

# From retention schedules to functional schemes in the French Ministry of Defence

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## ABSTRACT

In this paper, we describe our project to design a records management framework, based on the analysis of the IT architecture.. The aim is to help every actor in his field to manage properly and legally his data and records. This project is the keystone to set up the long term archiving information systems plan.

## Categories and Subject Descriptors

E.1 [Data structures]; H.3 [Informational storage and retrieval]

## General Terms

Management, Documentation.

## Keywords

Functional areas. Information governance policy. IT architecture. Long-term preservation. Records management framework Retention schedules

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The French ministry of Defence (MoD) has been going through various mutations for the last 20 years. Its size (in 2011/2012, almost 300 000 employees and a budget over 40 billion euros) and its organization (three main entities : the Army's General Staff -including Army, Air Force and Navy general staff-, the weaponry general department and the Secretary general department) make it evolve a challenging task.

The main change is the "interarmisation", inter-army policy started in 1962 and strongly led since 2005. The aim of this policy is to share the skills and means of the three armies (Army, Air Force and Navy) in a rational and efficient way. This policy implies drastic staff cutbacks. Between 2008 and 2015, the goal is the decrease of 54 000 positions.

Ministerial modernization action plans have been launched in order to challenge this rationalization, reduce the working distinctions and have a greater dematerialization of the business processes.

## 2. BALARD

The main example of this rationalization is the Balard project. All the departments are to be gathered in the same location, while today they are spread in a dozen of places in Paris . 9300 people will be working in the same buildings.

The stakes of these operations are to rethink all the working processes including the records and archives management. The first step was the drafting of a ministerial instruction, in July 2011, defining the records management policy of the MoD. Then an archives action plan was launched in 2012 to re-organise the filing and collecting processes of all the records, paper and electronic. It also has a "Balard" part to frame all the archives operations.

Such a massive removal implies a lot of archives to appraise and transfer in a short time, especially as the archives storage will be drastically reduced (less than 4,3 ml by person).

Appraise these bulks of archives was considered as the first priority. All the departments were asked to elaborate retention schedules in order to achieve that goal, avoid uncontrolled destructions and prepare the transfers in the archives repositories. In spite of the advice given and the practical information on the intranet, the retention schedules produced are of quality uneven. They have been made by departments and are not the efficient tool expected. They only work for serial records or departments which don't evolve a lot with a small perimeter of action. This method doesn't allow a pertinent management of the knowledge of the producing departments nor an appropriate appraisal of the records. Moreover, if it had helped some departments to appraise their bulks of records, it only takes into account the electronic records and the IT systems in fragmented way.

A new records policy had to be thought and applied to efficiently manage all the records produced and the IT systems.

### 3. FUNCTIONAL RATIONALISATION

#### 3.1 *IT systems archiving strategy*

The unavoidable state governance led by the IT department within the MoD to rationalize its systems implied 4 main actions:

- a unified and controlled storage, based on the tools provided by the new common technical platform;
- the decommissioning / the service removal of the obsolete or redundant IT systems;
- the setting up a global governance to manage the IT system's projects and their lifecycle;
- the implementation of the IT urbanization, based on functional zones designed by a 2007 instruction about the IT architecture.

A guide and a manual were written to explain the RM approach in those actions. As a result, the IT department wrote, in 2013, an instruction requiring each IT system to have, at each step of its lifecycle, an archiving approach: a RM expert must be designated at the beginning of the project, the preservation need must be analyzed, a retention schedules and an archiving chart must be written.

Moreover the trouble is that the French administration is far from having reached the zero paper target. So how can we manage mixed files composed of paper and electronic records? Deal with huge amount of paper as well as tracking all the information within IT systems?

In this context, the records manager's goal is to capture all the information flows, their contact areas, their production or validation phases before even considering the records typologies or the specific data. To elaborate an IT retention schedule the whole information flow (paper and/or electronic) must be taken into consideration.

#### 3.2 *Retention schedules by functional zones*

After the semi-failure of the "traditional retention schedules" policy, the records managers realized they have to take into account the IT urbanization and its global and functional approach.

The methodology then elaborated follows the IT architecture. The retention schedules are now based on the functional zones defined by the IT department. They have to be cross-disciplinary to avoid redundancy, they take into account both paper and electronic records and clearly identify the documents flow and the pilots of the actions or processes.

For each zone, the functional retentions schedules present by functional quarter and block, all the associated processes, their

pilots, the typology of the records or data produced, their retention times. At the same time, all the IT flows are analyzed and compared. The dialogue with the departments implied at each step of the conception is fundamental to the relevance of the project.

This type of functional retention schedules framed by well-defined and validated processes is simple to apply for restricted and not too complex areas. But this method can be harder to apply when the rationalization is in progress and to environment dealing with many businesses such as the human resources functional zone.

Nevertheless, this work is necessary to succeed in urbanization and information management. It allows to track the redundancy and duplication within a functional zone or between several zones. It, of course, also provide the right retention times. This framework gives a global vision of the blueprint of the zone which allows a better IT systems management from an archives perspective.

### 4. TOWARDS GLOBAL INFORMATION GOVERNANCE

Elaborating the retention schedules for the real estate resources zone has led to work on the different missions and sub-missions of all the departments implied in the processes. Soon, we realize that the theory and the definitions described in the overall IT architecture are fairly far from the reality and the real actions. It is necessary to clearly identify the creators of the data (producer services) and the submission services.

The retention schedules are elaborated to fulfill two main requirements: a vision based on the macro processes and needs of very accurate and detailed information on the processes.

Once the information flows are tracked, it is easy to spot the deficiencies either functional or documentary within the zone.

In order to identify all the data or information produced, it is necessary to audit all the IT systems of the studied zone. Many questions are raised at that point such as: how to manage the data that are not stored in a single IT system? How to deal with paper records used to complete manually the inputs in the systems?

The audit then gives a complete and accurate mapping of the paper records flows and clearly shows the ruptures in the documentary flows.

Functional retention schedules combined with an audit of the IT systems of the zone considered are very efficient tools for RM and global information governance. They also allow a greater dialogue not only with the records creators, as it used to exist with "traditional" retention schedules but also with the IT department and all the services implied in the processes.

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## **5. CONCLUSION**

This work is only at its beginning, as it has just started this year. Nevertheless, it is clear that these functional retention schedules allow us to set a global information management by identifying the data records managers must track, store and preserve. But they also show the records, paper or electronic, that we won't be able to preserve. They give us the ability to only capture significant information and to preserve in its context with the relevant metadata to understand them in the future. Archiving therefore becomes the acceptance of a scheduled loss of information, formalized in an archiving contract.