

**The Power of RIM...** by Jane Barske  
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The new emphasis on the management of information is a global phenomenon in which the rapid exchange of timely information is recognized as being crucial to the success of many businesses. One of the key factors in facilitating this and the associated changes in the way business is done is the strategic use of information technology. A common theme running through the Records & Information Management (RIM) discussion is the need for useful, accurate information and the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge. To fulfil this need additional emphasis on the management of information is required.

**Information Management** can be defined as being: the coordinated management of information-based resources, including information holdings and investments in technology. It involves the planning, directing and organizing of all of the organization's information-based resources to meet corporate goals and to deliver programs and services.

Both the perceived *infoglut* (an over abundance of information) and the *infovoid* (lack of and or invalid information to which access has not been determined) are increasing rapidly and in step with each other, especially over the past decade. This mainly due to the advent of networked computer systems and the Internet.

People are inundated with information and most often do not have approved mechanisms or guidelines to manage this resource. Systems, procedures and tools must be in place to ensure

that the information is not only accessible but also current, reliable and valuable to an organization.

### **A Priority**

Managing information has become a priority in the public and private sectors and here at the UofW. A basic RIM principle is that each employee will have access to pertinent, relevant and timely information needed for the delivery of their day-to-day operations.

The achievement of an organization's vision requires an increase in the degree of integration of functions, applications and repositories of information. It is also dependent upon the ability to manage information throughout its life cycle and making it readily accessible to those requiring it across an operational unit, an institution and yes, the outside world. The key to achieving the Records & Information Management goals is standards. The key to making it all work is training, education and support of the end user.

### **Life Cycle**

Records & Information Management addresses the issues related to the life cycle of information. Life cycle management includes the various steps associated with the creation and generation, organization, retrieval, use, accessibility, transmission, storage, backup, protection and final disposal of information. This life cycle can be attributed to information in any media, from paper to electronic to digital to audio and video formats.

## **At the University**

A Records & Information Management Policy has recently been approved by the Board of Regents and been distributed throughout the institution. Records Management incorporates various disciplines/directions such as document management, data warehousing, imaging, records management, and the RIM Program. (Knowledge management introduces the human aspect into the RIM realm, which must be aligned with the overall Information Management Strategy.) We have come to refer to these initiatives/programs as Information Management Building Blocks.

Many projects are being developed under the information management umbrella at the UofW. Examples such as the establishment of the Members' database, the creation and introduction of our Web site and the RIM policy are but a sampling of the progress being made in reducing redundancies and providing better access to our data. These initiatives are what makes for good, sound information management practices at the UofW. Efforts are already underway to accomplish the same principles for the procedural and textual based information with the advent of the OmniRIM project. In the future, a goal is to include the scanning of important documents and data files in order to provide full life cycle management to our information.

Now, what does this all mean to you and me? In terms of information management services and tools, these will have an impact on our work, existing policies and procedures and the way in which we interact with one another:

- A standardized and consistent environment will enable us to be more productive.
- Document sharing will make it possible for us to carry out our work in an environment

regardless of physical location.

- The automation of time-consuming daily tasks such as document routing, security and tracking can be managed through OmniRIM tools.
- Finally, relevant and efficient retrieval of information will be a great time saving factor in our day-to-day activities.

## **The Records & Information Management (RIM) Program**

The Records & Information Management Program located within the University Archives & Records Centre, in the Library, is responsible for ensuring a cohesive approach in the development and implementation of Records & Information Management at the UofW. One of the RIM Program's primary goals is to preserve our corporate memory and align related initiatives through education and effective communications throughout the organization. Creating an information management community at the University will provide us with the knowledge and tools to not only work better together but also to enhance the way in which the institution and its clients locate and access, learn from and use its information holdings.

## **In the Future**

More on what Records & Information Management means to us at the UofW will be forthcoming in the months to come. A web site with access to various RIM resources will soon be available. Meanwhile, let me leave you with a new concept to ponder. It was once perceived that the acquisition of information/knowledge was power. Now in the new millennium, it is believed that true power lies in the sharing of our information, the sharing of our experiences and of our knowledge... I look forward to continuing this discussion with you and invite you to reach me at 786-9259 for further developments in the RIM Program at the UofW.