Queensland State Archives
Public Records Brief
A RECORDKEEPING UPDATE FOR QUEENSLAND PUBLIC AUTHORITIES – ISSUED SEPTEMBER 2006

What is an eDRMS?

Public authorities are increasingly implementing electronic document and records management systems (eDRMS) to effectively manage paper and electronic records and documents. This brief provides an overview of the functions, benefits and implementation issues associated with an eDRMS.

eDRMS functions

As the name suggests, the functions of an eDRMS can be divided into document management and records management. The table below provides an overview of these functions in an eDRMS.

	Document Management Functions	Records Management Functions
What is stored	• Electronic files such as word processing documents, spreadsheets, multimedia materials, databases, images etc	• The same types of files, if and only if, they have been designated as records • Will also manage paper records
What end-users can do: ***Creation and capture***	• Create new documents (may or may not be records) • Save files with limited metadata related to business functions	• Accept only the files declared to be records and place them in proper file plan locations, associated with a retention and disposal schedule and linked to related records • Save records with enterprise level metadata including enterprise file plan categorisation and retention and disposal schedules
Access and use	• Retrieve stored files • Receive and action files in accordance with workflow processes • Edit files and select whether to save as new version or new document	• Retrieve copies of records but not the records themselves • Cannot change records • Accept changed copies designated as new records and place them in proper file plan location, associated with retention and disposal schedules
Disposal	• Delete files	• Cannot delete records. Records may only be deleted in accordance with retention and disposal schedules by authorised records managers

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Benefits of an eDRMS

> *"Every day in our work, we find instances where information is not professionally managed: records are not created when they should be; records are not properly indexed, filed or included in departmental record-keeping systems; records are not retained and are not disposed of in accordance with approved schedules."* (John Reid, Information Commission of Canada, March 2000)

Many business information systems are designed to support current business needs for information but have limited ability to keep records of the business transactions they carry out, potentially placing the organisation at risk of not being able to conduct its business or satisfy accountability requirements. Using an eDRMS can help overcome these risks. Other benefits include:

- Simultaneous access to documents and records by multiple users from a variety of locations.
- Assist in compliance with standards and legislation.
- Eliminate redundancy and duplication.
- Greater visibility and accessibility of information resources.
- Reduce response time for information requests.
- Alleviate paper from an otherwise electronic records management cycle.
- Management of document creation and workflow processes.
- Version control of documents under development.
- Can be tailored to interface with other systems such as web content management systems.

eDRMS implementation issues

The implementation of an eDRMS will not provide a solution to all of the document management and recordkeeping issues facing an organisation. To maximise the benefits of an eDRMS senior management commitment and a culture supportive of information management is essential. In addition, a range of recordkeeping tools, such as a business classification scheme, disposal schedules and business rules, need to be developed. Without these foundations it will be difficult to realise the returns on investing in an eDRMS.

An eDRMS is not a 'back-end' system and involves substantial change for all staff that create documents and records in a public authority. The implementation usually requires end user staff to take greater responsibility for the capture and classification of records. For these reasons, an eDRMS implementation project should also involve an effective change management component and extensive consultation when designing business rules and user interfaces.

Top 10 requirements to ensure organisational capacity to successfully introduce an eDRMS

1. Assess business needs
2. Gain senior management support and leadership to effect change
3. Establish a multi-disciplinary project team with a written project plan
4. Consult with users and other stakeholders
5. Choose a flexible system design which meets current and changing needs
6. Secure sufficient funding
7. Commit to fundamental recordkeeping principles, practices and standards
8. Develop recordkeeping tools
9. Establish eDRMS policies and procedures
10. Provide ongoing training for users.

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

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