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Convergence of the records management and enterprise content management in the digital environment

Ozgur Kulcu [a] *, Tolga Cakmak [a]

aHacettepe University Faculty of Letters, Department of Information Management, Ankara 06800,Turkey

Abstract

This study addresses the effects of the transformation experienced following the introduction of enterprise content management system configuration in the digital environment. The scope of this study comprises the integration of the opportunities provided by digital environment with the information management systems having different contents, including the information systems for administrative, financial and customer relations, the applications of enterprise communication, e-mail, records and archive management developed particularly from 1990s onwards, and the development of approaches to enterprise content management (ECM). In this study, descriptive method is used and the data were obtained through literature review. This study demonstrates that the relationship between records management and ECM applications is linear, and that there is a tendency for integrated systems oriented towards content management in the digital environment, which eventually lead to the convergence of independent enterprise information systems.

Keywords: Records management, information management, e-content management, enterprise content management words.

1. Records and Records Management as the Source of Enterprise Communication and Information

The records created as a part of the structured business process are documentary sources that meet the need for enterprise communication and that are widely used for communication and authentication purposes (Cisco and Strong, 1999, p.172). Unlike other documentary sources, records contain authentic information on the business process of which they form a part and they have evidential value. In this respect, systematic approaches to the creation, editing, distribution, effective use and sorting of the records constitute the field of study of records management (ISO 15489, 2001, p.3; Külcü & Uzun Külcü, 2009, p.265). Forming a significant part of the enterprise information content, records enable and facilitate enterprise activities in terms of:
1.   Executing the work, of which they form a part, regularly, effectively and legally,
2.   Enabling the continuity and consistency of the services,
3.   Supplying the policies, resolutions and outputs to the stakeholders and administrative units,
4.   Harmonizing with administrative and legal requirements, including supervision,
5.   Preventing any legal dispute,
6.   Fulfilling financial and ethical responsibilities,

* Özgür Külcü. Tel.: +90312-297-8200
  kulcu@hacettepe.edu.tr

7. Protecting the rights of employees, customers, and other stakeholders, along with the interests of the enterprise,
8. Ensuring the continuity of work in case of emergency,
9. Rendering the collective and corporate memory continuous (Sprehe, 2005, p.298).

Along with the ever-increasing use of its applications, the scope of the electronic records management is expanding to include the management of the electronic copies of printed records and the records that are born digital. Electronic records management systems either include the creation of electronic records and files, e-mail management, scanning and access, integration of work flow, user interfaces, mobile working environment, remote access, etc., (Azad, 2008, p. xxii) or become a part of the applications made in this regard.

2. Records Management; Life Cycle, Records Continuum Model and Digital Content Management

Triggered by the information technologies, the amount of the records have increased to an incomparable level to those created in the previous centuries; however, it is more difficult to access the complicated masses of information than it was in the past, which is an irony in itself (Duranti, 2000, p.10; Runardotter, 2007, p.3). The ever-diversifying sources of information and documentary structures render the problems equally complicated (Runardotter, 2007, p.3). The major problems experienced in the management of information sources in the digital environment are to ensure the continued existence of the digital information, to render it accessible even though the related technology becomes obsolete, and to ensure the authenticity and reliability of the content and scope of information (Runardotter, 2007; Ruusalepp, 2005). The digital content increasingly converge the enterprise information, information systems and records management applications, which fall under different disciplines of business in printed format. Being a part of the studies carried out for information systems, the issue of enterprise content management is also required to be addressed together with its administrative, financial, legal and social aspects (Lavoie & Dempsey, 2004). Content management should not merely be dealt with in its technical aspect; it has to be addressed together with every component affecting the information systems.

The management and preservation of information and records in digital systems have an influence on traditional approaches to various extents. For example, the concept of "life cycle", forming the basis for records management approaches, has started to be addressed together with the records continuum approach. Within this context, digital content management becomes an important component of records management. The traditional life cycle approach defines the record procedures linearly within the process of creation, editing and disposition, and accordingly, digital records might be identified simultaneously in different environments and under different conditions (McKemmish, 2001). According to the records continuum approach, the records are in a constant state of "being". The information system experts and the administrators of records and archives, defined by individual and separated tasks according to the life cycle approach, are described as nested within the recordskeeping system under the new circumstances (Reed, 2000). The records continuum approach stipulates the following four fundamental affirmations:

1. One record concept is acknowledged within the context of information systems, and records and archive management,
2. The quality of the records is defined by logical, rather than physical characteristics,
3. Enterprise social networks and business processes are integrated with recordskeeping systems.
4. The experts of records and archive management are responsible for the organization of the enterprise information (Upward, 1998; Runardotter, 2007, p.73).

3. The Emergence of Enterprise Content Management as a New Discipline

From past to present, as the indispensable components of social life, enterprises have had the need for information and records systems to perform their services and to ensure their continuum at various levels. Information systems related to administrative and financial affairs, and the systems for the management of personnel affairs and customer relations, in-house and external correspondence, communication, records and archives might be considered in this context. Throughout history, enterprises have gone to great lengths for rendering the content of

the information and records that they possessed accessible and available for the related individuals. As of the mid-1990s, however, they resorted substantially to electronic systems, for their activities with informative content. Instant messaging, scheduling, online meeting, content sharing, group management, records management, information management, application sharing, whiteboarding and business process management, which include enterprise information content, are considered in this context. These applications include, on one hand, unstructured ad hoc processes, and highly defined and structured processes on the other. The simplest and the most flexible solution supporting cooperative work have been the e-mail systems. In 1990s, the groupware, reknowned with the e-mail pioneer 'Lotus Notes' has improved and plenty of similar applications have been developed. The groupware has made important contributions to the development of the infrastructure for enterprise information and communication technologies. Late 1980s and early 1990s have been marked by fierce discussions within the institutional framework on such concepts as the workflow management software, redefinition of the business processes of the enterprises, automation, change management and benchmarking (Cimtech Ltd, 2009, pp.10-11; Waldron, 2004).

With the influence of the technological developments, new fields have emerged along with the fields of records and records management within the scope of enterprise content management. E-mail management has been one of these new fields. Enterprises started to communicate officially via e-mail; regulations and policies for vesting the enterprise e-mails with the quality of record have been introduced. Particularly in recent years, important studies have been carried out for developing policies that designate e-mail applications. The regulations on e-mails introduced in many states of the USA and in certain regions of the UK might be cited as an example (New South Wales State Records, 1998, Entlich, 2006). In addition, many publications stating that e-mails constitute official records have appeared in recent years (Wilkins, 2008; New South Wales State Records, 1998; Murdoch University, 2005; University of Newcastle, 2010). In this respect, the introduction of policies and regulations on e-mail management notably in the USA, and in many other countries (Czech Republic, Denmark, etc.) from the late 1990s onwards is considered to be a significant development in terms of enterprise content management (GFi, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c).

4. Conclusion

The records, which are created as a part of the business process management and that are used as enterprise information sources, as well as the systems designed for their organization have recently experienced a swift evolution. This evolution has led to the transition from printed into electronic environment, yet more importantly to the emergence of new approaches and the convergence of different information systems. These conditions necessitate addressing the content firstly in the scope of document/records management, management of administrative and financial information systems and web content management in different environments ranging from structured information that is readable by electronic systems to image-based or printed information, within the framework of ECM applications.

One of the main reasons for the abovementioned conditions is digitalization. Along with the swiftly increasing amount of the content, that is already born digital (Tonta, 2009, p.757) the digitalization is listed among the priorities on the agenda of many enterprises. The digitalization, definition and management of the content, which requires to be digitalized within the organizational framework and that is traditionally addressed within the scope of records management, necessitate multi-perspective approaches. Furthermore, digital content management necessitates new approaches rather than traditional linear definitions. For example, applications such as the creation or provision, editing, distribution and disposition of the records in the digital environment and the management and security of the information in electronic systems are no longer the field of occupation of different departments. In the new environments, it is possible to define the entry, editing, preservation or security of new data at any point within the system.

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