

Establishing a university records management programme: A case study of the University of Namibia

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Abstract

Records management is crucial to all organizations including universities. Unless records are managed efficiently, it is not possible to conduct business effectively, and to account for what has happened in the past or to make good decisions about the future. The University of Namibia (UNAM) records management project reported in this article was carried out on the notion that records need to be systematically and continuously managed throughout their life-cycle in an integrated manner. The management of institutional records throughout their life cycle is necessary in order to support strategic business objectives of the university and to preserve corporate memory. The project was an attempt to formalize record-keeping at the university in accordance with international archival standards. Starting with information gathering, the project followed some stages which included the legal and regulatory framework, resources and staffing. The investigation also covered vital functions of the university including finance, human resources, student affairs and the executive. The information gathered using the survey method paved way for the implementation of the records management programme at the university.

The University of Namibia (UNAM) came into being on 31 August 1992, following the promulgation of the UNAM Act (Act 18 of 1992). Before that, the institution housed the Academy of Education and with the attainment of Namibia's independence in 1990 this premise was reserved for the opening of the first university in Namibia. The Archives Unit, which falls under the Main Library, was established in 1993. Being a Statutory Body, all UNAM records are state records, and are therefore governed by the Archives Act of Namibia, No. 12 of 1992. In 2010, the Archives Unit merged with the Special Collections Unit to become

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the Archives and Special Collections department of the Main Library.

Background to UNAM records management

When the Archives Unit was established in 1993, its mandate was to take care of the institution's memory. It however, also became the depository for the United Nations Institute for Namibia (UNIN)'s collections which had been donated to the university when the UNIN, based in Zambia, closed six months after the attainment of Namibia's independence. A few other private archival collections, mostly on Namibian history, have also been donated to the archives. When the new Library building was opened in 2001, the eastern wing of the lower-ground floor was allocated to the archives with one repository and offices. The current repository is a large storage room with basic facilities for archival preservation including a single entrance, no windows or any other openings. The repository is air-conditioned but lacks humidity control. Some of the university departments, mostly administrative departments, have transferred their records to the Archives Unit, which mainly serves as a records center, even though it holds other privately donated papers as archives. For many years, the university operated without a formal filing system. However, interviews with long-serving staff members who worked for the Academy (which later became the University of Namibia) recall the existence of a filing system which they said was inherited from the Academy but had ceased to exist with time. In 2005, some record surveys were carried out to some of the UNAM departments by the Archives Unit. During this period, attempts were made to introduce a filing system for the university and also to formulate retention schedules for the institution. This pilot project drafted a few filing systems for specific departments, all drawn from a main one. A few retention schedules were also set at that time. However, this remarkable initiative fell victim to staffing problems after the then archivist left. By 2010, only one department out of the six piloted departments was still using that filing system.

The Library also attempted, in 2005, to introduce an electronic depository using software known as the Tortoise for the Library's electronically-generated records. Under this system, all official documents that would normally be filed physically would be deposited electronically onto the Tortoise system. However, even though it was used for a while, once again, it did not survive after staff changes. Other than this, there were concerns of security and confidentiality that were raised on the Tortoise software and this also contributed to its downfall.

In 2009, the Archives Unit made a decision to formalize and strengthen the university's records management system. A plan of action was put in place to commence at the beginning of 2010. The mandate of the Archives team in this project was to re-vamp and formalize the records management processes to ensure that a proper system was in place for the entire university. There were growing worries from the university's management that the university could be compromising on its accountability if it lacked basic and formal systems of capturing official university records. The Archives Unit then embarked on a project that would see the formalization and standardisation of record management systems for the entire university. The project operated under the following terms of reference, which also became the phases whose sequence were followed during the implementation of this project:

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- Phase 1: Carry out a UNAM-wide records management survey and produce a detailed report citing problems, strengths, flows and weakness areas, recommended solutions;
- Phase 2: Study current filing systems, recommend and draw up a standard Filing System for UNAM;
- Phase 3: Carry out implementation activities for the new Filing System and ensure compliance within all UNAM structures;
- Phase 4: Carry out records management training to UNAM staff working with official records;
- Phase 5: Draft Retention Schedules for all UNAM record types until their final approval by UNAM authority and National Archives of Namibia;
- Phase 6: Carry out e-readiness assessment and draw up functional requirements for an electronic records management system in preparation for the purchase and implementation of an Electronic Records Management System for the university; and
- Phase 7: Assessment and evaluation of the records management project.

Statement of the problem

The University of Namibia is a fairly young institution having been established just over twenty years ago in 1992. However, like any organisation, records are created and they accumulate from day one of existence. The absence of standard and formal ways of managing records at UNAM was not a desirable situation. Universities are expected to value knowledge for it defines their existence. Leaving records management activities in the hands of individuals and at their own discretion does not provide sound platform for institutional accountability and good business operation. Proper records management ensures that documents are traceable as and when needed. On many occasions, the archives received inquiries on important policy documents which could not be quickly located. The university required to lay basic foundation for proper management of records covering policies and guidelines as well raising awareness to staff on their records management responsibilities. Great universities all over the world rely on keeping the knowledge that they generate in order to create platform for further research and learning.

However, these problems seem not peculiar to UNAM only. A study of Nigerian universities (Iwhiwhu, 2005) revealed that most did not have records management or archival facilities and basic functions were carried out by clerical or administrative staff who had no idea what records management was. Similarly, according to an International Records Management Trust (IRMT) commissioned report by Barata et. al. (2001) records management systems in Namibia were completely inadequate and electronic records were in very poor conditions. Nengomasha (2009) also concluded that paper records were not properly managed, and the introduction of e-records even worsened the situation.

Objectives

The major aim of the project was to assess the management of records at UNAM with a view to develop a formalized records management framework for the entire university. The project aimed to investigate the management of records at UNAM to ensure effective and efficient operations which rely on evidence-based decision making processes. Issues investigated included: creation, maintenance and use of records; storage and security of records;

and records disposition. Therefore, the objectives of the project were to:

- investigate records management practices at the University of Namibia;
- recommend formal and standard ways of managing records at the University of Namibia;
- create and standardize policies, guidelines and tools for the management of records at the University of Namibia; and
- make preparations for the adoption of electronic records management systems at the University of Namibia.

Theoretical framework

The UNAM records management project was carried out based on the two main archival theories namely, the records life-cycle and the records continuum theories. The records life-cycle model portrays the life of a record as going through stages of creation or receipt of information in the form of records; classification of the records or their information in some logical system; maintenance and use of the records; and their disposition through destruction or transfer to an archives (Atherton, 1985; Shepherd & Yeo, 2003). The IRMT (1999) underscores the above statements by saying that without the lifecycle concept, vast quantities of inactive records clog up expensive office space, and it is virtually impossible to retrieve important administrative, financial and legal information. On the other hand, the records continuum questions the distinct stages of the life cycle model, and proposes the use of an integrated approach for records and archives (McKemmish, 2001). The continuum model was propagated especially to address the challenges of managing electronic records in order to guarantee their reliability, authenticity and completeness throughout their useful life.

Therefore, the project was carried out on the notion that records need to be systematically and continuously managed throughout their life-cycle in an integrated manner. The management of institutional records throughout their life cycle is necessary in order to support strategic business objectives of the university and to preserve corporate memory.

Importance of records management

Records management is crucial to all organizations including universities. Unless records are managed efficiently, it is not possible to conduct business effectively, and to account for what has happened in the past or to make decisions about the future. Records are a product of organizational activity, created or received during or after completion of the activity itself (Shepherd & Yeo, 2003). They are a vital corporate asset and are required to provide evidence of actions and decisions, to support accountability and transparency, and to comply with legal and regulatory obligations. Chinyemba (2011) alludes that this also applies to university set-ups.

According to Kerr (as cited in Mnjama, 2002), all universities worthy of the name possess three main functions: the storage of knowledge already acquired, the dissemination of knowledge in man's possession, and the search for new knowledge. Records are major information tools that are very useful in achieving goals of administrative functions of the university. As such they must be carefully controlled and organized and those that are not needed must be efficiently disposed of. Therefore, records should be managed to meet the research needs of researchers within and outside the university, which are aimed at the growth and

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development of the university and the nation at large (Iwhiwhu, 2005). More so, the university needs the experience of the past for guidance in its activities. The presence of records management policies and procedures in the institution not only preserves the institutions' integrity, but also facilitates efficient operation of the university.

With good records management university costs are reduced because resources are not wasted on retaining unnecessary records. Space is saved when unwanted records are not kept longer than necessary and thus, also saving money by reducing storage and maintenance costs. Good record-keeping also ensures information and records are not duplicated needlessly, which not only provides cost savings, but also maintains version control and accuracy. It further improves efficiency by ensuring information is readily accessible. The university can save money by avoiding unnecessary litigation cases where money is lost in the absence of documentary evidence to support claims against it. Instead, that money could be used to strengthen the university's teaching and research agendas.

In addition to this, compliance improves when documentation is kept in line with legal and regulatory requirements. Keeping information under control helps to preserve important data and prevents the accumulation of ephemeral material. It improves the quality of information, and provides staff with access to accurate and reliable records. It increases the security of confidential information; supports risk management and business continuity; and helps to preserve the corporate memory.

According to Shepherd and Yeo (2003) effective records management programme should basically include the setting up of policies and standards for records management throughout the organization; designing and implementing records management systems; and informing and educating staff about record-keeping. In essence, each organization should have a formal records management policy which states the organisation's agreed position with regard to its records. Furthermore, an organization requires a set of basic facilities and tools for it to operate a viable record-keeping programme. This includes a sound legal and regulatory framework; physical infrastructure and human resources.

Therefore, as is recommended by Mnjama (2002), records management processes at universities should be formalized through a combination of policies, procedures, infrastructure, tools, training and resources. Shepherd and Yeo (2003) also emphasise on the same issues which are basic for any effective records management programme and add that through the use of guidelines, responsibilities and accountabilities should be clearly stated. In addition, Mnjama (2002) further suggests that the archives of the university should be strategically placed within the university's administrative structure and this should be coupled with the appointment of a trained archivist/records manager and publicizing of the records management programme to the entire university. The appointment of an archives/records management advisory committee is also strongly recommended by Mnjama. Above all the university must provide the necessary funding to support the programme.

Like any other organization, the activities of the university are documented predominantly by the records it produces. According to the World Bank (n. d.), records are a vital asset in ensuring that the institution is governed effectively and efficiently; is accountable to its staff, students and the community it serves. They support decision-making; they document general operational activities, provide evidence of policies, decisions, transactions and activities, and support the university in cases of litigation. They are central to the university's operation, and managing them effectively is an important task for all members of staff. Without records, officials are forced to take decisions on an ad hoc basis without the benefit of an institutional memory. The consequences of poor records management are numerous. They include:

- loss or misplacement of records;
- the institution falling victim to litigation cases;
- difficulty in tracking records upon request from departments; and
- offices full of junk material with the archives becoming a dumping ground for useless material.

On the other hand, the overall benefit of good record-keeping for a university is that a positive synergy is created between the university's day-to-day processes and the overall academic and research agendas of the university. This often leads to high quality graduates and increased research output. With this, the university can attain higher rating thus making a name for itself. In essence, there is direct link between good record-keeping and the quality of university products to which its reputation is built on. Unfortunately, this vital link is often not given the recognition that it deserves as a crucial player in university business.

Methodology

As a starting point to this records management project, it was necessary to first gather information on how the university was managing its official records. This included finding out, through semi-structured interview questions, what kind of records were being created, what the university's functions were, its vital records and how it was structured. The information gathering was critical to enable the crafting of a system that would work for the university. Thus, a survey research design was used in order to gather information and assess record-keeping activities. Data was gathered through record surveys, interviews and observations. Questionnaires carried out in 2005 were also used in order to gather more information, and this was updated in the 2010 surveys. In records management, records surveys are conducted to gather all available information about existing records in an organization to design a records management programme for the whole organization. Analyzing the information gathered through record surveys and observations allowed the development of practical solutions for records management problems faced by the university. Observations were also carried out. This involved making observations at each and every office visited to see how record-keeping process were being carried out as well as the facilities and tools available or lacking.

Procedure

Meetings were arranged first with the Heads of the Departments/Units/Offices. This strategy was used in order to tackle the problem of negative attitude. It was easier to get through to staff members once there was support from their leaders. This was followed by meetings with the staff who handle records

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at each of the offices/departments. Immediately after this, a full survey of the records in that particular office was carried out. A list of record types was made at this point, including a record of any useful information on the department/section/unit being surveyed. After every visit, a report of the survey was compiled and circulated to all concerned including the department or office surveyed. A 'Department Profile' was then compiled for each department. The profile recorded information such as name of department/section/unit; date of visit; person(s) met; their positions; record list of the files found in that office; observations made; a note on handling of electronic records; security issues etc. The main idea behind the 'Department Profile' was to put on record the status of record-keeping in that office and what had been done at that point. The profile would be updated as and when any record-keeping activities had been done. This helps to provide continuity even when there are staff changes. It was then circulated and filed both at the Archives Unit and at the department concerned for it to act as a reference point for any future records management activities. In total, surveys were carried out to the following: 10 Campuses, 11 Administrative departments; 9 Faculties; 9 Centres and 13 Units over a period of one and a half years.

The surveys were done under the following guidelines:

- Assess and document current filing systems or filing activities;
- Compile list of records in each section surveyed;
- Review the effectiveness of current filing structures and revise where necessary;
- Establish conventions for file titles so that they are meaningful and descriptive and include the covering dates of file contents;
- Remove non-current material from all current filing systems and transfer to Archives;
- Establish procedures for the future routine removal of non-current material from department and their transfer to archives;
- Assess the management of the retention schedule;
- Assess the transfer, storage and retrieval of semi-current records; and
- Explore management of electronic records including email.

Data presentation

Data gathered during the surveys and observations was analysed and processed on a daily basis immediately after a survey was conducted. Below is a summary of the information gathered from both the 2005 questionnaires and the 2010 surveys.

Main Question	Summary of Responses
What records exist?	All 52 UNAM departments/units/offices visited confirmed that they create and received records, and record list were made on all departments.
Where are the records stored?	Records are kept in arch-lever files on shelves as well as in steel cabinets. Electronic records, including e-mail messages are stored on computer hard drives either in the 'Inbox' or in folders.
How are the records filed?	From the 6 departments piloted in 2005, only one department was still using the filing system. Others

	use different classification schemes, initiated by the staff themselves whereby records are arranged alphabetically according to faculties/centres/units or according to the subject matter.
When do you do the filing?	The responses varied from regularly, when the need arises to never.
Who does the filing?	Either the secretary if they had one or for those keeping records in their offices, filing was done by themselves or it was never done.
What kind of facilities and equipment is used?	Steel cabinets and office shelves to store records.
Are you aware of any policies, rules and regulations that inform you on records management activities?	None were aware of any legal and regulatory framework, though some mentioned that they were obliged to keep records in their line of work. This was the position with the administrative departments. As with faculties and teaching departments, other than student marks, there was very little record-keeping done.
Are there any guidelines regarding retention and destruction of records?	Except for an outdated retention schedule from the Bursar's office, a few offices had draft retention schedules whereas the rest of the offices did not have any.
Have you transferred any records to the archives?	Out of 52 offices/centers/units visited, 9 offices indicated that they had transferred their records to the archives; the rest never transferred any records to the archives or they were not aware of the existence of an archives. Reason given for not transferring was: they felt comfortable to access records from their offices instead of going all the way to the archives to get the documents.
How do you handle electronic records?	The majority of the respondents indicated that they print and file their electronic records. However, email messages are usually left in the Inbox.

Findings

The following were some of the findings of the surveys:

General

There was no standard filing system that was being used at UNAM. As a result, each department, unit or office was using their own personal ways of filing records which often changed with the coming of a new office bearer. Some of these systems were working well but most remained not ideal for records accountability (systematic records management). In addition, there were no set retention schedules and disposals were done haphazardly with no guideline at all. It was more of personal perspective than official decision and transfers were often done as a quick option to 'dumping' materials in order to create space. Even though there was a records management policy and a few guidelines, these remained white elephants with no one aware of them or referring to them for day-to-day operations. Some institutions formally adopt such international standards as the ISO15489 to which they base their operations on. Despite

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the fact that there was widespread use of ICTs, the institution did not have institution-wide electronic records management policies and procedures.

A general lack of awareness and appreciation of records management responsibilities and importance was also noted. The attitude of administrators towards records management constituted the biggest problem at UNAM. Record-keeping was in most cases taken primarily as a part-time activity. There was no direct relationship between senior administrators, information technology staff and archives staff. For example, the ITS system (a software used for recording student information regarding their academic progress) operates with no liaison with the archives section. It was also observed that electronic records were kept in such a way each individual officer could identify their records when they needed them. The records were saved either per subject, per person who sent the communication if it was an email, per date it was received, but without proper referencing. While we are aware that born digital records are being backed up at the Computer Centre, there is no guarantee for how long and to what extent.

Records of students and staff

The student records section falls under the Registrar's Department, while the staff records are under the department of Human Resources. Student and staff files records were found to be well-organised, with trained record-keeping staff among the staff working in those sections. The files are arranged by student number, while staff files are by staff surnames in alphabetical order. Older and closed files are transferred to the archives unit.

Faculty records

Faculty records are mostly held by the Faculty Officer, but mostly relating to student affairs. Original copies of records are sent to the Student Records for filing in the student's file, while the Faculty Officer remains with a copy for reference purposes. The Faculty Officer also feeds the same information into the Integrated Teaching System (ITS). The Heads of Departments in each faculty also keep files of activities relating to the particular department. However, it was found out that there was no standard way of deciding what to keep or how to keep it.

Records of the executive (Council, Senate)

The University's executive bodies include Council, Senate and various management committees. Meetings by these bodies are handled by Meeting Administration Department (MAD), a section of the Department of the Registrar. However, the investigation found out that many staff members from across the university were clogging their offices with reference copies of such committee minutes yet the official record is with MAD. This scenario is also alluded to by Samuels (1998) who noted that universities create and maintain a wide range of information about their students, and these records are voluminous, highly dispersed, and often heavily duplicated. MAD has the prerogative to transfer master copies of Council, Senate and Committee minutes and papers to the Archives Unit. The investigation found out that these were well-organised and access to them is easy as they are arranged by committee and date of sitting. According to Samuels (1998), "[t]he goal ... is an adequate record about students be preserved, and the significant problems must be considered as they shape all decisions governing student information" (p.34).

Finance records

The investigation found out that financial records used both the manual and computerised systems, whereby in most cases, both systems held the same information. Financial transactions follow a cycle format whereby a transaction moves from one office to the next showing stages of approval until the final payment is done. This is systematically done to ensure accountability. However, other offices from the finance department have other administrative kind of files which are not necessarily a record of financial transactions. These are files such as those for correspondence with banks, insurance companies or other service partners. According to Roper & Millar (1999), good financial management is “critical to the success of any organisation, whatever its size and whether or not it is in the public, private or voluntary sector” (p. 6). If financial records are not well managed, the financial management function suffers, and the institution suffers also.

Records of former colleges which merged with UNAM

In 2008 and 2011, the former colleges of agriculture and education merged with UNAM respectively. During the surveys, it was found out that there was no policy statement or instruction issued regarding management of records, both current and non-current records at the time of the merger. There were no formal handover-take-over discussions on old and current records. As a result of this, records were handled haphazardly with staff making their own decisions with no clear instruction on what to do.

Closure period for archival records

Being a state university, the records of UNAM are closed for a period of 30 years from date the file was created in accordance to the Archives Act of Namibia, No. 12, 1992. In case of special circumstances, closed records could be made available, provided that there is sufficient motivation as to why the records should be made available.

Vital records

While some vital records of the university were being carefully managed and accounted for, there is no coordinated approach between departments even though some processes may cut across departments. The University would find it difficult to function without its records. It is important therefore that the university knows which records it cannot operate without, and that measures are taken to ensure these are safeguarded in the event of a disaster. The findings of this project revealed that even though records were being looked after at the various sections and offices of the university, the biggest risk was the absence of a systematic and standard way of managing these records. The danger of this is that the university may have gaps within its archives in the future and the records may lack coordination where it is required. Currently, the Archives Unit is not aware of where and how UNAM vital records are cared for.

Level of awareness

The expectation was for academics and intellectuals to have acquired an acceptable level of appreciation of the importance of records-keeping despite their own areas of specialization. This is because almost every academic activity and other support actions require records to provide evidence of actions and operations. Sadly, most do not have basic awareness of the importance of

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record-keeping, and many of the high-ranking staff see records management as a low-level activity done by non-professional people. Many think that records management and archiving is simply boxing a bunch of junk papers and boxing them, yet it is an intellectual process that involves critical understanding of context, content and intellectual meaning of records.

Recommendations from surveys

Having realized that the university lacked formal and standard ways of creating, capturing and managing official records, the following recommendations were made to the university:

- Revise and formulate records management policies and guidelines;
- Create a UNAM-wide filing and classification system which caters for both paper and electronic records;
- Raise awareness to all university staff on their record-keeping responsibilities;
- Roll out the new filing system to all departments; and
- Acquire an electronic records management system for the university.

Records Management Project implementation strategies

Below are some of the critical issues that were looked at for the implementation of the UNAM records management programme.

Legal and regulatory framework

Being a state university, UNAM operates under the guidance of the Archives Act of Namibia, No. 12 of 1992. The act designates the records of the university as state property and provides for the inspectorate role of the Head of Archives. A Records Management Policy existed for the university which was approved in 2005. This is the policy which guided implementation of the current project. However, the policy had remained a white elephant because not many people were aware of it or had knowledge on how they could make use of it. Generally, a records management policy helps to ensure a coordinated approach to managing records throughout the university (Mnjama, 2002). However, the existence of a policy was a positive attribute as it provided a starting and reference point for any record-keeping initiatives. As a result, this UNAM Records Management Policy approved in 2005 has been guiding the current records management activities taking place at the university, though sections of it were revised. Operational guidelines have also been produced which guide staff on what to do and how to carry out their records-keeping functions. This is in line with the ISO 15489 records management standard (ISO 15489, 2001), which recommends that an organization seeking to conform to good record-keeping should establish, document, maintain and promulgate policies, procedures and practices for records management to ensure that it meets business needs.

Records Management Committee

An important step that the university took was to set up a Records Management Committee: officially formed as a sub-committee of the University Senate in 2009. It was a high-level body that looked at the records management interests of the university as a whole. This was a strategic move in that it allowed the voice of the archives to be heard across the whole university. The terms of reference for the committee included approving and making recommendations to Senate on records management policies, guidelines, and tools on behalf of the university

and pave way for their adoption by the whole university management. This top to bottom approach made enforcement and implementation of the whole process much easier. According Andolsen (2008) vital records programs will not work if they are not taken seriously by everyone in the organization. An effective programme starts with the strong support of management, who must clearly communicate the value of an organization's information assets to all staff. Moreover, any such programme is a cooperative effort. Without management support and a cooperative spirit, no records management programme can succeed.

Staffing

The staff of the archives totals five (5), all with professional qualifications ranging from diploma, degree and masters in records and archives bearing the titles: archives assistant, assistant archivist and archivist. The archivist is the head of the unit, and the post is appointed at Masters' level though a PhD is desirable. This shows that the university has decided to have its records and archives managed by professionals. One problem identified in many studies on record-keeping in Africa (including Mazikana, 1996, Nengomasha, 2009) is that record-keeping work is left to low-level staff or poor-performing staff transferred from other departments. The archives posts are also in line with other professional posts of the Library. Furthermore, the university recognizes the Library (to which the Archives Unit falls under) as an academic department with the Archivist/Librarian at the level of Lecturer, and heads of Library departments (including Archives) pegged at the same level as Head of Department in the academic departments. The Heads of Departments in the Library, including Archives are also required to attend university Senate meetings. Tshotlo and Mnjama (2010) recommended the recruitment of more qualified records management professionals who are responsible for coordinating the development, monitoring and reviewing of records management systems and procedures.

In summary, this strategy adopted by UNAM is in line with the resolutions of the 2012 Harare symposium on 'The management of university records and archives' (Matangira & Lukileni, 2012). The symposium recommended the setting up of a university archives which should be centrally placed where records and archives management is central to university processes. The recommended path to take was the setting up of a university-wide records and archives management programme which includes policies, procedures, infrastructure, human resources, ICT, and monitoring & evaluation systems.

Records Management Project progress report and future plans

The project has gone over the first two phases of information gathering and drafting of a formal university-wide filing and classification system. At the time of writing this article, the project was on Phase 3 which is the implementation of the new filing system through rolling it out to the various sections of the university. The remaining project phases are reported below:

Phase 3: Implementation of new filing system

The filing system implementation process commenced in 2012. The major responsibilities of the unit during this process were to introduce and define the filing system and how it works; highlight the importance of filing system and the need to properly manage records from creation to disposition; inform creating

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officers what is expected of them in the management of UNAM records, which include among others to comply with the University of Namibia Act, no 18 of 1992 and the Archives Act, no 12 of 1992; and maintain consultation between creating offices and the archives unit, with regards to any records management aspects. A physical (manual) filing system was set up using steel cabinets and hanging folders labeled according to the new filing system. This was done because even though all offices were using computers, most still print and file but do so with no guideline at all. Furthermore, this option was feasible in the absence of a functioning electronic records management system – plans of which are underway. In addition to the manual filing system, electronic folders were also opened for each department and saved on the PC's of each staff member visited. In this way, both the physical and electronic filing is drawn from one filing system and they duplicate each other. Up to the period of writing this article 10 out of the 13 administrative departments had gone through the installation and training of the new filing system. The faculties, departments and outside campuses are yet to be covered.

Phase 4: Training

Training for creating officers was designed in two folds: first, training of officers individually during visit to roll-out new filing system. During this, staff members responsible for maintaining records were trained on how to operate the system, how to transfer existing files and folders onto the new files and folders. Training was conducted on the use of electronic folders and their creation, and the relationship between paper and electronic records. The second aspect of training is still to be implemented after the roll-out phase. This involves training officers as a group in a workshop. At this stage, archives unit staff will be able to do a preliminary evaluation on how the process is unfolding and whether creating officers are complying.

Phase 5: Retention Schedules

Work on drafting the retention schedules is underway. Records retention schedules identify an organization's records and establish periods of time for which the records are to be retained, taking into consideration their administrative, fiscal and historic significance. Retention schedules specify how long each type of record is to be held in an organization. It is however, advisable for all faculties/departments/offices to develop schedules until their final approval by UNAM authority and the National Archives of Namibia, to ensure an accountable retention and destruction of records.

Phase 6: E-readiness assessment

It is hoped that once the formal record-keeping systems are in place and working in the manual format, the university will be ready to move on to electronic records management systems. This will be done with caution of not rushing to purchase an electronic system before basic records management processes are not yet in part of the university-wide system. Many institutions have failed in this regard because they simply transferred their mess to the computer. An e-readiness assessment will be conducted together with drawing up the functional requirements for adopting an electronic records management system for the university.

Phase 7: Assessment and evaluation

In order to see the success or failure of the project, there is need to carry out an

evaluation of the whole project. A report on this will be compiled after the evaluation.

Strengths

One of the strengths of the UNAM records management is found in the existence of a legal and regulatory framework which is backed by a records management policy, guidelines and instructions. The support of top management who are the policy makers is also realized through the formation of the Records Management Committee. The surveys also found out that though many of the staff members did not have an idea on how they should manage their records, most of them were keen to have some guidelines given to them.

Challenges

Even though there is the support of the Records Management Committee, full management support is often a problem, with the main focus being on academic matters and record-keeping has to compete with this. Lack of awareness and appreciation of importance of record-keeping is also another biggest problem. As a result, road-blocks, uncooperative staff, and closed doors were met while carrying out this project. This was made worse by lack of response to follow-ups and many other technical bureaucracies stifled the process. During the process, we also had to face the problem of lack of knowledge to separate archives work from library processes (technical terms such as archives processing vs. cataloguing; finding aids vs. catalogues etc.). Generally people knew about libraries, and not archives.

Conclusion

The most important single factor in establishing a records management programme is to gain the active support of senior management in an organization. Most often, this is a process of education in order to raise awareness. This should be backed by sound policies, well-crafted guidelines and a very practical and active implementation plan.

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