Management of Electronic Records in Universities:
A Case Study of Selected Universities in Kenya

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The chapter starts with an introduction as to what electronic record are, giving an overview of the Kenyan situation in institutions of higher learning starting at the kind of electronic records that are kept, which are accessed, the most frequently used, if there is any electronic management system in place, any guidelines, people leading the e-records agenda disposal and preservation, and finally, the future thinking in the e-records agenda. Thereafter, the chapter recommend some ways forward and a conclusion.

INTRODUCTION

Electronic records are defined as those records that are digital either by conversion through digitization or born digital. According the National Archives of Australia (NAA) electronic or digital records include "word-processed documents, emails, databases and images" (NAA, 2004a). On the other hand, IRMT (2009) defines electronic records as documents regardless of form or medium created or received, maintained and used by an agency, organization or individual in pursuance of legal

obligations or in transactions of business, of which they themselves form a part or provide evidence. While many records are printed and kept in paper or hard copy format, increasingly business activities are conducted in a purely digital context. As such, organisations -of which universities are among them- need to be able to capture these electronic records to ensure an effective and efficient business environment that can provide evidence of the organisations activities and fulfill legislative requirements. Those electronic records that are identified as being of continuing value need to be managed in such a way that they remain accessible.

Electronic records can be stored throughout an organisation in a variety of ways – in databases, on hard drives, in shared folders and in email accounts. In order to effectively manage the electronic records being produced by an organisation a method of capturing records using an Electronic Records Management System (ERMS) needs to be implemented.

The specific objectives of this chapter are:

i.   To identify the types and formats of electronic records created in universities in Kenya.
ii.   To explain the state of electronic records management in universities in Kenya.
iii. To describe the challenges facing electronic records management in universities in Kenya.
iv.   To provide a way forward for improving electronic records management in universities in Kenya.

BACKGROUND

The responsibility of managing electronic records has moved from records professionals to the people who create and use records in a daily basis. Unfortunately, these users are not trained to know what document to keep for evidential purposes or how to describe, file or maintain records. Consequently, even if computer systems allow for widespread access to information, there is no guarantee that the information will be available or that it will easily be retrieved by anyone other than the individual who created and used it. Therefore, careful monitoring of the way electronic records are created and used is essential to developing an effective work environment for businesses, all of which run on information.

This chapter came as a survey of the management of electronic records management in institutions of higher learning in Kenya. While there is an out- cry of lack of jobs in the country, surprisingly the uptake of university learning is on the increase. This has a direct implication on the sheer volumes of records that have to be maintained in these institutions of higher learning. Due to the humongous data that has to

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