

Information Culture: An Essential Concept for Next Generation Records Management

Gillian Oliver
School of Information Management
Victoria University of Wellington
New Zealand
Gillian.oliver@vuw.ac.nz

Fiorella Foscarini
Department of Media Studies
University of Amsterdam
The Netherlands
f.foscarini@uva.nl

ABSTRACT

This workshop will contribute to the Records Management in Transition stream, by introducing the topic of information culture (that is, the values accorded to information, and attitudes towards it, specifically within organizational contexts). The objectives of the workshop are twofold. Firstly it will demonstrate the utility of the concept of information culture as the basis for the development and promotion of next generation records management practice. Secondly it will stimulate reflection on the content and scope of education for records management, and explore the appropriateness of this in today's highly flexible and dynamic working environment.

Traditional records management education largely focuses on systems, processes and techniques required to achieve recordkeeping outcomes. Generally this approach largely ignores or at best superficially acknowledges the fundamental cultural issues encountered when attempting to implement these systems, processes and techniques in workplaces. The information culture perspective takes people, the employees of the organization, into account, and facilitates the understanding and diagnosis of the cultural dimensions of organizations as socially constructed entities.

The workshop will explore the components of a diagnostic model, the Information Culture Framework (ICF). The ICF is underpinned by three key ideas: recordkeeping informatics, soft systems methodology and rhetorical genre. The model distinguishes three levels of factors, which will be used as the basis to structure the workshop.

The first level, fundamental influences, includes consideration of the value accorded to records, information preferences and national or regional technological infrastructure, as well as language. Although the factors considered at this level are hard to change, identifying key features is essential in order to guide records management programme development. The second ICF level addresses the knowledge, skills and expertise of staff members relating to recordkeeping requirements. This encompasses understanding of information related competencies, for example information and digital literacy, as well as traditional areas of focus such as awareness of specific records-related obligations. The final ICF level considers the characteristics that are unique to a particular organization and probably the most amenable to change, namely corporate information technology governance and trust in existing organizational systems. This final layer highlights the need for practitioners to work collaboratively with cognate information professionals and for reflective practice.

The workshop presenters will introduce the concepts and explain the factors at each level of the ICF. Throughout the workshop, they will invite participants to reflect on their own experiences with records management education and training, as well as to consider how effective current education and training programmes are in enabling students to engage with the factors identified. Discussions generated through the workshop will enable participants to investigate where development or change is necessary to equip practitioners with the knowledge and skills that will allow them to apply the concept of information culture in their workplaces.