

UBC Social Ecological Economic Development Studies (SEEDS) Student Report

Records and Information Management Survey

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ARST 516: Management of Current Records

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Introduction

As a requirement in ARST 516: The Management of Current Records, "The Records Management Challenge" had to be completed in small groups of students by comparing the records management services at The University of British Columbia (UBC) to those at other universities, both domestically and internationally. The report which follows compares UBC to the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom. An overview of each school is given, followed by a thorough comparison of the records management services at both schools to determine whether or not each school follows international best practice as set out in ISO Standard 15489. Sustainability and its relation to records management at each institution is also examined and compared. As will be discussing, the lack of a records management program at the University of Cambridge commends the program at UBC.

University of British Columbia: An Overview

The University of British Columbia (UBC) is a provincially supported public institution located in Vancouver, British Columbia. UBC has approximately 45,000 students enrolled and supports a staff/faculty of 14,500 employees. In 1994 a records management program was adopted to help maintain the great quantity of records that are produced each year at the school. The institution currently employs one full time professional records manager, Alan Doyle, to help implement the Records Management Policy that has been adopted (Records Management Services).

In 1994 the University Archives was given the task of developing the records management program and it maintains the program at UBC to the present day. As the University Archives Records Management Services website states,

The involvement of the University Archives in the development of a classification system and retention schedules for the institution allows it to provide expert advice to University offices interested in redesigning their filing systems and developing their own internal records management programs. Being part of the University community allows Archives staff to recognize the context(s) in which a given University office operates and therefore better recognize the office's needs. Also, any systems developed for the office will be consistent with others developed for other offices around campus. (Records Management Services)

Christopher Hives is currently the archivist at the University Archives, and the person to whom the records manager, Alan Doyle, reports. Hives and two other professional archivists and two more support staff work to fulfill the mandate set to them in University Policy #127: University Archives at UBC Vancouver.

The Records Management Policy was first approved in March of 1996 by UBC's Board of Governors. It is now Policy #117 in the University Policy where the Vice-President of Administration and Finance is the "Responsible Executive" (UBC, University Policy #117). Its **Scope** states, "this Policy applies to all departments and administrative units of the University, to all Records, and to all University officers and employees who create, receive or maintain Records in the course of their duties on behalf of the University" (UBC, University Policy #117). Through this policy, the records management program is available to all faculties and departments on campus depending on their needs and wants. The records management program caters exclusively to the UBC community and functions within the larger body of the UBC Library. As such, they offer the separate faculties and departments in need of their services an inside understanding of the context in which the records are created and maintained (Records Management Services).

The University Archives has also authored the Records Management Manual, whose purpose is to “help UBC staff and faculty members understand the records management principles application to the information they create and receive, and to help employees manage their information in a secure and efficient manner” (3). The Records Management Manual is meant to be used by each individual department and faculty at UBC to aid in the management of their records. The manual is to be used alongside the Records Retention Schedules which the University Archives also makes available on their website. Any specific questions, problems or needed advice can always be directed to the records manager, specifically, or the University Archives, generally (3). The manual goes on to outline some key concepts of the record and records management projects (4-5). The role of the archives, the difference between an active record and an archival record and the issues involving electronic records are also touched upon. There is also a glossary included so that the member of the department or faculty involved with records management can learn some of the proper terms and incorporate them in discourse with the records manager (14). The Records Management Manual is, of course, not a stand-alone document and only covers the very basics. As stated above, it must be used in conjunction with the retention schedules available and guidance from the University Archives and Alan Doyle.

In terms of sustainability, UBC does not formally conduct research on the management of information on campus. However, through projects such as ARST 516’s “Records and Information Management Survey,” research is gathered on areas of common interest. UBC’s University Policy #5, the Sustainable Development Policy, was implemented in 1997 and is committed to developing an environmentally responsible campus which is “economically viable and reflects the values of the members of its campus communities” (UBC, University Policy 5). More recently, UBC has put into operation their “Strategic Plan,” a plan which is committed to

fostering a well-rounded environment at UBC through the education of its students, the research being conducted and the engagement of alumni and the local, national and international UBC community (Place and Promise: The UBC Plan). Sustainability plays a role in the Strategic Plan and is still gaining in importance. Though these policies and projects are not focused on the management of information on campus, the intention is there from the Archival and Records Management staff. The existence of ARST 516's "Records Management Challenge" demonstrates the growing interest in sustainability within records management and the impact it could have on the financial and environmental aspects of the creation, maintenance and disposal of paper and electronic records.

The University of Cambridge: An Overview

The University of Cambridge is the second largest public research university in the United Kingdom. Funded by the British government, it is financially in compliance with the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), the body responsible for providing a block grant for teaching. Public funding also comes from the Research Assessment Exercise, a grant which is determined by the quality and quantity of research done by the University. According to the 2009 annual report, currently Cambridge houses 11,608 undergraduate students and 6003 post-graduate students spread amongst thirty-one constituent colleges (44).

Being a collegiate university, the functions of the university are divided between the central administration, known as the Unified Administrative Services (UAS), and its thirty-one constituent colleges. The UAS contains the University Offices, which provide services to various Departments, Faculties and the six Schools. The constituent colleges are nearly autonomous entities separate from the central university. For example, each college is responsible for its own funding, accepting undergraduate students, and appointment of teaching staff. For some colleges,

such as Girton College and Downing College, individual records management policies are in place. Because of the complexities of Cambridge's administration structure, our survey is solely focused on the records management and archival practices of the UAS.

While there are many independent repositories across Cambridge, the main University Archives is housed as part of the University Library. The repository contains the administrative documents of the university collected from the last eight hundred years of the University's history. An archives policy exists; however, it is integrated into the Collections Development Policy of 2009, which was developed with a general aim for the University Library (Collection Development Policy 2009-10, 22). Currently there is only a single professional archivist appointed at the University Archives. The primary duties of the archivist are unclear; however, the individual does report to the Keeper of Western Manuscripts from the University Library.

Whereas information regarding the University Archives is clearly presented on the website, details about the records management environment were more difficult to uncover. From our initial research, we discovered that while the group responsible for information management has placed information online, most of the documents are inaccessible to the public outside of Cambridge's network. After liaising with the records management consultant we discovered that Cambridge's Unified Administrative Services does not have a records management system in place for either physical or electronic records. Currently the method of dealing with active and semi-active records is solely dependent on the choices made by independent managers or administrators on a case-by-case basis (see Appendix A).

Presently the responsibilities of records and information fall under the authority of the Information Strategy and Services Syndicate (ISSS) (see Appendix A). The purpose of the ISSS is to promote the adoption of information strategies and to advise the Council and General Board

on priorities relating to the development and application of information policies (Information Strategies and Services Syndicate). They are also responsible for the financial management of Information Services and technology-based projects.

Despite the lack of a records management system in place, Cambridge is aware of the need to manage records consistently and efficiently. In 2009 the University hired a consultant, Claire Johnson, through the ISSS in order to undertake a Records Management Scoping Project. The project's purpose was to ascertain the current record-keeping environment in the University's Unified Administrative Services and to propose improvement to existing policy, procedure and practice for both physical and electronic records (University Records Management Scoping Project). Working together with key record creators, Johnson analyzed a variety of areas in record keeping. The project assessed the level of management and maintenance of records, the current policies on how records are held, classified and interlinked, the level of awareness and understanding through the staff with regards to data security, the storage capabilities of the institution including security, control and access, and the strategy for long term sustainability (University Records Management Scoping Project).

The yearlong survey and recommendations report was completed in October of 2010 and has been sent to the ISSS for review. The deliberations are still presently ongoing. One of the main suggestions included in the report is to appoint a professional records manager for two years in order to conduct a pilot that would embed records management into the current administration system (see Appendix A). There is also a brief mention for the need to liaise with the Management Information Services Division's Business Improvement Team, and the University Computing Services, the two major information technology departments in the UAS, in order to deal with identity management and control (see Appendix A). The Management

Information Services in particular is noted because it maintains the university-wide systems that contain sensitive documents, such as student records, payroll and personnel information. Unfortunately a further detailed report about the findings of the scoping project is currently unavailable to the public.

The University of British Columbia and ISO 15489

The existence of UBC's Records Management Policy and Records Management Manual, and the fact that UBC has a full-time Records Manager, indicates the university's acknowledgement of the value of records management and intention to move toward more efficient and consistent handling of records across the institution as a whole. UBC seems to demonstrate a clear understanding of the benefits of records management as outlined in ISO 15489-1, Section 4, and communicates these benefits to UBC staff and faculty in the Records Management Manual (3-4). The manual also outlines key records management and archival terminology, with some definitions (e.g. *disposition*) taken straight from ISO 15489-1 and others (e.g. *records*) tailored specifically to the UBC audience.

ISO 15489-1, Section 5 states that "organizations need to identify the regulatory environment that affects their activities and requirements to document their activities" (4). UBC demonstrates awareness of this need through the inclusion in the Records Management Policy and Manual of information on forces outside the University Archives that affect records management (e.g. Canada Revenue Agency, FOIPPA, other UBC policies), though it is unclear whether UBC is able to "provide adequate evidence of its compliance with the regulatory environment in the records of its activities" (ISO 15489-1:2001(E): 4).

UBC's records management program falls short of the standards outlined in ISO 15489 in a number of areas, including implementation of the program, training of staff, and monitoring of compliance with policy and the regulatory environment. As such, while UBC initially appears to have a comprehensive records management program in place, once the surface is scratched it becomes clear that UBC has not dedicated the human or financial resources necessary to ensure its Records Management Policy is put into action. Indeed, ISO/TR 15489-2 notes that "a policy statement on its own will not guarantee good records management: critical to its success are endorsement and active and visible support by senior management staff and the allocation of the resources necessary for implementation" (1).

According to ISO 15489-1, records management policies "should be derived from an analysis of business activities" (5). UBC's Records Management Policy appears to be a blanket policy aimed at the university as a whole, and the onus appears to be on individual units to determine how their business activities are linked to records creation, though some guidance is provided in the Records Management Manual. Readers are referred to the Records Retention Schedules available on the Records Management website, which notes that the schedules "are *draft* records retention guidelines, presented here for the information of record-keeping staff in UBC offices and departments. If you have any questions or comments, please contact us." (<http://www.library.ubc.ca/archives/rrsda.html>). As such, the policy and manual seem rather toothless, amounting to little more than a request to individual units to manage their records well, and an offer of help should they wish to do so. There is no indication of whether units are required to sign off on the policy or otherwise promise or demonstrate their compliance, and expecting one records manager to monitor compliance at a university with 14, 500 employees is clearly unreasonable.

UBC's records management program lacks a clear linkage between business processes and records; while the Records Management Manual provides a glossary of relevant terms and outlines the basic life-cycle model of the record, embedded in the document is an assumption that the reader already knows how his/her business processes are linked to records creation and capture. The emphasis of the manual is on adherence to retention schedules informed by the regulatory environment, determining which of a given unit's records may become archival, and ensuring that electronic records be handled the same way as paper records. As such, UBC misses many key points identified in ISO 15489-1, Section 7 as components of an effective records management program, such as "determining what records should be created in each business process..., deciding in what form and structure records should be created and captured..., [and] deciding how to organize records so as to support requirements for use" (6).

Moreover, ISO 15489's emphasis on the need to clearly identify roles and responsibilities relating to records management remains largely unaddressed by UBC's Records Management Policy and Manual. The scope of the Records Management Policy applies to "all University officers and employees who create, receive or maintain Records in the course of their duties on behalf of the University," (1.1) though "operational responsibility for Records Management rests with the Vice Presidents and administrative heads of unit" (2.5). When discussing the actual actions to be undertaken in the management of records, the policy only uses the active voice when the University Archives and the Office of the University Council are involved. Otherwise, the passive voice is used, for example in statements such as "records must be retained for as long as they are required to meet legal, administrative, operational, and other requirements of the University" (2.2) and "records disposition must be carried out in the manner established by the applicable Record Retention Schedules and the Records Management Manual..." (2.3). It is

unclear exactly *who* is responsible for which specific aspects of records management, as outlined in ISO 15489-1:

Records management responsibilities and authorities should be defined and assigned, and promulgated throughout the organization so that, where a specific need to create and capture records is identified, it should be clear who is responsible for taking the necessary action. (5)

Finally, as mentioned above, if UBC is truly committed to implementing a comprehensive, ISO-compliant records management program, it is completely unreasonable to expect one Records Manager (Alan Doyle) or even one Records Manager and three Archivists to be “responsible for all aspects of records management, including the design, implementation and maintenance of records systems and their operations, and for training users on records management and records systems operations as they affect individual practices” (ISO 15489-1:2001(E): 5) in an organization of 14,500 employees. While it is heartening to see that the ISO 15489 standards have clearly informed the writing of UBC’s Records Management Policy and Manual, a significant human and financial resources gap exists between the policy and manual’s aspirations and the implementation of these aspirations in a comprehensive and accountable way across UBC as a whole.

Cambridge University and ISO 15489

As Cambridge currently does not have a comprehensive records management program in place, nor any records management policy, considering the state of records management at Cambridge with respect to ISO 15489 is more difficult than considering that of UBC. The future of records management at Cambridge is uncertain: at best, the university will follow the recommendations resulting from Claire Johnson’s Records Management Scoping Study and appoint a full-time Records Manager for two years (or longer) to try to establish a

comprehensive records management program; at worst, no funding will be allocated, the Scoping Study report will be shelved, and the handling of records will continue in its current ad-hoc, catch-as-can manner until the emergence of a crisis of some kind (litigation, loss of large amounts of documentation, misuse of private information) demonstrates the need for a records management program.

However, there is reason to hope that Cambridge, after eight hundred years, is taking the development of records management seriously. While ISO 15489 was not explicitly mentioned by either Claire Johnson or on the Information Strategy and Services Syndicate's website, the Scoping Study is a fine example of several stages of records management program design and implementation methodology as outlined in ISO 15489-1, encompassing aspects of stages a) through d): **Preliminary investigation, Analysis of business activity, Identification of requirements for records, and Assessment of existing systems**, respectively (10). ISO 15489-1 points out that "the tasks may be undertaken...iteratively, partially or gradually, in accordance with organizational needs," and it appears that Cambridge is doing just that as it begins exploring the possibility of institution-wide records management.

As institution-wide records management at Cambridge is still nascent, the university has a wonderful opportunity to develop from scratch (or near-scratch) a records management program that takes into account Cambridge's complex administrative structure while adhering to the best practices outlined in ISO 15489. Moreover, the Scoping Study recognizes the need to liaise with Cambridge's University Computing Services and the Management Information Services Division's Business Improvement Team. Ideally, this acknowledgement of the interrelationships amongst the various information management areas of the institution will help

ensure that any records management program developed at Cambridge has the full support and recognition of information management units beyond the University Archives.

UBC and Cambridge

The fact that UBC already has a Records Management Policy in place and an accompanying Records Management Manual to provide additional guidance to staff suggests that UBC is somewhat further ahead than Cambridge in the provision of records management. However, the Cambridge Records Management Scoping Study has addressed such business-process-related issues as how records are currently classified and interlinked, while it is unclear whether UBC has also had the opportunity to do so. As such, Cambridge may (pending funding approval) be able to develop a records management program that adheres to the best practices outlined in ISO 15489 in ways the current UBC system does not. Still, it is not too late for UBC to dedicate the human and financial resources necessary to identify areas for improvement, bring practice into alignment with the ISO 15489 standards, and become a leader in the provision of records management services in a large university environment.

Reflections and Conclusions

The findings from our assigned university were initially frustrating for our group. We assumed that a large university like Cambridge would have a records management system in place, and to discover that Cambridge was still deliberating the possibility of implementing a records management system came as a shock. However, the underlying implications from the lack of data spoke volumes about how records management is currently being perceived and applied in the real work environment. As we reflected critically over our results, we saw that the

need for a records management system was generally understood and accepted. However, the acknowledgement did not necessarily mean that action was taken to properly integrate it into the administration system. It was as Alan Doyle had mentioned in the beginning of the term, records management is still a difficult idea to promote, sell and maintain.

The inadequate results from our Cambridge survey, combined with access restriction over existing information management policies and projects, was disappointing for our group. It only served to demonstrate that records management is a concept that is still being slowly adopted even in large institutions, such as the University of Cambridge. We would have liked to learn some of the issues that initiated the Scoping Project in order to further ascertain the perceived degree of value in records management by the ISSS and the rest of the upper administrators of the school. Was the scoping project something built up over a length of time? Or did an immediate event set off a need to consider centralizing records management? Regardless, Cambridge is poised at an exciting turning point, with the potential of centralizing its broad administration with a strong records management system.

If Cambridge was still deliberating over implementing a records management program, then we assumed UBC was already quite well off with a records management policy and system in place. However, we quickly realized that having a policy is only the beginning of the process, and in the larger picture, UBC is still struggling with implementing and following through what the policy sets out. With only a single records manager in place at UBC to deal with all the records, indeed it would be a daunting task to ensure that the records management policy is met at all levels. This demonstrated that records management had not fully integrated as an essential part of the administrative system, and provided us with a glimpse into one of the realities many records managers face in the work place. Often times the need for a records management system

is acknowledged and action is taken to develop a policy and program. But there is still a lack of attention on part of an organization to ensure that compliance with the policy standards are actually met on a day-by-day basis, due to the lack of professionals hired and the amount of resources allocated to the records management system.

With respect to sustainability, we had hoped to uncover more information about record management's impact on environmental awareness and the overall reduction of costs in storage, retrieval and materials. Unfortunately we noticed it was only an aspect touched upon briefly by the records managers. There is intent from the Archival and Records Management staff reflected in a general University policy on Sustainable Development, but no concrete statements about any perceived impact that records management may have. For Cambridge, sustainability was mentioned in passing for digital records; however, it seemed to emphasize long-term preservation rather than environmental sustainability and the reduction of costs. Thus it appeared that sustainability is still another new idea being discussed by records managers and information groups and its role is still being developed and integrated into the overall records management system.

Appendix A

ARST 516 – **Records Management Survey Questions**

1. Does your institution have a central archivist?

Yes.

2. To whom does he/she report?

Keeper of Western Manuscripts, University Library

3. How many full time employees constitute the Archives staff? How many professionals? How many clerical?

1 professional

4. If your institution does not have an archivist, who manages campus records deemed archival?

NA

5. Is there a records manager currently at Cambridge?

No

6. To whom does he/she report?

NA

7. Does Cambridge have a specific Records Management staff? How many are professionals? How many are clerical?

No

8. If there is not a records manager present, how does Cambridge manage active and semi active records?

Dependent on the actions of individual managers / administrators on an *ad hoc* basis.

9. Is there a University Policy related to Records Management? What is the origin of the policy? Is it University, Library, Departmental?

No

10. Does Cambridge currently have a formal records management program?

No

11. Is there a campus-wide mandate for records management? Is there also a campus wide mandate for e-records management?

No

12. Is there a campus-wide oversight/advisory committee? If so, who is involved?

It comes within the remit of the Information Strategy and Services Syndicate (ISSS) and they are currently deliberating the recommendations report from the RM scoping study which has suggested appointing a professional records manager for two years to conduct a pilot to embed RM in the central administration .

13. Is there a dedicated budget currently for Records Management?

No

14. Who controls the budget for records management?

NA

15. How much is the budget?

NA

16. Does Cambridge provide records storage facilities for campus units?

NA

17. Does your institution have other centralized services to help departments manage records?

No

18. Who are the major stakeholders in the records management program currently?

ISSS

19. Who was included in developing the records management policies and procedures?

NA

20. What is your relationship with IT?

There is need to liaise with the Management Information Service (MIS) division's Business Improvement Team and the University Computing Service regard identity management.

21. What is your relationship with legal counsel?

There is a University Legal Services department.

22. If Cambridge does not have a formal e-records management program, is there one in the planning stages right now?

Along with other RM initiatives.

23. Do you conduct records management training for staff/units on campus? If you do, can you please describe the types of training the staff would receive?

NA

24. Do you publicize your records management program? If so, how and to whom?

NA

25. What do you consider to be the most important issues in records management?

NA

26. What are the most important issues to the departments/units?

NA

27. For which records management services do you receive the most requests from departments/units?

NA

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