IMS 5047 – MANAGING BUSINESS RECORDS

TOPIC 2 - Analysis

Two of the objectives of this course are for students to develop a knowledge and understanding of:
• the business processes that recordkeeping activities support
• the evidential requirements for evidence of business activities that exist in the workplace.
Topic 2 addresses these objectives.

Week Five: Analysis of business activity and an introduction to workflow approaches

Reading: on website

Workflow Introductory Exercise, by Frank Upward, 2002. (on website) (T2 Workflow intro)
Workflow - Business Process Re-Engineering Paper, By Anne Picot. (on website & library)
AS 5090 – 2003 Work Process Analysis for Recordkeeping,
(available via free download through the Library – Standards Online Premium Database)
Advanced Reading: Rosemary Pleva Flynn, (Electronic Records Project Archivist), Workflow and Electronic Records Capture, Indiana University Archives, last revised May 8, 2002 (on website & library)

Definitions


Workflow: automation of business processes, in whole or in part, where documents, information or tasks are passed from one participant to another for action, according to a set of rules. (p.96) (also adopted by the Workflow Management Coalition, TC1011 – Terminology and Glossary, 1999)*

Workflow automation: use of information technologies, including electronic imaging and database management, to support a workflow or process and to facilitate sharing among participants across a network. (p.96)

Workstep: collection of tasks that are initiated by events, actions and decision points. A workflow is comprised on multiple worksteps. (p.97)

Workflow Management Coalition (WfMC)
See definition above*
“Workflow …is a valuable technology. It is also a discipline, practice and concept.” (p.15)
WfMC references for the automated side of workflow – all free pdf files from the Workflow Handbook pages of the WfMC website: http://www.wfmc.org/


Work process: or business process is one or more sequences of actions undertaken to produce a specific business outcome, which complies with governing rules. (s.4, p.6)

“In a recordkeeping context, work process analysis …refers to a descriptive and analytical account of work processes in actual workplaces in real time….. (this is) distinguished from analysis of workflow as defined by the Workflow Management Coalition, which specifies the purpose of the analysis as automation.” (s.1, p.5)

“Work process analysis for recordkeeping purposes is specific – it describes and analyses what happens in a specific activity in a specific business context. ….it is dependent on …an understanding of the organisation’s context”. (Foreword, p.4)

AS 5090 – 2003 also says that there are two types of analysis for workprocesses:

- Functional analysis - a top down decomposition, separating something into its elements. (See Week 4 for functional analysis)
- Sequential analysis – the flow of work mapping – the focus of this week.

Workflow, when automated can be document centric or process centric.
- Document centric – the workflow process is built around a document moving from person to person, and triggering actions to be performed as a result, eg. an FOI request
- Process centric – a process is defined which involves the calling up or creation of any number of documents to be part of that process, eg. an application process.

Sequential Analysis

In contrast to the top down approach of functional analysis, sequential analysis is a 'bottom up' approach where you start by examining work processes and the transactions resulting from them, then gradually relate it to more broad levels of classification.

“It identifies and maps the sequence(s) of actions or transactions of a work process and their linkages/dependencies on other processes.” (AS 5090-2003, p 8.)

Functions also consist of business processes which are responses to a business event. Eg a Freedom of Information request received by the Environment Protection Authority.
Sequential analysis documents the actual work processes you do in performing your business operations. It shows the relationships and dynamism that exist between your functions and activities.

Sequential analysis involves identifying the sequence of steps or transactions and any variations that are currently undertaken to respond to a business event. This may involve identifying the linkages and dependencies between processes and it is workplace and time specific.

Sequential analysis should be carried out after, or as part of the hierarchical analysis, and the processes mapped to the hierarchy. The advantage of starting with hierarchical analysis is that it gives you the organisational context in which the activities and processes are taking place. Processes may straddle across a number of different functions or may be contained within one or two functions.

Sequential analysis involves identifying:

- What are the routine performance of the process
- What are the most frequent variations to the process
- What other variations might exist which require non-standard interventions.

Where to find the information to support work process analysis?

- Use existing analysis tools (eg. business process re-engineering study)
- Use existing recordkeeping schemes and tools (eg. a business classification scheme, disposal authorities)
- Check the analysis, schemes and tools of other organisations, especially similar ones (eg. as above)
- Use sources from your organisational and functional analysis
- Conduct interviews

The Analysis

Revisit the levels of functions, activities and transactions from Week 4. A good example comes from the DIRKS Manual 2003 – Step B

Example: Relationships between entities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Publication - the function of having works, irrespective of format, issued for sale or general distribution internally or to the public.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Drafting - the activities associated with preparing preliminary drafts or outlines of addresses, reports, plans, sketches etc prior to publication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transaction(s)</td>
<td>Create draft copies of publications/website/intranet with associated metadata, distribute drafts for comment, file comments made on these drafts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Steps in the analysis – what do you need to find out?

THE TASK
• What is the process you are mapping?
• For what purpose are you mapping it? (eg. FOI enquiry management)
• What is the scope of the task – is the process a single activity within one business unit; is it
  for a function that spans the whole enterprise?
• Organisational analysis – have you done this?

THE ACTIVITY
• What is the activity you are examining?
• Location - where is the process is being carried out?

THE PLAYERS/ACTORS
• Responsibilities – who is the manager of this activity, to whom are they accountable, and for
  what outcomes?
• The players - who or what are the people managing and performing the process and what
  accountabilities they have?

THE STEPS
1 What initiates the process and how is it recorded?
2 What information/data and materials are required to start the process?
3 Where do they come from?
4 What is the sequence of steps and how are they related? Each transaction should be a separate
  step.
  Are there parallel sequences at any point of the process?
  Where do the parallel sequences come together?
5 What triggers the successive actions and how do the actors know each action has been
  completed? (Actors = two aspects of users of systems; one is the human individual denoted by their name who
  has permission to use the system; the other is the role (job or position) which is characterized by delegated
  authority to perform certain actions.)
6 What performance indicators are used to monitor the progress and outcomes of the process?
7 Which are the key conditions which must be met to authorize the activity?
8 How and where are the approvals/authorizations through the process recorded?
9 How is the completion of the activity indicated and recorded?
10 What constitutes the audit trail for the process?
(From AS 5090—2003, Table 2, p13.)

VARIATIONS TO THE PROCESS
1 What conditions are attached to approving/authorizing the activity to go ahead or be
  completed?
2 What happens if all conditions are not met?
3 What are the procedures that identify these conditions and any variations to them?
4 Who authorizes or approves the key actions?
5 What happens if those key personnel are not available?
What happens if any of the key materials and systems needed to perform the process are not available?
If the work process needs to be re-routed, where does it go?
Are there other ways of performing the activity which are sometimes utilized, and if so why?
What sorts of things can go wrong?
What is the response if something goes wrong?
Are there established contingency procedures covering situations where something goes wrong?
Who is accountable for dealing with breakdowns in the process or complaints about the performance?
(From AS 5090—2003, Table 3, p14.)

EFFECT OF OTHER SYSTEMS - what are the inputs or dependencies from other systems?
How many actors in the workplace are dedicated to the process or are they also participants in other work processes?
What are the materials required to undertake the activity and how are they provided for the process?
What records/information sources/databases are accessed to perform this work and how are they modified by the process?
What other tasks or activities are connected with this particular work process?
What is the nature of the relationship of those other activities to this process, for example, are they providing inputs, is the other activity related by content or type of work process, do they use the same computer application, do they use the same records system or database?
Does the activity stretch across or involve more than one part of the organization?
What is the nature of the involvement of other parts of the organization, do they also perform the same process, do they provide input to it or respond to, or need, its output?
Does this activity trigger further action or provide input in another system/process?
What modifications/additions to the records system/databases does the activity make, as it is performed and as it is completed?
What use is made of the records/database generated by the activity?
(From AS 5090—2003, Table 5, p16.)

RULES - what rules affect the process or might apply to specific steps?
Which actions are required to comply with the regulatory regime?
Which actions are derived primarily from the mechanics of the process (technology deployed, physical and organizational arrangements)?
Which actions are taken to access the information necessary for the process?
Which actions are needed to get and record authorization and completion of individual steps?
What are the actions that achieve and record the performance indicators for monitoring progress and outcomes?
(From AS 5090—2003, Table 4, p15.)
An Example - Mrs Bloggs and Bill Gates’ church (see introductory exercise on unit website)

- Map the workflow steps.
- What are the main records we would expect to see from this process?
- Where might there be other subsidiary, but related workflows?
- What are the main decision points?

The answer will be posted to the website in V#2 of the lecture notes after the lecture