Facilitators’ feedback from session 1 – Records Management issues:

a) Where does RM currently sit within your organisation and where should it sit?

Main representation in this group was from University and the Health Service. In both FoI and Records Management seemed to be very closely linked, usually both roles within the same job description. Archive services (where they existed) for some reason seemed to be split from Records Management (the split between “dead” and living” records), although systems were very similar, and in one place there was close physical contact between the two.

Placing of RM within the organisation was quite variable, and included the Secretariat, Corporate Services, and in one case the Faculty Officer for the Faculty of Science (can’t quite see the logic!) It seemed that it ended up with the senior staff least able to resist.

All had a reporting process to senior managers.

The numbers of staff with records management functions were tiny compared to the total staff numbers within the organisation. However, one small organisation (20-30 staff) had an EDRMS and every member of staff managed their own records, and they did not have to have an individual identified as a “records manager”.

b) What is your organisation’s perception of RM?

Records Management tends to be seen by the organisation as a separate function that is the sole responsibility of someone with RM in their title or job description. Members of the group saw it far more broadly as a function within departments and responsibility of individuals. There was a comment that actually everyone does already records manage, although it may be completely idiosyncratic and not follow any organisational standards. It’s a matter of getting people to understand that they do already sort things and have a retention schedule (even if it is only to get rid of things once the pile gets too big) and persuade them to follow a corporate standard.

It was felt that individuals within organisations were beginning to have a concept of records management. However, it was also felt that although senior managers might get reports and have approved RM strategies, the impression was that some still have not fully grasped the implications of Records Management for thier organisation. It’s more than just producing policies and procedures; it’s about getting into the work areas and getting changes through heads of department (a more front-line approach).

Records Management did have links to Information Management, but Knowledge Management wasn’t even on the radar!
c) What changes are currently happening to the role of RM within your organisation?

RM did seem to be getting a higher profile within organisations. This is particularly the case in individual departments when a difficult or complex FoI request comes in, or when there is a crisis in storage space. General awareness levels do seem to be increasing.

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