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Digitisation of claims records at the Road Accident Fund in South Africa

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Abstract

This study is an extract of a master's study titled *An exploration into the current records management practices of the Road Accident Fund in South Africa.* The aim of the study was to investigate how the Road Accident Fund has been digitising its claims records. The study followed a qualitative research approach and used a case study design. Data were collected using document analysis, supplemented by observation. The population involved in this study was comprised of 766 permanent employees in the Road Accident Fund Pretoria Regional Office. The target population for this study was the 69 employees in the Correspondence and Document Management Services at the Pretoria Regional Office, and the sample consisted of a management team of 17 managers. The findings revealed that the Road Accident Fund has been trying to digitise its claims records since 2002 through scanning. However, the organisation scanned paper-based claims records without properly understanding database management concepts, file and document tracking, imaging and scanning technologies, electronic document management, workflow and electronic records management. As a result, scanned claims records cannot be retrieved. This results in more service delivery problems for the organisation than the traditional use of paper-based records.

Keywords: digitisation, claims records, paper-based records, scanning, Road Accident Fund

Introduction and background

The digitisation of records was initially intended to improve access, which is evident in the increased availability of records (Chauke 2022). However, many government bodies in South Africa face challenges of poor information governance when it comes to managing paper-based records. Hence, physical records are digitised and integrated into business information systems (Chauke 2022; Mathope 2022). Digitisation of records has been extensively discussed by scholars across the entire Eastern and Southern Africa Branch of the International Council on Archives (ESARBICA) (Chaterera-Zambuko, Masuku & Bhebhe 2022; Kalusopa, Mosweu & Bayane 2021). Computers have created new dynamics in records management, and systems for managing records are becoming more computerised. Electronic records are managed instead of paper-based records (Kalusopa et al. 2021). As government activities increase, more records are being created, and digitisation can ensure that services are provided promptly and that information is stored efficiently (Marutha 2022). However, to successfully digitise paper-based records, information technology (IT) specialists must collaborate with records management

practitioners to design systems for digitising records (Mathope 2023). The number of records in electronic format has increased dramatically and will continue to grow as paper-based office transactions are shifted to electronic formats (Mojapelo & Marutha 2023). As a result, creating electronic records through scanning must become a priority.

The current technological trends are changing how records are created in government bodies. To stay relevant, the records management fraternity needs to adapt to the new mode of operation. This includes managing records entirely online without relying on physical copies. Therefore, scanning has become one of the most critical functions in archives and records management (Modiba 2021; Ripcord Company 2019; Demaitre 2020). Scanning enables organisations to convert paper-based records into digital format. Modiba (2021) indicates that a part of Kofax's Intelligent Automation Platform uses OCR to scan files and convert paper records into digital information. According to Ripcord Company (2019) and Demaitre (2020), scanning can now be performed through robots that can be adapted to digitise records and that use a combination of robotic scanners and AI-powered programs. Modiba (2021), Ripcord Company (2019) and Demaitre (2020) state that it is vital for organisations to know how to use scanners because scanning enables them to convert paper-based records into digital format. Scanners are IT resources that organisations must take advantage of when contemplating the digitisation of records (Ripcord Company 2019; Demaitre 2020).

Contextual setting

The Road Accident Fund (RAF) is a Schedule 3A public entity established under the Road Accident Fund Act, 1996 (Act No. 56 of 1996), as amended. Its mandate is to provide compulsory social insurance cover to all users of South African roads, to rehabilitate and compensate persons injured due to the negligent driving of motor vehicles in a timely and caring manner and to actively promote the safe use of the roads (RAF 2017; 2018, 2019; 2020; 2021). The organisation's customer base comprises the South African public and all foreigners within the country's borders. The RAF has regional offices in Pretoria, Johannesburg, East London, Durban and Cape Town (RAF 2021; 2020). The organisation operates on a fault-based system; before accepting liability for a claim, the RAF must investigate who was at fault for the accident. Paper-based records are received from the claimants or their representatives as proof of injuries or deaths due to a motor vehicle accident.

Correspondence and Document Management Services business unit receives the claim documents from the claimants or their representatives on behalf of the RAF through the document reception (hand delivered) from the courier companies, the post office and other regional offices. The mailroom employees open, sort and date stamp claims documents to acknowledge receipt and dispatch them to the next business unit for registration. After registration, the investigation for compliance commences. Investigating compliance includes identifying the injured or deceased, establishing the date and place of the accident, establishing the identity of the driver and registration number of the motor vehicles that were involved in the accident (if known) and examining the completed Statutory Medical Report (SMR) (RAF 2021; 2020; 2019). All these activities are done to determine whether there was a motor vehicle accident and to establish whether the injuries or death were due to that accident before the RAF accepts liability for the claim.

Upon compliance, paper-based claims records are passed to the next business unit to establish merits. According to RAF (2021; 2020; 2019), this is the stage where the organisation

investigates whether the claimant was involved in a motor vehicle accident and whether the claimant sustained injuries from that motor vehicle accident, as alleged, and to determine whether the claimant's details about the accident are verifiable. This probing is achieved through a thorough examination of records provided by external stakeholders as proof of injuries or loss of life; records such as affidavits, officers' accident reports (OARs), death certificates and many more are submitted for this purpose.

Once merits have been established, the paper-based claim record is passed on to the next business unit to establish quantum. Quantum is investigating whether the damage claimed by the injured can be proven and is deemed reasonable (RAF 2021; 2020; 2019). During this phase, many experts are brought on board, such as assessors, medical experts and actuaries, to provide the RAF with reports that could assist the organisation in determining quantum (RAF 2019:33). Once the aforementioned investigations are completed, the organisation makes an offer to settle the claim based on the received expert advice (RAF 2021; 2020; 2019). After quantum has been established, the paper-based claim record is passed on to the next business unit for payment. In the 2001/2002 financial year, RAF's Internal Audit business unit found the organisation's claims assessment processes ineffective because they were using paper-based records and recommended digitisation (RAF 2002).

During this financial year, the organisation's Internal Audit business unit was working as the risk management team that assessed the RAF's exposure to risks, advised on mitigating identified risks and performed risk-focused reviews of the systems and processes (RAF 2002). Internal Audit identified the management of paper-based records as a significant risk threatening the existence of the RAF and advised the organisation to develop and implement tools for addressing the paper-based records management issue (RAF 2002). One of the requirements set out by the RAF risk assessment team was the development of a clear plan of action describing how to manage records. The organisation had to establish business processes and systems to comply with the internal audit findings. Subsequently, the RAF sought proactive measures to deal with the identified risk by procuring and implementing new computer systems to manage records better (RAF 2002).

Since the RAF's efforts to digitise claims and records commenced in the 2001/2002 financial year, the digital transformation journey is 22 years old. However, as established in various annual reports, the organisation's operations are still largely paper based (RAF 2021; 2020; 2019; 2018; 2017). The RAF continuously seeks ways to manage records better and adhere to the recommendations of Internal Audit adopted to minimise the institution's exposure to the identified information management risk (RAF 2002). In order to reduce the RAF's dependence on paper-based records, Enterprise Content Management (ECM) was introduced in Correspondence and Document Management Services as a pilot project, which was limited to scanning and indexing documents for storing (RAF 2019). The digitisation of the RAF's claims records was scrutinised by examining the annual reports from 2002 to date to understand where the journey began, what inspired the proposed transition and the progress recorded thus far.

Problem statement

As established from the annual reports, the RAF has been trying to digitise its claims records since 2002, with the sole purpose of mitigating risks identified by the internal audit team (RAF 2002). However, until now, the organisation's claim records have been paper based. Even though the RAF has commenced digitisation through imaging or scanning (RAF 2021; 2020;

2019), records are still not managed electronically, and paper-based records are a problem because this format does not enable the organisation to assess fault and determine whether they should accept liability (Mathope & Schellnack-Kelly 2022). This resulted in poor to no service delivery because the organisation's ability to render timely services to the public depends on the accessibility of authentic and complete records (Mathope 2022; Mathope & Schellnack-Kelly 2022). Paper-based claims records are scanned without a basic understanding of database management, file/document tracking, imaging and scanning, electronic document management, workflow and electronic records management to enable the organisation to control records created in an electronic environment properly. As a result, scanned claims records cannot be retrieved. This results in more service delivery problems for the organisation than the traditional use of paper-based records.

Conceptual framework

The National Archives and Records Service of South Africa's (NARSSA) *Records management policy manual* (2007), which is prescribed for all government bodies, guided this research. The RAF's process for digitisation of claims records was compared to criteria in ISO 15489-1:2016, as established by the International Organisation for Standardization (ISO), which NARSSA endorses. The researcher considered this comparison ideal because ISO 15489-1:2016 intends to provide a framework for digitising records through scanning.

As the regulatory body, NARSSA prescribes the records management processes with which organisations should comply, whether the created or received records are paper based or electronic. Table 1.1 summarises the NARSSA requirements for various records management processes.

Table 1.1: NARSSA requirements

Process	**NARSSA Policy Manual (2007)**
Access	• NARSSA (2007:7) states that government bodies need ready access to the information. They are required to render their services to the public in an accountable manner. • According to section 13(1) of the NARSSA Act (No. 43 of 1996), the national archivist ensures the proper management of records in governmental institutions. • Sections 13(2)(b)(ii) and 13(2)(b)(iii) of this Act provides for the national archivist to determine the conditions for the creation of electronic records and the conditions for the management of electronic records systems.
Classification	• According to NARSSA (2007:15), correctly arranged and stored records are easily accessible and facilitate transparency and accountability, which are the cornerstones of democracy. • Section 13(2)(b)(i) of the NARSSA Act provides for the national archivist to determine the records classification systems that government bodies will apply.

Retention and disposal	• According to section 13(2)(a) of the NARSSA Act, no public records under the control of government bodies may be transferred to an archive's repository, destroyed, erased or otherwise disposed of without a written disposal authority issued by the national archivist. Subsequently, these bodies need to implement a disposal programme that will enable the organisations to dispose of their records adequately and regularly, either by transferring them to an archival repository or disposing of those without enduring value by destruction (NARSSA 2007:21). • NARSSA issues the following three disposal authorities: standing, limited and general disposal authority (NARSSA 2007:21). According to NARSSA (2007:23), standing disposal authority is issued for current records. In contrast, limited disposal authority is issued for all terminated records and general disposal authority is issued for specific types common in all government bodies, such as financial and personnel records.
Storage and handling	• According to NARSSA (2007:33), the records of government bodies require storage conditions and handling processes that consider their specific physical and chemical properties. These organisations' storage conditions and handling processes should be designed to protect the records from unauthorised access, loss, damage, destruction, theft and disaster. NARSSA (2007:199-201) provides ways these bodies can adopt to protect records against various perils, such as fire, the position of records storage areas, shelving, cabinets, fire sources, fire extinguishers, water, pests, extremes of temperature and humidity, light, dust, handling and unauthorised removal.

Policies and procedures	• In terms of section 13(2)(c) of the NARSSA Act, the Records Management Division is responsible for inspecting government bodies to determine whether their records management practices conform to the policies and procedures communicated. • Section 13(2)(c) of the NARSSA Act specifies that the Records Management Division must examine the processes of the governmental institutions to determine their conformance to the conditions of the Act. Inspections are divided into six categories: routine inspection, inspection of the approved file plan implementation, inspection of approved filing system maintenance, appraisal inspection, occasional inspection, and comprehensive inspection (NARSSA 2007:223-229). Ideally, these inspections should take place annually. • When conducting these inspections, the Records Management Compliance Test for Officials of Government bodies and Statutory Bodies measures an organisation's compliance with the required standard (NARSSA 2007:223-229). Should there be anything with which the organisation's practice does not comply on completion of the inspection/s, NARSSA officials make recommendations to assist the organisation in improving and employing better methods for managing records that may enhance their record-keeping processes (NARSSA 2007:229). • NARSSA (2007:47) asserts that the records management performance criteria mentioned above can be used as a checklist by these organisations and as a basis to work from to monitor the organisations' compliance with NARSSA requirements in terms of policies and procedures.
Tracking	• Records tracking is the component of a records management system that ensures that records can be located when they are required (NARSSA 2007:12). Accurate recording and knowledge of the whereabouts of all records are essential in government bodies to ensure that the information they contain can be located quickly and efficiently.
Training	• NARSSA (2007:45) states that records management is a shared responsibility between users, including records managers and all other managers. Furthermore, NARSSA (2007:45) communicates that all records creators should be adequately skilled to create and manage reliable, authentic records. Therefore, in government bodies, all management team members, registry staff and users creating and using records while performing their functions in these bodies should be trained.

ISO 15489-1:2016 is relevant to any organisation that needs to ensure that their paper-based and electronic records are appropriately maintained, easily accessible and correctly documented, from their creation to ultimate disposal through archiving, imaging or destruction. The standard also ensures that disposal is conducted transparently and according to predetermined criteria. Therefore, ISO 15489-1:2016 is crucial for government organisations

that need to reassure the government that they maintain accurate, detailed records according to the NARSSA policy. Table 1.2 summarises ISO 15489-1:2016 requirements for various records management processes.

Table 1.2: ISO 15489-1:2016 requirements

Process	ISO 15489-1:2016
Access	• Clause 8.4 communicates that government bodies should establish sets of rules identifying rights of access and the regime of permissions and restrictions applicable to records (International Standards Organization 2016:15). Categories of access and permissions rules that apply to records should be based on the results of an appraisal, such as the identification of personnel and the determination of records requirements (International Standards Organization 2016:15). • Per Clause 9.5, access to records should be managed using authorised processes. These bodies should adopt records systems to support the provision and restriction of employee access to records to ensure access is appropriately managed (International Standards Organization 2016:17). • Clause 9.7 emphasises that records systems should be designed to support the easy use of records and, consequently, government bodies should develop and implement measures that enable swift access to records (International Standards Organization 2016:18).
Classification	• According to Clause 9.4, classification links records to their business context by associating them with categories in a business classification scheme that links the record to the business being documented at an appropriate level, such as function or activity (15489-1 2016:17).
Retention and disposal	• Clause 7 states that governmental bodies should evaluate their business activities to determine which records must be created and captured, and for how long they need to be retained. This process is known as *appraisal* (International Standards Organization 2016:10). • According to Sub-clause 9.9, these bodies should ensure that the disposal process aligns with established rules and the current disposal authority. Adequate records systems must be designed to support the execution of disposition actions (International Standards Organization 2016:18). However, before implementing disposition, there should be a review to ensure that record requirements have not changed (International Standards Organization 2016:19).
torage and handling	• Clause 9.6 states that records, regardless of their format or media, should be stored in a way that protects them from unauthorised access, change, loss or destruction, including theft and disaster (International Standards Organization 2016:17-18).
Policies and procedures	• Clause 6 communicates that policies and responsibilities should support the fulfilment of the requirements for the creation,

Process	ISO 15489-1:2016
	capturing and management of records and the design, use and management of records systems (International Standards Organization 2016:8). Consequently, government bodies should ensure that policies are supported by procedures that provide more specific instructions on creating, capturing and managing records.
Tracking	• Clause 8.1 states that government bodies must develop records controls, such as metadata schemas for records, business classification schemes, access and permission rules, and disposition authorities to meet records requirements (International Standards Organization 2016:13).
Training	• Clause 6.5 indicates that record creators, particularly those entrusted with the management of records, should perform record-keeping tasks competently. Furthermore, their competency should be evaluated regularly to ensure that they possess adequate skills to keep up with the new developments in records management (International Standards Organization 2016:10). Under Clause 6.5, the training programme should be ongoing and inclusive of various aspects, such as policies, procedures, roles and responsibilities for managing records.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the digitisation of claims records at the RAF.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study were:

- To investigate how the RAF has been digitising claims records.
- To identify gaps in the RAF's records digitisation process.

Literature review

Biggam (2017:104) opines that reviewing existing literature before undertaking a research project assists the researcher in remaining relevant in their argument, paying sufficient attention to pertinent issues and focusing on the research aims and objectives. According to Biggam (2017:106), researchers need to ensure that the literature sought and reviewed aligns with their research objectives to ensure that the discussion remains succinct and that the researcher has reference points to assist them in focusing on the research questions. The purpose of conducting the literature review for this study was to identify previous research on the topic and an appropriate methodology for determining what has already been established, including current records management practices in government bodies, as well as the creation of a platform for building a case for a new study by gaining an understanding of what is yet to be studied or improved in the field. The literature review also enabled the researcher to establish the recommended areas for further research. To investigate how the RAF has been digitising its claims records and to identify gaps in the RAF's records digitisation process, the literature

reviewed two themes that were derived from the research objectives: digitisation of records and gaps in the digitisation process.

Digitisation of records

In the preliminary literature review of this study, the researcher mainly focused on the digitisation of records in government bodies. In South Africa, most organisations use both paper-based and electronic records management systems (ERMSs) to manage records management services, regardless of the many challenges that are linked to the use of such systems (Marutha 2011; Luthuli & Kalusopa 2017; Modiba, Ngoepe & Ngulube 2019). Chauke (2022) further emphasised that with the use of both paper-based and electronic records, problems persist because ERMSs in the public sector are characterised by many administrative responsibilities that are tedious and time-consuming. Due to the use of paper-based and electronic records, organisations are often confronted with challenges such as insufficient storage space for records, loss of information and a lack of an integrated records management system for management of records in all formats (Mathope 2022; Mathope & Schellnack-Kelly 2022). Some challenges experienced by organisations are missing paper-based records and records that cannot be retrieved timeously (Chauke 2022). Failure to access the records timeously results in services being delayed or not being delivered to the public, especially in government organisations. Hence, the digitisation of records is of paramount importance in these organisations to ensure that they can render timely services to the public.

NARSSA (2007) endorses various national standards, including SANS 15489, SANS 15801 and SANS 23081, to guide government bodies in creating authoritative and reliable records. Digitising records comes with additional requirements to which governmental bodies must adhere. NARSSA (2007) requires a strategy for managing electronic records like paper-based records. SANS 15489: 2001, which involves records management, consists of the following two parts: Part 1: General and Part 2: Guidelines – the standard essential addresses imaging or scanning hard-copy documents and storing them electronically.

- Preliminary investigation

The relevant business unit seeks information on the records management practices of the government body implementing an electronic record-keeping system, such as strengths and weaknesses. Thorough interviews must be conducted with record-keeping employees to understand the current processes properly. This activity aims to understand all the different records created during the organisation's business operations and to gain an overview of the various record-keeping business units' roles, purposes and relationship to operations. The findings of this activity will enable the relevant team/s to identify significant factors that influence the need for the institution to create and maintain records. By doing this, the record-keeping strengths and weaknesses of the government body will be identified and managed accordingly.

- Analysis of business activities

Experts leading the transition should conduct qualitative interviews with the employees working with the records. Each business unit's functions, activities and transactions should be documented to establish its hierarchy. An effective classification system can be developed and

successfully implemented if business processes are identified and recorded when engaging with employees performing documented tasks.

- Identification of requirements for records

Several factors – such as legislation, processes and procedures – drive the record-keeping process (Marutha 2018). However, because NARSSA (2007) has a list of guidelines to be observed when managing records, it does not mean the guidelines will be adopted in practice. Therefore, the appropriate records structure that satisfies the function or activity should be chosen only after records requirements for each business unit have been documented to ensure that requirements for records are adequately identified.

- Assessment of existing systems

NARSSA (2007) reveals that government bodies often employ disparate systems that compound the record-keeping and information-sharing problems, resulting in even greater service delivery problems. NARSSA (2007) discourages government bodies from deploying disparate systems because they constitute problems in proving the authenticity of records, resulting in a diminished evidential weight of records created daily. The lack of integration between these systems hinders business units in government bodies from sharing electronic records with other business units. Therefore, before implementing an electronic record-keeping system, government bodies need to identify and analyse current record-keeping systems and determine whether they are effective. This activity will provide insight into the relationship between the organisation's business and its records, and aims for the development by the organisation of a conceptual model of what the institution does and how it is done to understand how records relate to the organisation's business and processes.

- Identification of strategies for satisfying records requirements

Strategies for satisfying records requirements should be developed and implemented during this phase. For example, the electronic records management policy should be communicated, together with the established procedures for administering electronic records. Therefore, the requirements for creating, receiving and keeping records will be established during this phase to ensure accountability. This phase aims to provide the government body with a platform to determine the most appropriate policies, procedures and standards applicable to the organisational records. This activity will enable the relevant business unit/s to make informed decisions about suitable strategies that can be adopted to manage records adequately.

- Design of a records management programme

During this phase, the records management programme is designed, which entails changing the existing systems, processes and practices by adopting or integrating technological solutions. During this phase, government bodies will also determine how to best incorporate the changes into the existing systems to improve records management. Furthermore, all experts tasked with developing and implementing the electronic record-keeping system must work together during this phase to produce the most suitable specifications based on the organisation's record requirements.

- Implementation of a records management programme

This phase identifies and places appropriate processes and procedures into a programme. During this phase, the government must have documented policies, procedures and training materials necessary for electronic record-keeping (Ngoepe 2008; Marutha 2011;Schellnack-Kelly 2013). Documentation should be available to communicate the conversion process. The organisation should generate reports to communicate the recorded progress and develop a project plan to explain how various strategies will be incorporated to implement a records management programme.

- Post-implementation review

The organisation should monitor the programme's effectiveness to examine whether it produces the anticipated results by interviewing employees from all levels, using feedback forms and observing the records system in use. This phase aims to determine the effectiveness of the implemented electronic record-keeping system/s and evaluate the effectiveness of the records management programme so that deficiencies in the processes can be identified and corrected early. During this phase, the relevant business unit/s should analyse whether records are being created and organised according to the introduced record-keeping tools. The relevant business unit/s should be surveyed, interviewed and observed for feedback purposes to evaluate whether introduced record-keeping mechanisms yield the anticipated results.

Organisations require relevant infrastructure to digitise records. Digital infrastructure refers to "tools, facilities, applications, systems, platforms, devices, and even strategies that support the use of both existing and emerging technologies" (Chaterera-Zambuko et al. 2022). These scholars examined the digital record infrastructure in Botswana, Kenya, South Africa and Zimbabwe (Chaterera-Zambuko et al. 2022). According to Chaterera-Zambuko et al. (2022), cloud computing, ECM systems and enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems are examples of digital records infrastructure that organisations can use to manage their digital assets or records. Cloud computing is a service model that allows IT customers to obtain computing resources over the internet (Technopedia 2018). Cloud computing caters for the management of information in all media, locations, states of use and transmissions, including digital asset data in a cloud environment, web content, metadata and transitory information.

The Association for Information and Image Management (AIIM) (2010) describes ECM as "The strategies, methods, and tools used to capture, manage, store, preserve, and deliver content and documents related to organisational processes. ECM tools and strategies allow managing an organisation's unstructured information, wherever that information exists". ECM works effectively in capturing, managing, storing, preserving and accurately referring information and digital assets. This means that ECM as a system used in digital transformation can enhance records management activities by providing records security, accuracy, efficiency, authority, accountability and transparency.

Research methodology

The study followed an interpretivism paradigm with a qualitative research approach and a case study design. Data were collected mainly through document analysis. The researcher employed document analysis and observation. Data collected by analysing various documents, including the RAF's annual reports, were analysed in a stepwise method that was adopted – as suggested by Biggam (2017) and Creswell and Creswell (2018) – comprising the following:

- Preparation of data for analysis
- Reading
- Coding
- Description and themes
- Interrelated descriptions gathered from the case study
- Data interpretation

Research findings and discussions

To investigate how the RAF has been digitising its claims records and to identify gaps in the RAF's records digitisation process, the literature was reviewed according to two themes: digitisation of records and gaps in the digitisation process. Under the first theme, digitisation of records, the literature reviewed indicated that for an organisation to digitise its records, eight steps must be successfully undertaken: preliminary investigation, analysis of business activities, identification of records for requirements, assessment of existing systems, identification of strategies satisfying records requirements, design for a records management programme, implementation of a records management programme and post-implementation review. Under the second theme, gaps in the digitisation process, the literature reviewed indicated that organisations often struggle to digitise records due to increased costs and a lack of skills. This section discusses research findings according to the study's objectives using guidelines for imaging or scanning hard-copy documents and storing them electronically.

The RAF's digitisation of claims records

Process	ISO 15489-1:2016
Access	The RAF did not fully comply with Clauses 8.4, 9.5 and 9.7, because the organisation still used paper-based records and all employees required access to the entire document to complete their tasks. Ideally, every employee should have access to only those parts of the records on which they need to work. For example, an employee in merits should only have access to the parts of the record dealing with merits assessment. However, due to the use of paper-based records, this was not possible and, as a result, the provision and restriction of employee access to records could be appropriately managed.

Classification	Although the organisation had an approved file plan, it was not in use and, therefore, the RAF did not fully comply with Clause 9.4 of ISO 15489-1:2016.
Retention and disposal	Based on the internal communique titled *Disposal or destruction of duplicate or multiple copies of records* issued in 2016 and 2021, the organisation did not adequately dispose of records. Therefore, the RAF did not comply with Clause 7 and Sub-clause 9.9 of ISO 15489-1:2016.
Storage and handling	The RAF did not comply with Clause 9.6, because its records were stored in the basement, which was not custom built for records storage.
Policies and procedures	The RAF did not comply with Clause 6, because it did not have a records management policy or standard procedures that provided more specific instructions on creating, capturing and managing records.
Tracking	The RAF did not fully comply with Clause 8.1, because it had not developed records controls, such as metadata schemas for records, business classification schemes, access, and permissions rules and disposition authorities to meet records requirements.
Training	The RAF did not fully comply with Clause 6.5, because not all Correspondence and Document Management Services employees had received records management training at the time of this exploration.

Gaps in the RAF's records digitisation process

According to ISO 15489-1:2016, which framed this study, the RAF must digitise its claims records through scanning by following eight phases, which did not happen:

- The study established that the RAF did not conduct a preliminary investigation to understand all the records created during business operations and to gain an overview of the various record-keeping business units' roles, purposes and relationship to operations.
- The study established that the RAF did not analyse business activities to determine and document each business unit's functions, activities and transactions to develop an effective classification system. The study established that the RAF did not identify requirements for records by analysing the organisational and regulatory environment and determining how each requirement can be satisfied through records management processes.
- The study established that the RAF did not assess existing systems to develop a conceptual model of the organisation's functions and operations and how they are performed to understand how records relate to its business and processes. The disruptions caused by the lack of integration between the systems, which hinder business units from sharing electronic records concurrently, must also be established.
- The study established that the RAF did not identify strategies for satisfying records requirements, such as the ERM policy and procedures for administering electronic records.
- The study established that the RAF did not design a records management programme that also entailed changing the existing systems, processes and practices by adopting or integrating technological solutions.

- The study established that the RAF did not design and implement documented policies, procedures and training materials necessary for electronic record-keeping, which are crucial during the implementation of the records management programme.
- The study established that the RAF did not conduct a post-implementation review to evaluate the effectiveness of the implemented electronic record-keeping system(s) and the records management programme to identify and correct process deficiencies.

NARSSA (2007) specifies that electronic records should be created and managed according to sound records management principles similar to those that guide paper-based records to facilitate efficiency and accountability. Electronic records management best practices require effective management and procedures regarding retention of documents; responsible business unit/s; adequate archiving of records, regardless of their medium; and adherence to the conditions set out in the Electronic Communications and Transactions Act (ECTA) (Act No. 25 of 2002). Furthermore, paper-based and electronic records must be stored safely and must be easily accessible to relevant stakeholders when required. According to ISO 15801: 2004, which was adopted by South Africa as SANS 15801: 2004, all electronic records management systems adopted by organisations must generate an audit trail (NARSSA 2007). The same system used for all electronic documents and records created or received must generate this audit trail. The records management system should enable the organisation to detect tampering easily and separate authentic and reliable records from those that are not authentic and reliable. This standard requires the safe storage and preservation of audit trail records as Write Once Read by Many (WORM) media.

According to Kwatsha (2010), Katuu (2015), Marutha (2016) and Munetsi (2011), requirements of an effective record-keeping system include compliance with the legal and administrative conditions in which government bodies operate. These bodies must have established policies and responsibilities that must be clearly defined to ensure that the employees assigned to develop and implement the electronic record-keeping system/s include all relevant parties (Kwatsha 2010; Katuu 2015; Marutha 2016; Munetsi 2011). This standard sets the parameters for the minimum requirements of record metadata. By using metadata, government bodies can identify the record by allocating unique identifiers, record names, identification of different structures, details (such as the date and time of the creation, modification or reading of the records) and the relationship of the document with other records. Furthermore, SANS 23081-1 requires the metadata to communicate the author as well as the specific business unit that has generated or accessed the record (SABS 2001a; 2001b). This standard also specifies the recording of information on access and security restrictions so that it is clear who is permitted to access which information.

SANS 23081-1 emphasises the importance of developing and implementing relevant policies and procedures to drive the process and to ensure that it is clearly understood from the onset how to create records, who will have access to do what on the system and why these restrictions are in place (SABS 2001a). Furthermore, the metadata should align with the organisational business processes to ensure that electronic records are as authentic, reliable and usable as paper-based records. Moving to an electronic environment should not cause government bodies to disregard basic record-keeping conditions because SANS 23081-1 acknowledges the significance of record-keeping tools, such as file plans, disposal processes and predetermined retention schedules. Subsequently, records management best practice conditions also apply in the electronic record-keeping environment.

Recommendations

This study proposes the implementation of a records management programme to facilitate the implementation of the records management policy, the development of records management procedures, the implementation and maintenance of the records classification system (approved file plan), the implementation of record control mechanisms, the development of a systematic disposal programme and continuous training in records management. Ideally, the organisation should have a records management policy, which is revised and communicated to all employees to create employee awareness of the significance of records management and to ensure compliance with the NARSSA Act. The policy should not only exist in principle; it must be fully implemented in practice. Records management procedures should support the policy, and a records classification system should be implemented and maintained. The organisation should also have record control mechanisms and a disposal programme and ensure that record-keeping employees are trained to perform their functions properly. Furthermore, the relevant business unit(s) should ensure that the records management policy is revised to include electronic records, that the policy is communicated to all employees and that the policy is implemented at all levels. Digitisation of claims records through scanning should be performed systematically, guided by the records management programme.

Conclusion

Advances in technology have compelled the RAF to move from paper-based ways of conducting business to managing records electronically to ensure that services reach citizens, regardless of their geographic location. Computers and associated technologies are necessary to access electronic records. However, scanning records that cannot be retrieved does not help the organisation or citizens.

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