

Born Digital – Stay Digital

A case study

PROJECT SNAPSHOT: Vital Records

- Over 18,000 vital documents dating from the 1970s onwards
- Paper format only
- Records were never formally appraised
- Storage space in Fire Room exhausted
- Little / no relationship with parent file reflected in EDRMS

Process

- Legal Services consulted on barriers to digitization and destruction of hardcopy original
- Compliance Declaration and related processes documented
- Software configured, documents prepared and scanned

Outcome

- 100% of records now digitized and all appraised. Of these 52% still vital and 72% now digital only
- Records available immediately in EDRMS as text searchable PDF/A with relevant metadata
- Process in place for new records
- Vital Records Policy and Vital Records Register in place
- Disaster Management Plan in place with knowledge that contractual vital records now digitally managed

An overall reduction of around 72% of physical storage of paper records. i.e. reduction from 267 to 75 cartons in storage.

The legacy

Griffith University's records management legacy is one of nearly 40 years of paper records stored in multiple onsite and offsite locations, along with unmanaged records in email boxes, on shared drives or in business systems.

The barriers to the University managing records in their native digital format are many:

- Our infrastructure services and records management unit were located in different branches of the University, leading to a disjointed approach
- Prohibitive cost of licensing an enterprise wide EDRMS
- Staff just want to do their work, in one location
- Many of business processes are paper-based
- The available framework for records management didn't efficiently accommodate managing records digitally
- Lack of infrastructure to facilitate converting legacy paper records to digital records.

Preparing for the digital world

In January 2013, Corporate Archives & Records Management Services relocated to the newly created Information Management Portfolio in the Division of Information Services. A number of activities were undertaken to lay the foundation for the conversion to digital records management:

- A Griffith University Information Management Framework was developed aimed at promoting a consistent, whole-of-University approach to information management. The Framework encourages effective stewardship of data to better assist the University to meet its strategic objectives and ensure that our valuable information and data assets are managed appropriately;
- A Corporate Information Management Roadmap which documented desired achievements for the next 3 years;
- A records management audit was undertaken which enabled the measurement of both coverage of records management activities and the digital/paper ratio for all University elements and business systems.

Through considered implementation of managed metadata and embedded recordkeeping, a shift from reliance on centralised to in-place records management reflective of the University's Information Management Principles.

1. ***Information is Shared;***
2. ***Information is Accessible;***
3. ***Information is Managed;***
4. ***Data and Information is Commonly Described; and***
5. ***Data and Information is Secure.***

Lifting the recordkeeping burden

It was recognised that the level of detail and complexity of the University Sector Retention and Disposal Schedule and the General Retention and Disposal Schedule for Administrative Records unnecessarily burdened staff with a choice of over 1,000 record classes from which to select a retention status. By undertaking a review of the Schedules and creating a single "rolled up" version combining both documents for ease of reference, management of records in their digital format is simplified. The "rolled up" version of the two Schedules contains less than 60 record classes.

Most importantly, there was a fundamental shift in practice with the adoption of the notion of in-place records management as the preferred management method for the majority of the University's records.

This change in thinking has provided an avenue for adopting products like SharePoint to manage records in place. As a replacement to our shared drives, it will become a fundamental recordkeeping and knowledge system. More importantly, staff will not need to do anything more than their usual everyday work, confident that the records they create and use are being appropriately managed.

Shifting paper to digital

Transforming from paper to digital whilst trying to maintain existing service levels, and without employing extra people is a significant undertaking. By identifying key record sets (25 in total) which generate the largest amount of centrally managed paper on file, the University will be able to free staff resources in the shortest time possible to focus on the conversion of legacy record sets. By purchasing 3 high end production level scanners and installing a robust scanning software solution, the University is now able to take a multi-pronged approach:

- Deploy a small team to work directly with University elements to modify business processes to reduce the amount of paper records being created (e.g. through online workflow remove the need for internal signatures)
- Use of existing technology and new infrastructure to facilitate easy transfer of paper to digital by the University element using their MFD to send records to an appropriately managed system. The hardcopy is destroyed under the appropriate Compliance Declaration.
- Digitisation of associated legacy records.

Promoting the message

A series of one-page flyers (digital of course!) and online Prezis have been developed to spread the recordkeeping message to the Griffith community. Topics covered include:

- Introduction to Recordkeeping at Griffith University
- Do I need to keep this?
- Need a hand with Information Management?
- Managing Corporate Records at Griffith University
- Records Storage Spaces Risk Assessment Tool for University Elements