IMS 5047 – MANAGING BUSINESS RECORDS

TOPIC 3 : Access and Ownership

Week Nine: Access and accessibility

Objectives – see Unit Outline

Some of the objectives of this unit are:

• To develop an understanding of how systems are designed and implemented, so that they meet business needs and evidential requirements.
• To develop an understanding of how to advise team members and function managers in an organisation on records management systems and business rules for business purposes.

This topic covers these objectives, and week 9 relates to some of the requirements, rules and guidelines for access and accessibility in a recordkeeping and archival context.

Reading:

Rather than prescribe any specific reading for this week, these lecture notes cover a wide variety of resources relating to issues of access and accessibility, eg. accessibility of electronic records, access to archival records, web content accessibility, privacy, etc. Look up the sources mentioned in the notes below.

Definitions

Access

Right, opportunity, means of finding, using, or retrieving information


Right or opportunity to reach or use or visit; admittance (eg. access to secret files)

Oxford Dictionary

The granting of permission to:
1. use the reference facilities of an archives
2. examine and study individual archives and records or collections held by archives
3. extract information from archives and records for research or publication.

Access to archives may be restricted or withheld to prevent physical damage to original records or to protect confidential information.

State Records NSW Glossary - Ellis (ed), Keeping Archives, p. 461

Accessibility

How reachable, how obtainable, how readily available is the right or opportunity to access. How easy to understand? (Derived from Oxford Dictionary)
User permissions
Privileges allocated to individuals determining the extent of access to records and authority to author/originate, add, alter and dispose of records in a recordkeeping system.

Access and Democratic Principles
If “access” is the right, opportunity, means of finding, using, or retrieving information, how does this relate to the principles of democracy, and in Australia – parliamentary democracy?

- The authority and power of government is based on the consent of the people. The people can change the government by a majority vote in free elections.
- Political liberties include freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of association with in the law.
- We operate within the framework of “responsible government” – ie elected representatives are responsible to those who chose them. Principles of accountability.

Accessibility - What are the issues for accessibility? What methods, tools, conditions need to exist to enable access?

- Policy and procedure
- Regulatory environment – establishes broad principles on access rights, conditions, restrictions to be incorporated into the design & operation of records systems. Specific legislation?
  > Privacy
  > Security
  > Freedom on Information
  > Archives
- Metadata (see Week 8)
  > Capture, registration
  > Classification
  > Indexing
  > Tracking
- Search methodsestrategies, eg, boolean
- Security and user permissions :
  > Applied at system level..
  > Applied within an organisation to people - normally grouped according to “enterprise-wide” permissions, “workgroup” permissions, “individual” permissions.
  > Applied to people external to the organisation
  > Applied to objects, eg. e-documents.
  > Restrictions should only apply where specifically required by business needs or the regulatory environment
  > Restrictions only to be applied/imposed for a stated period; the need for restrictions will change with the passing of time.
- Type of information, eg. personal, commercial or operationally sensitive information.
• Media & format – eg. audio visual
• Originating application – eg. WordPerfect documents
• Storage
• Preservation
• Controls/finding aids
• Portability, eg. digitised maps for field use
• Computing infrastructure, eg. bandwidth
• Search engines and search tools (eg. intelligent searching, Boolean operators)
• Speed

Privacy and Access

See:

Public sector provisions

The Information Privacy Principles in the Commonwealth Privacy Act 1998, which are based on the OECD guidelines, set out strict safeguards for any personal information that is handled by federal government and ACT government agencies. These rules cover the collection, storage, use and disclosure of this information.

In December 2000, the Privacy Amendment (Private Sector) Act 2000 amended the Privacy Act which previously, mainly covered Commonwealth and ACT Government public sector agencies. The National Privacy Principles (the NPPs) in the Privacy Act set out how private sector organisations (including health service providers) should collect, use, keep secure and disclose personal information. The principles give individuals a right to know what information an organisation holds about them and a right to correct that information if it is wrong.

Public sector provisions

The Information Privacy Principles in the Privacy Act, which are based on the OECD guidelines, set out strict safeguards for any personal information that is handled by federal government and ACT government agencies. These rules cover the collection, storage, use and disclosure of this information.

Many states have their own privacy legislation or codes (NSW, Vic, Qld, SA, Tas, NT,ACT). Almost are based on the 10 National Privacy Principles.
National Privacy Principles

1. Collection

2. Use and disclosure
   An organisation must not use or disclose personal information about an individual for a purpose (the secondary purpose) other than the primary purpose of collection, unless (specified conditions)…

3. Data quality

4. Data security
   4.1 An organisation must take reasonable steps to protect the personal information it holds from misuse and loss and from unauthorised access, modification or disclosure.
   4.2 An organisation must take reasonable steps to destroy or permanently de-identify personal information if it is no longer needed for any purpose for which the information may be used or disclosed under National Privacy Principle 2.

5. Openness

6. Access and correction
   6.1 If an organisation holds personal information about an individual, it must provide the individual with access to the information on request by the individual, except (specified conditions)…

7. Identifiers

8. Anonymity

9. Transborder data flows

10. Sensitive information

Freedom of Information

Legislation in most states and the Commonwealth.
Look up one of the Freedom of Information Acts in any State or the Commonwealth.
(Start with Australian Law on line; http://www.law.gov.au/)


3. Object of Act
   (1) The object of this Act is to extend as far as possible the right of the community to access to information in the possession of the Government of Victoria and other bodies constituted under the law of Victoria for certain public purposes by—
   (a) making available to the public information about the operations of agencies and, in particular, ensuring that rules and practices affecting members of the public in their dealings with agencies are readily available to persons affected by those rules and practices; and
   (b) creating a general right of access to information in documentary form in the possession of Ministers and agencies limited only by exceptions and exemptions necessary for the protection of essential public interests and the private and business affairs of persons in respect of whom information is collected and held by agencies.

Obligations of govt agencies:
7. Publication of information concerning functions etc. of agencies
   (1) The responsible Minister of an agency, …… shall publish…
   (i) a statement setting out particulars of the organization and functions of the agency, indicating, as far as practicable, the decision-making powers and other powers affecting members of the public that are involved in those functions and particulars of any arrangement that exists for consultation with, or representation by, bodies and persons outside the government administration in relation to the formulation of policy in, or the administration of, the agency;
(ii) a statement of the categories of documents that are maintained in the possession of the agency;
(iii) a statement of the material that has been prepared by the agency under this Part for publication or for inspection by members of the public, and the places at which a person may inspect or obtain that material;
(iv) a statement listing the literature available by way of subscription services or free mailing lists;
(v) a statement of the procedure to be followed by a person when a request for access to a document is made to the agency;
(vi) a statement designating by name the officer or officers responsible within each agency for the initial receipt of, and action upon, requests for access to a document;
(vii) a statement listing all boards, councils, committees and other bodies constituted by two or more persons, that are a part of, or that have been established for the purpose of advising, the agency, and whose meetings are open to the public, or the minutes of whose meetings are available for public inspection; and
(viii) if the agency maintains a library or reading room that is available for public use—a statement of that fact including details of the address and hours of opening of the library or reading room;…etc

PART III—ACCESS TO DOCUMENTS
13. Right of access
Subject to this Act, every person has a legally enforceable right to obtain access in accordance with this Act to—
(a) a document of an agency, other than an exempt document; or
(b) an official document of a Minister, other than an exempt document.

PART IV EXEMPT DOCUMENTS
• Cabinet documents
• Documents containing matter communicated by any other state, where disclosure would be contrary to the public interest.
• Documents affecting national security, defence or international relations.
• Internal working documents, (if disclosing deliberative processes of Ministers, or if contrary to the public interest).
• Law enforcement documents.
• Documents affecting legal proceedings.
• Documents affecting personal privacy
• Documents relating to trade secrets.
• Documents containing material obtained in confidence.
• Disclosure contrary to the public interest.
• Etc.

Making Electronic Records Accessible – issues for discussion
(Not currently available from Monash Library, so the text of 2 chapters are summarised here.)
Principle: Electronic records should be made accessible electronically….regardless of location of the records or their users.

- Whose needs are we trying to meet? All employees of the organisation?
- What are their needs? To support business.
- Does this mean all the organisation’s electronic records should be accessible to all its employees? What of personnel records?
- How is this dealt with in the electronic environment? User permissions. User permissions are at 2 levels in an electronic environment:
  1. access to designated types of records held within the system.
  2. ability to perform different functions within the system, eg. record capture, record deletion, create new users, etc.

Should we allow external access to the organisation’s electronic records? – Business to Business transactions, Business to Govt, Business to Consumer, etc.

Making e-records accessible as “information resources”, ie. the records may be useful for a range of purposes other than those for which they were created. eg. transactional database systems, case-base systems, geographical information systems. More scope for, and ease of analysis in an electronic environment.

Making e-records accessible as evidence of business activity.

- Issues with authenticity – no physical record, how to maintain over time and migrate from one storage medium to another, migrate from one software platform to another.
- Need to show that records & their related metadata are migrated under standardised protocols, which prevent alteration or deletion.

Technology issues:

- Systems need to manage e-records over time.
- Is the ED/RMS standalone, used by some, not by others? Or is it part of a standard set of desktop tools? Does it have a browser interface (user friendly)?
- The Internet must be the technological focus for making e-records discoverable and accessible outside the corporate boundaries – to the outside world.
- Issue of dependence on a specific application or viewer to read e-records. Hence the popularity of pdf.

Justine Heazlewood – “the primary goal of long term management of electronic records is twofold: to preserve the accessibility of the records and to protect the records’ authenticity and integrity” (p98).

What makes accessibility in the digital environment?

- The format of the record must be able to be understood by the system through which the record is being accessed.
- The record must have the same logical structure and intellectual content it had when it was created – to be interpreted by the person accessing it.
• Decisions need to be made about the level of accessibility required to different types of electronic records – so the appropriate preservation can be activated. See below for Preservation Strategies.

• Records should be authentic, complete & unaltered. It must be able to be understood in its proper context.

Preservation Strategies for electronic records – to enable access over time
(From Justine Heazlewood, see reference above)

Migration – moving records from system to system, and possibly format to format as the original creation or management systems…become obsolete and are replaced with newer technology. Need to extract electronic documents, their related metadata and their audit trails, and maintain the relationships between these 3 elements. Example = ED/RMS to ED/RMS

Encapsulation – packaging records with enough information so that someone in the future can obtain or build a viewer to display the records. The metadata must be packaged with the record to ensure it can be understood. Example = VERS

Long term formats – choosing a standard format to keep long term records, eg. ASCII text, TIFF image format. Long term formats can be used in conjunction with encapsulation or migration strategies. Example = VERS, NAA.

Emulation – based on the same strategy as encapsulation, plus includes in the record package, specifications for the hardware and software system which produced or managed the record, so that in the future technologists can build software which “emulates” (mimics) the hardware environment and the creation software.

Conversion to paper or microform - printing a representation of the record onto paper or microfilm with enough contextual information to make the record intelligible. Possible strategy if migration of records from legacy systems is expensive.

Managing media over time. Regardless of which preservation strategy is used, the media upon which the records are stored must be maintained. Choice of media may depend on the access required to the records being stored. Eg. on-line, off-line, magnetic disc, optical disc, magnetic tape, etc.

Environmental storage conditions and handling are important, eg. issues of temperature, humidity, dust.

Risk analysis and disaster planning is important. What are the risks of loss or damage? What protection or prevention measures can be put in place?

For examples of the above strategies under development see:
• VERS #2.:at
NAA & digital preservation at
“Underpinning the approach are principles developed to ensure that the performance model
supports the Australian Government policy of comprehensive, equitable and sustainable
access to the Commonwealth’s archival resources.” (p.7)

Access and Web Resources

World Wide Web Consortium See: http://www.w3.org/
The World Wide Web Consortium was created in October 1994 to lead the World Wide Web to its
full potential by developing common protocols that promote its evolution and ensure its
interoperability. W3C has around 400 Member organizations from all over the world and has earned
international recognition for its contributions to the growth of the Web.
W3C Mission: “…. By promoting interoperability and encouraging an open forum for discussion,
W3C commits to leading the technical evolution of the Web. In just over seven years, W3C has
developed more than fifty technical specifications for the Web's infrastructure…."

W3C’s Goals:
1. "Universal Access: To make the Web accessible to all by promoting technologies that take
   into account the vast differences in culture, languages, education, ability, material resources, access
devices, and physical limitations of users on all continents;
2. Semantic Web: To develop a software environment that permits each user to make the best
   use of the resources available on the Web;
3. Web of Trust: To guide the Web's development with careful consideration for the novel
   legal, commercial, and social issues raised by this technology.”

W3C has a Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) underway.
See: http://www.w3.org/WAI/

Aim: to explain how to make Web content accessible to people with disabilities and to define target
levels of accessibility.

Web Content Design Principles
(From Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0)
The overall goal is to create Web content that is perceivable, operable and understandable by the
broadest possible range of users and compatible with their wide range of assistive technologies,
now and in the future. The basic principles are expressed in the 4 guidelines:
1. Perceivable. Ensure that all content can be presented in form(s) that can be perceived by any
   user - except those aspects of the content that cannot be expressed in words.
2. Operable. Ensure that the interface elements in the content are operable by any user.
3. Understandable. Make it as easy as possible to understand the content and controls.
4. Robust. Use Web technologies that maximize the ability of the content to work with current
   and future accessibility technologies and user agents.
Accessible Web content benefits a variety of people, not just people with disabilities
Consider user needs – eg.

- Someone who cannot hear will want to see the information normally presented via sound.
- Someone who cannot see will want to hear or read through braille information that is usually presented visually.
- Someone who does not have the strength to move quickly or easily will want to use as little movement as possible and have as much time as they need when operating Web interfaces.
- Someone who does not read well may want to hear the information read aloud.

The Guidelines go on to provide:

- The (non-technology-specific) checkpoints for each guideline (18 in total).
- Success criteria (normative), and definitions, benefits and examples (all non-normative) for each checkpoint
- An appendix containing definitions, references and other support information.


Access to information about government information and services via the WWW.

“[www.gov.au](http://www.gov.au) is an Australian whole-of-government single point of access (portal). In its current release, the site provides links to the ten entry points for Australian, State, Territory and Local governments. …..to be further developed to allow full search and retrieval capabilities across all levels of government and all government sites. ..... achieved through the implementation of the GOVERNET architecture, an initiative of the Online Council of Ministers.

GOVERNET is a cooperative project that aims to provide access to government information and services across Australian, State, Territory and Local levels. When completed, GOVERNET will enable quick and easy access to government information. Knowing which jurisdiction or agency is responsible for a particular function will not be necessary, as describing an area of interest, topic or need in everyday English will retrieve relevant items across all levels of government.”

“The GOVERNET architecture (a system model, protocols and standards to ensure interoperability) which works by having government agencies and service providers describe their information and services in a structured way and making these descriptions available to advanced search engines. The architecture uses the Australian Government Locator Service (AGLS) metadata in order to be consistent nationally and to improve search access speed and accuracy. AGLS is being progressively implemented by all participating GOVERNET jurisdictions.”

The site is subject to an “Information Governance Policy” (see [http://www.gov.au/info/policy.html](http://www.gov.au/info/policy.html))

The Information Governance Policy aims to:

* Make reasons for the inclusion of content on www.gov.au transparent
* Identify relevant Government policy that needs to be complied with.
* Outline the policy of allowing non-government organisations to link to www.gov.au.
Access and Archives

E-records also need to be discoverable from archival information systems, these are information systems designed to keep and provide access to information about records held as archives.


“Throughout history governments have recognised that the records they produce in their daily business are a valuable resource for future generations. Commonwealth Government agencies and the National Archives work together to identify and preserve valuable records so that the public can have access to them.

Under the Archives Act 1983, the National Archives is responsible for providing public access to Commonwealth Government records that are more than 30 years old. Once a record (or a part of it) reaches 30 years of age, that record (or part) comes into the ‘open period’. The public has a right to apply to see any record in the open period, wherever it is located – it may be held by the Archives, still with the agency that created or used it, or stored elsewhere.

The Archives helps people to find the records they want by providing reading rooms at each of its offices, and by producing indexes and guides to records, called finding aids.”

NAA’s main catalogue, RecordSearch, contains descriptions of over 4 million records (about 10% of our collection) – from some 9000 Commonwealth government agencies since 1901. We added more than 800 000 descriptions in 2002.


“Once members of the public have identified the records in the open period they wish to see, they must apply to the Archives for access. The Archives will first locate the records. If agencies have not transferred the records to the Archives, they will need to produce them for the Archives to examine in order to decide whether the records may be released for public access.”

The whole or parts of records are not given to public access if their release would:

• “damage the security, defence or international relations of the Commonwealth;
• be a breach of confidence or identify a confidential source;
• have an adverse effect on the financial or property interests of the Commonwealth and not serve the public interest;
• interfere with legal or police investigations and procedures, or prejudice a fair trial;
• endanger the life or safety of a person;
• be an unreasonable disclosure of personal information about any person, living or dead, or their business, commercial or financial affairs; or
• reveal trade secrets or other valuable commercial information.”

The Archives Act and privacy

“Under the Privacy Act 1988 Commonwealth Government agencies may only collect and use personal information for lawful purposes that relate directly to the functions or activities of the agency. The rules about the way government may use information about individuals are set out under the Information Privacy Principles (IPPs). The Privacy Act also gives members of the public the right to see records about themselves.
The Privacy Act applies only to records that are less than 30 years old. Once a record is over 30 years of age and comes into the open access period, the Archives Act comes into effect. Agencies cannot use the IPPs to refuse a person access to a record that is in the open period.”

See:
- NAA Fact sheet 10: Access to records under the Archives Act.
- NAA Fact sheet 219: Special access - allows certain categories of researchers to apply to use Commonwealth records that are not publicly available. Special access may be used to view records less than 30 years old or records over 30 years old but not publicly available because of the types of information they contain.

The Archives of Australia network (Hosted by NAA)
Provides a basic web presence for archives institutions without their own web site.
The Archives of Australia network is a major Net Project of Australia's Cultural Network, which is an initiative of the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts. It involves the development of a website to act as a gateway to archive resources.

“Our vision: Easy access for the Australian and international communities to the diverse activities of the dynamic Australian culture and recreation sectors.”
Provides access to articles, newsletters, studies, discussion lists, statistics, grants etc

Another example:
City of Sydney – using Archives Investigator

“Archives Investigator….Provides ambient, context and content information about archival records created by the City Council, other Councils and Council areas absorbed by Sydney City, and Sydney Festival Ltd.”

“Archives Investigator is a tool to assist all who need access to archival records, for business, research or management reasons. It provides information about -
1. what records are in the archives, and
2. the contexts in which the records were created and used.”

“As well as identifying context (who created the records), Archives Investigator features 'functional context', enabling you to identify records relevant to your research through the functions and activities that they document…..Archives Investigator is based on the 'series system' for management and access to records, first developed in Australia and now widely recognised as a metadata standard.”
The Directory of Archives in Australia (hosted by ASA )

“Introduction
The aim of the Directory of Archives in Australia is to identify the location of as many archival collections as possible throughout Australia, indicating factors relevant to the use of the collections. This information is intended for two broad audiences; to assist researchers to identify relevant archival repositories, to point to more detailed descriptions of collections and to provide details which will be useful for organising a research visit; and to provide contact points between professional colleagues.”

First published as: Our Heritage: A Directory to Archives and Manuscript Repositories in Australia in 1983.
515 entries. Look up some examples.