

Chapter 16

Challenges in Managing Records in the 21st Century

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ABSTRACT

The chapter contains the challenges the 21st century record managers after reviewing scholarly literature. It was discovered that what actually differentiates the 21st century from others is the emergence of information and communication technology and internet which an ideal record manager must keep him/herself abreast of if he/she want to stay relevant. The major challenge is the lack of record management policies by both organizations and government. Some other problems include hacking, high cost of information technology infrastructure, information proliferation which is popularly known as information explosion, etc.

INTRODUCTION

It's no longer news that the 21st century has witnessed and is still witnessing a lot of technological revolutions, and that revolution has caused a lot of changes to the traditional order of doing things in all works of life. Not only that, even the modern system of doing things needs constant and timely evaluation for constant upgrade in order to stay relevant.

The 21st century is characterized with terms like information age, digital age, the new norm age, e-age (electronic age) ie, e-banking, e-commerce, e-learning, e-governance, etc.; jet age, cloud computing, internet, social media platforms, electronic mail, digital presence, hackers, spyware, cybercrime, cyber insecurity, etc. All these were a product of Information and Communication Technology.

One major grand slide of the 21st century is the emergence of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and its accomplice (digitization of things, e-resources, e-records management, cloud computing, web 2.0, and the Network G's (3G, 4G, 5G, etc.) that has cut across all human activities, organizational operations, and governance, thereby causing a great revolution in routines of organizations.

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The great revolution caused by ICT did not leave record management behind, ICT has caused a tremendous change in the way records are managed from creation, storage (preservation), retrieval, (utilization), and removal (disposition). All the elements of the life cycle of records management have undoubtedly been affected by ICT. Hence the records manager need for ICT compliance or else he/she become irrelevant in the 21st century.

The world at the beginning of 21st century that is heavily characterized by its technological innovations and inventions has undoubtedly caused radical changes in the profession called record management; the slow death of paper-based systems, an abundance of new sources of information, the rise of cloud storage solutions, electronic mail platforms in generating, storing records and the growing complexity in defining what record is and is not. The rapidly evolving technology space coupled with the lack of a standard method of keeping records in this day and age has posed some unique and complex challenges for 21st - century records managers in the business, legal, academic, and government sectors.

Records are inevitable information carriers with high reference, legal, transactional, and historical value. They are information carriers that are pivotal for personal, economic, financial, political, legal, national, and general growth and development. Therefore, the need for integration of ICT competencies into its management is non-negotiable as it is only the way out.

Information and Communication Technology has been a blessing, it has reduced the stress and the ambiguous tasks that come with the manual system of records management, it has made the creation of records easy, it has made accessibility of records very quick and irretrievability is less burdening compared to the manual system. Quoting West (2001) *“There has never been a time when more people had more access to information, on a global basis than right now”*. On a general note, it is believed that information and communication technology has made life much easier but not without its challenges among which we have terms like Information explosion which has make storage and retrieval more difficult and highly demanding; Information authenticity, because anybody can dump anything without verification or authorization. Another challenge is high demand for precision (getting what you want with little or no ambiguity), etc.

Not only has ICT affected the module Operandi of organizations, it has also changed the nomenclatures of events and things, e.g. we now have e-learning, e-buying, e-commerce, cloud computing, online transactions, e-governance, e-dating, e-banking etc. therefore, record management is now known as e-record management with the acronym ERM.

RECORD MANAGEMENT

Record Management is a co-joined word, records, and management. The former is a substance and the latter is an act. Records are anything (documents; papers or electronic format) that contains and conveys information that is made, created, generated, produced, executed, issued, and received in connection with the transactions and official activities of the organizations. Examples of records include but is not limited to correspondence, receipts, policy statements, reports, deeds of agreement, etc. However, the criteria that such a document must meet to be classified as records is the validity and the authenticity of the information it carries (Mukred & Yusof, 2020). This means that the information it carries must also be understandable, accessible, retrievable with a high reference value.

Management is the coordination and harmonization of different activities to achieve a goal. Combining the two words, Records management is the coordination and harmonization of different records

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