

# 8

## Implementing records management: practical and managerial issues

This chapter examines the practical and managerial issues surrounding the establishment and operation of a successful records management programme. It provides advice on the development and maintenance of effective records systems for organizations that already have the human and financial resources to support a records management programme, and guidance on establishing the necessary infrastructure for those at an earlier stage of implementation. It uses the framework recommended in the international standard on records management (ISO 15489-1:2001) and the accompanying technical report (ISO/TR 15489-2:2001).

### Getting started

#### Establishing a records management policy

All organizations should have a formally agreed policy for the management of their records. The goal of the policy 'should be the creation and management of authentic, reliable and useable records, capable of supporting business functions and activities for as long as they are required. . . . The policy should be adopted and endorsed at the highest decision-making level and promulgated throughout the organization' (ISO 15489-1:2001, clause 6.2).

An example of a records management policy is given in Figure 8.2 (page 255). When records management is first under consideration, however, it will not be possible to prepare a fully detailed policy statement. The initial focus must be on obtaining a high-level policy decision that the organization will proceed to set up a programme of records management. When the need for a programme has been formally recognized, decisions are required to establish its broad parameters: in particular, whether it will embrace newly created as well as older records and whether it will cover the whole of the organization or only a part. Once these deci-

sions have been made, the policy can be refined as work proceeds on developing the programme.

Reaching agreement on these initial policy decisions may not be easy. Some individuals at senior level may think that records 'manage themselves', or that decisions about records can safely be left to the initiative of local workgroups or individual staff members; others may not recognize a need for well-managed records or may consider it a low priority. Sometimes a crisis occurs – an organization suffers financial loss because records are unavailable for a legal dispute or for recovery from a disaster – and the case for records management becomes self-evident. In other circumstances some marketing may be required to convince every key senior manager of the need to manage records systematically.

Traditionally, records management programmes were promoted as a means of space saving and cost reduction, and this argument is still valid in paper environments where efficient management of records can offer substantial savings on storage costs. In the world of electronic and hybrid systems storage space has a lower profile, and records management is more effectively promoted in terms of the need to manage evidence and information to improve business performance and support accountability and legal and regulatory compliance.

Ideally, senior management will agree that the programme is to encompass all records in all media throughout the organization. Even if some parts of the organization already have local systems in place, these should be reviewed and incorporated into an organization-wide programme.

Sometimes key players need to be convinced of the need for a programme that is truly comprehensive. Some individuals may believe that records management is only concerned with paper records. A common misapprehension is that back-up systems operated by computing units will provide for the 'archiving' of electronic records, and it may be necessary to explain that back-up mechanisms designed to allow recovery from hardware or software failures are not sufficient to support the ongoing management, accessibility and use of records. Sometimes it is proposed that records management should be concerned only with records that are no longer required for the current business of the organization. While older paper records have often been the focus of records management programmes in the past, organizations now need to recognize that requirements for trustworthy evidence of their activities can only be met in full when all media are covered, and when records management issues are addressed at the point where records creation systems are designed and used.

In practice, however, resource limitations or political factors sometimes mean that a comprehensive programme appears to be an unrealistic aim. In such cases,

the initial policy decision may be to establish a programme of more limited scope. It is common for organizations new to the concept of records management to start on a small scale, and for systems to spread across the organization as the benefits become clear and top management support increases. In some cases a small pilot programme may be formally agreed, with future decisions dependent on the success of the pilot. However modest the initial programme, a systematic approach to planning, design and implementation will be required.

### Defining initial responsibilities

When a records management programme is introduced, responsibility rests at several levels. Senior management support is vital to the success of the project. It is essential to involve the chief executive or management board from the start, so that they support the programme, endorse the policy and provide resources.

At an early stage, key stakeholders can be brought together in a records management policy group or committee. Members of the group are likely to include business unit managers and senior computing, information management, financial, legal and corporate governance specialists. Such a group will provide a high level of management expertise to direct the project and assist in decision making and implementation.

An appropriate individual must be designated to take the lead role in planning and implementing the programme. The organization may choose to:

- appoint a consultant
- assign responsibility to an existing member of staff
- employ an experienced records manager on a long- or short-term contract.

Consultants can bring an impartial and experienced view and are often available at fairly short notice. They will undertake a project quickly and produce recommendations that are likely to be taken seriously by senior managers. However, it is important to select consultants with proven expertise in records management (rather than in, for example, library and information management, which requires a different balance of skills) and who can show a real understanding of the organization's needs. Consultants who import their standard blueprint should be avoided in favour of those who can tailor a solution to organizational requirements. Consultants may be used only for preliminary advice and planning or may also assist with implementation; in either case the organization will need to find staff to develop and maintain the programme after the consultant has left.

Assigning responsibility to an existing staff member has the advantage that the employee already knows the organization well. However, existing employees may lack the necessary skills (and thus need retraining). If records management is simply added to their other duties, staff with sufficient seniority to establish a records management programme may lack the time or interest to devote to its design and implementation. If more junior staff such as registry or filing supervisors are assigned to the task, they will lack the credibility or authority to implement significant changes. However, if the organization has staff such as archivists who have been trained in records management, their responsibilities could be extended accordingly.

Probably the ideal solution is to employ a suitably qualified and experienced records manager. The initial recruitment of a records manager sometimes follows a consultant's recommendations and a short-term appointment may be made until the organization becomes fully committed to a long-term investment.

The individual appointed to establish the records management programme will become a key member of the policy group and will need to call on the expertise of other group members. In an organization of any size, more than one individual will be required and a multidisciplinary team of project workers will be set up, perhaps including appropriate members of the policy group as well as others with relevant skills and interests. The records manager may lead the team or a separate project manager may be employed to oversee the project while leaving the professional decisions to those with records management qualifications or experience. Whichever model is followed, account must be taken of the project management issues discussed in Chapter 2.

## **Developing records management programmes and systems**

### **The ISO 15489 methodology**

A design and implementation methodology for sustainable records management is recommended in ISO 15489-1:2001, clause 8.4. The methodology is based on the Australian records management standard AS 4390.3-1996, clause 6.2.2. It has eight components:

- preliminary investigation
- analysis of business activity
- identification of requirements for records
- assessment of existing systems
- identification of strategies for satisfying records requirements

- design of a records system
- implementation of a records system
- post-implementation review.

The methodology is valid for the establishment of the records management programme as a whole and for the development of particular systems within it. When a new records management programme is established some systems and sub-systems will necessarily be introduced before others, but if records management is to be adopted in a uniform manner across the whole organization it will be essential to keep the 'big picture' in mind throughout the development process. ISO 15489-1 emphasizes that the methodology need not be linear: the tasks can be undertaken iteratively or gradually.

Detailed guidelines originally based on the AS 4390.3 version of this methodology are available in the *Designing and implementing recordkeeping systems (DIRKS)* manual published by the National Archives of Australia (2001). These guidelines set out a rigorous approach and were designed primarily for Australian public sector organizations, but offer useful and practical advice applicable to all sectors. The British Standards Institution has published shorter guidelines based on the ISO version of the methodology: PD 0025-2:2002, *Effective records management: practical implementation of BS ISO 15489-1*.

### Preliminary investigation and analysis of business activity

When establishing a records management programme, the starting point is to gain an understanding of the role, purpose and environment of the organization and to analyse its structures, functions, processes and activities (ISO 15489-1:2001, clause 8.4). This involves examining why the organization exists, what products or services it offers, how it operates in the present, how it plans to operate in the future and what changes to its operations and methods have been made in the past. It also involves an investigation of external factors affecting the way the organization operates, including its economic, political, legal, regulatory and social environment.

Techniques that can be used in these investigations have been discussed in Chapter 2, which also describes how a detailed analysis can be made of the functions and processes that the organization undertakes.

### Identification of requirements for records

The preliminary investigation and the analysis of functions and processes provide

essential background information about factors that influence or determine requirements for the creation and maintenance of records. Such requirements will vary from one function or process to another. Some will be stated explicitly in legislation or regulations but others are likely to be implicit in the business, accountability or cultural needs of the organization or the wider community. If the organization has a formal compliance programme, measures may already be in place to ensure that relevant laws, regulations and standards are observed; but account must also be taken of the other needs of internal and external stakeholders, including the organization's staff and customers.

As the records management programme develops, judgments must also be made on the extent to which the organization will seek to meet each particular requirement. As well as identifying stakeholders' needs for records of particular processes, it will be necessary to assess the costs that the organization will incur in meeting those needs and the possible consequences if the needs are not met. Sometimes it may be decided that the cost of creating or capturing records of a process cannot be justified, since the risk attaching to their absence is low; or that records of a process will be captured but the costs of long-term retention or maximum security provision are unwarranted. In other cases the need for records may be judged to be critical: if the risk attaching to their absence or defectiveness is high, requirements for records will be met in full. Such decisions must be ratified at senior level within the organization.

### Assessment of existing systems

Records managers rarely work in virgin territory. Occasionally they may have the opportunity to design systems for newly established functional areas, or even for a new organization, but more often their work is concerned with the records of functions and processes that have been in operation for some time. In this situation they must take account of the existing records as well as plan for the management of those created in the future.

The key tool for gaining control of these legacy records is the records survey. As noted in Chapter 2, a survey enables records managers to assess the records themselves and the systems used to manage them in the past. It provides the opportunity to learn how the organization's functions, structures and environment have affected the creation and maintenance of its existing records. It also provides the opportunity to discover how far the existing systems match up to the requirements that have been identified and where they fall short.

In organizations where no structured records management programme has been in place, surveys often reveal a variety of problems. Typically a survey may find that:

- paper records systems are congested, and in some cases have been used to store information products and other materials that are not records
- paper records are poorly organized and difficult to retrieve, and their arrangement does not fully reflect the processes and activities that led to their creation
- parts of some record series appear to be missing from the paper systems, but some of the missing records are believed to be held in electronic form on personal computers
- computer storage is not organized to match the paper system, but each worker follows their own system: most store records alongside work in progress, and many use random and seemingly meaningless file titles, so that correlating electronic and paper documentation is impossible
- records stored on personal computers are inaccessible when the worker is absent
- further records that are needed appear to have been lost or destroyed, but no one knows exactly what exists or where
- when employees leave or change jobs, computing staff clear the contents of their hard disk or personal account: everything is deleted regardless of any continuing value it may have for the organization
- older paper records, together with some unlabelled computer tapes or floppy disks, are in unmarked cabinets and boxes in a basement.

Surveys do not always find the existing situation as dire as this. Sometimes a survey discovers that fairly adequate systems are in place even if they have not been designed to professional standards. There may be an existing infrastructure of records staff, accommodation and equipment, which can be used as a basis for future development.

Where an embryo records management service already exists, it is often helpful to evaluate it by means of a SWOT analysis (see Figure 8.1). The acronym SWOT refers to the *strengths* and *weaknesses* of the service and the *opportunities* and *threats* that it faces. SWOT analysis can be applied to develop and extend the conclusions drawn from investigation of the external environment. It seeks to identify the opportunities and threats in the external environment and the strengths and weaknesses of existing resources and activities, which might be used to take advantage of opportunities or avert threats. The analysis enables informed decisions to be taken

| <i>Internal factors</i>  | <i>External factors</i>  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• long-serving and committed records staff</li> <li>• good relations between records staff and users</li> <li>• capacious and well-equipped storage areas for paper records</li> <li>• established systems for controlling access and maintaining confidentiality.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• new privacy and freedom of information legislation highlights the importance of effective records management systems</li> <li>• new senior executive has a more open attitude to records management</li> <li>• outsourcing of support services means that the need for documentation of contracts and service level agreements has a high profile.</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lack of staff skills, especially in managing electronic records</li> <li>• lack of integration between electronic and paper records</li> <li>• no co-ordination between systems in different parts of the organization</li> <li>• inadequate funding.</li> </ul>           | <p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• management of electronic record creating systems is driven by information systems provision; software packages and hardware combinations are chosen by computing specialists with little or no regard for records management implications</li> <li>• outsourcing of support services means that there is little in-house access to information technology expertise for advice on electronic records issues.</li> </ul> |

Fig. 8.1 Example of a SWOT analysis for a records service

about the ability of the existing records service to contribute to the development of a new programme.

### Identification of strategies for satisfying records requirements

Strategies to satisfy the requirements that have been identified may include adopting policies, standards, guidelines, procedures and practices; such strategies can be applied separately or in combination (ISO 15489-1:2001, clause 8.4). When establishing a new programme, it is also necessary to agree the balance between centralization and decentralization, as discussed in Chapter 6. The strategies chosen must suit the environment, culture and technical capabilities of the organization, and will guide the design and implementation of the programme and its components.

Organizational culture is an important factor in selecting appropriate strategies. For example, in recent years most organizations have actively encouraged employees to focus on outcomes and productivity; while commendable in many ways, this has sometimes created a culture where capture and maintenance of records is perceived as unimportant. Similarly where staff turnover is high, or where staff are employed on short-term contracts, many employees are likely to have little concern for the organization's longer-term needs for records of their activities. If operational staff appear to lack motivation to capture or maintain records systematically, policies and guidelines must be supplemented by other strategies. Particularly in highly decentralized systems, promotional or training strategies are likely to have a major role.

Strategies in a paper environment will include the use of agreed procedures (such as procedures for capturing and classifying records correctly and for transferring them to alternative storage). Additional strategies must then be selected to ensure that the procedures are followed. In some organizations, it may be appropriate to rely on assigning responsibility for these tasks to records management staff or other designated postholders. Where day-to-day responsibility is to rest with operational staff, there may be a need for senior management directives, supervisory checks or regular monitoring to enforce compliance.

In electronic environments similar choices must be made, but there is an additional option of using system functionality to ensure that records management requirements are met. For example, computer systems could be configured to purge personal directories or e-mail accounts of any items that have not been accessed for a stated number of weeks, thus obliging the user to capture records to a formal records management system if they are not to be lost. As noted in Chapter 4, with many routine processes it is also possible to rely on purely technological strategies that allow records capture and other requirements to be met automatically.

As decisions are made on records requirements and strategies, the initial policy statement is likely to need amplification or revision. An overarching records management policy should be developed, setting out the aim, scope and objectives of the records management programme (see Figure 8.2); where necessary it should be supported by more specific policies on creation, capture, retention, access or other aspects of the programme.

Once the policy statement has been drafted, perhaps by a records policy group or committee, it needs to be approved by senior managers and endorsed by the chief executive or management board. When this has been achieved, the organization's directors have formally accepted responsibility for good records management and have given their authority for the inauguration of the programme.

Responsibilities for records management must also be defined more precisely at this stage. Primary responsibility should be assigned to a records manager, who may be supported by other staff. Especially in role culture organizations, consideration must be given to the location of the records management service within the organizational structure. It may be an independent unit or a part of a larger department such as information services, facilities management, legal services or central administration.

Decisions are also needed on the extent of the records manager's responsibilities. For example:

| <i>Component</i>   | <i>Example of wording</i>  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outline of the legislative or regulatory framework, or reference to other standards or best practice</li> </ul> | <p>'Our records management programme will seek to comply with ISO 15489-1 <i>Records management</i> and ISO 9000 <i>Quality management systems</i>. As a public body, we are also bound under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to maintain and make available records to which citizens have a right of access.'</p>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aim and scope of the programme</li> </ul>   | <p>'The aim of the programme is the effective management of our records as a source of evidence and information. It encompasses records in all media and in all parts of the organization.'</p>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key objectives for the programme</li> </ul>   | <p>'The programme's objectives are to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• adequate records of our business activities are created</li> <li>• appropriate access to those records is provided for all authorized users</li> <li>• records required for business, accountability or cultural purposes are retained and remain usable for as long as they are needed</li> <li>• records of long-term value are identified and preserved as archives</li> <li>• other records are confidentially destroyed when no longer required.'</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statement of responsibilities for records management</li> </ul>   | <p>'The Central Records Service is responsible for ensuring the implementation of the programme. It provides records management services to all departments, including those at satellite sites. All staff are responsible for the proper management of the records they create and use and should follow the procedures and guidance of the Central Records Service. Central Records staff are responsible for offering support and training and for monitoring of standards. Liaison staff in each department can give local advice and assistance. The Information Services Division is responsible for the technical aspects of managing electronic records and the Central Records Service will work closely with Information Services to provide a comprehensive service.'</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Definitions of technical terms</li> </ul>   | <p>'In this policy, <i>records</i> means any documents or data which form recorded evidence of a business activity.'</p>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• References to specific policies and other more detailed documentation</li> </ul>                                | <p>'Policy guidelines on records capture, media conversion and migration ... and records procedure manuals, classification schemes and retention schedules ... are available on the intranet.'</p>   |

Fig. 8.2 *Components of a records management policy statement*

- 1 If storage of current paper records is to become or remain decentralized, how much authority will the records manager have with regard to records held in business units?
- 2 If the records manager is to assume custody of such records later in their life, what rights and obligations will be transferred along with the records, and how much responsibility for their control and management will remain with business units?

- 3 Are the organization's archival records to be managed separately or will they form part of the records manager's remit?

Decisions on these matters should be incorporated into the policy document, together with statements on the records management responsibilities of operational staff and information technology specialists.

Since records management must be adopted across functional and departmental boundaries, and needs formal links with other business functions such as information technology and compliance management, the policy group overseeing the initial project can usefully be given a permanent status. Such a group should be a formally established body, which can contribute to the further development of the records management policy, advise on procedural issues and act as a forum for communication between records experts and senior operational managers. It might be chaired by a management board member or by the records manager or another senior member of staff.

### Designing systems and identifying resources

When appropriate strategies have been agreed, records management systems can be designed in detail. Designs should be based on the requirements and strategies that have been identified and should follow the principles and techniques discussed in earlier chapters of this book. They must take account of the size and resources of the organization, and the extent to which its operations are concentrated on one site or geographically dispersed. At an operational level, systems must also be designed so that they comply with regulatory or best practice requirements for health and safety in the workplace.

It was noted in Chapter 1 that a single organization-wide records management system may be feasible in a small organization, but in larger organizations separate systems will probably be needed in different functional areas. While common models should be used where appropriate, it is also important that each system is designed to match the needs of the relevant business processes and activities. When technological solutions are to be employed for records capture, relevant functionality should be built into operational systems as far as possible. If operational staff are to be asked to follow specific procedures, instructions can usefully be incorporated into guidelines that have wider scope; for example, records management rules about the capture of e-mail messages can be included in corporate guidelines on e-mail use, or instructions for managing records of a particular business process included in procedural manuals relating to the process concerned.

Depending on organizational requirements, retrieval mechanisms for records may be designed to stand alone, or may need to be integrated with particular business process tools or corporate information systems. While their evidential qualities differentiate records from other information sources, many users wish to use records simply to gain access to their information content. If structured information from records is widely used beyond the process where the records are created, it may be appropriate to design records management systems so that they can support the copying of the relevant data to a dedicated information environment such as a statistical or decision-support application. Alternatively, if wide-ranging use is made of information obtained by direct consultation of the records themselves, records management systems may be designed to share an interface with library systems, corporate databases or information products published on an intranet. Particularly in larger organizations, records or metadata maintained electronically may be accessed through a corporate information portal. For optimum integration, both technical and semantic interoperability will be required; as well as appropriate technological standards it will be necessary to use index terms that share a common vocabulary.

In geographically dispersed organizations it may be necessary to make provision for staff at one location to gain access to records created or held at another. Internet technology can facilitate remote access to electronic records as well as the provision of common gateways for records and other information resources. However, the advantages of shared access to corporate information must be balanced against the overriding need to design systems that protect the evidential value of records by preserving their functional context and integrity.

Resources are a prerequisite for a new records management service. Staff with specialist skills, accommodation and equipment will be required, and these requirements must be identified and costed when programmes and systems are designed.

In larger organizations, several types of *records management staff* will be needed. One or more professional members of staff will be responsible for the direction of the records management service and for systems development (see Figure 8.3). The senior records professional may also be responsible for other services such as data protection or freedom of information compliance, mailroom services or internal communications.

It can sometimes be difficult to identify a 'professional records manager'. Many people working in records management have added records management skills to a professional background in information management, librarianship or business administration. Others have a postgraduate qualification in records or archives management. Many countries have a framework for the training and

**Job description : Records Manager**

Job purpose: to develop and manage a records management programme that meets the business, accountability and cultural needs of the organization.

Reporting to the Deputy Chief Executive, the postholder is responsible for:

1. managing the Central Records Service and its operations
2. undertaking needs analysis, strategic planning and policy development for records management
3. developing and maintaining appropriate records management systems, liaising with client departments as necessary and ensuring that all legal and regulatory obligations are met
4. managing the implementation of a system for electronic records management, in conjunction with the Information Services Division, and ensuring its full integration with existing paper records systems
5. devising and delivering records management training for staff throughout the organization
6. devising and maintaining quality control and compliance procedures for records management
7. supervising other records management staff and assisting them to develop appropriate skills and capabilities
8. planning and managing the budget for the Central Records Service.

*Person specification*

Qualifications and experience:

1. postgraduate qualification in records management
2. at least five years' experience in a records management service.

Aptitudes:

1. financial and staff management skills, or aptitude to acquire them
2. familiarity with office automation systems and specialist software applications for records management
3. ability to communicate effectively in writing and orally with staff at all levels.

**Fig. 8.3** *Example of a job description for a professional records manager*

development of records managers. A survey in 1997 (Yusof and Chell, 1998, 33–51) identified more than 80 academic institutions in 26 countries worldwide that offered undergraduate or postgraduate training in records management, either as standalone courses or in conjunction with educational programmes in archives, information science or other subjects. Distance learning courses are increasingly available. Links to the websites of many training providers can be found on the UNESCO Archives Portal at [www.unesco.org/webworld/portal\\_archives/pages/Education\\_and\\_Training/Institutions/](http://www.unesco.org/webworld/portal_archives/pages/Education_and_Training/Institutions/).

Membership of a professional association is often an indicator of commitment to a professional career in records management. Some of the major professional associations are listed in Appendix C. Formal routes for continuing professional development are offered in some countries. The certification programme of the Institute of Certified Records Managers, based in the USA, requires its members to undertake 100 hours of approved educational activity every five years. In the UK and Ireland, the Society of Archivists' Professional Register requires candidates to have three years' post-qualification experience and to show evidence of professional development in this period.

Especially where records are maintained on paper, professional staff in larger organizations will be supported by records assistants responsible for carrying out day-to-day procedures (see Figure 8.4). Intermediate tiers of supervisory staff may also be employed. In some organizations clerical, portering, cleaning or maintenance staff are dedicated to the records management unit; elsewhere these services may be provided centrally.

**Job description : Records Assistant**

Job purpose: to assist in the running of the University's records centre.

Reporting to the Records Centre Manager, the postholder is responsible for:

1. processing user requests, including retrieving and reshelving paper records
2. preparing records for transfer from current storage to the records centre, and checking deliveries and transfer lists
3. preparing records for scanning or conversion to microfilm
4. checking the quality of scanned or filmed images
5. processing records designated for destruction or transfer to the University Archives
6. completing documentation associated with the tasks set out above, and entering relevant data into the Central Records Service database
7. assisting professional records management staff in other tasks as appropriate.

*Person specification*

Qualifications and experience:

1. a school leaver or graduate
2. at least one year's general office experience or experience in a records management service.

Aptitudes:

1. fair keyboard skills (40 wpm)
2. familiarity with office automation systems, including word-processing, e-mail and databases
3. ability to interact with users courteously and effectively.

Fig. 8.4 Example of a job description for a records assistant

Records assistants and paraprofessionals may be school leavers or graduates with information technology, keyboard or administrative skills. Sometimes paraprofessional posts are used to give experience to aspiring professionals. In some countries there are technical courses offering task and skill centred training for paraprofessional staff working in records management, although where such courses exist they do not always lead to formal qualifications.

In practice the head of the records management unit will not have line management responsibility for all staff involved in records activities. Most records creation is necessarily the responsibility of operational staff across the organization. In decentralized systems, some records staff may work locally within business units: such staff may form part of the central records management team or report to a manager within the business unit concerned. Ideally they should be professionally responsible to the head of records management even if they report to another manager for operational purposes.

Where business units have no dedicated records staff, some organizations establish a liaison network, whose members might meet periodically but mainly work remotely. Each business unit nominates a liaison officer to take responsibility for records management locally. This type of network can supplement a senior policy group in bringing ownership of records management into business units and providing a focus of expertise to contribute to development of the programme. The records manager can use the network to disseminate procedures and monitor implementation.

In addition to suitable staff and office facilities for them, a records management unit is likely to require the use of *accommodation or equipment* for a number of specialist purposes. These may include mail sorting and delivery facilities, one or more records storage areas, microfilm or digitization facilities and access to services such as transport and confidential waste destruction. Issues relating to the planning of accommodation have been discussed in Chapter 6. Advice should also be sought from architects, structural engineers, builders or equipment suppliers.

*Technological solutions* are almost certain to form part of any systems design. These may include the addition of enhanced records management functionality to existing software applications, the acquisition of a new application to support records management, or both. When acquiring a new application the first steps are to define the functionality that is needed and draw up a specification of requirements. In some organizations there may be an option to have a system specially built to match the specification, but more commonly an existing commercial product will be purchased. For paper records, organizations have sometimes chosen to use a number of separate small databases to manage different aspects of a records management

programme, but where resources allow it is preferable to use a single integrated application. In a hybrid environment the application should be able to support the management of records in any medium. It should provide a range of retrieval and reporting tools that can be used to find information about the records, instigate disposal or other actions when required and produce reports and statistical analyses so that the records management unit can account for its activities and plan for the future.

The published standards listed in Figure 4.5 (page 123) may be used to help identify necessary enhancements to existing applications to support the management of electronic records, and can also be used or adapted when specifying the functionality required from a new ERM application. Some national bodies, such as the US Department of Defense and the UK Public Record Office, have issued lists of records management software applications that they have tested and approved.

While some commercial packages for records management are bought ready to run, others allow or require varying degrees of adaptation or further development of the supplier's core product. Whichever route is followed, the software must be compatible with existing or available hardware platforms and operating systems, portable to future platforms and scalable for expected rates of growth. Where necessary it must also provide technical interoperability with other relevant applications.

Procedures for software purchases vary between organizations, but usually it is appropriate to contact a number of suppliers and make a preliminary evaluation of available products against the specification of requirements. The reputation and financial stability of suppliers should also be investigated, before making a short-list of suppliers who are formally invited to tender. All tenderers should be sent a copy of the specification and a statement of compatibility, scalability and interoperability requirements, and asked to provide a detailed written response stating precisely how their product matches what is required. They should be advised that, when a selection has been made, their response will be incorporated into any eventual contract together with the organization's requirements for maintenance and support services and the supply of future upgrades.

Records systems design necessarily includes the planning of *documentation*. Traditionally this required the design and production of numerous control forms: internal forms such as charge-out sheets, location registers and survey forms for use by records management staff, and also forms such as transfer lists and records request forms for interaction with users. Today most of the data provided on such forms are collected and maintained electronically, and if a records management software package is acquired it will provide most or all of the necessary infra-

structure. Nevertheless there will still be a need for decisions about documentation and data collection, whether in customizing the interface provided by a software package or in preparing documentation for distribution on paper or through an intranet.

There are three broad categories of records management documentation:

- 1 *Programme documentation* includes policy statements, organizational records management standards and guidelines, and business plans for the records management service.
- 2 *Systems documentation* captures information about the logical infrastructure of the system (including logical models of functions and activities, classification schemes and retention schedules), its physical infrastructure (including storage plans and location metadata) and operational procedures for records management staff and users (including procedural guidelines, which may be brought together in a procedure manual). Systems documentation may need to be made available in different versions for records staff and for users; records management software packages often support this by providing different views of relevant metadata.
- 3 *Promotional materials* include publicity brochures, leaflets and web pages giving general information about records management services.

Whatever the systems design, its implementation will require adequate *financial resources*. There will also be recurrent costs for staff, accommodation, supplies, equipment and services purchased. To meet these costs, records management will need a budget. Depending on the organizational structure this may be an independent cost centre under the control of the senior records manager, which enables priorities to be set and expenditure controlled locally, or part of the budget of a larger business unit of which records management forms part.

Sometimes records managers are expected to negotiate agreements with business units for delivery of records management services and to derive the records management budget from internal contracts of this kind. If successful, this approach can provide records management with close user links and a high profile within the organization. If records management is funded centrally, its funding is simpler to manage but may be vulnerable to cuts in budgets for non-income earning functions. Sometimes records management is funded from a mixture of sources: an allocation for central services ensures a spread of good practice across the organization, and can be supplemented by charging for value added services delivered in individual business areas.

## Planning and managing implementation

When the prerequisites are in place, decisions must be made about priorities for implementation. New systems may have to be introduced in stages, allowing time for piloting and testing each component before full implementation. Existing systems may have to be partly or wholly restructured; while it is sometimes possible to implement a new system independently of any need to resolve problems inherited from past practice, more usually existing arrangements must be integrated into the new design.

Priorities will vary according to local circumstances, but in general it is unwise to attempt the implementation of new systems for electronic records until paper systems are in good order. Business managers sometimes assume that the introduction of information technology is all that is needed to solve problems of managing paper records, but if the paper records are in disarray automation may simply transfer the problem to a different medium.

Often the first step is to decongest the existing systems by establishing appraisal criteria and eliminating records that are redundant. Records that are identified for retention but are not expected to be used for the current business of the organization can be separated and removed to off-floor or offline storage.

If information products such as trade catalogues, magazines or instruction manuals for office equipment have been interfiled with paper records they should be moved to separate information files. Stocks of office supplies and blank forms should also be segregated from the records management system. Members of staff who keep personal papers or memorabilia in their offices should be encouraged to establish a personal file so that these do not become confused with organizational records.

Functional classification schemes are the intellectual basis on which effective records systems are built. Once materials that are not records have been separated out, record series corresponding to business processes can be identified, classification schemes implemented and systems for the capture, retention, maintenance and retrieval of records built around them.

When a new classification scheme is introduced or an old scheme revised, existing records may be reclassified or the new scheme applied only to records created subsequently. Reclassifying existing records is labour-intensive and can be prone to error. It is often more appropriate to identify a date when the new scheme will come into use, and to leave records created before that date with their classification under the old scheme. Existing paper files should be closed on the agreed date, while electronic folders can be made read-only so that no new items are added to them. It will then be necessary to run the two schemes in tandem, often for several

years. Both will be required for retrieval, although only one will be used to classify newly created records.

If this is likely to be difficult, or if management of the existing records is critically hindered by the inadequacy of the previous scheme, reclassification must be undertaken. Each file, folder or item must be inspected so that a new classification can be assigned to it. In a busy organization this is often impractical during working hours when records are in use for business purposes, and it may be best for the task to be undertaken during holiday periods or at weekends. Once started, the work needs to be finished as quickly as the need for care and accuracy will allow, so that business operations that use the records are not impeded. Sometimes it is possible to reduce the scale of the task by limiting reclassification to the most critical records or those created after a fixed date in the recent past. Teamwork is likely to produce faster results than an exercise undertaken by one person working alone, but it is important to ensure that all team members work to the same standards. Another option is to reclassify on demand as old records are needed.

Similar options are available for other retrospective conversion tasks, such as converting paper-based metadata to digital form, scanning paper records to create digital images or importing electronic files from office suites into electronic records management software applications. When records are to be digitized or moved to a more robust software environment it is likely that additional metadata will need to be captured. If this requires records to be reviewed individually, this can be done while scanning or importing is in progress or as a separate exercise when scanning or importing is complete. While import processes may be largely automatic, upgrading of metadata usually requires staff or contractors with specialist skills. The timing and scope of retrospective conversion must take account of their availability.

Those parts of a system that relate to the off-floor or offline management of older records are often easiest to introduce. While the establishment of new current records systems can bring substantial benefits in the medium and longer terms, nevertheless in the short term it inevitably disrupts established working patterns; on the other hand, improved systems for paper records whose usage rate has declined are usually welcomed, because staff see an immediate benefit in the decongestion of their working areas.

The introduction of new systems for managing records will have an impact on all members of staff who create or use them in their daily work. Training staff in the new systems is essential, but the issue extends beyond training into wider areas of change management. Records managers have a delicate task to perform in

working with staff who are often very possessive about 'their' records and may be apprehensive or unsympathetic when records management systems are devised and standards imposed.

While the introduction of any corporate system of records management brings a loss of personal control over records, additional culture change issues often arise with electronic records management:

- 1 Some individuals may only feel comfortable with keeping records on paper, because of its obvious visibility and its independence from computer technology.
- 2 Some may accept the introduction of corporate systems for paper records, but resist it where electronic records are concerned because of an assumption that computer storage is essentially personal.
- 3 Many people find that an electronic records management system imposes more discipline than the paper systems to which they are accustomed, particularly if it changes the way that they use standard office software or obliges them to complete record profiles when records are captured.
- 4 Others become so committed to using electronic systems that they forget paper resources altogether.

The starting point is usually the need to promote an awareness of records as a corporate resource and an understanding that, whether on paper or in electronic form, they are not merely for personal use. Culture change often includes motivating staff to recognize the importance of good records management, as well as building confidence in the new systems. The organization's records management policy should be communicated to all staff, together with a directive for its implementation. By itself, however, this will not be sufficient. 'Records managers will have to meet with staff throughout the organization to express their enthusiasm' for records management and develop 'a corporate culture in which employees take the documentation of their activities seriously' (Bearman, 1994, 112; 1995, 392). Staff must feel ownership of the new systems and so it is essential that they participate as fully as possible in the change process. A communications strategy should be adopted, with workshops, demonstrations, meetings and interviews held as necessary. Particularly in larger organizations, change agents (individuals who can influence others and promote involvement in workshops and training sessions) can be identified and used to assist the records manager in achieving a smooth transition.

### Post-implementation review

Design and implementation are the beginning of an ongoing records management programme. After implementation, the programme and each of its components must be reviewed and evaluated. The purpose of such reviews is to monitor progress and measure success, so that senior management can be informed of results and revisions to the programme can be made as necessary. Review and evaluation will also be ongoing processes. Policies and procedures should be examined regularly to ensure that they still meet the organization's requirements. Targets may be set and performance measured against them. Records management services may also aim at compliance with independent quality standards such as the ISO 9000 series *Quality management systems*.

Performance measurement seeks to define the relationship between the resources going into a records management service and its achievements, using quantitative and qualitative measures. If a records management software application is used, much quantitative information (for example, on the frequency of records use) can be obtained from report output. Other indicators of performance (such as the time taken to retrieve paper files from storage) may have to be measured manually. Qualitative evaluation (assessing how effectively the records requirements of the organization and the needs of individual users are being met) requires techniques such as interviews, questionnaires and observation of systems in operation. Quality audits can be undertaken internally or by external bodies.

### Maintaining the impetus

#### Planning for the future and responding to change

The records management programme should have a place in the strategic plans for the organization as a whole, and the records management unit charged with carrying out the programme should produce a business plan of its own. Where appropriate, a long-term business plan setting out objectives over several years can be supplemented by short-term plans indicating immediate operational priorities. Business plans should be regularly reviewed and updated and should also be sufficiently flexible to allow a rapid and effective response to changing requirements for records management.

The analytical techniques examined in Chapter 2 can be reused when necessary in the ongoing management of the programme. Particularly in times of organizational or legislative change, or at points of significant technological evolution, it is helpful to deploy some of these techniques to undertake a new analysis

of the strategic position of the records management service and to shape ideas on its future direction. For example, reuse of the PEST analysis technique described in Chapter 2 can be valuable to maintain current awareness of the wider environment. The SWOT analysis described earlier in this chapter can be repeated periodically to analyse the resources available within the organization and help to ensure that strengths are maximized and weaknesses minimized, so that opportunities can be taken and threats avoided.

Records managers must be ready to react to changes both to organizational structures and to the functions, processes and activities that the organization performs. Structural changes occur frequently in contemporary organizations, and records managers need to log information about each change, in order to document the resultant shifts in responsibility for functional areas of work and thus for the creation, capture or maintenance of records. The functions of the organization, though relatively stable, may also change over time, and changes to individual processes will be made at more or less frequent intervals. Records managers may need to introduce new systems when new functions are established and will certainly need to modify existing systems from time to time in response to changes in the way that functions are carried out. Such changes will require revision of the logical model of functions and processes, and of the classification schemes and retention schedules derived from it, to ensure that they are kept up to date as new types of record creating activity are introduced or old ones discontinued.

Existing systems may also need revision to meet other changes in requirements for records. Within the organization, these may be triggered by new internal regulations or control measures, changes in organizational culture or evolving business needs. Other events that may call for a response are office moves, reductions in the size of the workforce, or the introduction or revision of service agreements, market testing or outsourcing requirements. Records managers must be constantly alert to such developments and should respond appropriately.

In the wider environment, technological changes can also be expected to have a major impact on a records management programme. Records managers need to maintain an awareness of the arrival of new formats for the creation and preservation of records, and of the implications of the obsolescence of older formats. While the rapid rate of change in information technology can sometimes appear daunting, it can also bring benefits in terms of improved functionality for users and records management staff.

Other external factors include changes to laws or statutory regulations, which may require the creation of new types of record or the alteration of existing retention periods or access rights. In addition, external pressures such as the passage

of new legislation can sometimes provide leverage and opportunity to raise the profile of records management or to improve practices in difficult areas.

Records management programmes must remain focused on the needs of their users, not on records retention for its own sake. Monitoring new developments, responding to change and taking advantage of opportunities all form part of the ongoing management of an effective programme. When there is a need for significant modification of the programme components, some or all of the design and implementation methodology recommended in ISO 15489-1:2001 should be applied. Appropriate elements from the methodology should be selected to ensure that the changes are managed systematically.

### Promoting competence, understanding and awareness

Ongoing training for users and records staff should be provided, to ensure that records management objectives are understood and best practices communicated throughout the organization. New staff in particular will need to be informed about records management policies and trained in the relevant procedures. Many organizations include a briefing by the records manager in induction courses for new employees.

Awareness of records management issues can also be promoted using newsletters (in paper or electronic form), posters, mouse mats, records centre open days and other marketing techniques. If the programme is to be successful the benefits of effective records management must be demonstrated and emphasized to managers and staff at all levels in the organization.

### Recording records management

Records management activities must be subject to the same records management discipline as other organizational activities. Records of policy development and operational procedures in records management must be captured and managed systematically. Operational records traditionally comprised paper forms completed by users, records management staff or contractors, but now often take the form of transactional data captured in a database or records management software application. Retention decisions and access controls should be applied to these records as rigorously as to records created elsewhere in the organization.

Records of quality control processes in records management must also be created, captured and managed over time. Evidence of systematic monitoring and auditing of practices and procedures should be maintained for as long as it is needed.

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