



SOME ASPECTS OF MANAGEMENT IN DISTANCE LEARNING

Edited by ADAMS ONUKA

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MANAGEMENT
IN DISTANCE LEARNING

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN LIBRARY

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Chapter Five

RECORDS MANAGEMENT IN DISTANCE LEARNING

BY

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INTRODUCTION

Records management is the collection and management of information from one or more sources and the distribution of such information to one or more audiences as the need may arise. This, sometimes involves those that have a stake in, or a right to the information. Records Management means the organization of and control over the structure, processing and delivery of information. In the 1970s records management was largely limited to files, file maintenance, and the life cycle management of paper-based files, other media and records. With the advent and embracing information technology, from sometimes in the 1970s, the job of information management took on a new light, and also began to include the field of computer data maintenance and management.

SOURCES OF RECORDS.

In short, information management, of which record management is an aspect, entails acquiring, organizing, storing, maintaining and retrieving information. In distance learning Programmes, records are sourced for through the following:

(1) Advertisements

The various advertisements made on applications for academic,

administrative jobs as well as admissions of students into various courses has to be well documented and kept in order of occurrence. The hard copies that are kept in files have to be properly arranged and kept in cabinets.

(2) Admissions/Registration

Admissions and registrations documents are another sets of vital data kept in institutions. These are official and confidential documents that must be kept properly because of its legal nature.

Finances

The finances of the institution in terms of the income and expenditures must be properly kept in order to be able to give adequate account of dealings or transactions within the institution. In other words, financial information (records) must be properly acquired, organised, controlled and maintain for retrieval as the need may arise.

(3) Correspondences

The various documents that are vital to the existence of the institution as well as letters received from the government, non-governmental organizations and the Nigerian universities commission (NUC) has to be properly kept.

(4) Minutes of Meetings

The minutes of meetings of an organization are very vital to the proper running and progress of the system. This is because references can be made to past deliberations if the minutes are properly kept and relevant information retrieved for use at any material point in time.

(5) Internal and External memoranda (memos)

The various memos being circulated in an organization enables the

dissemination of information to all members without calling for meetings. This makes the running of the organization to be smooth and man-hour will also be saved.

(6) **Examinations**

The examination questions, answer scripts, marks records and overall results are vital documents that no institution should joke with. This is because of the confidential and legal nature of the documents. They should therefore be properly filled and kept safe vault.

(7) **Miscellaneous**

These are other sources by which vital records of the institution may be derived.

TYPES OF RECORDS

The data acquired from the aforementioned sources are therefore organized, stored and maintained in various forms. Records management is the practice of maintaining the records of an organization from the time they are created up to their eventual disposal. This may include classifying, storing, securing and destruction or archival preservation of records. A record can be either a tangible object or digital information such as:-

(1) **Certificates**

These ranges from birth certificates of both students and staff, the certificates awarded at the end of completion of various courses and other vital certificates of occupancy of the various structures of the institution.

(2) **Medical X-rays**

These are health records of both students and staff, of which references can be made should in-case a member of the institution is ill.

(3) Office documents

There are preponderance of office documents, such as students and staff registers, stock books, log books, ledgers, account books, visitors' books, and a host of others.

(4) Data bases

There are records kept in data bases such as the records of marks of students in the various courses taken as well as their grade-points.

(5) Application data

Application data are derived from various applications for Admission, jobs and positions within the institution.

(6) E-mails

These are electronic mails of students, staff, and other institutions that have business with distance learning programmes.

(7) Result transcripts, etc.

Result transcripts are usually prepared at the request of the owner of certain result and these are made available to their destination through the post or electronic media.

PROCESSES INVOLVED IN RECORDS MANAGEMENT

Records management involves the management of physical records, identifying records, storing records and records disposal.

Managing Physical Records

Managing physical records involves different disciplines and may draw a variety of forms of expertise. Records must be identified and authenticated. This is usually a matter of filing and retrieval, in some circumstances more careful handling is required.

Identifying Records

If an item is presented as a legal record, it needs to be authenticated. Forensic experts may need to examine a document or artifact to

determine that it is not a forgery and that any damage, alteration or missing content is documented. In some extreme cases, items may be subjected to a microscope, x-ray, radiocarbon dating or chemical analysis. This level of authentication is rare, but requires that special care be taken in the creation and retention of the records of an organization.

Storing Records

Records must be stored in such a way that they are accessible and safeguarded against environmental damage. A typical paper document such as certificates may be stored in a filing cabinet in an office. However, some organizations employ file rooms with specialized environmental controls, including temperature and humidity. Vital records may need to be stored in a disaster-resistant safe or vault to protect them against fire, flood, earthquake and conflict. Civil engineers may need to be consulted to determine that the file room can effectively withstand the weight of shelves and the cabinet filled with papers.

However, modern record keeping technology has transferred much of that information to electronic storage. In addition to on-site storage of records, many organizations operate their own off-site records centres or contact with commercial record centres.

Disposal of Records

Disposal of records does not always mean destruction. It can also include transfer to historical archive, museums or private individuals who need the records. Destruction of records ought to be authorized by law, statute, regulation or operating procedure and the records should be disposed off with care to avoid inadvertent disclosure of information. The process needs to be well-documented, starting with a records retention schedule, policies and procedures that have been approved at the highest level. An inventory of the records

disposed off should be maintained, including certification that they have been destroyed. Records should never simply be discarded as refuse. Most organizations use processes including pulverization, paper shredding or incineration.

Benefits

Effective management of records enables any organization to:

- (1) Conduct business in an orderly, efficient and accountable manner.
- (2) deliver services in a consistent and equitable manner.
- (3) support and document policy formation and managerial decision making.
- (4) provide consistency, continuity and productivity in management and administration.
- (5) facilitate the effective performance of activities throughout and organization.

In addition, records are of immense importance as references as well as evidences in the law courts.

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