

How green are you ?

Seven ways records management can help save the planet and make savings for your organisation.

See how on page 6

03

Are our retention schedules still fit for purpose?

12

The strategic importance of email archive management

36

Records management in Japan



>>>> training required to carry out the tasks. Finally record management perception was discussed from RM seen as “box shifting” all the way through to the wheel being reinvented. Finally the typical actions associated with gap analysis were described.

After all three presentations there was a discussion period whereby our presenters fielded enquiries and opinions from the delegates which led to some enlightening exchanges.

After a lunch kindly sponsored by Bramble.cc, the more formal aspects of the meeting were discussed. After an explanation of the requirements of the group, the following RMS members were elected to the group committee: Leanne Bridges and Jenny Grodzicka of the Audit Commission (Joint Chairs); Robert Hogarth - Cornwall County Council (Treasurer) and Melody Allsebrook - Economic and Social Research Council (Secretary). Our thanks go to these members for offering to be officers. Suggested topics for further group meetings included: Procedures & Policies; Email management; retention scheduling; information audits; Prince 2 methodology; digital preservation and taxonomies. Finally possibly venues were requested and the Joint Chairs suggested that they will investigate the possibilities of using a meeting room at their premises.

A final thanks has to be extended to the Environment Agency for arranging the venue especially Julie Mitchell, Anthony Morley and Matt Thomas for helping with the arrangements.

It is hoped that the next meeting will take place in the first quarter 2007, details to be forwarded via the RMS SouthWest listserv. To subscribe, simply send an e-mail to

listserv@mailtalk.ac.uk - leave the subject of the message blank but include the following text in the main body of the message: “SUBSCRIBE RMS-SOUTHWEST Your Name” replacing “Your Name” with the actual name you would like to be known by on the list. ©



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Administrative document management within Japanese local government

The ongoing challenge for change in awareness

Denichiro Hirota

Introduction

This paper deals with the management of administrative documents by local government in Japan. First, in dealing with problems that have arisen in this area, the discussion is divided into problems of a surface nature, of which employees are aware, and deep-seated problems of which employees are not aware.

This is followed by a broad outline of the path taken to improve administrative documents and its connection with Britain. The paper concludes with a detailed discussion of recent information with respect to improvements in administrative document management, based on the Crystal Triangle Theory.

1 What problems are experienced in Japanese Local Government?

Problems with regard to document management in Japanese local government may be classified into two areas. The first involves problems which are of a surface nature and about which employees are aware. The other involves deep-seated problems of which employees are not aware.

(1) Problems of which employees are aware

Problems of a surface nature

Problems of which many local government employees typically complain may be classified into three areas:

- Time wasted in searching for documents under an employee's own charge (own retrieval is slow)
- Impossibility of locating documents under the charge of others (cannot retrieve other's documents)
- No idea as to location of past documents (difficulties ascertaining location)

Finding Solutions

These problems of a surface nature may also be identified as problems that relate to 'quality' in document management. In slightly more concrete terms, they are problems involving poor levels of retrieval. An important key to their solution lies in classification techniques used to improve retrieval levels. The preparation and use of management lists, which register all documents held to assist in locating them easily is important in this regard.

Ultimately these problems relate to quality, can be adequately dealt with through technical improvements, and are easily solved.

(2) Problems of which employees are not aware

Deep-seated Problems

The mistaken belief held by many employees, that documents are their own and that their own individual method of document management is best, is a deep-seated problem. This mistaken belief leads to a lack of importance placed on document management. It can in some cases result in serious indiscretions, including non-compliance with respect to regulations covering information disclosure, and protection of personal information.

Finding Solutions

These deep-seated issues are problems involving employee 'awareness'. In slightly more practical terms this means that, although the documents are the common property of the administration and citizens, administration employees treat documents as their own ('appropriation') and that, this in turn is allowed by other employees. The difficulty of reforming this attitude cannot be overcome by improving quality levels in document management alone. The key to a solution lies in appropriate 'improvement facilitation methods' and 'improvement facilitators'. The solution to this difficult problem calls for the application of wisdom in seeking to bring about changes in awareness.

2 The history of document management and compliance violations in Japan

Britain's reform of Japanese document management

The prototype for keeping documents in order in Japanese administration has its origins in the Nara Period (710 to 794). Finalised documents involving completed determinations were either rolled into a scroll or bound with ribbon according to topic and stacked on shelves. This method of keeping documents in order was adopted until the end of the nineteenth century.

After 1900 the management of documents in Japan changed course and it was Britain that provided the impetus. >>>>

>>>> At the time the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in place the London branch of Mitsubishi Zaibatsu was using a vertical filing-cabinet to manage its documents. On advice from the London branch, Mitsubishi Zaibatsu completely switched from its old method of storing bound documents, to the use of folders and cabinets. Then in 1916 it imported filing cabinets from Roneo, the British office supplies manufacturer. This marks the beginning of modern methods of document management in Japan.

Manufacture of filing cabinets in Japan began in the 1960s and it was precisely at that time that local government inaugurated

most documents in the possession of government agencies as well, such as non-finalised documents lacking a completed determination, simple internal documents and reference documents (close to the meaning of documents under ISO 15489).

Consequently local government had to achieve conformity with the national standard and was required to expand its coverage of documentation from records to documents.

However it was finalised documents about which equipment manufacturers continued to provide guidance and this guidance failed

Over the last 5 years approximately 100 local government bodies have carried out administrative document management improvements.

significant improvements in administrative document management. However local governments did not attempt improvements themselves, and most outsourced these improvements, to the manufacturers producing the cabinets. It was the consultants, aiming to boost filing cabinet sales, who explained how they were to be used. (The manufacturers referred to these employees as 'document management consultants') The focus of their advice related to finalised documents involving completed determinations.

Disclosure of Information Regulations and Compliance Violations

At the beginning of the 1980s local government began to implement the Disclosure of Information Regulations and in 2001 the national government implemented the Law Concerning Access to Information held by Administrative Organs. In the case of local government only finalised documents involving completed determinations (close to the meaning of records under ISO 15489), were subject to information disclosure (regulations). However, at the national level, the scope was extended to cover not only these kinds of finalised documents, but

to require systematic management of other documents, so the fact remains that employees who have charge of them are allowed to 'appropriate' files accumulated in the vicinity of their desks.

Currently of the documents held by local government 20% are finalised documents, but others account for as much as 80%. The fact that these other documents are not managed systematically means that they are not recorded on the information disclosure list for which a duty arises under the Information Disclosure Law. Therefore under the guidance of these equipment manufacturers compliance violations began surfacing and dealing with them has become a significant challenge to society.

3 ADMiC and the Crystal Triangle Theory

NPO/ADMiC

In 2003 when this problem surfaced, the Administrative Document management Improvement Council ("ADMiC"), a special non-profit corporation, was established pursuant to a request from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, the ministry administering the Law Concerning Access to Information held by Administrative Organs. ADMiC is the only think-tank in Japan with corporate status as an NPO, whose mission is to contribute to the public



Timber cabinet manufactured in UK in 1890's (manufacturer unknown). Currently being used in ADMiC training centre in Tokyo.



Office environment before introduction of AKF



Office environment after introduction of AKF and a row of cabinets (shot from the same angle)



Individual folders inside a cabinet



Office environment after introduction of AKF



Documents held by local governments are filed in a folder and placed in a cabinet, leaving no documents lying around in the vicinity of desks when employees leave work.

interest through appropriate improvements to administrative document management. In this regard we are deeply indebted to Mr Philip A. Jones (Head of Information Governance, Staffordshire County Council) and Dr Julie McLeod (Reader & Programme

already mentioned in 1(i) by providing the 'quality' needed to obviate violations of compliance. ADMiC has also accumulated know-how for improvement facilitation method and improvement facilitators, to change 'awareness' with respect to allowing

- To facilitate retrieval within 30 seconds, even of documents not under one's charge, sequential analysis is carried out, and, for example, documents are arranged horizontally in order of business processes.
- Classified results are recorded at the end of each year in the file list and when ultimately passed on to the stack-room the document storage box number is acknowledged on the list. This is used as a register to identify the location of past documents. When a storage period expires, all the folder titles, entered on the file list, for which the storage period has expired, are retrieved using an identical keyword group used in the archive, so that they can automatically be assessed to select those that ought to remain.
- The method described above offers a solution to the three issues of self-retrieval, retrieval of documents of others, and identification of location.



Screen showing the result of documents retrieval. Assistant manager found a document prepared by a staff member in his division in 8.54 seconds. (source: TV program showing ADMiC's facilitation session)

Leader MSc Records Management School of Computing, Engineering & Information Sciences Northumbria University) for the understanding and support extended at the time of the establishment of the Council.

Within ADMiC, the executive office of the Administrative Document Management Institute provides various enquiry, advisory, investigatory, research, training and consulting services with respect to administrative document management for national and local government. ADMiC expert advisers have not only served, at the request of government, as international delegates with respect to document management, or on government and local government committees, but have also published research outcomes with respect to administrative document management, and published 28 books and 86 academic papers.

Over the last 5 years approximately 100 local government bodies have carried out administrative document management improvements. Of these 54 used NPO/ADMiC for management facilitation.

Crystal Triangle Theory

'AKF' (Administrative Knowledge Filing) is a part of the administrative document management system developed by ADMiC. AKF solves the problems of a surface nature

'appropriation' of documents by employees, the deep-seated problem described in 1(ii). This improvement facilitation for administrative document management practised by ADMiC is based on the Crystal Triangle Theory, a theory comprised of the following three constituents: (1) quality (2) improvement facilitation method and (3) improvement facilitators.

Each of these aspects is further explained below.

Quality

a) Scope of documents managed by AKF: covers all documents held by local government.

Specifically this refers to:

- Paper documents, electronic documents and archives
- Finalised documents involving completed determinations, non-finalised documents lacking completed determinations, simple internal documents and reference documents etc

b) AKF classification method: involves the cross-classification of hierarchical and horizontal classifications.

- To facilitate individual retrieval of documents under an individual's own charge within 15 seconds, functional analysis is carried out and outcomes classified hierarchically.

c) AKF objectives : AKF aspires to accomplish the following objectives of ascending importance.

- Prerequisite: Eradication of attitudes allowing appropriation of documents
- Objective: Maintenance of high-speed retrieval levels and assisting increased efficiency in administration
- Higher objective: Increasing the sharing of information by all government agencies and using information to assist in optimising decision-making.
- Ultimate objective: Sharing information with citizens to provide them with autonomy such that they can use administrative information to think and act for themselves. At this stage AKF functions as the base in the creation of an 'ideal level of autonomy'

Improvement Facilitation Methods

Improvement facilitation methods used in Japan can be broadly divided into the 'Indirect Group Training Model' adopted by equipment manufacturers and, the 'Direct One-on-one Facilitation Model' developed by NPO/ADMiC. They differ as follows:

a) Target groups facilitated by consultants and locations

- Indirect Facilitation Training Model: Focusing on approximately 20% of employees and 50 individuals each time. Employees receiving training then provide facilitation for employees in each division.
- Direct One-on-One Facilitation Model: Expert advisers provide direct facilitation of all employees one-to-one. >>>>>

>>>>

b) Principal role of consultant:

- Indirect Group Training Model:
Explanation as to filing-cabinet use;
disposal of documents
- Direct One-on-One Facilitation Model:
Eradicating attitudes allowing
'appropriation' of documents by
employees; achieving high-speed
retrieval levels

c) Location and format for consultant facilitation

- Indirect Group Training Model:
Conference room using text-books
- Direct One-on-One Facilitation Model: in
division offices using real documents

the tasks involved in administrative business, as well as powers of persuasiveness underpinned by a knowledge of psychology. All NPO/ADMIC facilitators are university teachers.

Conclusion

Improvement in administrative document management involves changing employee awareness.

If NPO/ADMIC's charter were to be described in a phrase, it might be 'The Challenge for Change' – for change in attitudes, which allow 'appropriation' of documents – a change which equipment



ADMIC's Facilitation session by an expert advisor one-on-one guidance in division office using real documents.

- The 'one-on-one facilitation format' was adopted after ongoing efforts to find the best method for achieving changes in awareness of employees through improvement facilitation. The disadvantage in this method is the time taken to train specialist advisor personnel.

Improvement facilitators

Improvement facilitators in Japan can be divided into industry personnel (equipment manufacturer employees), academics and independent persons (such as former local government employees responsible for document management or former equipment manufacturer staff). NPO/ADMIC employs academics. It is an onerous task for employees of manufacturers, which are primarily involved in selling equipment, to seek changes in awareness on the part of local government staff. It requires considerable theoretical knowledge and administrative experience with respect to administrative document management, a thorough appreciation of

manufacturers attempt to ignore. NPO/ADMIC is not simply satisfied with solutions to problems of a surface nature. In order to achieve the ultimate goal of providing citizens with autonomy, it continues to strive away from closed, bureaucracy-focused administrative document management, towards building a functional administrative document management structure, which is open. ©

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Information industry gathers to celebrate annual Online Information exhibition and conference

9660 information industry professionals from around 74 different countries gathered at the annual Online Information exhibition and conference, which took place at the Grand Hall, Olympia, London from 28 - 30 November 2006. Visitors and delegates joined around 266 exhibitors showcasing the latest in online content and information management solutions.

Launch event Information Management Solutions also ran alongside Online Information for the first time. The event was aimed at business, information and IT professionals needing to drive business performance through effective information management and also offered visitors an extensive free educational programme.

As well as the free show floor seminar programme running throughout the event, the Online Information Conference ran for all three days of the event and attracted 725 delegates. The opening keynote session from Thomas A. Stewart, Editor of the Harvard Business Review was a huge success with standing room only in the main conference auditorium.

The fourth annual International Information Industry Awards took place on the evening of the 29 November at the Royal Lancaster Hotel in London. Hosted by Online Information 2006 and Information World Review, the awards offered the chance for the global industry to recognise the achievements of information teams, information and content management projects, vendors and individual information professionals. The evening was compered by John Sergeant, with 400 guests in attendance to salute excellence in the information field. Winners included: ARUP, The National Archives & Autonomy, ISI Emerging Markets, Prenax, Springer eBooks Collection, MPS Technologies and the British Library. Dr Eugene Garfield, Chairman Emeritus, Thomson Scientific, received the Lifetime Achievement Award.

Online Information 2007 runs from 4 - 6 December 2007 at the Grand Hall, Olympia, London. For more information please visit www.online-information.co.uk