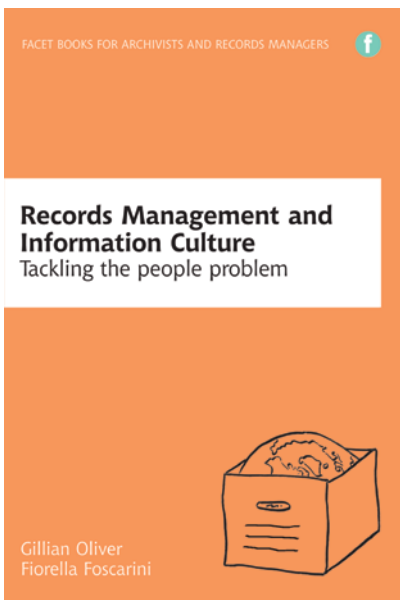


Culture: The Key to Records Program Success

Meribeth Plenert



Records *Management and Information Culture: Tackling the People Problem* by Gillian Oliver and Fiorella Foscarini describes what information culture is, why it is important, how to analyze an organization's culture, and how to use the results of the analysis.

This book, which provides examples of information cultures from a variety of organizations around the world, could prove useful to others, but its heavy reliance on the reader to know information management theories makes it useful predominantly to trained information professionals.

Information Culture Framework

Although information professionals are charged with overall responsibility, employees have a role in the records management program's success through their records management practices. The authors use the Information Culture Framework to illustrate how employees' differing views of records can affect an organization's records management program.

The base of this pyramid-shaped graphic shows those areas the authors identify as ones records managers are required to know about – but cannot change. This includes the value employees give to records, their preferences when it comes to information, language requirements, and infrastructure.

The second layer of the pyramid encompasses employees' skills and knowledge, which records managers can change through training employees so they improve in and become accountable for their records practices.

The top layer of the pyramid represents IT governance and trust, which are the most influential for records management program success – and can easily change to the program's great detriment.

The information culture framework is a very useful tool, outlining small details in employees' lives that have huge effects on their information management practices. Drawing out sensitive topics, such as differences in language, information sharing outside social groups, and preferences for oral instead of written discussion, is important for those who are trying to manage change.

Providing a current example of each problem would have helpfully expanded each of these sections and heightened their importance better than does the authors referring readers to examples in other chapters.

Too Much vs. Too Little

A huge drawback of the book is its continual references to other parts of the book to remind the reader where topics have been or will be covered. Although specific references can be useful for a large volume or series of volumes, in such a slender book this

Records Management and Information Culture: Tackling the People Problem

Author: Gillian Oliver and Fiorella Foscarini

Publisher: Facet Publications

Publication Date: 2014

Length: 192 pages

Price: \$95

ISBN: 978-1-85604-947-4

Source: www.alastore.ala.org

becomes distracting, and it is made redundant by an exceptionally thorough index and detailed chapter titles.

Although the authors outline some basic methods for identifying various records problems within an information culture, they rely on the typical options of conducting an employee survey and watching employees work rather than provide new ideas.

The book also does not provide much guidance on how to delve into sensitive topics like discovering an employee's cultural background. Suggesting how to address survey questions to ascertain that information would have been more helpful than simply telling readers to consult their local human resources department.

Oliver and Foscarini tackled a very challenging problem in a way that will be valuable to trained records managers. Although they developed a useful framework for illustrating and ranking cultural problems according to their changeability, their book provides only limited help on identifying the problems; solutions will have to be found elsewhere. **END**

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