Information and records management systems and the impact of information culture on the management of public information

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FOREWORD AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Prior to becoming a doctoral student, I had worked as an archivist, a research administrator, and project co-ordinator. These engagements enabled me to appreciate the challenges of information and records management in government administrations, particularly with regard to issues of accountability and transparency. I was also exposed to the challenges of managing information in post-conflict countries and especially during peace-building initiatives. Furthermore, my work as a project co-ordinator exposed me to the importance of managing records as a collective memory. Consequently I embarked on this research not as an objective investigator as far as information and records management are concerned, but as a person influenced by my past experiences.

I started my licentiate research in May, 2009 on a half time basis and embarked on fulltime studies in September, 2009. I worked under a European funded project called the Centre for Digital Information Management (CEDIF). CEDIF was a three year research and development project funded by the European Union and managed by Mid Sweden University, in co-operation with the county board of Västernorrland and the municipalities of Sundsvall and Härnösand. The project aimed to address the following areas of research:

- Enterprise Content Management (ECM);
- Enterprise Architecture (EA);
- Business Process Management (BPM);
- Documentation;
- Metadata;
- Records Management;
- The borders between records management and archives management;
- The archive as a function; and
- Systems for long-term preservation.

Due to my earlier experiences regarding the challenges of information management, I focused on ECM and records management. The role of archivist gave me insights into the challenges of implementing effective information management strategies and the task of convincing management and staff of the value of good records management practices to efficiency, accountability, transparency and for retaining the corporate and societal memory. The challenges that I encountered in the workplace, aroused my interest to establish whether ECM
and records management could be harmonized to lead to a proactive and holistic approach to information management. I did this by examining the interface between Enterprise Content Management and records management. This research resulted in a licentiate thesis entitled “The Interface Between Enterprise Content Management and Records Management in Changing Organizations” which I defended in December 2011. I thereafter started contemplating the next phase of the Ph D project. The findings of the licentiate research compelled me to undertake a study on information culture, because I discovered that collaboration issues and the attitudes that existed among the municipal employees also exacerbated information and records management challenges.

To strengthen the quality of the research, I included a third municipality in Belgium. This municipality had offered my former institute a consultancy to evaluate two studies written by two IT companies. The studies were pre-studies of an attempt to implement an ECM solution in the municipality. I was appointed project leader for the consultancy since the evaluation was based on my licentiate research. This is what inspired me to include this medium sized municipality in my continued research. I had also during the consultancy acquainted myself with some of the information management problems that the municipality was facing.

The following publications have derived from the Ph D research project:


This thesis is an integration of the published licentiate research and the last study of the Ph D project that has focused on information culture. The entire thesis builds on the list of the articles mentioned above except for article No. 8. Though this paper was a result of the Ph D project, its results are not included in the thesis. The licentiate thesis was done by publications. This meant that it constituted a cover paper that linked the published articles together and the first four articles of the licentiate project numbered 6, 7, 10, 11. Article No. 6 was the first publication and derived from a joint study that I conducted with a fellow researcher. This is also indicated in chapter 4 where the study is presented. The rest of the articles included in the thesis are based on my work. Article 5 is a book chapter based on the results of my licentiate thesis. Article No. 4 is a publication that was still pending from the licentiate studies. Article No. 9 is the licentiate thesis.

The final thesis is a monograph and integrates the licentiate findings and the information culture study findings that have also been published as indicated in article Nos. 1, 2 and 3. This integration required a rewrite of chapter 1 in order to include the information culture study. Chapter 2 was also rewritten to include the concept of information culture. The information culture study meant undertaking additional literature that led to the rewrite of chapter 3 to accommodate new references. Chapter 4 is an integration of the research findings from the licentiate research. Chapter 5 presents the research findings of the information culture study. Chapters 6 and 7 have been rewritten to incorporate the information culture results and conclusions. Precaution has been taken not to change the licentiate research findings.

The licentiate research was carried out under the auspices of the Centre for Digital Information Management (CEDIF) at Mid Sweden University. CEDIF was a three year research and development project funded by the European Union and managed by Mid Sweden University in co-operation with the county board of Västernorrland and the municipalities of Sundsvall and Härnösand. I would therefore like to acknowledge the financial assistance received from the European Union Objective 2 funding.

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I would also like to thank Dr. Janine Douglas for the help she gave me during the licentiate thesis writing. Adjunct Prof. Pekka Henttonen, I thank you for your invaluable comments. I would like to thank Dr. Gillian Oliver for her guidance during the information culture study.

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To the future doctoral student; this has been a journey full of tears and it has humbled me a lot. It however does not need to be this way. Ensure you have a written agreement regarding research funds before making a decision to embark on doctoral studies. Lack of funds amidst a Ph D project can derail you from your dream if you are not a strong person and causes a lot of distress.

Proscovia Svärd, May 2014