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In This Issue: Getting started with records management
Updates on Records, ELNs, Archiving and Organizing.

eOrganizedWorld
the Online Information Management Newsletter for Information Professionals
from Charlie Sodano

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Getting started with records management
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Are you responsible for managing a collection of records that are currently stored in filing cabinets, boxes, computers and servers? Is the collection growing rapidly? Do you feel that no one really cares, except when there's a legal or regulatory action?

You are not alone. Even with all of the publicity about companies getting into trouble because they had inadequate records programs, records management still does not get much respect.

Many people fall into the habit of doing as little organizing as possible, hoping that nothing bad will happen during their watch. I have that attitude about earthquakes in California, where I live. The downside is that if something bad does happen, you will be overwhelmed and may resort to half-truths to get through the ordeal.

It doesn't have to be like this, especially if your record collection is only a few years old. Even if it's older you can plan and implement a program for new records, then gradually incorporate your legacy collection.

Here's what to do to get started. Compose a simple listing of all records in an Excel spreadsheet. Come up with 5-10 general categories and assign each record to one of them via a new Excel column. You may have one category called "unknown". That's OK. You can spend time in the future sorting out what these records really are.

With the help and assistance of the record author/owners determine a retention schedule for each category. Some research will probably be necessary to identify records that have to be kept for legal or regulatory purposes. Business needs are usually the most significant factor in establishing retention. You should NEVER keep records permanently unless they have historical significance. I recommend that the maximum retention should be no more than 50 years. All records should be reviewed at the end of their retention to determine whether they need to be retained longer, destroyed or reclassified. I have heard good arguments about keeping some type of records permanently. The problem with this way of thinking is the assumption that nothing will change over the next 50 years. And we know that things do change. Companies get bought and sold, laws change, policies change, etc. Historically significant records should be moved to a different repository and managed separately.

Record categories and retention schedules should be reviewed annually. Laws, regulations and business needs constantly change. It's not cheap to store records. Get rid of them as soon as possible. One box of paper records can cost you upwards of \$30 a year. Electronic record storage also is not inexpensive. The total cost of storing a gigabyte of information on a secure network server is about \$30 a year.

Contact us (consultants@eorganizedworld.com) for additional information about getting your records management program started. We'll give you more free advice and explain how we can continue to work together.

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What's new?
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Records: An Australian and New Zealand led multinational team of archival institutions has developed a global standard for record-keeping software. This is the latest movement to push records management software into a commodity product.

ELNs: The distinction between LIMS and ELNs continues to blur. Agilent Technologies Inc. introduced a new version of its Kalabie electronic lab notebook (ELN) that processes analytical work requests, integrates with Agilent OpenLAB enterprise content management system and Accelrys' Pipeline Pilot. Labtronics Inc. launched Nexxis ELN for Routine Analyses, the first application to be released on the new Nexxis platform that include Nexxis CIM (Chemical Inventory Manager), Nexxis CAL (Instrument Calibration Manager), and Nexxis ST (Sample Tracker

Organizing: EMC Corporation announced version 6.5 of its Documentum Enterprise Content Management (ECM) Suite version that strongly integrates with Web 2.0. Web 2.0 is a term describing the trend in the use of World Wide Web technology and web design that aims to enhance creativity, information sharing, and most notably, collaboration among users. The eBay site is a good example.

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