Assessment of Hybrid Records Management Systems at Mount Kenya University, Kenya

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Abstract: *Records are pillars of business activities. In their absence the organizational management is likely to sabotage decision making. This study aimed at assessing the effectiveness of hybrid records management system at the Mount Kenya University. The study was guided by the following objectives to establish whether MKU has an adequate records management policy that governs hybrid records management system, analyze the extent of staff training on records management and determine the security measures that have been put in place to manage records. The study adopted a case study which involved in-depth analysis of how records were being managed using a hybrid records management system at MKU. Target population consisted of 240 respondents drawn from University`s main campus. Stratified sampling technique was used to select respondents from administration, examinations, Information Communication Technology (ICT) and Library departments. Data was collected using questionnaires, interview schedules and documentary evidence. Quantitative data was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Science Software (SPSS) version 20. The study found out that Mount Kenya University (MKU) has embraced hybrid records management since most of its records were in paper and electronic formats, the university has policies governing management of records using a hybrid records management system which has led to effective management of records, staff training does not affect the use of hybrid record management system since most staff that have been employed are managing records especially the electronic records due to the technological changes most staff are computer literate, the university records have been secured and that personal records and vital records can only be accessed by authorised personnel. By embracing the hybrid records management system the universities records will be effectively managed and it will also enhance decision making by policy makers. The study is vital to researchers who will use it for benchmarking and for future reference.*

Keywords: Hybrid, Records Management Systems, Record Management Policy, Staff training, and Security Measures

1. Background of the Study

Many organizations continue to create both paper and electronic records as a normal part of their daily activities. Managing this hybrid record keeping is expected to continue as it is likely that a pure electronic record as will not be found anywhere in the world in the near future. This varying regulations present issues in terms of privacy, legality, storage and staffing. Robeck, Brown & Stephens,(2006) argues that the concept of hybrid records management systems refers to a sharing of technology between micrographic systems and electronic imaging systems scan-on-demand micrographic to electronic information management conversions, aperture card and Computer aided design applications, computer image output, and image transmission systems Tough, (2006).

In the 1970s and 1980s mechanisation-secure fax, for example-continued to spread, and the FCO made its first tentative experiments with the computerisation of records. The registries were all instructed to give documents a very constricting range of file names that the computers could recognise. This got nowhere, because the computer systems didn't work. There was a similar fiasco in the middle to late 1980s, when a great deal of money was spent on a system of electronic document handling and messaging which in the end was not introduced: it was undercapitalised, and the senior management never gave it the attention or understanding it needed during the development phase.

There were endless problems about sharing information across Whitehall, because departments had incompatible systems, and or often grossly exaggerated reasons of security (and departmental jealousy) were unwilling to share information anyway the activities of their department seemed to be shrouded in mystery – something to do with records or filing, it was thought, nobody knew for certain, but it was evidently 'women's work' the kind of thing that could easily be replaced by a computer.

According to the government of America, In February 2009, President Obama signed the American recovery and reinvestment act into laws. Part of the act goal is to encourage health organizations to adopt electronic health records through financial incentives because of the slowness of adoption, funding barriers and competing technical priorities. Therefore many health care are finding themselves maintaining a hybrid health record as an alternative to full automation of the legal health record.American Health Information Association,(2009). As per the report on records management service components requirement project held in March 8, 2005, participants were urged to identify records management activities that could be supported with software service components within federal enterprise architectures. This allowed participants to focus on the objective of identifying and documenting record management activities.

An organization that has vital records for business continuity has to maintain its record in a hybrid system in the event of a major disaster, the organization will benefit from having its vital records and other records organized in an electronic record management system with backup copies so that they can be recovered using the alternative infrastructure as in the organizations business continuity planAmerican Health Information Management Association, (2009).

While some business owners prefer manual record keeping systems, most businesses use an electronic record keeping system - making it easier to capture information, generate reports and meet tax and legal reporting requirements. Some business owners may want to use a simple, paper-based record keeping system since the risk of corrupted data is much less. MacDonald, (2006) argues that computerized record keeping has now become the norm in many organizations, and there is a range of commercial personnel systems available.

However smaller organizations may only need to keep a card index system, perhaps with simple forms to keep absence or sickness details. Such forms can be kept in envelopes filed to match the card index. Alongside staff information held on computer or in an index, many organizations maintain personnel files, which might hold the individual's application form, any particular career or training notes, references received and so on. These files can become bulky, and may take up a lot of space.

Storage must be secure but accessible to authorized users. Organizations also need suitable secure storage for those records kept long term, for instance tax records need to be kept for six years. As the workforce grows, different demands are made of personnel systems that manual systems might find difficult to meet - for instance from personnel, training, wages, pensions or production control.

Duplication of records can lead to breakdowns in security, difficulties in keeping up-to-date, and problems with accuracy. A centrally administered computerized system should avoid these problems, and access by different users can be better controlled. Therefore in order to manage personnel records the organization has to maintain both manual and electronic records.

Many researchers have observed that there is a challenge in the management of records such that it is not clear how records are managed both physical and electronic formats. According to the latest web metrics findings Mount Kenya University is among the top 10 Universities in Kenya.

However MKU like other organizations are currently in a dilemma of whether to go fully electronic, or continue using the paper records or the application of both. The University is currently creating records both in paper and electronic formats which has led to keeping of records in a hybrid system. This study is a response to the records management challenges by assessing the hybrid records management systems that could improve record management processes in the University.

2. Literature Review

Hybrids records management
Nakpodia, (2011) asserts that hybrid record management involves the creation storage, retrieval maintenance, disposition and the use of compact and other manual or electronic means. However, this depends on the laid record management policies, trained staff and proper access and control of records. Presently, findings show that records are poorly managed in universities hereby posing a lot of challenges.

Veal, (2001) indicates that hard copy creation and distribution is being overtaken by electronic methods. As paper based records for many construction projects have future uses, they need to be organised and maintained especially in the event of a conflict or claims situation Loesch and Theodori, (2004).Loesch and Theodori (2004) also comment that stories about records and documents locked in drawers and filing cabinets are legendary with no global access to the data/record contained within. Veal (2001) indicates the accepted view at present is that we have progressed to the less-paper office rather than the paperless office.

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Lack the fundamental skills and competences that would enable them to handle records in electronic environment. Studies by Kemoni and Wamukoya (2000), Iwhiwhu (2005), and Egwunyenga (2009), confirmed that African records keepers lack the basic skills and competences for handling records and archives in the public sector.

There were endless problems about sharing information across Whitehall, because departments had incompatible systems, and or often grossly exaggerated reasons of security (and departmental jealousy) were unwilling to share information anyway the activities of their department seemed to be shrouded in mystery – something to do with records or filing, it was thought, nobody knew for certain, but it was evidently 'women's work' the kind of thing that could easily be replaced by a computer (Lowry,2013).

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Records Management Policy

A policy is a governing principle, plan or course of action which guides the operation of a given entity. It can also be termed as a framework that provides information with operational guidelines for development of resources such as data, information technology and development and also

outlines issues concerning the users and customers of the product and services being offered. Nicholas, (2001).

Records management policy can be described as an authoritative statement of intent to manage records in an appropriate and suitable manner for as long as they are required for business purposes. It is intended to form the initial framework or principles which express how records should be managed within the organization.

Where the records management policy comprises part of a broader information management or knowledge management policy, it should still be easily identifiable and available to users.Shepherd and Yeo (2003) have explored that organizations need to manage their records in order to deliver efficient and effective services. McLeod and Hare (2006) argue that a legal and regulatory frame-work is a key to strengthening records management practices. In the same way, Tough, (2006) reports that the best way to manage records is through well guided records management practices positioned through an institutional legal framework.

According to the International Standards Organization (ISO 15489-1), organizations should set policies and regulations as strategies for effective records management.

It recognizes that records are inputs and outputs of business processes and therefore their creators and users have a role in managing them. In the same way, Ngulube and Tafor (2006) explain that the adoption of records management standards and integrating them assists by ensuring that records are managed consistently for the required periods. Business records should be managed for them to comply with regulatory, legal and ethical requirements. Compliance is mainly concerned with information integrity, privacy and records retention Marobella (2005).

Put differently, compliance fosters accountability and good governance, especially in the private sector where business activities are not always open to public scrutiny. Compliance with legislation and standards has an impact on how records and information are captured or created, transmitted and used, stored, indexed, retrieved, controlled, retained and preserved. Compliance can be mandatory or optional.

Staffing Training Influence in Record Management

Cook, (2006) argues that information professionals need to realize that an utter transformation is taking place in the world of information. This in turn requires a complete new paradigm, or intellectual framework, to situate our ideas and practice. As remarked ten years ago, in searching for this new paradigm, archivists (and their information professional's allies) will move from focusing on information to seeking and conveying knowledge and understanding. We will move from databases to knowledge bases.

Lack of trained records managers affects the work practices in an organization and the quality of services offered Yusuf and Chell, (1998).Trained records management staff is required in an organization to provide a solid foundation for

the management of its records Barata, Cain and Thurston, (1999).Barata and Cain (2001), and Lipchak (2002) are also of the opinion that employing trained records human resource is a prerequisite to effective corporate records management. The study by the International Records Management Trust IRMT, (2009) highlights that ICT offers fabulous potential for managing records in contemporary organizations.

Utulu (2011),states that the role of the Universities in records management training, a survey undertaken by connect , the higher education accommodation consortium in the shows that 90 per cent of organizations questioned favor the use of the academic venues for training events.

The survey reveals that universities can play a very important role in training providers. Records management is one area of training that at present is the best provided for within the universities world-wide, and universities, including those in Malaysia, should take the opportunity that this offers to expand provision for records management courses. It is important to re-emphasize that records management is a segment of information management that needs prompt attention. A well planned and relevant curriculum is crucial.

Security of Records

The Data Protection Act, (1998) requires record manager to keep any records which contain personal data in the most secure manner possible. But it is also good practice to protect records, even when they do not contain personal data. They may need protecting because they are commercially sensitive, and they may also need protecting because they are business critical or key in some way.

They may also be simply important for you, in order for you to carry out your role efficiently and easily. Therefore we all need to follow the university's codes of practice, procedures and policies, as well as relevant legislation.

Charles Darwin University records management policy (2012), university records must be kept secure to prevent inappropriate access by persons without correct authorisation and potential misuse. To ensure this is possible, records must be kept in an approved system listed on the register of systems approved for the management of university records (henceforth known as the Register) and managed consistently and systematically.

For instance, the risk of identity theft is now very real in the electronic world. Some unscrupulous individuals and companies compile and sell personal information about people; this information has been gathered, usually illegally, from electronic sources such as credit databases, land title files, motor vehicle records or medical files. This information may be used to gain access to credit cards, bank accounts and even property title documents. Archivists in Africa should be careful Asogwa, (2012).

3. Methodology

The researcher adopted a case study of MKU both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The sample size of 72 respondents included: Administrative Officers, Library Officers, ICT Officers and Examination Officer. The researcher used the four stratums which represents departments that are charged with responsibilities of managing records.The researcher collected data through questionnairesand documentary analysis.

Data Analysis

Before the researcher analysed the data, all the filed up questionnaires were checked for reliability and verification and in a manner that facilitates analysis. The data was coded and entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (**SPSS**) software version 22was used to run descriptive analyses to produce frequency distribution percentages based on various characteristics of the respondents. Descriptive statistics were presented in frequency tables, pie charts and bar graphs.

4. Results and Discussion

a) Adequacy of the Records Management Policies at Mount Kenya University

The participants were asked if there was adequate policy governing the hybrid records management system. Findings showedthere was a record capture policy which helps in identifying the Mount Kenya University information as records for future reference, by registering and assigning it a unique identification as per the 61.4% (43).48.5%(34) of the respondents strongly agreed that records classification policy aids in retrieval of records by assigning a code, number or index term that can be used to retrieve the record. Records storage policy ensures the provision of a reliable storage location as per the 42.8 %(30) respondents. As per the findings of the 50.0% (35) also strongly agreed that records access policy provides users with search, retrieval and display tools and enforces records access and security restrictions. 33% (47.1) respondents agreed that record tracking policy helps in tracking the current custody and location of records.This means that the availability of the policy and other factors has enabled the university to manage the hybrid records management system efficiently.

b) Staff Training

The study established the effects of staff training on the hybrid records management practice 55.7 %, 28.5%, and 15.7 % of the respondent agreed that staff training affects the implementation of the hybrid records management system to a moderate extent, great extent.

Staff training does not affect the performance of the hybrid records management system depending on other factors which support the system for instance most communications at the university is done through the university websites, staff emails, staff portal and the students portals this means that both students and staff are able to access records online and create electronic records on the desktops, laptops or smart phones this is due to the current technological change whereby majority of people are always online.The study supports Ifedili,(2012) who urges that records management is a field that needs to be run by experienced professionals who will know what has to be done when, specialists who understand their roles and responsibilities as they know themselves. Therefore it is the researcher's opinion that the staff at MKU requires training on records management to enhance efficiency in the management of records.

c) Security of Records

Table 1.2 below represents data was collected on security of records to show the extent at which security of records has affected the hybrid records management system.

Table 1.1: Extent to which Security of Records affects the HRMS

Factors	Frequency	Percentage
Very great extent	26	37.1
Great extent	33	47.1
Moderate extent	11	15.7
Total	70	100

The study sought to determine the effects of security on records management and it relates to the management of university records. From the findings on the extent to which security affects the records, the study found that the majority of the respondent's as shown by 47.1%(33) indicated that the security affect the hybrid records management system in the University to a great extent, 37.1%(26)indicated that the security of records affect security affect the hybrid records management system in the University a very great extent, whereas 15.7%(11) indicated that security of records affected the hybrid records management system in the University to a moderate extent.

As from the findings this study concludes that there is security of records at the Mount Kenya University.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The study concluded that Mount Kenya university has to maintain records using a hybrid records management system records are found in both print and electronic formats since there records are created daily in different formats It is also concluded that the records management policy has not given a priority,moreover staff working at Mount Kenya University doesn't require to be trained to manage the records also the University has not employed qualified records management staff to manage the University records.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions thereof, it is recommended that;

1) The university should adopt the hybrid records management systems and ensure that paper and electronic records are managed well.

2) Mount Kenya University should implement the records management policy in fully
3) The university (especially the registrar's office and the records manager) should train the records management staff to have a qualification in records management.
4) For security purposes, records should be stored in a different device so that in case of fire or disappearance one can be able to produce one.

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