

Thank you to Lea Beeken from Edmonton Public Schools, Joanne Kurek from Northern Lights School Division, Theresa Maggs from Peace River School Division, and Denise Monaghan and Shirley Barton from Wetaskiwin Regional Public Schools for sharing their experiences with records management.

Case Study #1 – EPS and Retention and Paper Records

Edmonton Public Schools began its Records Management journey 10 years ago by analyzing the paper record found at schools. The paper records of 40 schools were inventoried by retrieving record boxes retrieved from the basement, the furnace room, under the stage, forgotten filing cabinets and many more exotic locations.

All records located were inventoried, and the value of records determined. One of the surprises was how common the records were among all the schools. The most common document was financial printouts from our financial system - these documents didn't need to be kept at all! Through this inventory we created a school retention schedule, which identified the most common records that schools had, whether the school had the "master" copy of the record, and how long the record needed to be retained.

A sample set of the records found:

Consent Forms; Student Accident Reports; Lunch Room Fees; School Generated Funds; Parking; Photographs; Maintenance Logs; Field Trip Forms; Student Focused Medication Plans and Principal Daily Logs

Many record series are now managed digitally, through on-line systems that capture the data into a database. Fewer records are generated as paper documents and need management in a paper based system.

The development of an on-line process for parents to sign key documents such as field trip forms; demographic confirmation forms; FOIP consent forms; etc. will result in fewer paper records being created and needing to be managed by schools.

Once the school records were inventoried, the paper records of various departments were inventoried one at a time, to build a retention schedule for the whole district.

Some records are deliberately kept in paper format for two reasons. Signed beneficiary forms are retained in hard copy (and scanned as well) because the insurance company will only accept the original signed paper copy. So far this is the only record we've identified that cannot be scanned and the scan retained as the master copy.

Other records (board minutes, building drawings) have permanent retention. So far, paper appears to be the best medium for long term storage although the digital equivalent, PDF/A, is accepted by the ISO for long term storage.

Managing records requires detailed consideration of each record series to determine the value, the owner, the format, the access and even the naming convention. At its heart, Information Governance (digital records management) requires consensus about the value of content. A good place to start that conversation is with the paper records we already collect.

Case Study #2: Northern Lights School Division and DocuShare

Northern Lights School Division started down the road of records management back in 1998 with a system called Documentum. In 2003, we moved to DocuShare.

DocuShare is our records repository for all corporate records including:

- Accounts Payable/Receivables
- Human Resources (including the individual Employee files)
- Transportation
- Student Records
- Facilities
- Finance
- Public Relations

Our “rule of thumb” is that if you would plan to save that document to a file folder, box, binder, local drive, network drive, google drive etc. – you would save it instead in DocuShare. It is our only approved repository for all of our corporate records. Staff may use google apps and google drive to share documents but any document considered a corporate record is to be in DocuShare.

Additionally, DocuShare works with Atrieve to save all the scanned copies of invoices so that these scanned documents are available along with the Atrieve information for all of Accounts Payable/Receivables.

Our Human Resources department does not have employee files in paper in the vault. Everything normally saved for the employee record are in an Employee Collection in DocuShare.

Our student records are all digital and along with a system created in-house, we send student records to any school in a digital format. We do not do paper records. Our student records project was a three-year project that saw all the paper student records scanned to individual student collections in DocuShare with a go-forward strategy for saving all documents into appropriately named collections in each student’s collection in DocuShare. All staff that require access to the student records have access via ACL (access control lists) to the student record.

We are in the process of removing information from our website Intranet to a shared location in DocuShare for staff. This way, information already saved to DocuShare will be in a shared location within DocuShare for staff and when a document is revised, it is updated in all locations where it is shared.

None of the above would be possible without the support from the top executives and board to the staff in the schools. Our Board of Trustees supported this concept back in 1998 and our Division Office executive (Superintendents, Associates, Secretary-Treasurer, Department Heads, Directors) are supportive and ensure that staff in their supervision are trained and using DocuShare for all day-to-day functionality.

The diversity of our division (3 communities spanning a fair distance between them and Division Office) makes sharing documentation much easier and this information is standard and structured across the Division. Practices and processes are the same from school to school to division office and all departments within. This makes using DocuShare much easier, especially if staff move from one location to another. It also is very valuable when you are away from your desk. If you have access to the internet, you have access to your information. It is always at your fingertips!

We researched the retentions on all of the legal acts that govern the documents we have in our control and apply these retentions to the collections. Although DocuShare can do destruction automatically, we like to manually review and make the decision to proceed to destruction or to keep longer than the act requires. We adhere as much as possible to the legal requirements; however, there are documents and document types that our authority chooses to keep longer than the legal act requires.



Administration of our Records Management is the responsibility of one person. In our division, this is not a full time role. The person responsible for Records Management is also the SIS Coordinator, FOIPP Coordinator along with a few other areas of responsibility.

We annually review our practices, processes, structure and use and if necessary, make any alterations necessary to ensure that DocuShare continues to meet the needs of the staff using it.

Case Study #3: Peace River School Division's Journey

Quick outline of the process that I've take (not finished yet) and some tips I'd recommend along the way...

1. Look at any existing formalized records processes. Get familiar with what is being filed, where it is being filed, how records "move" between people/departments and how they are used.
For any districts that don't have a formal records listing/process, I would suggest that they use the template from ASBOA and pick up at step #3.
2. List or map out one department or type of record as best you can.
3. Take that map to the staff members who use that record type (include all levels of staff) and go through your map; understand it from their perspective. How do they obtain, store and use their records? What records do the use from other departments? What records do they generate that end up in other departments? This may take more than one meeting.
 - a. Where there are crossovers between departments, determine if each department uses the records for the same purpose, or if the purpose of the document changes when it moves to another department (if it is the same purpose, then cross-file/share the record; if not, the document should exist as 2 separate records (likely there will be different retention periods)
4. Once staff likes the list, compare it to the template.
 - What is different?
 - What retentions are different?
 - Do the descriptions fit?
 - Do you need to alter/combine record series?
 - Do you need to alter the descriptions?
 - Do you need to add examples to the descriptions?
 - Make notes, think about how your list should change to be compliant (I don't recommend trying to change your departments ways of filing unless they are ready to change or the change is necessary for legal/compliance reasons) If the department WANTS to change or feels that a new records process would be beneficial, then celebrate!!! These are your new favourite people!
5. Take the comparison list back to the department staff and discuss it. IF they want to implement any non-compliance changes, consider how that will affect their processes (or what processes that will create). If there are records in the template that aren't currently being filed, consider why and be conservative about adding new records lists – only add them if they are required for legal reasons or if the department itself sees value in having them. Don't add records for the sake of adding records. Work over the list and note anything to adapt/edit.



6. “Final” review – this is never the last time you’ll look at this, but it’s a nice thought.

Once the department is happy with their records listing, take all of the changes and listing to the person in charge of records (for many districts, this will be the Corporate Secretary). They need to understand it and (usually) approve it, and upper-management buy-in is the key to successful records management.

Throughout this entire journey, ensure that you and the departments are noting where procedures and business processes need to be formalized/created/adapted. A records management listing is only a listing if your staff don’t know the what/how/where/why of their departments’ records.

Common procedures/processes could include naming conventions, filing procedures, scanning procedures, destruction of documents, etc.

“Rinse and repeat” until everyone is comfortable and you have each department in your district set up for records management.

Case Study #4: Wetaskiwin Regional Public Schools – Managing our District-Wide ECM System – Xerox DocuShare

History - WRPS implemented DocuShare in 2003 and used it in various ways but primarily for HR. In 2013, the district hired a consultant to review DocuShare and provide guidance going forward. Issues that arose from this consultation:

- wide open permissions to everything in DocuShare;
- lack of structure;
- no retention on collections and documents resulting in a back log of items no longer needed; and
- inconsistent naming conventions making it difficult to re-locate items.

Goals:

In 2014, the division developed a plan to address these issues as well as work towards digitalizing student records for the entire district over a three year period. The district’s goals at this time included:

- lock down permissions from wide-open to as needed;
- manage collections according to the district’s classification system;
- create automatic processes based on trigger events to manage retentions on current documents and all documents added going forward;
- standardize naming conventions; and
- develop a district wide process for digitalizing student records.

Process:

- Created matrices for all of our classifications in DocuShare. The matrices included:
 - Names of collections and subcollections;
 - Permissions associated with collections and subcollections;
 - Retentions;
 - Collection number; and
 - Contact person.
- Met with each department head to review the records in the DocuShare collections applicable to them, and established:
 - Retention based on triggered events where possible;
 - Permissions based on required access to files;
 - Standardized naming conventions district wide; and
 - Relevant collections within each classification



CASE STUDIES

- Developed a Digital Student Records process in consultation with other school divisions, and in working through our colony and home education schools. We recognized the importance of starting with the lower grades and letting the highest grades roll out as paper files because of the size of those files and keeping the process as simple as possible.
- Piloted our Digital Student Records process with two pilot schools in the district, with the expectation they complete the lowest and highest grade in their school that year. These two schools completed all their grades within a month.
- Rolled out Digital Student Records process to the other schools in our district, with the exception being our in-town high school. By the end of the first year, all but two of the schools in the district completed digitalizing all of their student records. The two remaining schools completed their records within the next year. We left the high school on the 3-year plan because of the size of records. Currently, their grade 10 and 11 student files are digital, with the grade 12 paper files rolling out at the end of the year. In 2017-2018, all student records in our district will be digital.
- Worked with our website manager to establish a secure digital Student Record Request System so that student records could be transferred to other divisions in their digital format.

If you have a case study that you would like to share for the benefit of others, please contact”

ASBOA Records Management Committee

Email: laurelknowles@asboalberta.ca

