

Managing Shared Drives

This public records brief provides advice to public authorities on the challenges that shared drives can pose and suggests actions that will improve their management. These actions can also have positive effects on recordkeeping activities, such as eDRMS readiness strategies.

What are shared drives?

Shared drives, also known as network drives, are used by most public authorities to store information created by users electronically. This information can include Word documents, Excel spreadsheets, PowerPoint slides and reports from databases. Some of this information will be public records.

Shared drives have often evolved in an informal manner with minimal structure or planning. Folders with titles such as Mary's Letters or John Smith's Folder are not uncommon. These folder names convey no indication of content, making the location of required information difficult.

Why unstructured shared drives can pose challenges!

The common problems that shared drives can cause include:

- Difficulty finding and retrieving information that is known to exist.
- Public records are difficult to authenticate if they are only stored in a shared drive (An authentic record is one that can be proven and trusted to be what it purports to be and to have been created, used, transmitted or held by an agency or person to whom these actions have been attributed).
- Documents in shared drives do not provide reliable evidence of actions.
- Shared drives do not provide any recordkeeping functionality.

Shared drives are not recordkeeping systems

Shared drives do not usually have the functionality to serve as a recordkeeping system. Documents stored on shared drives can be edited or deleted by anyone who has access to the drive; there is no audit trail that can identify who has modified a document, properties fields are rarely populated with metadata, there is no context to the documents.

Public authorities must develop strategies to ensure that public records stored on shared network drives are captured and kept within a recordkeeping system, such as an electronic document and records management system (eDRMS) or in paper-based files.

Applying recordkeeping principles such as using a business classification scheme to shared drives can assist public authorities to improve information and records management activities.

Effective management of shared drives can provide a number of benefits that support recordkeeping, such as:

- assisting in educating users within public authorities of their recordkeeping responsibilities;
- preparing users for eDRMS introduction and preparing data for migration to an eDRMS; and
- increasing users' awareness of classification schemes.

Other information management benefits of managing shared drives include easier retrieval of information, a structured approach to managing electronic documents, consistency in how information is managed across the public authority and improved cooperation and linkages between the information technology and recordkeeping areas of the public authority.

Improvement actions

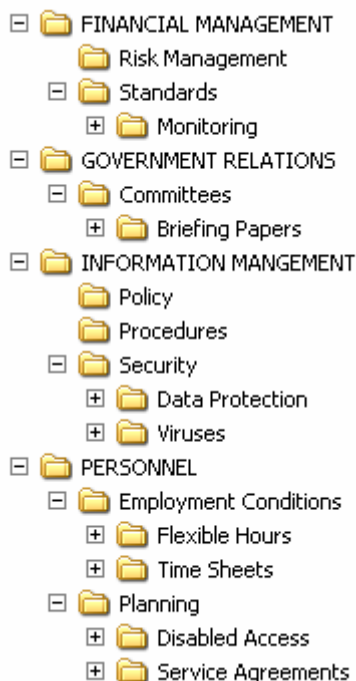
Public authorities should include the management of shared drives in their overall information management strategy. Possible actions could include:

- Align the folder titles to the public authority's business classification scheme.
- Develop a document naming standard that is easy to use.
- Develop policies and procedures that provide structure and consistency for the management of shared drives.
- Identify appropriate processes and controls for the deletion of information from the shared drive.
- Audit shared drives on a regular basis to ensure that the policies and procedures are being followed.

Public authorities should also educate users about use of the shared drive. Education topics could include:

- Ensure that all users are made aware of the need to follow policies and procedures.
- Provide training to all new users when they are first given access to the system.
- Ensure that users are aware that information in the shared drive that is a public record needs to be captured into an appropriate recordkeeping system, whether paper-based or eDRMS.
- Assign responsibility for the creation of new folders to a central administrator.
- Encourage users to include footers that provide a document name and file path in all documents.

The following figure shows a basic shared drive file structure based on part of a public authority's Business Classification Scheme.



For more detailed guidance on the management of public records visit the Queensland State Archives' website at <http://www.archives.qld.gov.au>, or contact us on:

Telephone: (07) 3131 7777

Email: info@archives.qld.gov.au.