has recently added to its various information management accreditations. We now hold the following:

- NSW Government ICT Services Scheme (including Professional Services)
- NSW Procurement – Early Access Registration List (Performance and Management Services – full qualification)
- Queensland Government Information Technology Contracting (GITC) (Software Support Services, ICT Consultancy Services and ICT Contracting Services)
- Queensland Government ICT Strategic Sourcing (ICTSS) Panel (Strategy and Architecture and Business Change categories)
- CCIQ QAssure

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.

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