

RECORDS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AT THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF LESOTHO

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Abstract

Records management is that area of general administration that seeks to achieve efficiency and economy in the creation, maintenance and disposition of records by ensuring that records that are created are maintained efficiently and those that are no longer needed to support the current business of the organisation are disposed of at the expiry of agreed retention periods. It cannot be overstated that records are a vital asset in ensuring that an institution is governed effectively and efficiently and that its activities are open to public scrutiny. Poor records keeping gives room for corruption and other malpractices to flourish. Further, records support effective decision-making, provide evidence of policies, decisions, transactions and activities and support an organisation in cases of litigation. Most universities are continuously deploying integrated records management (paper records and electronic records) as a means of improving decision-making and the quality of service delivery. This study was conducted at the National University of Lesotho (NUL). The aim of the study was to assess record management practices at the NUL. This included finding out if there were a formal records management system and a formal records management policy, as well as the challenges faced by the NUL regarding records management. The study was guided by the Association of Records Managers and Administrators (ARMA) International's Information Governance Maturity Model. Data for the study were collected through the use of in-depth interviews with purposively selected key informants from the university. Content analysis of both local print and electronic media sources and the review of the relevant internal NUL documents such as policies and reports and general observations by the researchers constituted part of the data collection strategies. The key findings from the study were that the NUL records management programme

operates within a weak legislative framework, and there is a lack of policies and procedures, a lack of adequate trained personnel and inadequate records preservation facilities. Based on these findings, the study recommends that the NUL formulates a campus-wide records management policy, enhances staff training in records management, and develops and embarks on a programme for managing both paper and electronic records.

Keywords: records management; National University of Lesotho; university records; records management programme

Introduction

The role of managing records in academic institutions cannot be over-emphasised. Record keeping is a vital strategic plan in the efficient and effective management of a university system as it ensures that the institution is governed effectively and efficiently, and is accountable to its staff, students and the community that it serves. The absence of a proper records management programme may lead to a lack of evidence that an organisation carried on its operation in a transparent and accountable manner. Furthermore, without a records management system there is a danger of losing individual, corporate and collective memory (Mckemmish 1997).

A study by Coetzer and Roux (2012) conducted at the University of Zululand revealed that it was not clear how paper and electronic records were being managed. The study reported cases of misplaced or missing records at the University of Zululand. A similar study conducted by Phiri (2016) on the state of record keeping at the Mzuzu University in Malawi indicated that records management practices in the university were poor, with frequent occurrences of completed forms for members of staff getting mixed up or going missing altogether in the administration or accounts offices. Another study conducted by Asogwa (2013) showed that a lack of the availability of records management programmes, policy on records, records manual (records retention, disposition schedule), trained personnel that handle records, inadequate facilities (for preservation, storage and retrieval) and attitude of administrators towards records and records management constitute the problems of records management in universities in Nigeria. The examples from South Africa, Malawi and Nigeria add to a list of cases of neglect of record keeping and records management in sub-Saharan Africa. Mnjama and Wamukoya (2004) point out that the east and southern Africa member countries faced challenges in the capturing and preservation of records. These challenges include absence of organisational plans for managing records, low awareness of the role of records management in support of organisational efficiency and accountability, absence of legislation, policies and procedures to guide the management of record among other real challenges.

Mnjama (2002) and Procter (2002) asserted that despite the fact that universities are continually being called upon to function in a business-like manner, they often overlook the enormous advantages that proper records management practices could contribute to the achievement of their objectives. Akor and Udensi (2013) point out that in higher education institutions, proper records management could help to manage information efficiently in order to fulfil their mandate, protect them from litigation, preserve their corporate memory and foster accountability and good governance. A proportion of higher education institutions in Southern Africa, including the National University of Limpopo (NUL), are semi-autonomous in that they receive a portion of their funding from the state, students' fees and stakeholders. Through its activities, a university generates large volumes of physical and electronic data and documents on a regular basis. These documents and data are important and need to be retained for specified periods of time in order to meet the legislative and regulatory requirements within which the organisation is based. Like other semi-government or government institutions, the National University of Lesotho is legally bound to retain and preserve documents as a record of their activities and proceedings. According to Nanighe and Felix (2016:13), in higher educational systems, some of the vital records produced and used include personnel (employee) and financial records. Personnel records could be those that contain initial application forms, educational results, physical examination, periodic appraisals, transfers and promotions, to mention only a few. Financial records are all transactions kept in relation to financial matters. These include budget allocation, budget requests, statement of expenditure, shipment receipts, invoices, requisitions, purchase orders, receipts of monies received or expended, and so on. Records management has become a basic aspect of the organisational life of higher educational institutions.

Today, electronic records are gradually replacing the culture of managing physical records. The reviewed literature indicates that archivists and records managers in Africa lack adequate training and experience relating to the management of e-records. A study by Asogwa (2012) on the challenges of managing electronic records in developing countries affirmed that the major problems of e-records management in Africa are administrative and technical difficulties, experience and training of records managers. Therefore, this study sought to assess records management practices at the NUL using the Association of Records Managers and Administrators (ARMA) International's Information Governance Maturity Model and to propose necessary measures for enhancing record-keeping practices in the institution.

Contextual background to the National University of Lesotho

The NUL was first established in 1945 as the Pius XII College. In 1964, it was taken over by the governments of Basutoland, Bechuanaland Protectorate and Swaziland. At the independence of the first two countries in 1966, its status as a co-owned university of the three countries was maintained, but its name changed to the University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland (UBLS) in accordance with the names assumed by these countries as they shed their colonial names. This status remained until 1975 when the Roma campus of the university was proclaimed the National University of Lesotho. According to the National University of Lesotho archives (2018), the decision to establish the National University of Lesotho on the Lesotho (Roma) campus site of the former University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland was taken on 20 October 1975 by the Lesotho Interim National Assembly through Act No. 13 of 1975. The NUL is the proud heir of the Pius XII University College, the UBBS and the UBLS. It occupies the same site, grounds, and buildings as its predecessors, as well as additional ones.

The university is located in an isolated valley 34 kilometres southeast of Maseru, the capital city of Lesotho and the university community consists of students, and academic and support staff. Since 1975, the NUL has achieved modest levels of growth in its faculty, support and student demographic profiles. Programmes have diversified, campuses have multiplied and extension activities have increased. There are currently seven faculties namely: Faculty of Agriculture, Faculty of Health Science, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Social Science, Faculty of Education, Faculty of Humanities, and Faculty of Science and Technology. The university has one institute: the Institute of Extra-Mural Studies. The governing body of the university is the council and academic policy is in the hands of Senate. The University Act (National University of Lesotho, 2018) established both the University Council and Senate.

The NUL is a public institution, hence its records are public archives. The Lesotho Archives Act of 1967 defines public archives as any documents or records received or created in a government office or office of a public authority during the conduct of affairs in that office and which are from their nature or in terms of any other law not required to be dealt with otherwise. Although the NUL used to have a records management unit, it was closed soon after the person in charge went on retirement. Every unit is now in charge of and responsible for the management of their own records (National University of Lesotho 2018).

Statement of the problem

The literature review on the management of university records has shown that universities in Africa are facing a myriad of challenges in managing their institutional records (Asogwa 2012; Asogwa 2013; Akor & Udensi 2013; Nanighe & Felix 2016:13; Phiri 2016). In terms of the Lesotho Archives Act, the records of the NUL are public records subject to the provision of the Archives Regulations of 1972. There have been instances at the NUL where records were reported to be misplaced or missing, thus raising the question of how records are managed and what systems and policies are used for records management. In 2011, it was reported that the NUL owed M34 millions to staff. In an interview with the *Lesotho Times*, the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Sharon Siverts, indicated that the university's failure to keep proper records was the main reason why the NUL was overloaded with huge financial obligations (Siverts 2011). As a result of this acknowledgement by the Vice-Chancellor that inadequate records-keeping practices were contributing to the effective operations of the university and the fact that as late as late as 1 August 2017, the *Sunday Express* (2017) reported corruption allegations relating to the procurement of goods at the NUL, this study sought to determine the record-keeping practices at the NUL using ARMA International's Information Governance Maturity Model and to propose necessary measures for enhancing record-keeping practices in the institution.

Purpose and objectives of the study

The purpose of this study was to assess records management practices at the NUL using ARMA International's Information Governance Maturity Model with a view to proposing measures aimed at enhancing record-keeping practices in the institution. The specific objectives of the study were to:

1. determine the guidelines such as legislation, regulation, policies and procedures used to guide records management at the NUL.
2. determine the current state of records management at the NUL.
3. investigate the challenges that hinder effective records management at the NUL.
4. make recommendations on how to improve records management at the NUL.

Theoretical framework

ARMA International's Information Governance Maturity Model suggests that there are eight principles of a records management programme and these are:

accountability, transparency, integrity, protection, compliance, availability, retention and disposition, which guided the study. The maturity model also suggests that there are five levels in each of the eight principles and these levels are: level 1 (sub-standard), level 2 (in development), level 3 (essential), level 4 (proactive) and level 5 (transformational) (ARMA International 2010). According to ARMA's Records Management Maturity Model, there are 33 aspects of what constitutes a records management programme (Phiri 2016). A maturity model is a structured collection of elements based on levels of achievement enabling an organisation's performance to be assessed against external benchmarks and providing a more detailed picture than a simple "yes / no" check (Queensland State Archives 2010). A maturity model defines a pathway of improvement for an organisational aspect and is classified by a maturity level. The maturity levels often range from zero to five, where zero consists of the lack of maturity and five consists of a fully mature and self-optimising process (Proenca, Vieira & Borbinha 2016).

Accountability – Principle No. 1 demands that organisations appoint a senior executive (or person of comparable authority) who oversees the recordkeeping programme and delegates programme responsibility to appropriate individuals. The organisation adopts policies and procedures to guide personnel, and to ensure that the programme can be audited.

Transparency – Principle No. 2 states that 'an organisation's business processes and activities of an organisation's recordkeeping programme are documented in a manner that is open and verifiable and is available to all personnel and appropriate interested parties.'

Integrity – Principle No. 3 states that 'a record-keeping programme shall be constructed so the records and information generated or managed by or for the organisation have a reasonable and suitable guarantee of authenticity and reliability.'

Protection – Principle No. 4 states that a record-keeping programme shall be constructed to ensure a reasonable level of protection to records and information that are private, confidential, privileged, secret, or essential to business continuity.

Compliance – Principle No. 5 asserts that the record-keeping programme shall be constructed to comply with applicable laws and other binding authorities, as well as the organisation's policies.

Availability – Principle No. 6 requires that an organisation shall maintain records in a manner that ensures timely, efficient, and accurate retrieval of needed information.

Retention – Principle No. 7 demands that an organisation shall maintain its records and information for an appropriate time, taking into account legal, regulatory, fiscal, operational, and historical requirements.

Disposition – Principle No. 8 requires that an organisation shall provide secure and appropriate disposition for records that are no longer required to be maintained by applicable laws and the organisation's policies. (ARMA International 2010)

The maturity model goes beyond a simple declaration of the principles; for each principle it associates various features that are distinctive for each of the five levels of the model in a record-keeping programme commencing with Level 1 (sub-standard), Level 2 (in development), Level 3 (essential), Level 4 (proactive) and Level 5 (transformational).

Level 1 (Sub-Standard): This level describes an environment where record-keeping concerns are either not addressed at all, or are addressed in a very ad hoc manner. Organisations that identify primarily with these descriptions should be concerned that their programmes will not meet legal or regulatory scrutiny.

Level 2 (In Development): This level describes an environment where there is a developing recognition that record keeping has an impact on the organisation, and that the organisation may benefit from a more defined information governance programme. However, at Level 2, the organisation is still vulnerable to legal or regulatory scrutiny since practices are ill defined and still largely ad hoc in nature.

Level 3 (Essential): This level describes the essential or minimum requirements that must be addressed in order to meet the organisation's legal and regulatory requirements. Level 3 is characterised by defined policies and procedures, and more specific decisions taken to improve record keeping. However, organisations that identify primarily with Level 3 descriptions may still be missing significant opportunities for streamlining business and controlling costs.

Level 4 (Proactive): This level describes an organisation that is initiating information governance programme improvements throughout its business operations. Information governance issues and considerations are integrated into business decisions on a routine basis, and the organisation easily meets its legal and regulatory requirements. Organisations that identify primarily with these descriptions should begin to consider the business benefits of information availability in transforming their organisations globally.

Level 5 (Transformational): This level describes an organisation that has integrated information governance into its overall corporate infrastructure and business processes to such an extent that compliance with the programme requirements is routine. These organisations have recognised that effective information governance plays a critical role in cost containment, competitive advantage, and client service. The ARMA International (2010) maturity models are widely used and accepted because of their simplicity and effectiveness (Proenca et al 2016:15).

Records management in academic institutions

Records of various kinds are created in every institution in accordance with their functions, activities and transactions. A study conducted at Delta University, Nigeria, by Akporhonor and Iwhiwhu (2007) showed that records created by the university included bulletins, forms, queries, reports, letters (admission, appointment, etc.), as well as correspondence from other departments of the university. The essence of a record-keeping system is to capture, maintain and make the document available when they are needed. In higher educational institutions, various records are created which vary from one department to another. Mnjama (2004) shows that the types of records housed by universities include: generic administrative records, financial, personnel, and student, legal and physical planning records.

Managing records in higher education institutions is important because good records that are accurate, comprehensive and authentic store important information needed for administrative, historical and evidential purposes. A study by Seniwoliba, Mahama and Abilla (2017) showed that where records management forms part of strategic objectives of a university and when records management is given the desired attention with staff complying with records management regulations, it will ensure confidentiality, proper maintenance, security, and preservation of the content and context of the university. On the other hand, a study by Azameti and Adjei (2013) in Ghana revealed that records management practices adopted by institutions of higher education included planning the information needs of the schools, enforcing policies and practices regarding records organisation, and coordinating internal and external access to records.

Academic institutions depend on records to discharge their activities and functions. According to Chinyemba and Ngulube (2005), a functional analysis provides a systematic way of establishing key functions of an organisation and hence determine the records that support those activities and functions. Efficient information

management helps an organisation to cope with challenges, because it guarantees the capacity to produce information that is timely, accurate and reliable (Momoh & Abdulsalam 2014). Chinyemba and Ngulube (2005) further observe that a university, like any other academic institution, has key functions through which records are created, maintained, used and, finally, disposed of. The key functions are conveying knowledge, conferring credentials, conducting research, sustaining the institution, fostering socialisation and providing social services.

According to Momoh and Abdulsalam (2014), “an efficient ‘information management system’ creates, processes and disseminates information that is critical to organisational performance. It ensures that information is available to the managers and other users in the form they want it and when they need it.” A study conducted by Coetzer and Roux (2012) revealed that a records management system improves office efficiency, facilitates administrative access to inactive as well as active records, ensures the consistent maintenance of records, decreases operational costs, increases staff productivity, and helps the university to meet legal and regulatory standards. On the other hand, Muhenda and Lwanga (2012) state that records contain information that is useful in running the education business in an efficient and effective manner, in delivering services consistently, in supporting all management decisions and in ensuring continuity of policy implementation.

In higher educational institutions, there are two forms of records management and these are paper records and electronic records. Paper-based records are any records that have been written or printed on paper. They can be items such as hand-written notes, correspondence, printed reports, procedures or maps. Nanighe and Felix (2016:13) posit that “records management in higher educational institutions largely depends on recorded information which could be on paper, audiotapes, videotapes, microfilms, photographs, slides and such computer readable as computer tapes, disks, compact and optical disks.”

The application of information and communication technology (ICT) to the management of records will go a long way in making such records accessible and usable (Akporhonor & Iwhiwhu 2007). Electronic records must be authentic, complete and usable to support academic institutions’ functions. For example, even ICT systems must be able to generate or capture the ‘metadata’ that record the contents, contexts and structures of records within the business processes that produce them (IRMT 2008).

Bigirimana, Jagero and Chizema (2015) assert that an effective ERM system ensures that the movement and location of records are controlled in a way that any record can be retrieved when needed and that there is an auditable trail of recordable

transactions. Similarly, Momoh and Abdulsalam (2014) advocate that the university information system should link all the components of the university such as personnel, admissions, exams and records, bursary, library, sickbay, students affairs unit, security and management, among others. Electronic records maintenance at universities should operate within the framework of policies, rules and procedures that give guidance to practice.

In a quantitative study by Yousef, Zawiyah, and Mohd (2013), it was posited that it is highly important to manage records electronically through integrating advanced technology in the existing system because the modern environment demands speed and accuracy in utilising university data for making fast decisions, and this can be attained through electronically recording the university's data.

A number of institutional benefits will accrue to any university when proper records are kept. These benefits include better use of physical and server space, saving of staff time, improved control of valuable information resources, compliance with standards and reduction in its operational costs (University of Education, Winneba 2000). Seniwoliba et al (2017) state that in essence, sound records management is the foundation any higher educational institution needs to provide services, to fulfil its obligation of accountability towards its immediate community, students and staff, and to protect their rights.

According to University of Education, Winneba (2000), the key records management practices in the university records management policy framework are records creation and capture, records survey/audit, records analysis/retention schedule, disposal of records, records protection and security, and provision of appropriate training for relevant staff.

Research methodology

According to Best and Kahn (1998), "research is the systematic and objective analysis and recording of controlled observations that may lead to the development of generalisations, principles, theories resulting in prediction and ultimate control of many events that may be consequences or causes of specific activities." The research was guided by the pragmatic research paradigm. The study adopted a quantitative and qualitative research approach. Mwanje and Gotu (2001) assert that the quantitative research method explores and measures the situation based on statistical information such as how many people supported or did not support certain issues or statements, and interpret the result. The quantitative method assists in the analysis of data into statistical charts and tables. Qualitative methods are those research techniques that employ non-mathematical, naturally occurring, and no

experimental research practices in order to uncover the meanings and significance of the wide variety of evidence that social researchers collect (Phiri 2016).

The study population comprised 410 employees of the NUL and included both administrative and academic staff. A non-probability sampling method, specifically purposive sampling, was used to sample 41 out of the total population of administrative and academic staff of the NUL, as records management is a collective cross-departmental responsibility. Purposive sampling that is also known as selective or judgemental sampling is a type of non-probability sampling technique. Agyedu, Donkor and Obeng (2010) suggest that in purposive sampling, the researcher uses his or her own judgement about which respondents to choose, and picks only who best meet the purpose of the study. Heads of departments and staff that deal directly with records management were selected, as well as the senior members who can assist in making records management one of the strategic priorities.

Purposive sampling was used to select 41 respondents from administrative and academic staff of the university. The sampled population was distributed as follows: 21 respondents were drawn from the administrative staff, 3 from Academic Office, 2 from Department of Student Affairs, 1 from Internal Audit, 2 from Bursar, 4 from Computer Service Unit, 2 from Human Resource Office, 2 from the Office of the University and 5 from the Library staff. The justification for the inclusion of these respondents was based on the following factors:

- (a) Administrative staff were included in the study because these officers were considered crucial in the successful day-to-day running of the university since they create, receive and use records on a regular basis.
- (b) Respondents from the Academic Office were included in the study since the Academic Office usually heads the administrative functions (as Secretary to Council, Senate and Executive Management team), including the management of academic records of the university and were in a position to answer questions on all aspects relating to the management of academic programmes and academic records.
- (c) Respondents from the Department of Student Affairs were included because they deal with student's affairs from applications for admission, accommodation, counselling until graduation. They were better placed to answer questions relating to issues on filing, retrieving and verifying records.

- (d) Respondents from the Internal Audit Unit were included in the study since the unit examines and evaluates university financial reports.
- (e) The Bursar was included in the study as the officer who manages the university finances for both staff and students and is in a position to answer questions on sources of finance and financial expenditure.
- (f) Respondents from the Computer Service Unit were included in the study as they manage and operate the university's ICT infrastructure such as computers and related software, data networks, NUL PABX system and telecommunications links.
- (g) Staff from the Human Resource Office were included in the study as they are responsible for the management of personnel records in the university including recruitment records, contractual records, employment documentation and case management records.
- (h) Staff from the Library Archives Unit were included in the study since the unit is responsible for university records selected for permanent preservation as archive.

The second group of respondents included 20 respondents from the academic departments. The Faculty of Agriculture (2), Faculty of Health Science (2), Faculty of Law (2), Faculty of Social Science (2), Faculty of Education (2), Faculty of Humanities (2) and Faculty of Science and Technology (2) and the Institute of Extra-Mural Studies (6) were purposely selected because they are in a position to answer questions on student continuous assessment grades management. The reason for selecting the academic staff was based on the fact they have insight into and understanding of student continuous assessment records, institutional repository and that they deal directly with records management as part of their duties. Heads of Departments were included in the study as they usually coordinate specific subject disciplines in the various faculties and were in a position to answer questions relating to the storage, security, and disposition of departmental records.

Both primary and secondary data were collected during the study. Primary data were collected through questionnaires, interviews and personal observations. Separate face-to-face interviews with the administrative staff were conducted to collect data from the University Archivist on policies and preservation of records. A separate interview was conducted with the Director of IEMS, Academic Office and Internal Audit on procedures of records management and security, as well as with the librarian on legislative to collect data managing archives held at the NUL Library.

The researchers were engaged in direct observation of the environment where records are stored, how they were arranged and how they are accessed. This type of observation was very helpful in understanding the actual use of technology at the workplace (Foscarini 2012). Permission to collect data from the NUL was obtained from the university on 8 January 2018. Following the approval from the university, the researchers distributed the questionnaires to the respondents. Different questionnaires were distributed to the administrative staff and heads of departments from the various units, sections, departments and faculties. Respondents were allowed two weeks to complete the questionnaires, after which they were collected. The researchers conducted face-to-face interviews with the administrative staff. Prior appointments were made with respondents to be interviewed and each interview session took approximately 10 to 20 minutes. Interviews were tape recorded and later transcribed. For observations, arrangements were made with the Registrar to conduct personal observations on 26 January 2018. An observation checklist was used to record observations made regarding aspects such as location of records storage areas, arrangement of the records, environmental conditions, handling procedures and records security. Secondary data involved the reviewing of articles from the internet, journals, and information from the NUL, which included the compilation of NUL ACT, Statutes and Ordinances. Qualitative data were analysed through themes while quantitative data were analysed using SPSS.

In conducting this study, the researchers adhered to the spirit of research ethics. Firstly, the researchers informed participants that the research is voluntary and that they can withdraw at any time. Each respondent was required to sign an informed consent form (see Appendix 9) agreeing to participate in the study. Secondly, the researcher ensured that respondents' privacy was not invaded and that no harm was caused when collecting the data. Respondents were not required to indicate their names in the questionnaire. All data obtained from the respondents were held in confidence and at no point were the identities of the respondents revealed. Furthermore, the data collected were used solely for purposes of this study. Moreover, the data collected were not manipulated in any way to suit a certain viewpoint but have been presented as it is. In addition, accurate and clear information about the research was provided to participants prior to commencing with the research, that is, why the research was being conducted.

Research findings

As stated above, the sample population consisted of 41 respondents. A total of 36 questionnaires were distributed among heads of departments and administrative staff. Among these, 33 questionnaires were completed and returned, giving a response rate of 92%. The high response rate was achieved due to the persistence

of the researchers in moving from office to office collecting the completed questionnaires. The respondents who could not respond and return questionnaires were tied up with other official responsibilities or did not want to complete the questionnaire due to their limited knowledge about records management despite the fact that they were known to be working with records in their respective offices. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001), a 50% response rate is adequate for analysis, while 60% is termed as good and 70% is considered very good. Based on the response rate for this study, it can be concluded that the results reflect the current situation prevailing at the NUL.

(a) Legislative, regulatory and policy framework on records management at the NUL

The first objective of the study sought to determine the legislative, regulatory and policy framework within which NUL records are being managed. In order to address this objective, a review of relevant documents, including the Lesotho Archives Act, the National University Act No. 13 of 1975, the National University of Lesotho (Amendment) Act of 2002, Statutes & Ordinances Order No. 19 of 1992 and Ordinance No. 8 (Promulgated on 29 October 1979) were examined. The findings of the study revealed that the management of the records at the NUL is subject to the following requirements:

- (b) Lesotho Archives Act of 1967
- (c) The National University of Lesotho Act, Statutes & Ordinances

According to the Lesotho Archives Act, the Chief Archivist shall be charged with the custody, care and control of the archives; and may advise any person charged with the custody with regard to the care and filling thereof. The Lesotho Archives Act of 1967 is one of the oldest Acts in Southern Africa. The archaic Lesotho Archives Act, No. 42 of 1967, defines archives as any documents or records received or created in a government office or office of a public authority during the conduct of affairs in that office. Since the NUL is a public institution funded by the Treasury, its records are public records and are therefore subject to the provisions of this Lesotho Archives Act. However, there was no evidence from the study that the Lesotho National Archives had been inspecting and advising the NUL on matters pertaining to the management of records as required in the Lesotho Archives Act.

Furthermore, an examination of legal instruments revealed that the NUL was established under the National University Act, No. 13 of 1975. According to Statute

6, Statutes & Ordinances Order No. 19 of 1992, the Registrar is mandated to manage all the university's administrative affairs, as well as maintenance of all records, files, registers and accounts of the university's assets and properties, movable and immovable.

In addition, the findings of the study indicated that section 39(1) of the National University of Lesotho Order of 1992 states that: "The Council shall cause to be kept in relation to the funds and assets of the University such accounts and associated records as shall correctly record and explain all transactions". An examination of the available legislative and regulatory documents at the NUL showed that Statute 14 of the National University of Lesotho (Amendment) Act of 2002 requires the university's Board of Management to "To supervise the taking and keeping of inventories of all the properties and assets of the University, including appropriate records for stores, furniture, and equipment, and a system of annual audit thereof."

As regards the management of student records, the study revealed that Ordinance No. 8 (Promulgated on 29 October 1979) requires that:

1. "The University shall maintain at all times, under the Registrar's control, an up-to-date set of records of students registered with the University and of graduates of the University, together with the academic achievements of such students and all other pertinent information.
2. In addition to sub-order 1 above each Faculty shall keep similar records of all students registered within the Faculty. Such Faculty records shall, under the general supervision of the Dean and Deputy Dean, be the responsibility of the Faculty Tutor, assisted by Personal Tutors and by the Faculty Secretary."

Based on the above findings, it can be concluded that in terms of legislative requirements for managing records, the government has put in place the necessary legal framework that ensures that records required to support the functions of the university are created and managed at the NUL.

(b) Records management policies and procedures at the NUL

According to ISO 15489-1 (2016), organisations should define and document a policy for records management. The objective of the policy should be the creation of authentic, reliable and useable records, capable of supporting business functions and activities for as long as they are required. Hence, this study sought to discover

if the NUL had an institutional records management policy covering the management of records both paper and electronic. The findings of the study indicated that six (42.86%) of the respondents were of the opinion that the NUL has a campus-wide record management policy, four (28.57%) disagreed, two (14.29%) were not sure/did not know and two (14.29%) did not respond to this question. Interviews with the Academic Officer suggested that there was a policy that needed updating. However, during the interview with the University Archivist, it was clearly reported that “there is no written policy on records management; all we do is copy best practices from all over” Personal observations confirmed that that the NUL lacks a formal written records management policy.

Another aspect that the study sought to determine relates to the availability of documented procedures, standards and tools relating to records management. The findings indicated that 13 (39.39%) of the respondents said that the university had policies and procedures for the creation and storage of records, seven (21.21%) were neutral, 10 (30.30%) said there were no policies and procedures, one (3.03%) was not aware or had no idea of its existence and two (6.06 %) did not respond to the question. Personal observations indicated that there are no policies and procedure manuals relating to the management of records at the NUL, whether paper or electronic.

(d) Current state of records management

ISO 15489 (2016) states that “business rules, processes, policies and procedures which control the creation, capture and management of records should be implemented and documented to ensure the authenticity of records”. Hence, the second objective of the study sought to examine NUL practices in managing its records (manually and electronically) from their creation to their final disposition. In order to address this objective, data were collected on several aspects and the findings to each of those aspects are presented below.

(e) Types of records created and held at the NUL

Respondents were asked to indicate the formats in which records are created and kept at the NUL. The findings showed that 25 (75.76%) of the respondents created both paper and electronic records, four (12.12%) respondents indicated that they created records in paper format only and four (12.12%) stated that the records were electronic. The results also indicated that administrative and academic records were the most common types of records created by the university, followed by human resource records (personal records), supplies and legal records. A brief discussion of the types of records created and held at the NUL is presented below.

(i) Academic records

Personal observations as well as examination of documents availed to the researchers showed that academic records are kept at the Academic Office that stores them both manually and electronically. One of the major functions of the Academic Office is the management of students' records, which includes filing, retrieving, and verification of records (NUL 2019c). The findings also revealed that secretaries in the faculties and departments were responsible for making sure that academic records held at faculty and departmental levels were secured and made available whenever they were required. The management of these records includes managing applications and admission records, programme and course registration details, student progress reports, academic transcript and information about the students.

(ii) Personnel records

Interviews with staff from the Human Resources Office indicated that the Human Resource Unit manages all personnel records. The office is also responsible for responsible for maintaining the ITS personnel sub-system ensuring integrity and confidentiality of employee records and files (NUL 2019a). The unit is responsible for managing personnel records and for ensuring that these records are protected against unauthorised access. The Human Resource employees manage their records separately from administrative files, but these are organised using alphanumeric classification system for their records.

(iii) Financial records

The Bursary Unit undertakes the management of financial records at the NUL where most of the university's financial records are on their own intranet (NUL 2019b).

(iv) Electronic records

It was observed that the NUL is making giant strides in computerising some of their records. The university currently uses the ITS (IHUTO) to store some of their records online. The campus-wide computer network is continuously being reinforced and upgraded. At the time of the research, records that were online included student, personnel and financial records. The Bursary Unit also has most of the university's financial records on its own separate intranet.

(f) Types of records management system in use at the NUL

The study also sought to identify the kind of records management system that was in use at the University. Six (31.6%) of the respondents said that the records management system was centralised for electronic records, 11 (57.9%) said it was decentralised for manual records, and one (5.3%) did not respond to the question. Personal observations revealed that the NUL uses a decentralised records management whereby faculties and departments are responsible for the management of the records that they create and receive while the Central Records Management Unit is responsible for policy and general administration files of the university. Interviews with staff from the Human Resources Office revealed that the Central Records Management Unit was not functioning well and it had been operating without a trained records manager for a considerable number of years. Electronic records are held centrally while the departments and faculties practice a decentralised system. A Central Records Management Unit that is located and managed within the ICT section by the systems experts serves as a back-up for all academic records and administrative records of the entire university (NUL 2019b). Personal observations also revealed that there was no collaboration from records managers and the system experts.

(g) Records classification (arrangement of current records)

Concerning records classification, the study sought to determine how records are arranged at the NUL. As stated by ISO 15489 (2016), a “Classification system reflects the business of the organisation from which they derive and are normally based on analysis of organisations business activities and functions”. For this reason, respondents were asked if an organisational file plan was available. The results of the study indicated that three (15.79%) respondents strongly agreed that there was a file plan that lists primary functions, six (31.58%) agreed, six (31.58%) were neutral, three (15.79%) disagreed and one (5.26%) was not aware of such a file plan.

Personal observations by the researchers revealed a lack of uniform classification system. Observations conducted at the decentralised offices revealed that some of the files at the departmental and faculty were arranged using an alphanumeric system, while others were arranged according to their subjects. This means that the various sections of the university organise their records with methods that seem to meet their day-to-day needs. In an interview with one of the academic officers, it was reported that “the file plan used has never been updated in the years that I have been here.”

Based on the above findings, it can be argued that the filing system used by the NUL has no guidelines for records creation, is not uniform and not adequate for record keeping. This in turn causes records creators to seek advice from office supervisors, use individual initiatives, and consult with colleagues when filing records.

(h) Roles and responsibilities

Another aspect that the study sought to investigate was how records were monitored in the respective departments. The findings indicated that six (31.58%) respondents thought that monitoring and controlling of records management are done by staff working in the Academic Office, 11 (57.89%) said it is done by individuals, while one (5.26%) said it is done by secretaries and one (5.26%) said he was not aware of who monitors and controls records management. The respondents were also asked to indicate who manages records in their respective sections and departments. The findings indicated that individuals manage sectional records, while secretaries manage records at departmental and faculty level. The results further revealed that most of the personnel charged with the responsibility for managing records at the NUL had no training in records management.

Based on the foregoing, it can be concluded that the poor state of records management practices at the NUL is partially due to the lack of qualified personnel in records management. However, it must be stated that the NUL has a qualified archivist and a records manager, but these are based in the Archives Section of the library section. This is still a very small number of qualified records staff in comparison to the large volume of records they are expected to handle.

Access and retrieval

Another aspect that the study sought to investigate relates to access and retrieval of records. Respondents, including Heads of Departments, were asked to state whether they were satisfied with the information services provided by the records staff. The results revealed that eight (57.14%) respondents were satisfied, whereas five (35.71%) were not satisfied with the information services provided, and one (7.14%) did not respond to the question.

The respondents were further asked to indicate how long it took to obtain a file held in the Records Office within their departments. Three (21.4%) of the respondents said 5 minutes, five (35.7%) said it took five to ten minutes, while three (21.4%) said an hour to a day and three (21.4%) said it took a day to two days to access records held in the records offices. During an interview with the Internal

Auditor, the Auditor stated that “It depends on the kind of file requested. Some supervisors require their prior approval before access is granted. Because of bureaucracy, this may take very long. Sometimes it can take a period of six months before one has access to the file needed.”

Interviews with the participants also revealed that tracking of records at the NUL is ad hoc due to unutilised file movement cards and records personnel relying on their memories. In addition, the findings also revealed that the NUL lacks effective retrieval tools such as indexes for both current and closed records, leading to the delay in information services provision.

Records storage

Another aspect that the study sought to investigate relates to the storage of records at the NUL. Respondents were asked if there are any storage facilities for semi-current and non-current records. The results indicated that eight (57.14%) of the respondents were of the view that the NUL has adequate storage facilities for records, while six (42.86%) believed records storage facilities and storage areas were inadequate. Personal observations revealed that records are kept in boxes in individual offices, which leads to a limitation of space. In an interview with one of the participants, the respondent lamented that “We have to wait for the library staff to come and get the records to create more space, unless we take the initiative of taking the records to the archives.” This means procedures for the orderly closure and transfer of records from the offices to the library are lacking. Personal observations by the researchers revealed that the offices used as storerooms are not well maintained and lack suitable physical and environmental conditions for records storage. This was confirmed by a lack of humidifiers and fire extinguishers in the records storage areas as well as the lack of burglar bars on glass doors.

(i) Records security at the NUL

Records should be kept safe at all times and as such, the respondents were asked to indicate if the level of security of records at the NUL is adequate. The responses obtained indicated that three (21.4%) of the respondents stated that they were satisfied with the security measures that the university had put in place, seven (50.0%) said no and four (28.6%) did not know whether the security measures were adequate or not.

Personal observation revealed that some doors to the offices have a controlled access lock system in place in addition to the normal door locks to other offices, while others offices relied on the ordinary locking system. The Internal Auditor in

an interview said, “My office handles very sensitive records, therefore access to the office itself is controlled. The door to the office has a finger detecting lock in addition to the normal lock that the other offices have.” Offices where there are wooden and metal file cabinets that are used to file documents, also have keys so that they are locked, especially to prevent unauthorised access by support staff that do routine housekeeping activities.

The interview with the Internal Auditor also revealed that electronic records are kept safe by making back-ups to an external hard drive or on the intranet. A participant from the Internal Audit Unit indicated that “Most of the time, I work and keep my documents in soft copy; I make back-ups to an external hard drive that I take home with me at the end of the week. I have also made it a habit to have a copy of important documents to my internet email.”

(j) Vital records programme

Yet another aspect that the study sought to determine was whether the NUL had a vital records management programme that would guarantee that critical records required to resume university operations are available even in the event of a disaster. Three (15.79%) respondents strongly agreed that the university had a vital records management programme, four (21.05%) agreed that the NUL had a disaster preparedness policy, six (31.58%) were neutral on the issue, four (21.05%) disagreed while two (10.53%) were not aware of any vital records management programme at the NUL. Personal observations confirmed that the university lacks a vital records management programme and its records are likely to be lost in the event of a major disaster such as a fire outbreak.

Records disposition at the NUL

The study further sought to investigate the records disposition practices at the NUL. As such, the respondents were asked if there were any specific procedures for disposing of records no longer required to support administrative or research uses at the NUL. The findings indicated that nine (64.29%) of the respondents said there were procedures for determining which records were to be retained, four (28.57%) said there were no procedures at all, while one (7.14%) did not know.

Another aspect under disposition of records which the study sought to determine was whether the NUL has a documented records retention and disposition schedule that lists records' categories and their expected retention periods. The findings indicated that one (5.26%) of the respondents strongly agreed that there was a records and disposition schedule, four (21.05%) agree it was there, nine (47.37%)

were neutral about the presence or availability of the schedule, three (15.79%) disagreed to being there while one (5.26%) strongly disagreed that there was no schedule and one (5.26%) was not aware of its existence.

An interview conducted with a participant from the Academic Office indicated that the NUL has no retention schedule and that they only use best practises and self-judgement. In an interview, one respondent said “it takes time before records are sent to their disposition, unless we tell them to come and pick them we are stuck with them.”. Observation revealed that indeed the respondents were not aware of the existence of the retention schedule. An interview with the university’s archivist indicated that there is no retention schedule. The archivist further argued that “it is a gentlemen’s agreement, no formal procedure.” Discussions with the Archivist based in the library revealed that, currently, there are no proper arrangements for transferring closed records to the Archives Section of the Library for storage and preservation. The transfer of the records to the Archives Section depends on when the library staff come to collect records. This is why current, semi-current and none-current records are stored within the same office.

(k) Preservation of archives at the NUL

When respondents were asked to state whether or not there are any archival services to preserve records of continuing value, the study revealed that 13 (92.86%) of the respondents said the NUL offered archival services for records preserved at the NUL, while one (7.14%) did not know. Literature review shows that the NUL has been managing archives in the library for a considerable number of years. In the past, the university library did house the National Archives of Lesotho (Kukubo 1986).

An interview with the Academic Officer revealed that university records (students’ records, personal records and academic records) are being automated as a means of archiving them and only records from 1995 until current have been automated. These records are kept within the library archives section that holds about 189,000 titles of documentation and archival records that are kept on closed access. One responded said, “We collect and preserve NUL records and it is a process that involves communication with the faculties and the various departments.” Personal observation also revealed that it was the case that records of continuing value are being archived.

(l) Hindrances to effective records management at the NUL

The third objective of the study sought to investigate the challenges and problems that hinder effective records management at the NUL. Respondents were asked to tick challenges that they were facing relating to records management at the NUL. Interviews with participants indicated that the challenges that were being experienced at the NUL include:

- Misfiling
- Huge documents
- Delays in processing files
- Mixture of subjects
- Inadequate control of records
- Duplication
- Excessive time in retrieval

In order to determine the challenges encountered in managing records at the NUL, data were collected on several aspects and the findings to each of those aspects are presented below.

(i) Lack of professionals

Respondents were asked to state whether a lack of professionally trained records managers contributes to problems of records management. The study revealed that 11 (57.9%) respondents strongly agreed that a lack of trained professionals was a contributing factor to poor record keeping at the university, six (31.6%) agreed, while two (10.5%) were not sure. The study also established that although the NUL has a trained Archivist and a Records Manager, these were based in the Archives Section of the university and were not engaged with the management of current and semi-current records.

Improper classification in retrieval

Respondents were asked if improper records management (classification/filing) is a challenge in retrieving office documents. The study revealed that 11 (57.9%) strongly agreed that improper filing is a challenge in retrieval of records, seven (36.8%) agreed and one (5.3%) was not sure.

(ii) Resources

Another aspect under challenges associated with records management was to investigate if inadequate resources are a problem that facilitates proper records management at the NUL. The findings indicated that 11 (57.9%) of the respondents strongly agreed that inadequate resources are a problem that hinders proper management of records, five (26.3%) agreed, while three (15.8%) were not sure.

(iii) Records security

When respondents were asked whether a lack of proper security for records affects the records management practices, the study revealed that seven (36.8%) strongly agreed that proper security is a challenge, six (31.6%) agreed, five (26.3%) were not sure and one (5.3%) disagreed.

(iv) Inadequate storage space

The respondents were asked whether sufficient space for records management at the NUL was also a challenge and the findings indicated that eight (42.1%) of the respondents strongly agreed that insufficient space is a challenge, six (31.6%) agreed, while five (26.3%) were not sure.

(m) Discussion and interpretation of the findings

The findings of the study revealed that although the NUL has adequate legislative requirements for managing its records, record-keeping practices at the NUL were still weak. This study therefore concluded that the NUL lacks policies and procedures, and staff are not aware of the existence of policies and procedures for managing records. These findings are consistent with those of Kamatula (2010) who revealed that University of Dar es Salaam lacked policies and procedures for managing its records from creation to final disposition. Nanighe and Felix (2016) also state that in Nigerian higher educational institutions, certain factors, including the absence of well thought through, comprehensive policies and procedures concerning records management in higher educational institutions, are not available.

It is very difficult for a university to function properly without policies and procedures that lay out the goals and standards of the university. A study by Phiri (2016) indicates that cases of poor record keeping in Malawi universities was attributed to a number of factors, including the absence of formal records management policies and guidelines. Wamukoya and Mutula (2005:74) note that

failure to capture and preserve electronic records in eastern and southern African institutions of higher education has been attributed to a lack of policies and procedures, among other factors. These findings are similar to those of Gude (1992) who argues that as people work continuously on a particular task for a long time, they become more conversant with the best practices and tenets of the work and subsequently develop a good attitude towards high performance.

(n) The study has further shown that that the filing system used by the NUL has no guidelines for records creation, is not uniform and is not adequate for record keeping. This in turn causes records creators to seek advice from an office supervisor, use individual initiatives, and consult with colleagues. This finding is similar to those findings of studies by Chinyemba and Ngulube (2005) which noted that, due to the absence of guidelines at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, practices and procedures of records management were developed by individual initiatives.

Furthermore, the findings of the study have shown that record-keeping practices at the NUL are generally poor. The major cause for this has been attributed to poorly trained staff who are managing the records. The same was noted by Iwhiwhu (2005) that records managers in Nigerian universities are employed without prejudice to the principles of records management. They are clerical/administrative staff with no idea or conscious of the need to create and manage records with the utmost care. At the University of Malawi there was a lack of senior management support, record-keeping policies and guidelines were not available, and record-keeping staff were inadequately trained, amongst other record-keeping deficiencies (Phiri 2016).

With regard to access to and tracking of the movement of files at the NUL, the findings indicated that this was problematic and users encountered delays when they requested for files. These findings are similar to those by Kamatula (2010:78) who revealed that “there are no guidelines to control records access, lack of effective retrieval tools” at the University of Dar es Salam. Ifedili and Agbaire (2011) also reported that there were no defined system of record keeping for complete and easy channelling so that records are always readily available on demand in Nigerian universities.

Moreover, the study has established that the NUL lacks a retention schedule and that it has never destroyed any of its ephemeral records. A study conducted in Otu (2016) at Koforidua Polytechnic in Ghana revealed that there are no guidelines or policy on the disposition of records. Similarly, Iwhiwhu (2005) in a study on records management in Nigerian Universities showed that there is no retention schedule, as the retention of records is done at the discretion of the officer in charge of such records. In addition, the study has revealed that the NUL lacks a disaster

preparedness plan for its records. This finding is not unique to the NUL. Studies conducted by the International Records Management Trust (IRMT) (2008:5) revealed weaknesses in the management of both paper records and e-records which include the absence of vital records and disaster preparedness and recovery plans. A study at Moi University in Kenya by Musembe (2016) also rendered similar findings, that the university lacked a clear records management policy which would lead to the development and implementation of a records management programme. At least for e-records, the university ICT services have installed network devices for professional backup of critical data kept in the NUL server. Although this may be the case, a study by Azameti and Adjei (2013) noted that public tertiary institutions lack the logistical support required to effectively manage electronic records.

The findings of the study also revealed that records security for the records leaves much to be desired. Similar problems were reported at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Chinyemba & Ngulube 2005:13–16) and the University of Malawi and Mzuzu University (Phiri 2016), which revealed that poor storage exposed records to multitudes of threats, while storing university records on personal computers compromised their security. Furthermore, the study revealed that appropriate attention and protection do not apply to all records and the evidence and information that they contain cannot be retrieved effectively and efficiently because of the lack of a policy that would govern the entire process of records management. Wamukoya and Mutula (2005:74) state that poor security and confidentiality controls have been identified as major factors contributing to the failure of capturing and preservation of electronic records in eastern and southern African institutions of education.

Based on the above discussion, it can be concluded that record-keeping practices at the NUL are weak and in dire need of improvements. A study by Akor and Udensi (2013) at the Federal University of Technology and Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University Lapai, Nigeria, also revealed that records management at the universities is not receiving the attention it deserves. Some of the reasons cited for this are non-usage of the file plan, lack of training of both records office staff and users (staff), unskilled and demotivated records office staff and lack of support from top management. Studies conducted by Mnjama (2002) at the University of Botswana, and Kamatula (2010) at the UDSM, also revealed similar situations. Despite the important role played by records, there is shattering evidence that the management of university records has largely been neglected in public universities in Africa, including the NUL. Similarly, a study by Iwhiwhu (2005) in Nigerian universities also revealed that records management programmes or policies on records are not

available; hence, the administration of records is without recourse to the principles of records management.

(o) Recommendations

(i) Regulatory, legislative and policy framework

The study established that the NUL operates in an environment with various laws and regulations, which if implemented, could strengthen records management effectively. As noted earlier, the major problem facing the NUL records management practices stems from a lack of a policy on records management. Therefore, it is recommended that the Lesotho National Archives should perform its oversight responsibilities of advising the NUL on better record-keeping practices, as stipulated in section 5 of the Lesotho Archives Act.

Improvements in the policy framework will enable the NUL to comply fully with Principle 1 of ARMA International's Information Governance Maturity model which states that "a senior executive (or person of comparable authority) oversees the recordkeeping program and delegates program responsibility to appropriate individuals. The organisation adopts policies and procedures to guide personnel, and ensure the program can be audited."

The records management policy to be developed should make provision for the formulation of a university records management policy. The study has shown that the university lacks a university-wide records management policy. This study recommends that the NUL should develop and implement a campus-wide records management policy.

Although the contents of a records management policy vary and depend on the nature of the organisation, the following issues should be addressed in the policy:

- Purpose
- Scope
- Applicability
- Definitions
- Policy
- Requirements for Department Record Management Practices and Procedures. (Drexel University, 2014)

According to ISO 15489 (2016), policies on the management of records should be developed, documented and implemented as they are derived from business

objectives and supported by business rules or procedures for managing records. Phiri (2016) argues that management support is essential for the implementation of records management programmes, and in this context, the implementation of records management laws. Coetzer and Roux (2012) state that, in the case of an institution like the University of Zululand, adequate policies would result in staff awareness of standards and would allow them to follow proper records management practices.

(ii) Procedures and manuals

The lack of records management manual or guidelines was noted as one of the drawbacks to effective records management practices at the NUL. Tough (2004) and Phiri (2016) state that records management guidelines or procedures manuals, or in some cases, standing office instructions, provide details on how to manage an organisation's recorded information. They are and can be used for operational guidelines and staff training. In the view of Ellison (2006), the purpose of a procedural manual is to help users understand and implement the procedures of the records management programme. This study recommends that the NUL should develop a records procedures manual. The most outstanding foundational procedure manual should address the following aspects: overview/procedure description, areas of responsibility, procedure detail, referenced and a help page (University of California 1994).

The development of a records procedures manual, records retention schedules, and disaster preparedness plan will enable the NUL to be compliant with Principle 2 of ARMA International's Information Governance Maturity which states that "an organisation's business processes and activities of an organisation's recordkeeping program are documented in a manner that is open and verifiable and is available to all personnel and appropriate interested parties."

(iii) Records management training

Mncwango (2014) asserts that records management needs to be run by experienced professionals who will know what has to be done and when. The study established that the NUL lacks staff qualified in records management while some had little training in records management. The study recommends that the university (especially staff charged with the responsibility of managing the NUL's records) should be trained in records management and attend workshops to improve their skills in managing records. It is essential for record-keeping staff to undergo training programmes in order to remain relevant in the changing world; more so, in this era

where digital records are increasingly becoming the predominant medium of information (Phiri 2016). Mncwango (2014) indicates that although universities use the ITS module as part of records management, there is a need to also train the staff in records management.

(iv) Establishment of a central records management unit

The study findings revealed that the NUL lacks a central records management unit. This study recommends that the university should explore the possibility of establishing/re-opening a Central Records Management Unit (RMU) that will be responsible for the following functions:

- Control over quality and quantity of records
- Control over creation and prevent unnecessary duplication
- Mail management
- File management
- Information retrieval
- Ensuring security of records
- Audits
- Issue guidance (procedures)
- Proper disposal

Phiri (2016) asserts that universities without records management units should establish such units in order to coordinate the records management functions effectively. It is also important to ensure that records management units are being managed by staff qualified in records management. The development of the RMU is crucial as this unit is entrusted with the responsibility of overseeing the welfare of the university records.

The establishment of the Central Records Management Unit will enable the NUL to comply with Principle 3 on Integrity which states that “a recordkeeping program shall be constructed so the records and information generated or managed by or for the organisation have a reasonable and suitable guarantee of authenticity and reliability.”

(v) Security of records

Record keeping must be guided by some level of confidentiality, proper maintenance, security, preservation of the content and context, and so on (Iwhiwhu 2007; Akor & Udensi 2013). This is in line with the views of Phiri (2016) who asserts

that sound record keeping delivers security of information, whether personal or organisational.

However, as noted above, the NUL lacks proper security over its records. Records should be kept in a safe environment to protect against loss or damage (Egwunyenga 2009). Hence, the study recommends that security measures should be put in place that will protect and ensure the security of the records. These measures should include strong locks for doors and windows, clear labelling of records, and fire and security alarms. Tower Software (2004) and Egwunyenga (2009) argue that adequate manual classification, security, storage facilities and funds are generally recommended for good record keeping.

The provision of adequate security measures at the NUL will enable the university to comply with Principle 4 of ARMA International's Information Governance Maturity model which states that "a recordkeeping program shall be constructed to ensure a reasonable level of protection to records and information that are private, confidential, privileged, secret, or essential to business continuity."

(vi) Availability of records

Records that cannot be located or are lost lead to delays in decision-making or making decisions without the support of the institutional memory, which is usually contained in records. This study recommends that the NUL should develop retrieval tools and implement a tracking system of records. Norris (2002) asserts that an effective records management program should have in place systems, manual or automated, that can locate and retrieve records in a reliable and timely fashion to meet the needs of users. Systems that the NUL could consider for monitoring the physical movement of records include:

- location cards
- index cards
- docket books
- diary cards
- transfer or transit slips
- bar-coding
- computer databases (electronic document management systems)
- regular record audits or censuses (preferably once a year) (National Archives 2004).

The implementation of the use of the above tools will result in the NUL complying with Principle 6 of ARMA International's Information Governance Maturity model

which states that “an organisation shall maintain records in a manner that ensures timely, efficient, and accurate retrieval of needed information.”

(vii) Records retention and disposition

As noted earlier, the NUL lacks retention and disposition schedules, and this study recommends the development of retention and disposition schedules in the university. According to Norris (2002), proper records retention and disposition “ensure that records are present when needed for litigation, audits, day-to-day business purposes, or historical research, but that unneeded records do not take up costly storage space.” According to Skemer and Williams (1990), the development of a schedule for an agency is a major accomplishment in that it is a helpful tool to govern the timely disposal of useless material and the systematic transfer of the non-current records of enduring value to the National Archives. A retention and disposition schedule is aimed at: protecting vital records, retaining records with value of historical interest, restricting filing equipment and space to house active records, releasing computer magnetic tapes for reuse as quickly as possible, and destroying records that have served their usefulness (Iwhiwhu 2005).

The development and implementation of a records retention schedule will result in the NUL complying with Principle 7 ARMA International’s Information Governance Maturity model which states “an organisation shall maintain its records and information for an appropriate time, taking into account legal, regulatory, fiscal, operational, and historical requirements.”

(viii) Vital record program and disaster preparedness plan

As noted above, the NUL lacks a vital records and disaster preparedness plan. This study recommends that the NUL should identify its vital records and develop a disaster preparedness plan for its records. According to the United Nations ARMS (2010), a vital records programme is a management regime for vital records which includes preventative and protection measures and procedures, retention requirements and locations, staff and service provider contact details, together with documentations. A vital records programme entails identifying the vital records, defining and planning for disaster, and protecting vital records and procedures for accessing records in the event of a disaster.

In order to ensure the longevity of documentary materials, records must be protected from disasters that have the potential to destroy them since disasters occur unexpectedly. Akor and Udensi (2013) posit that it is critical that a Records Management Disaster Prevention and Recovery Plan be developed to prevent the

disruption of institutional critical operations should a disaster occur. An effective vital records programme ensures that records are present for historical reason.

Conclusion

As stated earlier, the purpose of the study was to assess the extent to which record-keeping practices comply with ARMA International's Information Governance Maturity Model. This maturity model is designed to help higher education institutions to assess where their institution currently sits in relation to records management as it provides statements summarising five levels of 'maturity' against 33 aspects of what constitutes a records management programme. It should be noted that each description of maturity is designed to be a representative summary to encompass the major traits of an organisation at that particular level of 'maturity' in its records management programme.

In the case of accountability, the study findings indicated that there is no senior executive who oversees the record-keeping programme and delegates programme responsibility to appropriate individuals. There are also no policies and procedures to guide personnel and that are adopted to make the records management programme auditable. The study findings concluded that there is transparency in the current record keeping, although it was clear that it varied from one department/unit/section to the other. There is no integrity within the record-keeping program, as the NUL lacks a registry. Records that are created and managed does not have a reasonable and suitable guarantee of authenticity and reliability.

The findings also indicated that the level of protection over records within the NUL is of a significantly acceptable level. The study findings concluded that the NUL lacks a records management policy and in the case of compliance, the NUL record-keeping program does comply with applicable laws and other binding authorities, as well as the organisation's policies. Regarding the availability of records, the findings indicated that although records are maintained, their retrieval is not timely, efficient, and accurate at all times. The study findings on the retention of records revealed that the NUL does maintain its records for an appropriate time, considering historical, operational, regulatory and legal requirements. On the disposition of records, the study findings did indicate that it was not clear on the procedures of disposing of records at the NUL.

The study revealed that records management maturity at the NUL is at level 2 (In Development) in that the environment is still developing recognition that recordkeeping has an impact on the organisation, and that the organisation may benefit from a more defined information governance programme. It therefore

follows that users of this model will be required to not necessarily treat each description literally, but to consider the underlying condition that it is trying to capture. However, level 2 also shows that the NUL is still vulnerable to legal or regulatory scrutiny since practices are ill-defined and still largely ad hoc in nature.

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