

Propelling the Profession (and the Professional) to the Next Level

The results from Forrester Research and ARMA International's recent online records management survey show rising support and professional knowledge of information governance principles. But, if records managers want to propel their careers, as well as the profession, to the next level, they need to get better acquainted with resource planning, technology roadmaps, and their colleagues in IT.

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2013 marks the fifth year ARMA International and Forrester Research have surveyed records management (RM) decision makers in an effort to track key trends in adoption, challenges, and technology rollout. Conducted June 5-July 12, 2013, the “Forrester Research and ARMA International Records Management Online Survey, Q3, 2013” gathered responses from 397 RM decision makers from around the globe.

Forrester’s findings show a continued rise in awareness of the Generally Accepted Recordkeeping Principles® (Principles), as described and promoted by ARMA International and its members. The survey results, however, also reveal that not all RM professionals are able to consistently put the Principles into action.

Developed to “foster general awareness of information governance standards and principles and to assist organizations in developing information management systems that comply with them,” the Principles describe character-

istics of information governance (IG) program success.

Ninety-one percent of survey respondents claim familiarity with the Principles, a slight increase from the 2012 survey, which revealed that 85% of respondents had familiarity. (See the 2012 survey highlights at <http://tinyurl.com/l4fps65>.)

Despite this strong awareness, many RM decision makers still have work ahead to bring the Principles of Accountability, Integrity, Protection, Compliance, Availability, Retention, Disposition, and Transparency into fruition in their workplaces.

Accountability: No Clear Home for Program Oversight

The 2013 survey shows that one-fifth of RM teams report to legal, slightly fewer to IT (17%), and 13% to business units directly. “Other” reporting relationships comprise 38% of survey responses.

Regardless of where RM professionals sit in the company organization chart, most enterprises have more than one key executive providing sponsorship of the RM program. Nearly half have the general

counsel or other most-senior legal officer as a key sponsor, followed by the chief information officer/ chief technology officer or other most-senior IT executive (39%). Chief executive and financial/administrative officers are the next most-highly represented roles, at 25% and 22%, respectively.

An executive or steering committee provides program sponsorship for 38% of respondents’ organizations. In a positive sign, only 6% of respondents report that they have no C-level sponsorship for their RM programs. (See Figure 1.)

Integrity: People, Systems Stymie Consistency

The Principle of Integrity describes how RM and IG programs must demonstrate consistent adherence to approved policies and procedures in order to establish the reliability and authenticity of information. People who engage with records must be given training on systems and appropriate practices, and the technologies used to control information need to be reliable. People and systems are core to establishing the Principle of Integrity.

The survey asked respondents to identify the top RM challenges in their organizations. The most pervasive issues pertain to either people (staffing and skills development, user adoption, or stakeholder alignment) or systems (limitations presented by current technologies). (See Figure 2.)

People Challenges

Difficulty in hiring or developing in-house expertise, lack of stakeholder alignment, and inconsistent classification by end users are the top three challenges that involve people. IG programs need to have input and guidance from IT, legal, compliance, and business unit leaders, yet this coordination of priorities is perceived as difficult



Figure 1: Sponsors for RM Programs

for about two-thirds of the survey respondents.

RM teams are scrambling to find the right mix of skills and knowledge to move their programs forward, and end users are struggling to consistently classify their business records. These challenges may indicate that training programs are insufficient, commitment to employee development is low, or current applications are overly complicated.

Systems Challenges

Top challenges with systems and technologies include limited integration capabilities with other systems and an inability to capture a broader range of information types. The inability for RM systems to integrate with other enterprise applications or capture new and emerging information types means that the RM system may be incomplete or that items generated in different formats are left out of the information life cycle or handled inconsistently.

Protection: Not Comfortable with Cloud... Yet

The Principle of Protection helps ensure that sensitive information is guarded against inappropriate disclosure or leakage and that essential records are available as part of business continuity.

Overall, security and privacy concerns present less of a problem to RM professionals than other challenges. Satisfaction with how current RM systems address privacy requirements is solid. More than half (55%) of respondents indicated they are fine with how their applications handle privacy requirements, including for confidential or personal information.

Comfort with protecting confidential information, however, has not yet translated into using cloud-based RM systems. Only 10% of survey respondents have

adopted a cloud or software as a service (SaaS)-based RM solution (up marginally from 8% in 2012). Nearly one-fifth (18%) are planning to adopt cloud-based RM in the future, but a resounding 64% have no adoption plans at all. The top reason for low interest in cloud RM, at 58%, is “potential privacy or security concerns,” followed by “policies, regulations or laws prevent this approach” at 25%.

Compliance: Low Confidence in ESI Drives IT Needs

The Principle of Compliance helps organizations ensure that an IG or RM program is designed to comply with applicable laws and abide by internal policies and other relevant authorities.

Confidence in meeting compliance obligations has been somewhat steady year over year, with approximately one-fifth of respondents continuing to report “high confidence” when asked, “How confident are you that, if challenged, your organization could demonstrate that your electronically stored information is accurate, accessible, and trustworthy?”

Of the 2013 survey participants, 41% reported some level of confidence that they could defend their information if challenged, with 26% – more than a quarter – reporting low or no confidence. (See Figure 3.)

E-Discovery Compliance

Compliance with discovery orders issued by auditors, regulators, or legal counsel is also an important issue for survey respondents. Just over two-thirds (68%) report that it is important that their RM solution providers support capabilities to meet the collection, review, and other activities in an e-discovery process.

Standards Compliance

Compliance of RM applications with functional standards also continues to shape product selection. Nearly one-third (32%) of respondents say it is “very important” or “extremely important” for their product to meet the U.S. federal government’s DoD 5015.2-STD *Design Criteria Standard for Electronic Records Management Software Applications*.



Figure 2: Top-10 RM Program Challenges

Other global standards are rated substantially lower, with *Model Requirements for the Management of Electronic Records* (MoReq), International Council on Archives' *Principles and Functional Requirements for Records in Electronic Office Environments* (ICA Module 2), and the Victorian Electronic Records Strategy (VERS) considered essential by 17%, 12%, and 10% respectively

Availability: Search OK, Preservation Doubtful

The Principle of Availability outlines how an IG program should ensure timely and accurate retrieval of information to meet the needs of business users, as well as the RM team.

Search

Survey respondents are relatively satisfied with the search capabilities in their current systems. Search concerns don't even crack the top 10 list of RM program challenges, as described in Figure 2.

Long-Term Preservation

This principle also addresses the requirement to protect information over long periods of time to ensure it can be retrieved, as well as migrated to sustain on-going accessibility.

When asked how confident they were that records could be retrieved in 15 years, 15% of survey respondents indicated a high degree of confidence, with 42% claiming some level of confidence. 25% expressed a lack of confidence in their ability to retrieve this historical information.

Well-designed storage systems are important to meet availability requirements. Nearly half (46%) of survey participants reported that they either make or influence decisions about storage systems for RM applications, such as tape, disk, optical, or servers.

Furthermore, 60% of respondents indicated that RM stakeholders are included as part of IT strategic planning in their organization, including selection of vendors and requirements definition – a figure that has remained relatively flat over the past five years' surveys.

Deeper alignment with IT is required if RM professionals want to overcome the challenge of better content capture and easier integration with other business systems. (See Figure 2.)

Retention: Buckets Shrinking, Content Overlooked

The Principles of Retention and Disposition outline how, why, and for how long an organization keeps information and how it should be destroyed or handed over to an external custodian after a designated period of time. Balancing the retention and disposition needs from stakeholders, such as legal, business, IT, and even institutional historians or knowledge managers, can be a complex undertaking.

Records managers take the lead in this activity, with more than 90% of survey respondents indicating a high degree of involve-

ment in setting retention policies. The next two largest groups of participants include corporate legal at 53% and business managers at 41%. IT, compliance officers, and external consultants/technology vendors follow at 29%, 27%, and 28% respectively.

Despite this broad set of participants, getting retention schedules established or approved is still identified as a top challenge for more than half of respondents. (See Figure 2.)

Big Bucket Schedules

The number of retention policies varies from organization to organization – reflecting the move by early adopters to a “big bucket” approach to RM – a specific effort to flatten, simplify, and reduce the number of retention policies to take advantage of electronic systems and leave behind the complex set of policies that originated in the world of paper. Nearly one-fourth (22%) of respondents still have more than 150 retention policies, while 34% claim fewer than 10.

Surprisingly, this trend to fewer retention policies appears to be reversing itself. In the 2011 survey, when this question was last asked, 15% of organizations had

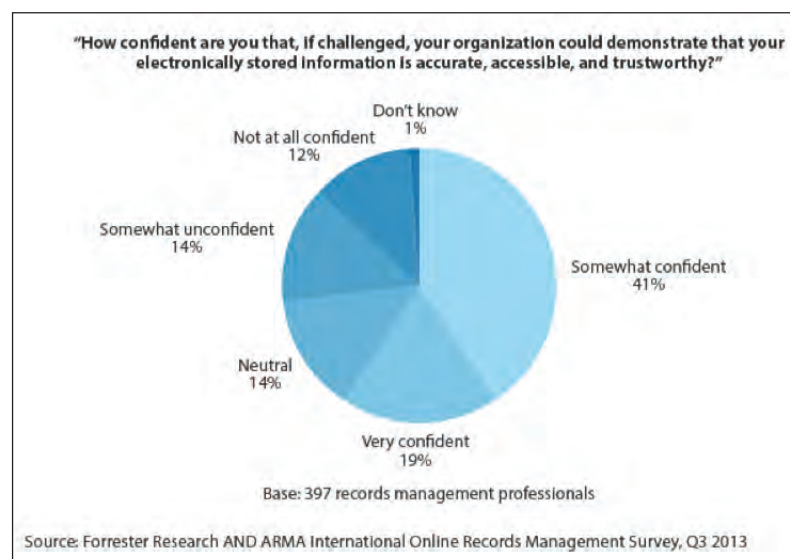


Figure 3: Confidence in ESI Trustworthiness

more than 150 retention policies, with 50% reporting fewer than 10.

New Content Types

RM decision makers are also looking at technology in an effort to manage retention for a broader set of formats and content types. IG strategies should be format-neutral, though many RM programs either ignore or struggle to capture

managing. This is only marginally better than the 36% who chose this response when the question was last asked in 2010.

RM and IG vendors are beginning to add intuitive dashboards, helping their RM users get more insights into storage metrics and capacity planning, make informed decisions on changes to retention policies with “what-if” modeling,

who either have a small budget or do not know what their budget is, an optimistic 64% of respondents said they expect to expand or roll out new RM products in the coming year – the highest percentage of affirmative answers in the survey’s five years.

This shows that RM professionals must become more deeply versed in the budgeting cycle and

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and manage newer digital content types.

Content from social media/collaboration sites, cloud-based file-sharing systems, and instant message systems is of the lowest interest to RM professionals when implementing technology to manage retention. The risk of not managing the retention for these emerging content types must be carefully assessed, particularly in regulated industries. The viral nature and fast rise of social media, enterprise social networks, and SaaS document-sharing applications mean many potential business records could go unmanaged.

Disposition: IT Partnership Needed

The companion to the Principle of Retention – the Principle of Disposition – is essential not only for reducing the risk of retrieving obsolete, irrelevant, or inaccurate information, but also for keeping storage and overhead costs in check. Here, a partnership with IT to ensure consistent execution of electronic records ready for disposal is performed in line with laws, policies, or regulations.

Nearly one-third of records managers, however, are unsure about the volume of electronic records under their control; 32% of survey respondents selected “Don’t Know” when asked what volume of content their RM applications are

and forecast costs and disk requirements. These data points can be valuable when planning for technology acquisition and rollout or making a case for enhanced budget or personnel.

Transparency: Budgets, Rollout Plans Often Opaque

The Principle of Transparency describes how an organization’s IG program should be documented in an open manner, demonstrating the recordkeeping policies, procedures, and implementation activities.

Transparency and open communication about new technology rollouts, changes to procedures or systems, and what is expected of end-users and business stakeholders are important parts of a communication strategy and change management.

The resources available for system deployment, however, appear to be an area of the unknown for survey respondents, as 35% selected “Don’t Know” when asked how much is budgeted for RM software acquisition in 2014. (This, however, is an improvement from the 43% that selected the same response when this question was last asked in 2011.)

Nearly one-third (29%) of 2013 respondents say they have no budget or less than \$50,000 for technology rollout in 2014. Despite the high percentage of respondents

resource planning and be confident that any planned rollouts are adequately funded, staffed, and communicated internally.

Opportunities for Growth

As RM professionals become familiar with the Principles, they have an opportunity to set benchmarks and success metrics and begin to measure their contribution to both the top and bottom lines within their organizations. The next step is action.

As IG concepts help propel the RM profession into its next level of maturity, areas of richest opportunity include deepening the relationship with IT to get a strong grasp on storage, technology roadmaps, and software budgets.

Opportunity is also present in aligning with the often-changing demands of business users as new forms of electronic communication and content are generated in cloud, mobile, and social applications. Tuning or updating incumbent RM systems to encourage better user adoption and consistency of classification and to integrate more easily into a broader set of record-generating applications are all considerations when planning an RM roadmap. **END**

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