

## ARTICLES

## Development of RMJ

Development  
of RMJA mirror of the development of the profession  
and discipline of records management

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to examine critically the history of *Records Management Journal* on its 20th anniversary; it aims to review and analyse its evolution and its contribution in the context of the development of the profession and the discipline of records management. The paper seeks to provide the context and justification for the selection of eight articles previously published in the journal to be reprinted in this issue.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The paper utilises the contents of *Records Management Journal* (1989 to date) to present a thematic analysis of topics covered and their development over time, and statistical data (from 2002 to date) provided by the current publisher to assess quantitatively the use and impact of the journal worldwide. The paper then compares this with a series of key turning points in the records management profession.

**Findings** – There is evidence that the initial aspiration for the journal to make an important and long-lasting impact on the field of records management in the UK has been exceeded because its readers and contributors are global. The volume of downloads has continued to increase year-on-year and the journal appears to be the only peer-reviewed journal in the world in the records management discipline. The journal has responded to and kept abreast of the records management agenda.

**Research limitations/implications** – The analysis is based on the work of the current and immediate past Editor and did not seek the views of its Editorial Board members, readers or contributors to the journal.

**Practical implications** – Looking to the future, the journal must seek to widen its impact on other key stakeholders in managing information and records – managers, information systems designers, information creators and users – as well as records professionals. It must also continue to develop the scope of its content, whilst maintaining its focus on managing records, and must keep pace with technology developments. It should try to influence the professional agenda, be controversial, stimulate debate and encourage change. And it should remain a quality resource.

**Originality/value** – The paper provides a unique critical analysis of the journal, its history and contribution to the development of records management, on its 20th anniversary of publication.

**Keywords** Records management, Information management, Publishing, Professional education

**Paper type** General review

## Introduction

From its first issue in 1989, which comprised four articles and two items that became regular features for its initial period of activity, the content and breadth of coverage of

the Records Management Journal (RMJ) were established. And if one were to compare the list of contents of that first issue and the last issue of 2009 many of the issues, impact of IT, challenges of records management in different sectors, and the range of backgrounds of the contributors are the same. But there have been changes, not only in content but also in the journal's role, purpose and position in the world of records management, which has itself seen significant developments over the past two decades. This article aims to balance a review of the history of RMJ on its 20th anniversary with a critical analysis of its evolution and contribution to the development and shaping of the profession and the discipline of records management.

### Creation

RMJ was launched in 1989 at the end of the decade which had seen, in 1980, the launch of the *Records Management Quarterly*, published by ARMA; the sale of the first IBM PC in 1981; the foundation in 1983 of the Records Management Society of Great Britain; and the coming into force in 1984 of the UK Data Protection Act. The 1980s was also the decade which saw a series of technological advances – digital scanning, improved computer speed, low-cost digital storage, image displays and laser printers – all of which made electronic records possible and led to the development of the first records management software applications (Hoke, n.d.). A new role was being created for records managers (or perhaps at this stage it would be more accurate to say those working in records management) who until then had focused on the handling of paper records, and the time was right for a journal devoted to records management; but how exactly did it come about?

It was the idea of Aslib, The Association for Information Management (see [www.aslib.co.uk](http://www.aslib.co.uk)), to introduce a journal devoted to records management, independent of any professional society, to embrace the issues and challenges facing records across the world. The journal was published on a quarterly basis for the first three years, but then there was a break in publication during 1992 and 1993 when the first editor resigned and Aslib decided to suspend publication (Poynder, 2003). When Volume 4 appeared in 1994 it was with new Editors – Catherine Hare and Angela Jones-Evans – who were based in the Department of Information and Library Management at Northumbria University. Aslib had approached Catherine Hare because Northumbria (Newcastle Polytechnic at the time) had developed a Master's-level module in records management – the first Library School to do so. This broadened the base of records management, marking it out as part of information management rather than the handmaiden of archives management and a small part of archives courses. They introduced some changes, a crucial one being the establishment of an Editorial Board. The first Board members were a combination of six practitioners and academics, two of whom remain members of the Board today: Elizabeth Shepherd, an academic based at University College London; and Ian Day, a practitioner currently working at the Human Rights Commission. This balanced combination of practitioners and academics has remained a feature of the Board ever since and one of the foundations of RMJ emphasising the marrying of theory from the academic world with practice from the workplace. In 2004 the Board's membership was expanded to 12, extending its international representation. This range of representation underpins the role, or "charter", of the Editorial Board, which is to represent the expertise, experience and status of the

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profession and academic discipline of records management, to provide advice to the editor(s) on key players, institutions, current and emerging theory and practice and guide the journal's direction and development, in addition to reviewing article submissions. (Appendix 1 provides a complete list of the Editorial Board members to date.) When Angela Jones-Evans left Northumbria University, Julie McLeod, who had joined the University from the pharmaceutical sector, became joint Editor with Catherine Hare; this ensured that the joint editors reflected the two pillars of academic thinking and practice.

In December 2001, as the final issue of Volume 11 of *RMJ* appeared, Emerald bought *RMJ* from Aslib, along with seven other titles. This took Emerald's total number of information management titles to 24 and positioned it as the leading publisher of journals in this field (Emerald, 2002). Since 2002 *RMJ* has been published in association with Aslib[1].

Diane Heath was Emerald's first Managing Editor of the *RMJ* and was invaluable in supporting us and the Editorial Board, helping to steer the journal's growth, in particular with regard to marketing, publicity and distribution opportunities. It was during Diane's period of office that the complete backfiles archive of the journal, i.e. articles from Volume 1 to Volume 7, 1997, were made available electronically. When Diane moved to another role at Emerald, Elizabeth Scott became the journal's Managing Editor and has initiated and is actively overseeing the preparations for its 20th anniversary volume. An additional facility recently introduced by Emerald is EarlyCite, providing access to pre-published accepted papers online.

*RMJ* as it enters its 20th volume, has thus experienced some changes in terms of production and publication, but its fundamental purpose and mission as an independent journal, still the only one, with a breadth and depth in its coverage of the global reality of records management has remained constant.

### Purpose

When *RMJ* was launched it was clear from the first editorial that, because records managers at the time were perceived to be lacking in management skills, the journal would:

... cover a variety of managerial topics, in addition to the more familiar, specialized topics pertinent to records management (Morddel, 1989).

In 1994 its aim was to publish "material on all aspects of creating, processing and the disposal or retention of records, whatever their form, emphasizing the latest research and current practice"[2].

Since 2004 the aims of *RMJ* have been to provide:

- a forum for the dissemination of scholarly articles, professional practice, research reports and critical reviews in records management;
- a link between research and scholarship and reflective professional best practice so that both are informed and enhanced; and
- a link between research, scholarship and practice in records management and other relevant disciplines[3].

Its scope is records management in its broadest definition:

It explores all aspects of records management, i.e. is inclusive rather than exclusive, from the different perspectives of practitioners, researchers and educators across all sectors and internationally. This encompasses the latest research and thinking, current best practice, legal and other frameworks and case studies, within the context of the electronic environment and across the entire continuum, including archives”[3].

Contributions are welcomed which focus on:

- concepts and frameworks for understanding and helping to manage records in any form;
- findings of research relating to all aspects of records management and/or research methodology;
- practical application and implementation of models, frameworks and standards;
- case studies and reflections on practice;
- reports of innovative projects;
- opinion, fostering debate;
- education and training for records management; and
- critical reviews of the literature and the evidence-base for professional practice.

In addition, book reviews and reviews of other relevant resources are welcome, but adverts for services, systems and software are no longer included. This is in contrast to the very first issue, which included adverts for a Zenith Supersport 286 portable PC with a 40 MB fixed disc, from International Data Security in London, and KBS Servicepoint, a network of dealers for computer repair and maintenance. So, RMJ has consolidated and extended its initial purpose of emphasising the “management” in records management to embrace the theory and research aspects of records management.

How may we describe RMJ’s fit within the context of other records, archives and information management journals?

The title itself – Records Management Journal – was an obvious one to use for the publication. The name “Journal” established it as serious and scholarly and the other two title words established records management as a discipline in its own right on a par with others in the information management domain. However, a search of Ulrich’s Periodicals Directory (see [www.ulrichsweb.com/](http://www.ulrichsweb.com/)), which most information and library management professionals would cite as the trusted source of information on journal titles, reveals two different entries for Records Management Journal. One is for this journal and the other is for a quarterly publication which was produced by the Association of Records Executives and Administrators (AREA) from 1963 to 1975. AREA was “founded by 12 Records Administrators from New York Corporations and City Government Agencies in November 1955. Their purpose was to create a non-profit organization to facilitate exchange of information on Records Management” (ARMA International, Greater Washington, DC Chapter; see [www.armamar.org/GWDC/About%20Us.htm](http://www.armamar.org/GWDC/About%20Us.htm)) and the journal, edited by Vince Bosak, one of their Presidents, was one of their outputs. By the time AREA merged with the American Records Management Association (ARMA) in 1975, to form the renamed ARMA (Association of Records Managers

and Administrators), the journal had over 1,000 subscribers worldwide. It ceased publication in its own right and was combined with ARMA's Records Management Quarterly (see [www.armamar.org/GWDC/About%20Us.htm](http://www.armamar.org/GWDC/About%20Us.htm)).

When this, the second RMJ, was first launched, other records management journals included:

- Archives and Manuscripts (Australian Society of Archivists), 1955-;
- Informaa Quarterly (Records Management Association of Australia), 1985-;
- Records & Information Management Report (M.E. Sharpe, Inc.), 1984-2007;
- The Information Management Magazine (ARMA International), 1960- (formerly The Information Management Journal and Records Management Quarterly); and
- Records Management Society Newsletter and later Bulletin (RMS of Great Britain), 1983- (Source: Ulrich's Periodicals Directory; see: [www.ulrichsweb.com/](http://www.ulrichsweb.com/)).

This list is not necessarily comprehensive; rather it is only indicative of the range of other journals in the field at the time. All but the Records & Information Management Report is associated with a society and only the first two are listed in Ulrich's Periodicals Directory as being refereed. (Previous "versions" of The Information Management Magazine were peer-reviewed but it has reverted to being practitioner-based and not peer-reviewed). Today, therefore, RMJ would appear to be the only English-language academic/scholarly journal focused on records management that is peer-reviewed and not published by a professional society[4]. If the range is expanded to include archives, journals then Archival Science, published since 2000 by Springer Verlag (see [www.springerlink.com/content/105703/](http://www.springerlink.com/content/105703/)) has similar characteristics.

In terms of audience and because of its lack of affiliation with a single professional society, RMJ has always targeted and been used by academics and practitioners, in any sector, and by students in records management and related information professions, globally.

### Usage and impact

Since Emerald became the publisher in 2002 statistics about RMJ's usage and impact have become available. Salient information regarding its 19 volumes and 58 issues shows:

- 280 articles/papers comprising opinion pieces, case studies, research, study guides, etc., and many book/resource reviews;
- 165 different authors from 22 different countries in five continents[5];
- 127,503 article downloads between 2002 and 2009; and
- 1,122 organisational users worldwide in 2009.

Figure 1 shows an annual (mostly double digit) increase in the number of users since 2005 and an overall increase of 66 per cent in the last five years, reflecting the importance and recognition of records management as a profession and academic discipline. Subscriptions to the RMJ are fairly evenly balanced between the public, private and academic sectors as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 3 shows that since 2002 the number of article downloads has increased each year, with 36 times as many downloads in 2009 compared with 2002. Of course, during that period back issues were added but, irrespective of that, there has been at least a 10 per cent increase in downloads year on year since 2002. With the top ten countries for downloading articles including Malaysia, the UK, Australia and New Zealand, the USA and Canada and four African countries; and articles having been downloaded by users in every continent, readership truly is global. From the evidence of actual international usage (Figures 4 and 5) it is revealing that some of the most active users are in the Far East/Asia and Africa – is it the electronic availability of the journal that has contributed to its global usage? It is also interesting to note that the top countries by number of downloads does not exactly mirror the top countries by number of customers. Figure 4 perhaps reflects educational usage, with the top countries having university education programmes. Figure 5, based on individual customers, reflects the countries at the forefront of industrial development and perhaps reflects the role of information and records management in supporting progress and stimulating growth in the newer global powers.

The six most downloaded articles from 2005-2009 (in order) were:

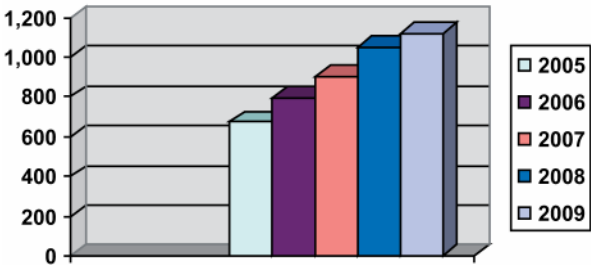


Figure 1.  
Records Management  
Journal users 2005-2009

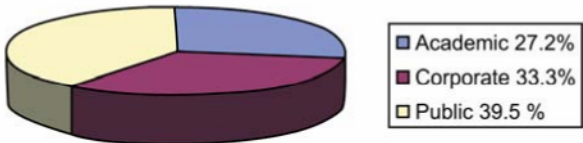


Figure 2.  
Records Management  
Journal subscriber  
breakdown by sector  
(2009)

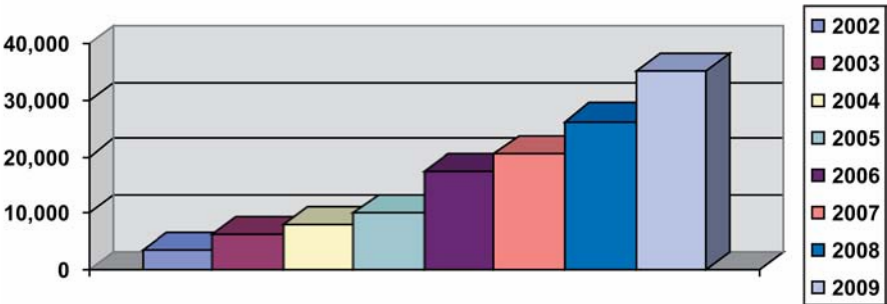


Figure 3.  
Article downloads,  
2002-2009



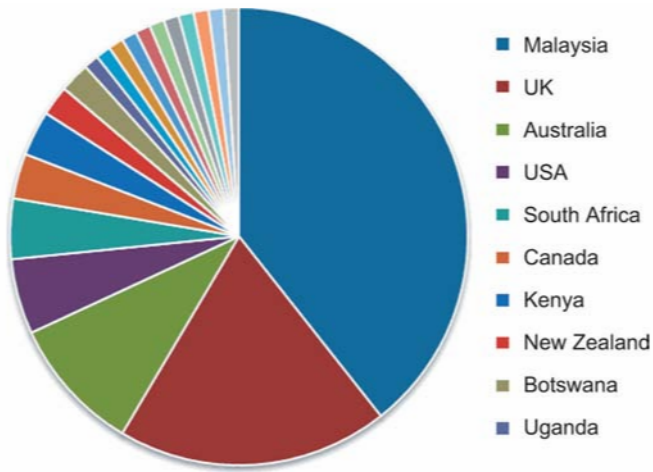


Figure 4.  
Top 20 countries by the  
number of articles  
downloaded by customers  
in those countries, 2009

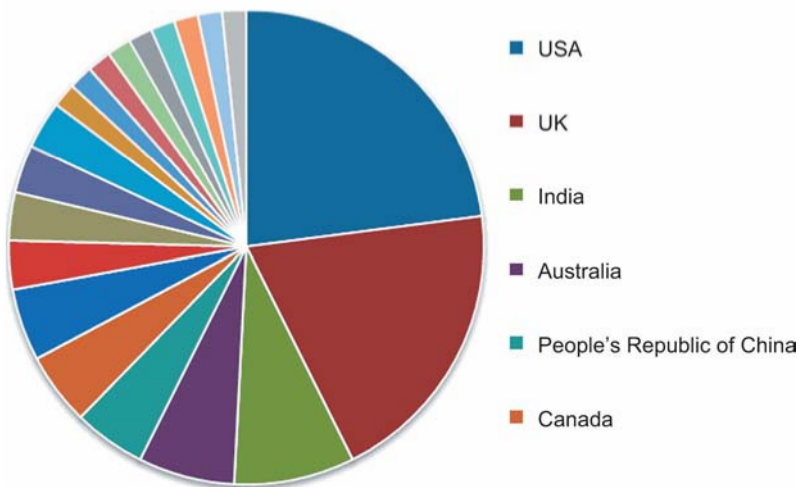


Figure 5.  
Top 20 countries by the  
number of customers  
using the journal within  
those countries, 2009

- (1) Margaret Pember (2006), "Sorting out the standards: what every records and information professional should know", Vol. 16 No. 1, pp. 21-33;
- (2) Gary P. Johnston and David V. Bowen (2005), "The benefits of electronic records management systems: a general review of published and some unpublished cases", Vol. 15 No. 3, pp. 131-40;
- (3) Anthony Willis (2005), "Corporate governance and management of information and records", Vol. 15 No. 2, pp. 86-97;
- (4) Elizabeth Man (2005), "A functional approach to appraisal and retention scheduling", Vol. 15 No. 1, pp. 21-33;



(5) Elizabeth Shepherd (2006), "Why are records in the public sector organizational assets?", Vol. 16 No. 1, pp. 6-12; and  
(6) David Ryan (2005), "The future of managing electronic records", Vol. 15 No. 3, pp. 128-130.

The quality of these individual articles aside, the list suggests that overviews by specialists are greatly appreciated.

Overall, these statistics are impressive and show very positive growth and a healthy pulse ahead of the journal's third decade. There have also been other indicators demonstrating a growth in status and standing and an enhanced level of recognition of the importance of the journal's role.

#### Esteem indicators

##### Literati Awards

Emerald launched their Literati Club in 1993 to provide services and support for authors who publish in their journals, as well as their editors (Emerald, 2009). One of the activities of the Literati Club is the annual award for the outstanding papers published in Emerald journals[6]. Appendix 2 shows the Literati Award Winners for RMJ. Seven authors have won the award for outstanding paper of the year, a jointly authored article winning it in 2006, and no fewer than 12 authors have been highly commended for their contributions. They come from different corners of the globe and work in different sectors, demonstrating that the journal attracts the highest quality contributions from leading names in the discipline, from leaders in related disciplines and from newer members of the discipline who are establishing a track record.

##### Emmett Leahy Award

The Emmett Leahy award annually rewards the highest individual achievement for the information and records management profession (see [www.leahyaward.com](http://www.leahyaward.com)). Three of the last five winners – Luciana Duranti (2005), Anne Thurston (2007) and Mariella Guercio (2009) – have published articles in RMJ as well as Ira Penn 1990, a former board member, and John McDonald, who won the award in 1999.

So, having reviewed the facts and figures of RMJ's creation and history to date and before moving on to review and analyse its content across the years, it is important to discuss the way in which content for the journal is sourced, before moving onto an analysis of the inaugural issue and the subsequent 20 years.

##### Sourcing content

With regard to the first three volumes, we have little information about how the articles and other contributions were sourced, other than in Anne Morddel's note, which appears in this issue. During the time we have been Editors we have played an active role in seeking and commissioning articles through our academic and practitioner networks, involvement with educational and professional development, and through research. We have deliberately looked beyond the immediate professional cohort to lawyers, auditors, risk managers, computer scientists, etc., in sourcing contributions, reaching out to the broad church that is the playing field in which records management needs to operate. As a result the roll call of contributors goes beyond the well-known

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names and newcomers in our field. Members of the Editorial Board have supported us and have themselves contributed articles. Together we have recruited and mentored contributors.

It has been, and remains, challenging to attract the necessary volume of appropriate contributions because it has not been the “norm” for the members of the records management “profession”, who were frequently single operators, to write articles and the number of academics in the field, even across the world, was, and remains, small. Just as there is not a ready-made audience for RMJ nor is there a community of potential contributors. One group of the profession, records management consultants, however, have been very productive and we would like to acknowledge the way certain of them have been key players, notably Rick Barry, Carl Newton, Barbara Reed, Mike Steemson and Ken Tombs.

The inaugural issue

The first issue contained the following articles:

- “Records management and data management: closing the gap”, by John McDonald;
- “The rate for the job”, by G. Raymond Gould;
- “Records management in a pharmaceutical environment”, by A.M. Chalmers; and
- “Patterns of information systems in Nigeria”, by G.O. Alegbeleye.

John McDonald’s article holds the “honour” of being the very first article in RMJ and it is reprinted in this issue; it sets the scene for the brave new world of the 1980s for records managers (as outlined above), who would need to work with data and IT specialists and users. McDonald, then Director, Automated Information Systems Division, Government Records Branch at the National Archives of Canada, discussed the importance of understanding an organisation’s entire information management landscape in the context of initiatives to manage its records. This article was prompted by his rather sobering experience of attending a meeting about developing a retention and disposition schedule for a large, complex electronic information system, where it became clear that the records manager and information systems people had not met each other, despite having worked in the same department for at least two years. What emerged were different perceptions of records and data and who was responsible for their management. Whilst a gap existed between data management and records management McDonald (1989, p. 11) explained that it was closing, and concluded that:

... the role of archives as a catalyst in integrating what has been perceived to be the disparate fields of records management and data management, should in itself cause organizations to take a second sober look at what it is they are managing, and why it is so necessary the “it” (record or data) be managed from a global and corporately defined perspective.

John McDonald’s article was visionary and remains so with these arguments still being put forward in our discipline. It is precisely because of this that his article is reprinted in this first twentieth anniversary issue and we can look forward to a new contribution from him in a later issue in this volume.

The contribution by Dr A.M. Chalmers, Head of the Records Management Group at Glaxo Research Ltd, UK, was a detailed case study of records management in his company. He emphasised the rigour of the systems in place, ranging from records creation to physical storage, which was required by the regulatory and legislative framework in which the pharmaceutical industry operated then and continues to do today. His team comprised 12 staff, again underlining the level of importance given to records management at Glaxo. The legislative requirements meant that the pharmaceutical industry were early adopters and innovators in the field of records management, producing expert records managers, such as Jean Samuel, who later moved into another role in that sector, and David Ryan who moved into a different sector as a records manager. (Later, both Jean and David were to contribute a great deal to the **RMJ**s development during their respective service as members of its Editorial Board.)

G.O. Alegbeleye, now Professor in the Department of Library, Archival and Information Studies at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, provided a review of the current state of the information systems in government and public administration in his country. While libraries, archives and computer databases existed and were being actively used, there was no policy or strategy to coordinate these information systems. And the most underdeveloped area was the management of current records. However a visit in 1988 by three British experts – Anne Thurston, Anne Morddel and Nicholas Cox – who worked alongside Professor Ajayi, a Nigerian historian, marked the beginning of a new approach, beginning with a survey of government records. Alegbeleye concluded with two important lessons learned: the benefits of working with international colleagues and the need to show “tact and resourcefulness in dealing with government authorities who are often indifferent to issues pertaining to records management practices”, a situation which remains recognisable to many records managers today.

Raymond Gould, an independent management consultant, in the first of two articles explained the process of job evaluation, outlining in detail how to prepare a job description and how to rank jobs in terms of their relative importance and content. There was no explicit mention of records management but an implicit acknowledgement that the job of records manager existed.

The inaugural issue also contained the first of two regular columns. “Loose Leaves”, by Veronica Davies, then Head of Records Management at Shell International, discussed changes and developments that would impact those working in the world of information and records management, the author deliberately “roving” across the hitherto fixed boundaries of records managers, librarians, information scientist and archivists. She set out to explore themes such as technology, strategic planning, information manipulation and the records/information manager. Her first column focused on classification and the records management profession. On the latter she wrote:

Let me nail my colours to the mast: I do not believe that there is such a thing (Davies, 1989, p. 36).

She qualified this by saying it depends on what we mean by “profession” and exhorted that a profession must have more than a representative institution (professional body), it:

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requires long-term dedication on the part of those engaged in it to a central activity. In pursuing this activity, the professional requires expertise while advancing, simultaneously his own career. For most of its practitioners, however, Records Management is not a long-term career. It is a phase (Davies, 1989, p. 36).

Davies pointed out she had no wish to “denigrate” records management, only to question whether or not it was a profession. This question has been raised again recently in online debates and at conferences. As Editors and academics, past and current, we believe records management is a profession and more – it is now a scholarly discipline.

Ralph Cornes was author of the second column, called “Managing the information in IT”. His first contribution established some “rules of thumb” or guidance on how to plan IT applications when it was and remains virtually impossible to predict the IT future. They included “clever” rather than “tight” integration (i.e. separate applications that communicate “over the fence”), simplicity, modularity and connectivity. The guidance remains valid today.

The first book review was also published in the inaugural issue. Patricia Methven, Archivist at King’s College, London, reviewed *An Introduction to Records and Information Management: A Home Study Course*, published by ARMA (1988), which was designed as a tutored reading of Ricks and Gow’s textbook, *Information Resource Management*, for the ARMA course (Ricks and Gow, 1988). And two “letters” were also included: in a “Letter from ARMA International”, John Moss Smith, Chairman of the Board, reported on recent activities of the USA’s Association of Records Managers and Administrators, Inc., and in “Letter from The Records Management Society”, Graham Southwood, who was Editor of the Society’s *Bulletin* and later to be Chair of the Society, reported on activities of the UK’s equivalent professional association.

Many of the topics explored in the first issue still remain relevant; they have continued to be recurring themes over the past two decades and more or less progress has been made with some of them. Other themes have also emerged, as we examine below.

## Analysis of 20 years of content

### Emergent themes

In the first five volumes (1989-1995) key themes were:

- **Records management and the organisational context.** Generic strategic topics included business benefits and drivers for records management, the value of records as an information asset and user perspectives/awareness of records management. Specific examples and case studies of records management in particular organisations/sectors were part of this theme and spanned local government, financial services, and the pharmaceutical and oil industries as well as an article on secret police files.
- **Technology.** A diverse range of topics was covered from the internet to media conversion, document image processing and electronic document management.
- **Specific (operational) aspects of records management.** Forms management, preservation, filing systems, vital records, information retrieval and controlled vocabulary, outsourcing, archives.

Positioning of records management. Relationship between records management and data management and information management.

Education and training.

Records management in Japan was the theme of an entire issue in 1991 (Vol. 3 No. 2) and covered a wide range of topics.

The next five volumes (1996-2000) saw some of these themes continue. For example:

Records management and the organizational context. More specific examples and case studies of records management in particular organisations/sectors, featuring the construction, utilities and pharmaceutical sectors, medical records and public records from the closure of a non-governmental organisation as well as an organisational relocation.

Records management in different countries. Africa, America, Asia and Australia.

Technology. Cryptography, e-signatures, software for RM.

Specific (operational) aspects of records management. Retention scheduling, media conversion, filing systems, appraisal and using an intranet for RM.

Education and training.

A new theme emerged in this period in the form of legal issues with articles covering data protection, legal admissibility of electronic document images, governance and risk.

But what was most significant about this period – i.e. the biggest single change – was the publication of articles on theoretical concepts, principles and methodology. Richard Cox (1997) wrote about the functional requirements for evidence in recordkeeping and Monica Scott (1997) wrote RMT's first article on the functional approach to appraisal. Zawiyah Yusof and Robert Chell (1998) asked if universally acceptable definitions of records and records management are possible, and Luciana Duranti (1999), in examining concepts and principles for managing electronic records, proposed that records management theory is archival diplomacy. Her article is reprinted in this issue. Sue McKemmish, Glenda Acland and Barbara Reed (1999) presented the Australian recordkeeping metadata schema as a step towards a framework for standardising recordkeeping metadata, and Frank Upward (2000) articulated what is considered by many to be the most significant contemporary theoretical development in the discipline – the records continuum model. We return to this in considering turning points in the next section.

The period from 2001 to 2005 was without doubt dominated by electronic records management issues, be it managing e-mail, software for managing e-records, EDRM systems or case examples of their implementation. Piers Cain (2002) reviewed what was a major publication: MoReq – the Model Requirements for Electronic Records Management. Other new themes emerged, driven by major events and legislative changes. At the start of this period ISO 15489 (2001) was published – as the first ever international standard for records management it was a significant milestone. There was an increased emphasis on legal issues with the publication of the UK's first Freedom of Information Act, the development of the Sarbanes-Oxley regulations and

on governance issues generally. Records management was highlighted as being vital to demonstrate good governance and also provide evidence of poor governance.

The well established themes of sector and geographic case studies continued, including a special issue devoted to the voluntary sector (Vol. 14, No. 3); specific aspects of records management, including preservation, appraisal and metadata, and also education and training. And a number of articles explored the relationships between records management and knowledge management or archives.

Since 2005 issues around managing electronic records have continued to be prominent, with more articles on EDRMS and two significant contributions from Barbara Reed on service-oriented architecture (Reed, 2008), which subsequently received the Literati Award for Outstanding Paper in 2008, and is reprinted in this issue, and most recently from Steve Bailey (2009). His opinion piece on automated records management draws on methods used by Amazon and Google as possible alternative ways of managing electronic records. Related to this the focus of articles on specific aspects of managing records changed; there has been far more emphasis on fileplans, business classification schemes, taxonomies and the concept of virtual folders (Jones, 2008). It was good to see concepts and principles of information science being embraced by the records management profession and becoming part of its literary warrant. And specific new topics included, for example, computer forensics.

Standards and frameworks were featured in more articles including new ones such as the PDF/A standard for archival preservation (Sullivan, 2006), MoReq2 and toolkits such as RMCAS (Records Management Capacity and Assessment System (McLeod et al., 2007; Demb, 2008) underpinned by other standards (ISO 15489). Case studies included sectors not previously represented, for instance the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, music and personal heritage, as well as previously covered sectors such as construction.

The other theme that received some prominence was research – based both in academia and practice – with a special issue (Vol. 17 No. 3, 2007) devoted to the links between theory and practice and their synergistic value. We explore this later as one of the turning points for records management.

### Special features

The journal has always included what could be described as “special features”. Starting with “Loose Leaves” and “Managing the Information in IT”, as described above, when RMJ reappeared in 1994 two new special features were introduced – Study Guides and Opinion Pieces. When, in 1996, the journal moved to its now familiar three issues per year, the third issue was a themed issue providing an overview of records management practice in the global context. Themed issues became a special feature, usually reserved for the final issue of each year. The choice of electronic records management for the theme in 1997 is an example of RMJ leading the way in terms of special coverage of key topics and developments for the profession and discipline.

Opinion pieces have always been viewed as an important feature of RMJ since they were introduced. From memory (if not evidence in any records that remain!), it was Ken Tombs’ idea to have an opinion piece in each issue and he provided the first one. Opinion pieces took over from the Loose Leaves column that Veronica Davies had

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RMJ  
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written in the early volumes, but they developed the concept. While Loose Leaves tended to cover current issues or news events relating to records management, opinion pieces were more substantial, focused on a particular topic and provided either an in-depth analysis or a controversial treatment/viewpoint of a topic selected by the author. Indeed Rick Barry and Mike Steemson's opinion piece "Heritage groups challenge George W. Bush nominee for US archivist: so what?" won the 2006 Literati

## 22 Award (Barry and Steemson, 2005).

### Summary analysis

From the 19 volumes of RMJ to date, what emerges is a rich and detailed picture of a profession which has emerged in its own right, with its own professional educational framework and qualifications, with its own international standard and legislative framework, with its own technological infrastructure and with its own community of experts and specialists. The remaining content of this issue is a selection of articles, some of which have already been identified, which provide a consolidated picture of the past 19 years and capture the turning points that have been significant for the development of records management. Making the choice was challenging; the aim has been to cover the historical period, the geographic spread and the range of themes that have emerged and the ones which we believe set the foundation for the other two issues of the anniversary volume which consider the status quo and the future.

The selected articles give the detail of the key themes, but here we reflect critically on some of the turning points which have contributed to making change happen and have been addressed in RMJ.

### Turning points

This examination of key turning points considers the link between RMJ and the discipline in the context of a series of issues:

- development of the profession;
- the relationship between records management and other information management disciplines;
- the discipline's theoretical base;
- standards;
- legislation;
- technology;
- education; and
- research.

It analyses what has happened and what is shaping and guiding the future direction of the discipline.

### Development of the profession

People have been managing records since the earliest civilisations. In fact the first libraries were really collections of public records. However, the initial emphasis was on records preservation. It was not until the establishment of the National Archives in the USA in 1934 and the development of the lifecycle concept in 1956 by Theodore

Schellenberg that a comprehensive framework for managing records from their creation until the end of their life was put in place. The late development of an embryonic theoretical base, as opposed to an operational approach, meant that the people who managed records were not specialists, coming instead either from other information backgrounds, for example librarians or archivists, or from administrative roles. For example secretaries often learned filing as part of their training and then got involved in managing records at different stages of their life, perhaps receiving some practical training relating to managing records.

At the birth of RMJ Davies (1989) did not believe a records management profession existed. A decade later Webster (1999) argued that records management had become a profession because, by then, it met the defining characteristics of a profession, based on definitions by writers such as Cox (1994), Greenwood (1966) and Strauss (1963). It had professional bodies, professional education (not just training) and professional literature.

Perhaps the first important step towards achieving the status of a profession took place in the USA in 1955 with the foundation of ARMA International as the first professional association for records managers. And in the 1970s and 1980s similar bodies were established across the world – RMAA (Records Management Association of Australia), the Records Management Group of the Society of Archivists, and the Records Management Society of Great Britain. Today, not only are there more members of professional records management associations than ever before (but many members are dedicated to pursuing “this activity”, to use Davies’s phrase) as a lifelong career rather than seeing it as a “phase” (Davies, 1989).

All the records management associations produced publications thus beginning to build up a professional literature, another of the defining characteristics of a profession, to complement a number of practical guides, which had been published in the 1970s or before. As explained above, RMJ in the UK also made its appearance, but with no affiliation to a professional society and articles on records management appeared in a wide variety of journals such as information management and business and computing. This wide distribution of professional literature continues today.

Professional education for records management also emerged (see a more detailed discussion of its evolution later in this article), adding another key element to the foundation of the profession of records management. Many records managers began to advance careers in records management, as evidenced by the number of professionals who enrol on part-time distance learning postgraduate programmes and/or continuing professional development modules whilst managing work and personal demands. (In the UK opportunities offered by Universities such as Aberystwyth, Dundee, Liverpool and Northumbria remain very popular.) It is important to reiterate that this marks a major change to 20 years ago when Davies (1989, p. 36) claimed that records management was not a long-term career for most of its practitioners. Whilst that remains true for some practitioners (as in other professions such as accountancy or law), there is no evidence to suggest it is true for the majority; quite the contrary, unless of course progression to senior (generic) management roles is considered to break the commitment. If it is then again this applies to those in other professions.

In the past two decades a number of records and information managers have achieved senior positions in different sectors across the globe, exemplified, for instance,



by the Emmett Leahy Award winners (see [www.emmettleahyaward.org/Past\\_Recipients.html](http://www.emmettleahyaward.org/Past_Recipients.html)); by winners of annual awards presented by professional associations such as the Records Management Society in the UK (see [www.rms-gb.org.uk](http://www.rms-gb.org.uk)) and the Records Management Association of Australia, whose J. Eddis Linton Awards for Excellence in Records Management are in memory of one of its founding members (see [www.rmaa.com.au/docs/awards/fed/linton/index.cfm](http://www.rmaa.com.au/docs/awards/fed/linton/index.cfm)); and by many of the contributors to Dearstyne's book on leadership in archives and records management (Dearstyne, 2008).

Another key element of any profession is the development for and enforcement of a code of ethics on its members. There has been widely debated in the USA about the need for a code of ethics for records managers and Patrick Ngulube (2000) explores this issue in the context of professionalism in the public sector in Zimbabwe.

In 1999 Webster argued there were clear signs that records management was going beyond being "simply" a profession and was developing as a scholarly discipline. Her assertion was based on evidence of growing practical and theoretical research activity, particularly in relation to electronic records management (Webster, 1999). It is the increase in research activity since then that supports our claim that records management is now a scholarly discipline. Today there can be no doubt.

The professional title of records manager is now valid, whereas previously it was more accurate to talk about "those working in records management", more so in some parts of the world than others. And records management has status as an academic discipline. It is less and less associated with the basement and dusty files and more and more with strategic issues such as information governance, information assurance, transparency and risk management. It is on the agenda of governments, public and private sector bodies, and individuals are taking responsibility and interest in their own personal records (Barrett, 2009).

But perhaps the most significant developments and turning points in terms of the professionalisation of records management have resulted from the records managers' response to the challenge of managing electronic records and the development of a theoretical foundation as a result of a raft of research projects (discussed in more detail elsewhere in this article). The technical nature and complexity of managing electronic records has impacted on the nature of and contributed to increasingly theory-based education in records management. And the level of research activity, ranging from scholarship in the form of doctoral students and the emergence of senior academics in the field, for example the appointment of Julie McLeod as the first Professor of Records Management in the UK and of Professors Luciana Duranti and Sue McKemmish from Italy and Australia, respectively, now unequivocally confers on records management the status of a profession.

As well as winning this battle, records management has also had to fight for its place alongside the other information management disciplines.

#### Relationship between RM and other information management disciplines

As already stated, before the 1980s, managing paper records tended to focus on the arrangement of the physical items rather than consideration of their informational content. At this time archives management, dealing with the historical records especially of public sector bodies, and information and library management responsible

for the management of published information, had already established their distinctive roles. However, as society moved into the information era, and more especially the information technology age, records took on greater importance as carriers of the lifeblood of the organization and a unique resource for improving effectiveness and efficiency of business operations. This meant that, in addition to its role of managing those records that would become archives, records management would need to interface with data management, the subject of John McDonald's article discussed earlier and reprinted from the first issue of *RMJ*. It also meant that records management became a fundamental part of information management, which embraced the management of all information, whether published or internally produced, irrespective of medium. David Best (1990), in his article, also reprinted in this issue, pinpoints the 1980s as the time when information established its status as a valuable organisational resource, referencing Alvin Toffler's *The Third Wave*, in which Toffler (1983) talked about "a third period of 'industrialisation' based on the industry of information".

Best (1990) outlines the implications of this new status for information and in particular the need to understand information flow, information use and storage requirements, thus underlining the critical importance of records as carriers of internal information and emphasising the need to put in place a whole management system and infrastructure to ensure the quality of the records created and captured.

In this technology-dependent world, records management's "traditional" relationship with archives management was called into question because, in the electronic world, records are no longer physical objects but logical constructs. It is no longer a question of two separate processes with records managers handing over historical records to the archivists at the end of their administrative life, but a seamless flow of recordkeeping determined before the record is created. Australia pioneered and has embraced this approach via the continuum, but in many other parts of the world there is still much debate about how records management interrelates with archives and information management. Many archivists still dismiss records management to a sub-operation of archives, failing to acknowledge its strategic importance.

The lack of a critical mass of records professionals and of senior practitioners has made it very difficult for the profession to exist and flourish in its own right, in comparison with libraries and archives. During the development of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in the UK we were asked to estimate how many people were working in records management. Our estimate of 250,000 was not believed, though today it might be. Ignoring the fact that everyone is a records manager (lower case "r" and "m"), many people with significant records management responsibilities do not have those words in their job title. They may be document managers/controllers, information assurance managers, information/freedom of information officers, etc.

The 1990s saw the emergence of a new information domain – knowledge management – which immediately resonated with senior managers. Its proponents presented it as a discipline very loosely, if not at all related to other information management disciplines, such as records management. Records managers (Saffady, 1998; Hughes, 2003; Tombs, 2004) have tried to make the case that knowledge management is impossible without records management as records capture and give

authenticity to the explicit knowledge which is so highly prized, but the battle is by no means won.

It is clear that records management is part of information management. It includes data management and is an essential part of knowledge management. It works in tandem with archives management. But it remains poorly understood outside the information world and not always fully understood within it. Progress has been made in part as a result of scare stories in the media about lost or stolen records. Much of the lack of recognition and understanding comes from the words record and records manager. There has recently (December 2009) been a debate on the [ARCHIVES-NRA@JISCMAIL.AC.UK](mailto:ARCHIVES-NRA@JISCMAIL.AC.UK) listserv about how the job title of records manager fails to appear on standard lists of occupations when completing official forms. The theme of the 2006 Witness Seminar Conference organised by Northumbria University was the essence of records management. Ryan (2006), in one of the articles reprinted in this issue, reviews and analyses what he presents as the “profound” debate which took place at that Conference. He revealed a mismatch between the chaos as viewed by the records managers and the senior managers who think their organisations are being competently run. He questioned why businesses have not turned to some other group of professionals, in particular records managers, rather than continue to let IT professionals continue to fail to deliver systems that manage records efficiently and effectively. And finally he asked the question why, unlike IT professionals, there are only generic records managers rather than specialists in its various aspects. This is perhaps a next important step in the development of the discipline. Specialisation in a field, as in society as a whole, is often an indicator of development.

Records management is still fighting for recognition in the world of information management but there are now more people battling on its behalf. Its future may best be served through alignment and partnership with information systems management, a discipline which has also faced challenges for appropriate recognition.

### Concepts and theory

What is the current body of records management concepts and theory? Our foundations are the characteristics of a record and the role and objectives of records management, both explicitly defined in ISO 15489 (2001). Whilst these are subject to debate in terms of relevance in the dynamic digital world (see, for example, McLeod, 2008; Yeo, 2007,2008), it follows that our fundamental theory and concepts must relate to the nature and function of records and their management.

We have already referred to the lifecycle concept (Schellenberg, 1956) as the first comprehensive framework for managing records from “birth to death”. Implementing this brings into play one of the other fundamental theories of the records and archives profession *viz* appraisal. Justice cannot be done to this important, and distinguishing, theory in a few lines; so much has been written about it at both at the conceptual and practical levels. RMJ has published at least six articles focusing solely on appraisal beginning with Scott’s article on the methodology of the functional approach (Scott, 1997) and followed by articles on appraisal in practice in different contexts (Whitman, 2000; Carvalho, 2001; Sims, 2002; Man, 2005). The fact that Man’s article is the fourth highest downloaded article is clear evidence of the importance of appraisal both in theory and practice, and the reason for reprinting it in this issue. It is precisely because

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of the importance of appraisal that Michael Cook's 1998 opinion piece on appraisal and access has also been selected for re-printing in this issue. In it he raises some of the continuing dilemmas, difficulties and duties surrounding appraisal and the retention of records, alongside the sometimes divergent or incompatible interests of records managers and archivists (Cook, 1998).

If these are two of the well established theories of records management, then two more recent theories which must be singled out as turning points in our field are the functional requirements for electronic recordkeeping and the records continuum model.

The University of Pittsburgh School of Information Sciences project, funded by the National Historical Publications and Record Commission (NHPRC) in 1993, was the first attempt to specify functional requirements for managing records (Cox, 1997). This project was crucial in terms of specifying metadata for managing electronic records, questioning the whole approach to electronic recordkeeping and introducing the notion of a model for business acceptable communications that provide evidence of business transactions (see [www.archimuse.com/papers/nhprc/BACartic.html](http://www.archimuse.com/papers/nhprc/BACartic.html)). It has influenced other work in the electronic recordkeeping arena, including the InterPARES project and the continuum model.

The records continuum model addressed the limitations of the lifecycle theory in the context of the electronic environment. It represented a theoretical construct for modelling complexity and a paradigm shift for records management, or rather recordkeeping since the theory was developed in Australia and recordkeeping is the term they use to embrace making, maintaining and managing records. In a personal reflection five years after developing the model, Upward (2000) shared what and who influenced and inspired him to create it. At the core is the earlier work of Australian Ian McLean, Chief Archives Officer at the Commonwealth National Library, including the nexus between records management and archives and the Australian "series" system; David Bearman's work on models for managing electronic records; prominent sociologist Anthony Giddens's theory of structuration and space-time distancing, well known in the information systems domain; as well as collaboration and conversation with his colleagues Sue McKemmish and Barbara Reed at Monash University. Upward's work is highly significant and merits his article being selected for reprint. However, we have resisted the temptation, based on the fact that his articles on the continuum are freely available on the Monash University website (see [www.infotech.monash.edu.au/research/groups/rcrg/publications/](http://www.infotech.monash.edu.au/research/groups/rcrg/publications/)) and that in this issue Kate Cumming, a member of the Editorial Board, provides a contemporary reflection on the impact of his work in Australia and beyond.

It may be difficult, even perverse, to question the four fundamental characteristics of "good" records (authenticity, reliability, integrity and usability) but it may be highly appropriate to question the degree to which all records need to, indeed can, satisfy all of the characteristics and over time. It is a question of risk and risk management, and therein lies a conceptual framework that, particularly in the last decade, has become a prominent and integral feature of records management.

## Standards

Some standards, irrespective of their precise nature and source (i.e. formal *de jure* standards from national or international bodies, *de facto* industry standards or open

standards), are necessary in the context of information sharing and communication in the digital world. The internet TCP/IP protocol is a good example. Others represent “best” or good practice, providing sound frameworks for developing and implementing systems and procedures, for doing the “right thing” and doing it right. Australian Standard AS 4390 (1996), the first standard on records management, and ISO 15489 (2001) are two such examples. The publication of the international standard in particular must surely be seen as a turning point and hence the inclusion in this issue of Susan Healy’s 2001 article about its development. Healy (2001, p. 140), then Chair of the BSI Standards Committee contributing to its development, wrote:

[I]n one sense, the contents of ISO 15489 are less important than its existence. The fact that records managers can point to an ISO/BSI Standard for their discipline can be used to improve the image and status of records management in the eyes of those who know little or nothing about the subject.

But would it be adopted? Early research into its use in the UK revealed some uptake and positive views from its users but limited impact on organisations (McLeod, 2003, 2004). For some practitioners the jury was still out, but a group of global experts were more conclusive about the role and value of standards for records management, saying:

... standards are a requirement for professional practice, helping establish best practice and providing benchmarks (McLeod and Childs, 2007).

An and Jiao (2004) demonstrated this in their case study of using ISO 15489 to benchmark and assess records management in China, and were able to suggest ways of improving the situation that their study had revealed.

Today ISO 15489 has been formally adopted in at least 17 countries, including Australia, France, Japan, South Korea, Russia, South Africa, Spain and the UK; many other countries use it without having officially adopted it as their “national” standard. The standard is currently being revised in the form of an ISO management system standards (MSS), like ISO 9001 (2000) the quality management standard, and ISO/IEC 27001 (2005) on information security. Unlike many other standards, management system standards:

... cover multiple aspects, levels and functions of an organization and, therefore, their implementation can have a substantial impact on how an organization operates and manages its business processes. In addition, more and more organizations are applying not only one, but a range of management system standards to satisfy their own needs as well as those of external stakeholders (ISO, 2008a; see [www.iso.org/iso/pressrelease.htm?refid=Ref1144](http://www.iso.org/iso/pressrelease.htm?refid=Ref1144)).

Some of the management system standards are the most widely used international standards and there are potential benefits of adopting the MSS strategy for ISO 15489.

A plethora of other standards is available to records managers, including others developed by the same committee that developed ISO 15489 (of which RMJ Editorial Board members have been or currently are active members). These include standards on metadata and work process analysis[7], ISO 19005-1 (2005) the PDF/A archival version of PDF for long-term preservation and ISO 32000 (2008b), which fully describes Adobe’s PDF format, and ISO 14721 (2003), the OAIS open archival information standard. Whilst it is neither appropriate nor possible to include a complete list

relevant standards here, it would be inappropriate not to mention two relating to systems for managing electronic records. The first is MoReq, the Model Requirements for the Management of Electronic Records specification, first prepared for the European Commission in 2001 and later revised and published as MoReq2 in 2008 (European Commission, 2008). A generic model of functional requirements for managing electronic records by electronic records management systems (ERMS), its intended use was as a systems specification for an ERMS, though it can be used to evaluate or audit existing systems. The second is DoD 5015.2 (2002) the US defence standard on design criteria for electronic records management software applications, developed for and by the military sector, as a model for testing ERMS software products. MoReq has been the subject of articles published in *RMJ* (Wilhelm, 2009; Henttonen, 2009; Cain, 2002).

### Legislation

Taking the UK as an example, before 2000, apart from references to the need to keep records appearing in legislation relating, for example, to finance, property ownership, personnel management, etc., the only legislation relating specifically to records concerned public records (Public Records Act and Local Government (Records) Act), personal data and health records. Since 2000 there have been two significant pieces of legislation for records management, one in England and Wales and one in the USA.

The first was the publication of the Freedom of Information Act (FoI) in 2000, which was accompanied by the Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on the Management of Records (Department for Constitutional Affairs, 2002). Although it applies only to public bodies it has been a real turning point in raising the profile of records management and records managers within the public sector. Now the majority of universities and local authorities have a records manager.

In the USA it was the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002, also known as the "Public Company Accounting Reform and Investor Protection Act", which was brought into force after a number of corporate scandals, for example Enron and Worldcom. It laid down stringent rules for financial reporting and recordkeeping and, as with the FOI Act in England and Wales, resulted in putting records management at the top of the business agenda (Stephens, 2005).

As interest in, and use of, cloud computing increases, so do concerns about which "public clouds" information and records are being stored in, i.e. in which legal jurisdiction(s) they are being kept. What laws of data protection and retention apply and are they in fact being applied? This is a challenge to current legal principles and guidance. Will the outcome be guidelines based on pragmatic decisions and best practice, or will a whole raft of new legislation be developed and come into force? In the future looking back it may be that cloud computing is seen as a turning point.

### Technology environment and use of IT

There are countless hardware and software technologies that could qualify as turning points – the PC, laptops, mobile information and communications devices such as PDAs, digital phones, the Blackberry, MP3 player and iPhones; scanners, document image processing systems and microform systems; database management systems,

office software, line of business systems, workflow and enterprise content management systems. The technology and systems evolution has seen first the development of software to create information and records and then to manage it. It has caused a cycle of centralisation/decentralisation, of control and lack of control, and a number of consequences pose significant challenges for records managers. The volume of information and records has quite literally exploded, their nature is very different – virtual, complex and in different systems often within different organisational boundaries. Today everyone is, or should be, a records manager (McLeod, 2008).

Some of the technology developments that have and are having a particularly significant impact on the way information and records are created, shared and managed are EDRMS (electronic document and records management systems), the web, in particular Web 2.0 technologies, service-oriented architecture and MicroSoft SharePoint. All but the latter have been the focus of RMJ articles.

Electronic document management systems (EDMS) had been in use in the private sector, for instance the pharmaceutical sector, since the early 1990s. In the UK EDRMS became a focus of attention in the public sector in the late 1990s and early 2000s in the context of the Modernising Government agenda (Cabinet Office, 1999) and the build-up to Freedom of Information (FoI) legislation referred to above. They were seen as the potential “solution” to finding information quickly and complying with the 20 working day target for responding to FoI requests. In 2005, Vol. 15 No. 3 was specifically devoted to EDRMS featuring case studies that shared experience, lessons learned and benefits achieved of some of the early implementations. Today standalone EDRMS are probably only a “solution” in certain scenarios; recent research indicates that their integration with office systems, line-of-business systems and/or Web 2.0 technologies is necessary if they are not to become “legacy systems” (Northumbria University, 2009).

But it is perhaps the web that has created some of the greatest and most exciting challenges for records managers. This is particularly the case with so-called Web 2.0, eloquently described in Andrew Keen’s book *The Cult of the Amateur* as “the most ‘awesomely’ democratic consequence of the digital revolution” (Keen, 2007, p. 35). Whilst Keen was not discussing records management, this democratisation has implications for what people do and want to do *within* the work environment because of what they do *outside* it. When employees have their own personal FaceBook site, or blog, contribute to wikis, use YouTube, Twitter, etc., they want the same or similar freedom to create, organise, capture, communicate and collaborate, anytime and anyplace *within* the work context. In fact for many, the boundaries between work and personal contexts have blurred. So what are the consequences for records management? Are “traditional” approaches still valid? Are they adequate? Do we need something different? Steve Bailey (2008) advocated Records Management 2.0 to “manage the crowd”, based on ten fundamental principles. Most recently he contributed an opinion piece on the concept of automated records management using some familiar techniques adopted by Amazon and Google (Bailey, 2009).

In 2008 Barbara Reed provided a very important opinion piece on the potential and implications of service-oriented architecture (SOA), something which had not been previously covered in RMJ, but which the NARA (National Archives and Records

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Administration) in the USA had been working on for some years (Reed, 2008). This is a significant approach in the context of web services that cannot be ignored, but which had attracted limited attention in the UK professional literature. It was appropriate that Barbara was the recipient of the 2009 Literati Award for her article.

One of the latest software technologies to be making an impact is MicroSoft SharePoint. Records managers cannot ignore it or the implications, complexity, risks and opportunities it brings. Some records managers have written extensively about it and, in the UK at least, there have been many SharePoint workshops and events in the last two years.

If technology raised interesting differences in the use of terms such as archiving (a very different concept for IT professionals than records and archives professionals) it also expanded the vocabulary of records professionals and renewed the imperative for them to work with IT colleagues and manage IT/systems implementation projects themselves.

The development of this technological focus, not to say dimension of records management has changed the nature of records management education.

### Education

In Vol. 1 No. 3 of *RMJ*, Couture (1989) reviewed the development of education for records management in the School of Librarianship and Information Sciences at the University of Montreal. Library schools were one of the first providers of training and education for records management as part of their undergraduate or postgraduate library programmes. The other providers were schools of archives studies, which similarly offered modules on records management as part of their archives management courses. So, at this time the post of records manager was often filled by someone with an archival or librarianship background or even by someone from within the organisation with little or no specialist training.

Focusing on the UK, one of the first specialist courses to be developed was a campus-based Master's in Information and Records Management at Northumbria University in 1993 (Hare, 1993) but it soon became clear that what was needed was a programme of study to meet the needs of people already working in records management and therefore not available for full-time study and to equip them to deal with the changing world and developing profession of records management. This realisation resulted in a Master's in Records Management programme by distance learning in the Department of Information and Library Management at Northumbria University in 1996 (McLeod, 1995) and an MSc in Records Management at Aberystwyth University in 1997. More recent developments are distance learning programmes at the University of Dundee and the MSc in Information Management and Preservation at the University of Glasgow.

To complement these opportunities for postgraduate study, other programmes have been developed at undergraduate level by Northumbria University for the BBC, Deutsche Bank and the European Central Bank, and for central government in association with Liverpool University. All of these initiatives had in common the objective of professionalising records management within the respective organisations so that it could become a career choice for those undertaking the programme of study.



## Research

Research is no stranger to **RMJ** – in fact as editors we have deliberately sought to include a research focus in the journal. In the first issue after its short break in publication, Tomlin (1994) reported the results of a small survey on records management practice in Northern England, and there have been two Special Issues on research. Contributors to the first of these (Vol. 9 No. 3, 1999) were all from the academic community, based in the UK, Australia and Canada. The opening lines of Elizabeth Danbury's opinion piece read:

What is research in records management? What is research in archives? Where should this research be leading us? How should it be directed? The answers to these questions are by no means straightforward or simple, and yet the issues are most important. Research projects in records management and archives, and the conclusions reached and recommendations made as a result of them, will impact soon and forcibly; and will affect not only practitioners, students and teachers of these subjects, but a far wider public (Danbury, 1999, p. 147).

These questions, and the focus of some of the other articles, were indicative of a profession that was still in the early throes of developing a significant research agenda and presence. When the second issue devoted to research appeared in 2007 the contributors were not all from academia. Indeed two very experienced practitioners, David Ryan and Elizabeth Lomas, provided the Guest Editorial and Caroline Williams provided the opinion piece at the point she left academia to return to practice, at The National Archives (Ryan and Lomas, 2007; Williams, 2007). New and very varied research, conducted by practitioners, students and academics, was reported in both of these issues. We mentor and encourage students to write so that they might view writing as part of their professional activity once they graduate and continue to share their views, knowledge and experience by publishing in **RMJ** and elsewhere.

Emerald's current publishing strap line is "Research you can use"; assessing and capturing the impact of research was a topic at their first Editors' Day in May 2009. Downloads and citations are two quantitative measures of access, but uptake and actual use of research, particularly in practice, are qualitative measures of impact. They are not easy to capture but are increasingly important indicators of the return on investment in research. Research will continue to be a significant part of **RMJ**'s remit, just as it has become a more significant part of the profession.

During the history of the **RMJ** key turning points in terms of research worldwide have included:

- funding of the first major research in managing electronic records by the NHPRC, referred to earlier;
- the InterPARES project (International Research on Permanent Authentic Records in Electronic Systems), directed by Professor Luciana Duranti at the University of British Columbia and probably the longest running and biggest records research project to date (see [www.interpares.org](http://www.interpares.org));
- the Clever Recordkeeping Metadata Project (CRKM Project) involving Monash University, the National Archives of Australia and others (see [www.infotech.monash.edu.au/research/groups/rcrg/crkm/](http://www.infotech.monash.edu.au/research/groups/rcrg/crkm/));
- projects funded by the 2002/03 JISC Supporting Institutional Records

research in the UK; see [www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/supportingirm.aspx](http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/supportingirm.aspx));

- the extensive work in Europe on digital curation and preservation, first through ERPANET then DigitalPreservationEurope (DPE) (see [www.digitalpreservationeurope.eu/](http://www.digitalpreservationeurope.eu/)), and also the Digital Curation Centre (DCC) (see [www.dcc.ac.uk/](http://www.dcc.ac.uk/)), in which the University of Glasgow's Humanities Advance Technology & Information Institute (HATII) has been a major player (see [www.gla.ac.uk/departments/hatii/](http://www.gla.ac.uk/departments/hatii/)); and
- AC<sup>Perm</sup> (Accelerating Positive Change in Electronic Records Management), the first records management research project funded by the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council (see [www.northumbria.ac.uk/acerm/](http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/acerm/)).

All of these projects have either been the subject of articles in RMJ or have been referred to in other articles in the journal (see, for example, Cox, 1997; Duranti, 1999; Evans *et al.*, 2008; Edward and McLeod, 2004). Whilst the number of records management academics globally is relatively small, the number of PhD students has increased, at least in the UK, so there is the potential to sustain and grow the body of academics.

As with other disciplines, records management research needs to span the full spectrum, from blue sky research in the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, to strategic research with potential practical application, to applied research and development with the specific purpose of developing products, processes, systems, etc. Increasingly it needs to be interdisciplinary if it is to remain relevant and useful and much, though not all research, requires partnering with practitioners. All of the projects cited above involve academic and/or practitioner partnerships, some involving multiple disciplines and multiple stakeholders. Recent doctoral research students have embraced the interdisciplinary or partnership approach through their use of action research. For example, Dr Joanne Evans, of Monash University, used this method to prototype and test the "create once-use many times" concept in her doctoral study on building capacities for sustainable recordkeeping metadata interoperability as part of the CRKM project above (see [www.infotech.monash.edu.au/research/groups/rcrg/crkm/method.html](http://www.infotech.monash.edu.au/research/groups/rcrg/crkm/method.html)); and Elizabeth Lomas, of Northumbria University, is using a derivation of this, co-operative inquiry, to bring together researchers and practitioners globally, as equal co-researchers, to study how organisations can maximise the potential of their communications (see [www.northumbria.ac.uk/sd/academic/ceis/re/isrc/phd/e\\_lomas/](http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/sd/academic/ceis/re/isrc/phd/e_lomas/)).

## Conclusion

The first Editorial of the journal opened with the words:

With this first issue of the *Records Management Journal*, we will begin to make what we hope will be an important and long-lasting impact on the field of records management in the United Kingdom (Morddel, 1989).

Twenty years later there is real evidence that this aspiration has been realized. In fact it has been exceeded. RMJ is a voice for the profession, led by the UK, whose importance and impact are not confined to the UK since its readers and contributors are global. The volume of downloads has continued to increase year-on-year and the RMJ is the only peer reviewed journal, independent of a professional society, devoted to records

management. As editors based in academia, and having worked as practitioners, we understood the importance of professional literature in disseminating underlying theory and practice and its role in establishing and moving forward a profession. We therefore strove to achieve a balance of academic and practitioner content and to appeal to both audiences. Statistics demonstrate it is a key resource for academic courses worldwide and has subscribers in all sectors. We also deliberately sought contributions from those operating in the wider academic and practitioner contexts of law, compliance, risk, computer science, engineering and construction etc to ensure the RMJ considers records management in the broader context in which it needs to develop. Taking a narrowly focused, bounded and precious view can only be dangerous for the future of this important discipline. The journal has responded to and kept abreast of the records management agenda; it highlights and consolidates key developments and issues through, for example, themed issues.

Looking to the future, what will the next two decades see for the journal? We certainly hope, as the first Editor did, that “our readers will find the *Records Management Journal* a worthwhile addition to the professional literature, and that they will be interested in making contributions to it” (Morrdel, 1989) but we hope for more than this. The journal must seek to widen its impact on other key stakeholders in managing information and records – managers, information systems designers, information creators and users – as well as records professionals, since everyone is an information and records manager (McLeod, 2008). Having highlighted the trans-disciplinary foundations of records management through the journal’s content and editorial, emphasising that records management does not sit in its own self-contained space, theoretically or practically, we need to further this view by commissioning and attracting contributors from other disciplines, engaging with other disciplines in writing articles, engaging with other theory and practice. The future of records management will not be secured through “isolation” or separation but through integration and embedding.

The RMJ must also continue to develop the scope of its content whilst maintaining its focus on managing records produced by organizations of all kinds and by individuals. If the initial emphasis of the RMJ’s content was on managerial topics to meet the needs of records managers at the time then, moving forward, its content must keep pace with technology developments. It is vital that records managers understand and are not afraid of technology, can articulate how records can be managed in new systems, have the ability to take a leading role and/or lead systems and technology projects and be successful in doing so.

Beyond the nature of the topics covered, RMJ must nurture theoretical discourse and provide a vehicle for future pioneers; it should try to influence the agenda through its opinion pieces and choice of themed issues. It should be controversial, stimulate debate and encourage change. And it should remain a quality resource respected and used by both records management academics and practitioners, and to which those and others want to contribute.

#### Notes

1. This arrangement means that Emerald continue to provide Aslib members with journals as part of their membership. Emerald’s ownership of RMJ has provided subscribers with

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additional benefits including electronic access to the journal via the web; organisation-wide personal e-mail alerting service for new articles and reference linking from journal article licensing allowing everyone in a subscribing organisation to access the journal online; a Development

references to abstracts of articles cited (Emerald, 2002).

2. Inside front cover of Records Management Journal.
3. Records Management Journal Editorial Board Mission, 2004.
4. The status of RMJ as apparently the only English-language scholarly journal in the \_\_\_\_\_ discipline has been highlighted in a recent listserv discussion sparked by a message from Jesse Wilkins (28 November 2009) asking for assistance in “locating peer-reviewed academic journals specific to records management” to expand his list of English language titles that he believes to be woefully lacking (Wilkins, 2009)
5. No authors have been based in South America or Antarctica, but it would be excellent to see these continents represented by the time the journal reaches its 30th birthday. Given that ISO 15489, the international records management standard, has been sold in South America and that several nations have research stations in Antarctica (which must be generating records!), this is not an unrealistic aspiration.
6. Nominations are selected by the Editorial Advisory Board through a democratic voting process and submitted to Emerald, who then select the winners of the best and highly recommended papers.
7. Editorial Board members who are/have been active members of the ISO TC46/SC11 committee on records management standards are Kate Cumming, Julie McLeod, Mike Steemson and Malcolm Todd. Other standards developed by ISO TC46/SC11 include: ISO/TR 26122(2008), Information and Documentation – Work Process Analysis for Records; ISO 23081-1 (2006), Metadata for Records. Part 1: Principles; and ISO/TS 23081-2 (2007), Metadata for Records. Part 2: Conceptual and Implementation issues.

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#### Appendix 1

Member	Affiliation at the time of appointment	Period of office
Steve Bailey	JISC infoNet	2009-
Rick Barry	Independent consultant	2004-2009
Kate Cumming	Researcher, New South Wales	2004-
Ian Day	British Medical Association	1994-
Peter Emmerson	Barclays Bank	1996-1999
Catherine Hare	Independent consultant	2004-
Michael Heelan	H.W. Wilson	1994-1997
Elizabeth Lomas	Northumbria University	2009-
Rachael Maguire	London School of Economics	2004-
Elizabeth Man	London Borough of Lambeth	2004-
Larry Medina	Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory	2009-
J. Michael Pemberton	University of Tennessee	1998-2004
Ira A. Penn	ARMA	1995-1997
Alan Poulter	Loughborough University	1994-1997
David Ryan	The Royal Household	2004-2009
Jean Samuel	Pfizer Ltd	1994-2001
Elizabeth Shepherd	University College London	1994-
Mike Steemson	Caldeson Consultancy	2004-
Malcolm Todd	The National Archives	2004
Kenneth Tombs	Independent consultant	1994-
Alistair Tough	Glasgow University	2004-
Marjo Valtonen	University of Tampere	2004-2009

Table AL.  
Records Management  
Journal Editorial Board  
Members, 1994-2010



Table AII.  
Literati Club Awards for  
Excellence, 2004-2009

Year/award	Author/article
2009 winner	Reed, B. (2008), "Service-oriented architectures and recordkeeping", <i>Records Management Journal</i> , Vol. 18 No. 1, pp. 7-20
Highly commended	Evans, J., Reed, B. and McKemmish, S. (2008), "Interoperable data: sustainable frameworks for creating and managing recordkeeping metadata", <i>Records Management Journal</i> , Vol. 18 No. 2, pp. 115-29
	Jones, P. (2008), "The role of virtual folders in developing an electronic document and records management system: meeting user and records management needs", <i>Records Management Journal</i> , Vol. 18 No. 1, pp. 53-60
	McCarthy, F. (2008), "Digital preservation: making the song remain the same", <i>Records Management Journal</i> , Vol. 18 No. 2, pp. 107-14
2008 winner	Oliver, G. (2007), "Implementing international standards: first, know your organisation", <i>Records Management Journal</i> , Vol. 17 No. 2, pp. 82-93
Highly commended	Cumming, K. (2007), "Purposeful data: the roles and purposes of recordkeeping metadata", <i>Records Management Journal</i> , Vol. 17 No. 3, pp. 186-200
	McLeod, J., Childs, S. and Heaford, S. (2007), "Records management capacity and compliance toolkits: a critical assessment", <i>Records Management Journal</i> , Vol. 17 No. 3, pp. 216-32
	Williams, C. (2007), "The research imperative and the responsible recordkeeping professional", <i>Records Management Journal</i> , Vol. 17 No. 3, pp. 150-6
2007 winner	Forbes-Pitt, K. (2006), "A document for document's sake: a possible account for document system failures and a proposed way forward", <i>Records Management Journal</i> , Vol. 16 No. 1, pp. 13-20
Highly commended	Irons, A. (2006), "Computer forensics and records management – compatible disciplines", <i>Records Management Journal</i> , Vol. 16 No. 2, pp. 102-12
	Craig, N. and Sommerville, J. (2006), "Information management systems on construction projects: case reviews", <i>Records Management Journal</i> , Vol. 16 No. 3, pp. 131-48
	Bedford, D. and Morelli, J. (2006), "Introducing information management into the workplace: a case study in the implementation of business classification file plans from the Sector Skills Development Agency", <i>Records Management Journal</i> , Vol. 16 No. 3, pp. 169-75
2006 winner	Barry, R.E. and Steemson, M.J. (2005), "Heritage groups challenge George W. Bush nominee for US archivist: so what?", <i>Records Management Journal</i> , Vol. 15 No. 1, pp. 2-20
Highly commended	Screene, L. (2005), "How prepared are public bodies for the implementation of the UK Freedom of Information Act, in January 2005?", <i>Records Management Journal</i> , Vol. 15 No. 1, pp. 124-8
	Moss, M. (2005), "Archivist: friend or foe?", <i>Records Management Journal</i> , Vol. 15 No. 2, pp. 104-14
2005 winner	Chapman, A. (2004), "From Sumeria to Sunny Hill: are we still cooking the books?", <i>Records Management Journal</i> , Vol. 14 No. 1, pp. 14-24
2004 winner	Feldman, P. (2003), "Applying the Australian Series system to the management of current records", <i>Records Management Journal</i> , Vol. 13 No. 2, pp. 54-61

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