

In This Issue: Searching and Finding Part 2
Updates on ELNs and Archiving.

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

Searching and Finding Part 2

=====

In my last Ezine we talked about different approaches for finding information within collections. Information can generally be classified as structured or unstructured. Structured information is normally found within a database and thereby has metadata descriptors that characterized it. Conceptually, the best approach for handling unstructured information is to import it into a database and extract information that can be used for metadata.

In many organizations the first step in finding information is to have discussions with people who were associated in some way to the topic of interest. They may be able to point you to the location of a local collection or refer you to someone else who can perhaps steer you in the right direction. I was contacted recently by a employer that I worked for a few years ago. They were looking for very specific information and asked me if I could give them some direction on where to look.

Who would have think that in this age of Googling that critical information was best found by having discussions with people who were long gone from the organization? And yet, this happens all of the time. It has been exacerbated by the constantly accelerating waves of mergers, acquisitions and divestitures. Piles of essential paper and electronic records lie in dusty closets. If a former colleague cannot be found, searching through these archives is laborious and incomplete at best.

Many organizations believe that they have good control over their information. I have seen several collections of records kept in document management systems that were well organized to meet the current needs of the user community. There was little metadata captured for each file. The only way to find information was to navigate through the various cabinets and folders. A new employee had to undergo extensive training to understand the folder and file nomenclature as well as the cabinet/folder organization. The company was sold and many of the users were downsized. The new owners had a different concept of organizing information. Restructuring of the document management repository was a laborious process that took years to complete.

So where did these people go wrong? They invested in a centralized system to store essential records. This was an excellent first step. They organized their information to make retrieval convenient for the frequent users. Again a good move. What they did not consider is how would their successors would find and retrieve information. We all know that it is becoming increasingly unusual for people to stay in the same job for more than 5 years. So 10-20 years from now there may be no one left from the original user group and thereby no one to help find information..

Future retrieval of information is greatly facilitated by having proper metadata associated with each electronic record. There are some obvious choices: Date completed and/or Approved, Author, Descriptive Title, Product/Project name and Key Words. Information like Department, Location, Function are transient designations and no one is going to update them, especially with very large collections.

The lesson learned is to design a records management system not only for today, but for the future. Ask outsiders if the organization makes sense and is easy to find information. Be sure to capture metadata for each document that will facilitate future retrieval.

Please pass on this EZine to those in your network.

To leave list or change email address, scroll to bottom.

A link to the EZine is also found at www-eorganizedworld.com

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.

=====
What's new?
=====

Records Management

Autonomy Corporation has announced a new product letting businesses record and archive dynamic Web site content, designed to "address the increasing and complex regulatory requirements for businesses presenting dynamic content on the Web," company officials say. The product combines Autonomy Digital Safe with Interwoven TeamSite to form an offering for including Web content in a comprehensive compliance policy. As Anthony Bettencourt, CEO of Autonomy Interwoven noted correctly, the need to record and produce point-in-time records of Web content for compliance requirements is becoming a major issue at the world's largest banks, insurance companies, and retailers.

A recently released survey by ARMA International, "2009 Records & Information Management Survey, shows an apparent disconnect between information management issues deemed important by the organization and training and monitoring of the adherence to those policies.

Respondents to the survey were asked to analyze their organization's total information management landscape in order to get a snapshot of current information practices as they relate to general management, policies and procedures, information management training, information technology, and legal / compliance.

Survey results found the following:

- 73 percent of boards of directors or comparable high-level executive teams have approved a records and information management policy statement that obligates all employees to create and maintain records in accordance with the organization's stated requirements
- 61 percent of an organization's executive management, through its actions, demonstrate the importance of managing records and information.
- Organizations currently have policies in place that address records management issues, such as electronic records and e-mail (71 percent), legal holds (71 percent), information security (72 percent), privacy (72 percent), and physical records (88 percent).
- Organizations are increasingly adopting a standards-based approach to developing information management policies and procedures. Fifty-five percent of organizations use ANSI/ARMA or ISO standards to develop vital records programs, and 89 percent of organizations use standards to develop retention policies.

- 52 percent of organizations report encrypting all sensitive data and personally identifiable information stored in and transmitted from their primary systems.

Training Issues Continue to be a Weak Area for Organizations

A company's information is arguably the most important asset they have. Managing and protecting that information is a crucial part of business process as it helps to keep costs and risks low, as well as keeping competitiveness and compliance a top priority. Each employee plays a part in protecting their organization by managing their own sensitive data. However, it is each organizations responsibility to provide the training necessary to ensure employees are aware of policies and procedures related to RIM. Still, training continues to be a significant downfall in this process:

- Only 25 percent of organizations train their employees on individual roles and responsibilities for managing records and information.
- Organizations that do offer training do not cover many of the important and legally discoverable issues, including instant messaging (78 percent not covering), voice mail (72 percent), removable storage devices (58 percent), wireless handheld devices (69 percent), and text messages (77 percent). Only 60 percent of organizations specifically train employees about their legal holds process.
- 22 percent of organizations do not train employees about data security or protection of sensitive data, even though 87 percent of organizations rate data security as an important issue, with 91 percent placing a high priority on securing client data and personally identifiable information.
- Only 27 percent of organizations have a formal marketing / communications program in place to communicate the value of records and information management to the organization's employees. This communication is a key check on the implementation of enterprise-wide compliance with policies.
- Only 25 percent of organizations feel very confident they could respond appropriately to a legal discovery request.
- When asked how effective their overall records and information management program is, 42 percent placed it on a scale above being "somewhat effective." In the same group, only 19 percent could say the same about their electronic records program (including e-mail).
- When conducting IT strategic planning, less than half (48 percent) of strategic planning teams include records and information management professionals in the process.
- 61 percent of organizations do not monitor employee adoption and adherence to records and information management policies and procedures.

Archiving

Surety, LLC announced that is has joined the Microsoft-sponsored BioIT Alliance as the first and only data integrity protection provider of its kind within the alliance. Utilizing digital timestamp technology, Surety's solutions allow government and commercial organizations to validate the integrity of their electronic records and help prove their authenticity and intellectual property (IP) ownership when challenged in a competitive or legal situation.]

Organizing

"The paperless office is still a myth," said George Goodall, senior research analyst at Info-Tech Research Group Inc. Boxes of files are disappearing from storage rooms and warehouses, but the piles of paper stacked on desks aren't going away, he said. "Despite these advances in the records

room, our day-to-day life will still include a lot of paper. It has a lot of advantages: it's persistent, we can stack and move it, and we can scribble on it with a pencil. It will be very difficult for digital tools to replace it," said Goodall.

ELN

Rescentris, which sells CERF Electronic Lab Notebook software, has announced a partnership with scientific software firm Systat Software. According to a release, Rescentris said the partnership "increases the breadth and depth" of its product offerings and support. The firms will be jointly offering SigmaCERF, an electronic lab notebook and knowledge-management platform.

ArtusLabs, Inc. (www.artuslabs.com) announced the launch of Ensemble Electronic Notebook . The team at ArtusLabs pioneered the Electronic Laboratory Notebook marketplace over 10 years ago at Synthematix. Now they're back with an entirely new approach to Electronic Notebooks and data management solutions.

PRIVACY and SPAM POLICY: I never rent, trade or sell my email list to anyone for any reason whatsoever. You'll never get an unsolicited email from a stranger as a result of joining this list.

To unsubscribe or change subscriber options contact us at ezine@eorganizedworld.com