Playing Nicely: Managing Electronic Records at Colleges & Universities

S. Victor Fleischer, M.A., M.L.I.S.
University Archivist and Head, Archival Services
Associate Professor of Bibliography
Background
Background

The University of Akron

- 21,000 students
- Over 2,200 faculty
- Over 5,500 staff
- 87 buildings on 222 acre campus
- 3 regional campuses
- 200 undergraduate majors
- 100 Master’s degrees
- 4 law degrees
- 12 colleges/schools
- Over 60 academic departments
- Over 200 auxiliary/support departments
Background

Laws/Policies

• State Law
  – Ohio Revised Code 149.33 (State Records Program)

• University Policy
  – 3359-11-11 (University Records Officer)
  – 3359-7-01.1 (Records Compliance Officer)
  – 3359-11-11.1 (Electronic Records Retention)
Background

Archival Services

• Mission
  – Division of University Libraries that collects, preserves, and provides access to primary source materials that document the history of the university and the region

• Areas
  – University Archives
  – Special Collections
    • Regional History Collections or Manuscript Collections
    • Rare Books
    • Local Government Records (9 counties)
  – Records Management (main campus and 3 branch campuses)
Background

Archival Services

• Statistics
  – 36,000 square foot facility
  – 40,000 cubic feet of materials including:
    • 18,000 volumes
    • 20,000 cubic feet of manuscript collections
    • 4,000 cubic feet of university archives
    • 4,000 cubic feet of local government records
    • 12,000 cubic feet of records center materials
  – 5,000 inquiries per year
Background

Archival Services

• Personnel
  – 4 full-time staff
    • University Archivist/Head of Archives
    • Processing Archivist
    • Reference Archivist
    • Records Manager
  – 1 part-time staff (Special Projects Archivist)
  – 6 student assistants (4 archives/2 records management)
Background

Procedures/Guidelines

• RM Program
  – Training
    • Individual
    • Group training/presentations
    • Workshops
    • Training manual
  – Forms
    • Records Transfer Form
    • Destruction Form
    • Records Inventory Form
  – Website
    • Records Management (www.uakron.edu/recordsmanagement)
    • OGC Website (www.uakron.edu/ogc)
  – Liaisons/Records Coordinators
  – Promotional materials
Challenges
Challenges

Staffing/Time

• Archival Services (4 full-time; 2 working on RM)
  – University Archivist/Head of Archival Services
  – Records Manager
  – Support Staff
  – Student Assistants (auditing/retrieval)

• Office of General Counsel (4 attorneys & 3 administrative assistants—1 working on RM)
  – Records Compliance Officer/Associate General Counsel

• Liaisons/Records Coordinators
  – Usually College/Department Administrative Assistants
  – Student Assistants
Challenges

Communication/Support

• Deans/VPs/Department Heads
  – Limited support/buy-in
  – Difficult to get everyone to appoint liaisons/records coordinators
  – Some don’t respond to requests for info/destruction approval

• Liaisons/Records Coordinators
  – Difficulty getting responses for info/training
  – Difficult to get them to transfer archival records or to do records inventory for paper and electronic records

• IT
  – Sometimes don’t bring Archives/RM/OGC to table
  – Purchasing RM/imaging software without Archives/RM/OGC input
  – Difficult to get response regarding backup, migration, preservation, disaster planning, and server space

• Why? (lack of staff/time/resources, apathy, don’t take seriously until there is a problem)
Challenges

Understanding of RM Program, Policies, & Guidelines

• Unsanctioned Records Management Committee
  – Created own records schedule (already had one in place—IUC)
  – Had to be disbanded
  – Unapproved schedule kept resurfacing

• Records Storage/Destruction/Archiving
  – Try to archive records that aren’t archival
  – Try to store records that have passed legal retention period
  – Store records in Records Center that are still active
  – Don’t realize that retention schedule applies to electronic records—Think once digitized can keep forever

• Not bringing Archives/RM to table—don’t understand our role (need more training!)
Challenges

Control, Management, and Storage of Digital Records on Campus

• Numerous electronic records being produced in digital age—hard to control/manage all of them
• Not enough staff, time, and resources to properly manage paper let alone electronic records generated by university
• Not digitizing and storing electronic records according to best practices
  – File naming conventions
  – File directories to facilitate retrieval/access
  – File by record type/retention period to facilitate destruction
  – Not digitizing at high res or saving in proper format
  – Employees think once digitized can keep forever
• Not enough server space
Challenges

RM Software

• In-House
  – Pros
    • Cheaper
  – Cons
    • Lots of time to create and maintain
    • When programmer/developer leaves knowledge goes with him/her

• Out of Box (Oracle RM)
  – Pros
    • Does everything? (e-mail, Word/Excel files, websites, social media, etc.)
    • Good support
  – Cons
    • More expensive $500,000-$1 million)
Challenges

RM Software

• Management of numerous systems:
  – NolijWeb—for document imaging and management
    • Purchased without input from Archives/RM
    • Employees were digitizing “willy-nilly”: records that are not archival, have short retention periods, or have passed legal retention period and should be destroyed
    • Do not destroy records once digitized—mentality that can keep forever
    • Not storing by retention code to facilitate destruction
    • Recently eliminated without input from Archives/RM
  – BePress—for institutional repository
  – CONTENTdm—for archival records
  – Zasio—to manage archives and records inventory

• Digital Assets Committees
  – 2 committees (oversight and working committee)
Discussion
Questions/Topics

For Discussion

1. Are you getting people at your institutions to comply with your records program, especially regarding electronic records? If so, how are you doing it? If not, what suggestions do you have to get compliance?

2. How do you get IT and others to work with you and bring you to the table in regards to management of electronic records, especially the purchase and management of software?

3. How do you get buy in from your administration to make electronic records management a priority?

4. Do your university policies address electronic records and if so does it include e-mail, websites, social media, text messages, etc.? Are these rules adequate and if not what else do they need to address?

5. What software are you using to manage your institution’s electronic records (NolijWeb, Oracle, Zasio, Preservica, Archive-It, Internet Archive, home grown system, etc.) and what are the pros and cons of these systems?

6. Others?
Solutions
Solutions

Ideas

• More training (possibly online tutorials)
• More publicity (E-mail blasts)
• More buy in from administration/top down approach (push out to Deans/VPs again)—mandate?
• More software?
• Surveys (to liaisons/records coordinators)?
• Acceptance—can’t control everyone or everything—do the best we can