

Records management, information governance and the future of information lifecycle management

Isn't information governance just a different name for records management?

By Don Lueders

Hard as I try, I simply cannot make myself understand how information governance isn't just a different name for records management.

I'm sorry, I know this is probably offensive to a lot of people. 'Information governance' has taken over just about everything. Even ARMA (formerly the Association of Records Managers and Administrators) now describes itself as simply 'the authority on information governance'. Its entire mission statement reads: "To advance information governance principles and practices, and to support the ongoing development of information governance professionals."

Few people would question Gartner's authority on all things technology. Here's Gartner's official definition of information governance according to Debra Logan:

"Information governance is the specification of decision rights and an accountability framework to encourage desirable behavior in the valuation, creation, storage, use, archival and deletion of information. It includes the processes, roles, standards and metrics that ensure the effective and efficient use of information in enabling an organization to achieve its goals."

I honestly fail to see what part of that definition distinguishes it from traditional records management practices. ➔



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LET'S LOOK AT THE FUNDAMENTALS

Think back 30 years or so. Back then, virtually all unstructured information was managed in non-electronic form. The vast majority of it was, of course, on paper. What were records managers doing with this information back then? Encouraging desirable behavior in its valuation and creation? Yes, certainly. Storage and use? Absolutely. Archival and deletion? You bet. Those are fundamental records management services.

And, of course, this work included managing the processes, roles, standards and metrics that ensured these non-electronic records were used in the most effective and efficient ways possible.

And none of this changed over the next few decades as more and more information was converted to an electronic format.

So that begs the question, "Were we doing information governance back then or are we still doing records management now?"

Cohasset Association, ARMA and the Association for Information and Image Management (AIIM) recently released their biennial Information Governance Benchmarking Survey². In it, the authors provide the following definitions for 'records and information management' and 'information governance':

"Records and information management (RIM) is information lifecycle management – the management of information from its creation through its active and inactive phases and concluding with its final disposition.

"Information governance is emerging as a comprehensive platform for managing information. Cohasset defines information governance as establishing the policy-level rules, investment priorities and accountabilities for managing the lifecycle of information."

In my nearly 20 years as a professional records manager, I can recall creating countless policy-level rules and all sorts

of investment priorities for my customers. And accountability – knowing the provenance of a record, knowing where it is and who has access to it and knowing what internal and external lifecycle management requirements applied to it – was always my primary concern.

So, again, I fail to see what has changed. But let me be very clear. I have no argument with the term 'information governance'. I actually like it as a description for the work records managers perform. But here is why I believe it has the potential to cause significant damage – damage beyond what most information professionals across all industries seem to understand or want to admit.

TIME IS RUNNING OUT

The results of the Cohasset/AIIM/ARMA survey this year were – as they have consistently been in every previous survey – simply appalling. The distinguished panel of survey co-authors did a good job presenting many of the findings in a positive light, but some results simply can't be ignored:

- ◆ Over 60% of respondents indicated that eligible electronically stored information (ESI) is not regularly deleted.
- ◆ Only 5% of respondents reported automated disposition processes for all their collaboration tools (eg, project sites, SharePoint), while 62% had no automation or did not know.
- ◆ Less than 10% of respondents considered management of 'new media and locations' (eg, cloud services, mobility, social channels) at their organisation mature.
- ◆ Information lifecycle management in the application development lifecycle was considered mature by only 13% of the respondents.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

HarborPoint Information Management, LLC founder Don Lueders is a Certified Records Manager (CRM) and a Certified Document and Imaging Architect (CDIA) with over 20 years of Enterprise Content and Records Management (ECRM) experience. Don has worked extensively with numerous records and information management solutions and has been working closely with SharePoint since initially supporting the Microsoft development team as they began to integrate records management functionality into their MOSS 07 platform.



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- ◆ Only 8% of respondents report that records management metrics at their organisation are mature.
- ◆ Only 12% indicated that records management planning is integrated with application decommissioning.

Use whatever labels you like, but these are *records management problems* and they will only be resolved by records management professionals applying traditional information lifecycle management practices using state-of-the-art technologies and innovative, next generation records management methodologies.

And time is simply running out. There is no way to escape it. Despite all its inherent risks, cloud computing, to one degree or another, is the undeniable future of information technology. As the findings of the Cohasset survey show, most of the information lifecycle management methodologies we've used for on-premises environments

the last few decades have failed us. We simply cannot apply these same methodologies to information stored in the cloud. If we do, the massive volumes of information created and stored there will quickly overwhelm our organisations and we will *not* be "playing a game of catch up", as the Cohasset report suggests. Catching up will become impossible. ◆

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