Breaking the Barriers of traditional Records Management

Records, Records Management, Enterprise Content Management and MoReq2

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1. Records and Records Management

The perception of records and records management has changed over time. In the transition from a world of paper and folders to the digital age, the definition and understanding of records and records management had to be adjusted. The most widely accepted definition of records and records management are given by the ISO standard 14589:

> *"Record*
> *Information created, received, and maintained as evidence and information by an organisation or person, in pursuance of legal obligations or in the transaction of business."*

> *"Records Management*
> *Field of management responsible for the efficient and systematic control of the creation, receipt, maintenance, use and disposition of records, including processes for capturing and maintaining evidence of and information about business activities and transactions in the form of records."*

But different users have different interpretations of the terminology and what records management is:

- The archivist sees it as “pre-preservation”
- The public sector records manager sees it as result of a “bureaucratic process”
- The chief compliance officer sees it as “legal evidence” of his business activities
- The IT manager sees it as “application” of his ERP-solution
- The programmer sees it as “structure and fields” in his legacy application …
- The database manager sees it as “contents of tables” …
- The music fan sees it as the “directory functionality” of his LastFM records …

Accordingly, there is a need for clearer and more general definition of the term “record” before we can talk about records management. Records can easily be defined by their attributes like business value, legal value, context, integrity, persistence, authenticity, defined metadata, consistency, classification, and more. These attributes separate records from other types of documents and information objects. This leads to the following five step approach to define the term “record:”

A record is

- Defined by its legal and business value,
- A stable, authoritative and consistent information object,
- Independent of its physical format,
- Made up of its contents enriched with context and descriptive information,
- Identified by a unique identifier and its classification.

In the electronic world, records can originate from web content, office documents, scanned paper, emails, media assets, forms, files, images, videos, blogs, audios, twitters, PDFs, datasets, etc. Some propose general use of the term “information objects” only. But there is still a need for the concept of a record. Not all information objects will become a record, and not all information objects, or records for that matter, will end up in an archive. Records management is not digital preservation. Digital preservation is a support function of records management to ensure the integrity and persistence of the records. And we should not forget that we live in a hybrid environment. Records can also be paper-based and should be managed by the database of the records management system combined and synchronized with electronic information objects.

One question is whether records management will stay a discipline of its own or if it will become a general feature of all business activities. In the context of electronic records management systems, this leads to the next question, whether an electronic records management solution is stand-alone or part of the IT infrastructure serving other applications.

2. Comparing different Records Management approaches

The differences in regard to approach records management systems can be shown using the industry term ECM Enterprise Content Management by comparison with the MoReq2 concept.

The ECM Enterprise Content Management concept

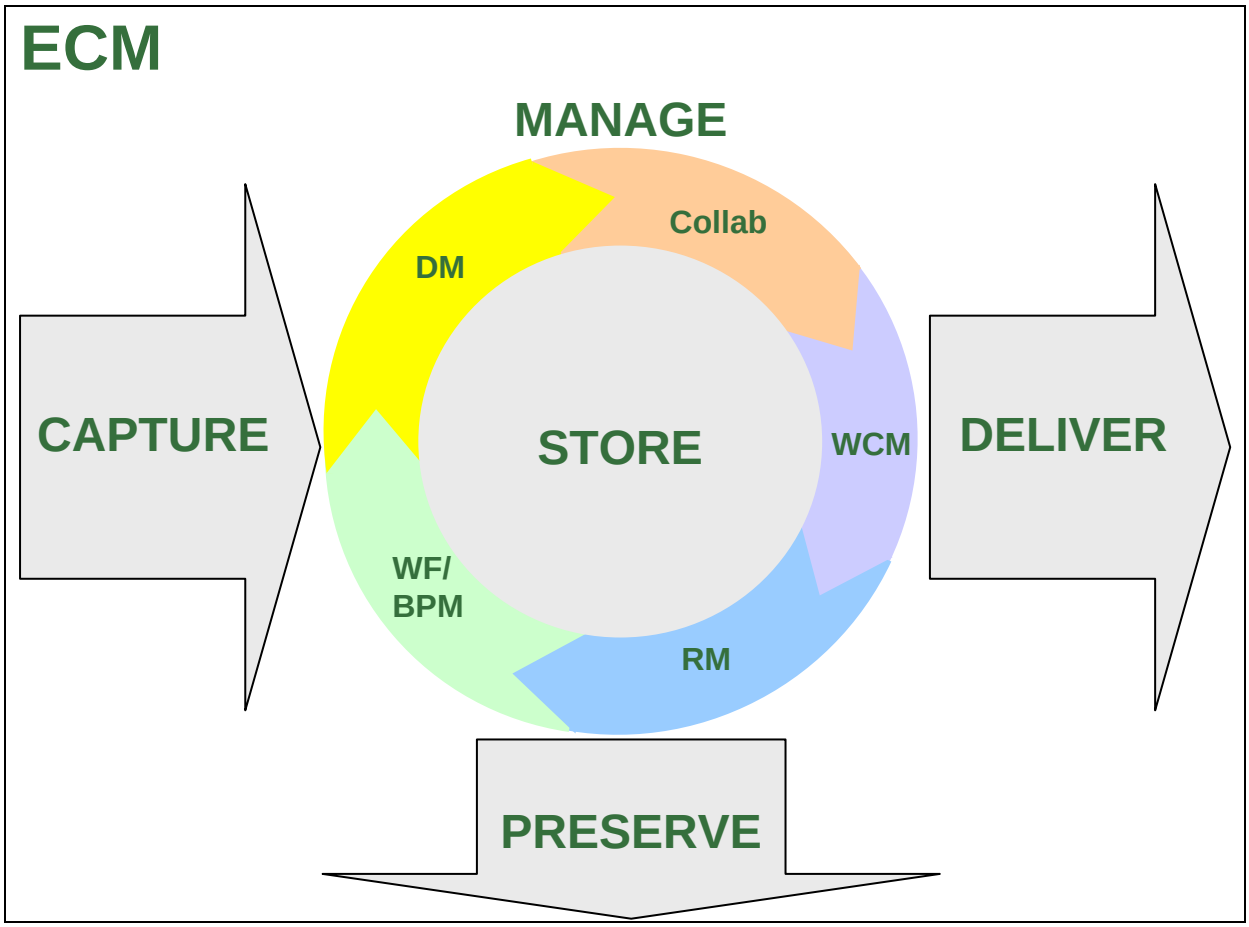

Fig.1 The AIIM ECM model with the five major components capture, manage, store, deliver and preserve. The manage component contains the modules document management, collaboration, web content management, records management, and workflow / business process management.

The definition of ECM by the international industry organization AIIM international in 2008:

> *"Enterprise Content Management (ECM) is the strategies, methods and tools used to capture, manage, store, preserve, and deliver content and documents related to organizational processes. ECM tools and strategies allow the management of an organization's unstructured information, wherever that information exists."*

In the ECM model, RM records management is an integrated module which is part of the process of managing information and interacts with the other components of the ECM model like workflow, document management, digital preservation, input management etc.

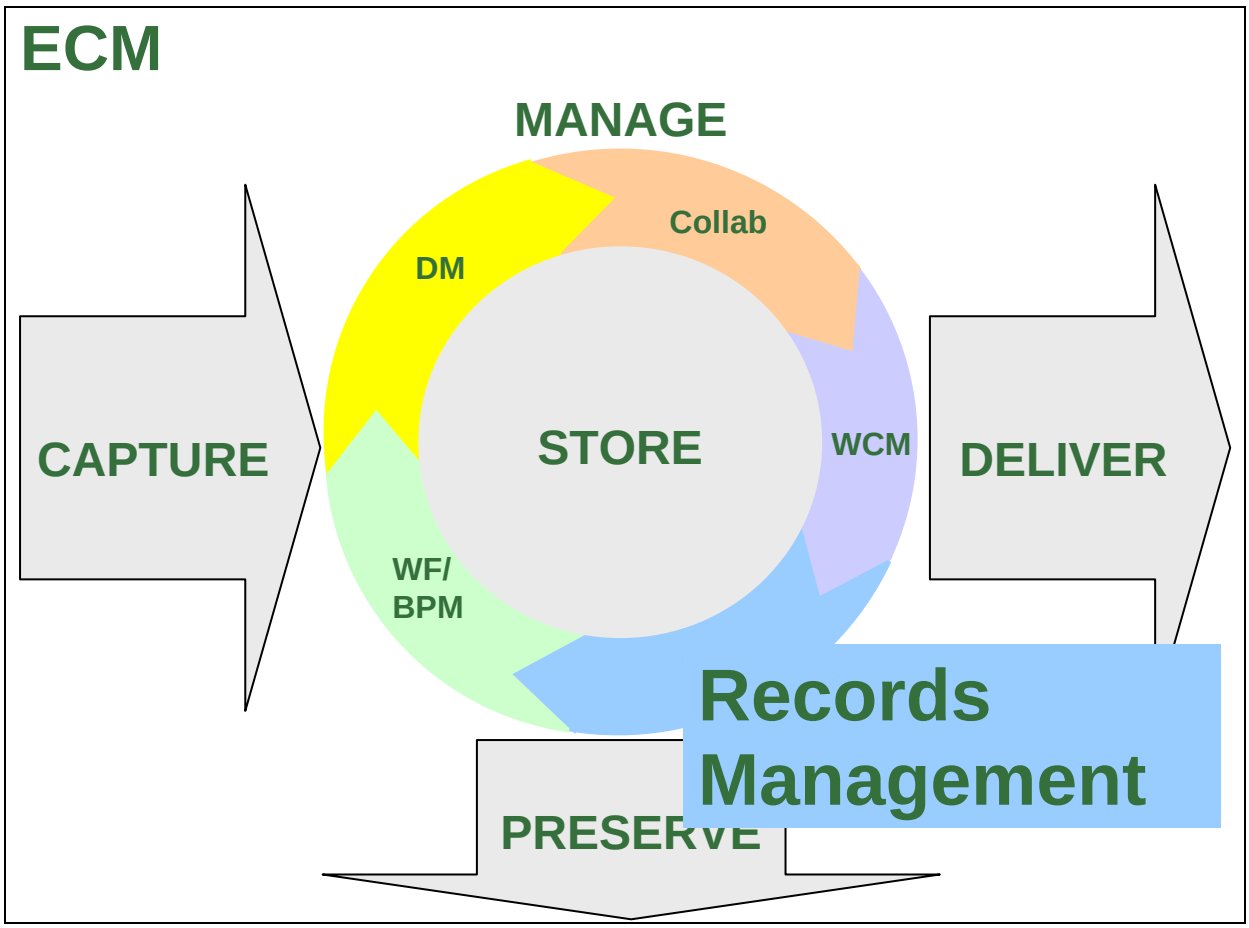

Fig.2 In the AIIM ECM model records management is an integral part of the manage modules.

The MoReq2 Records Management concept

When we compare this model with the MoReq2 approach, we find similar terminology. MoReq2 also describes capture, store, preserve and other components of the AIIM ECM model.

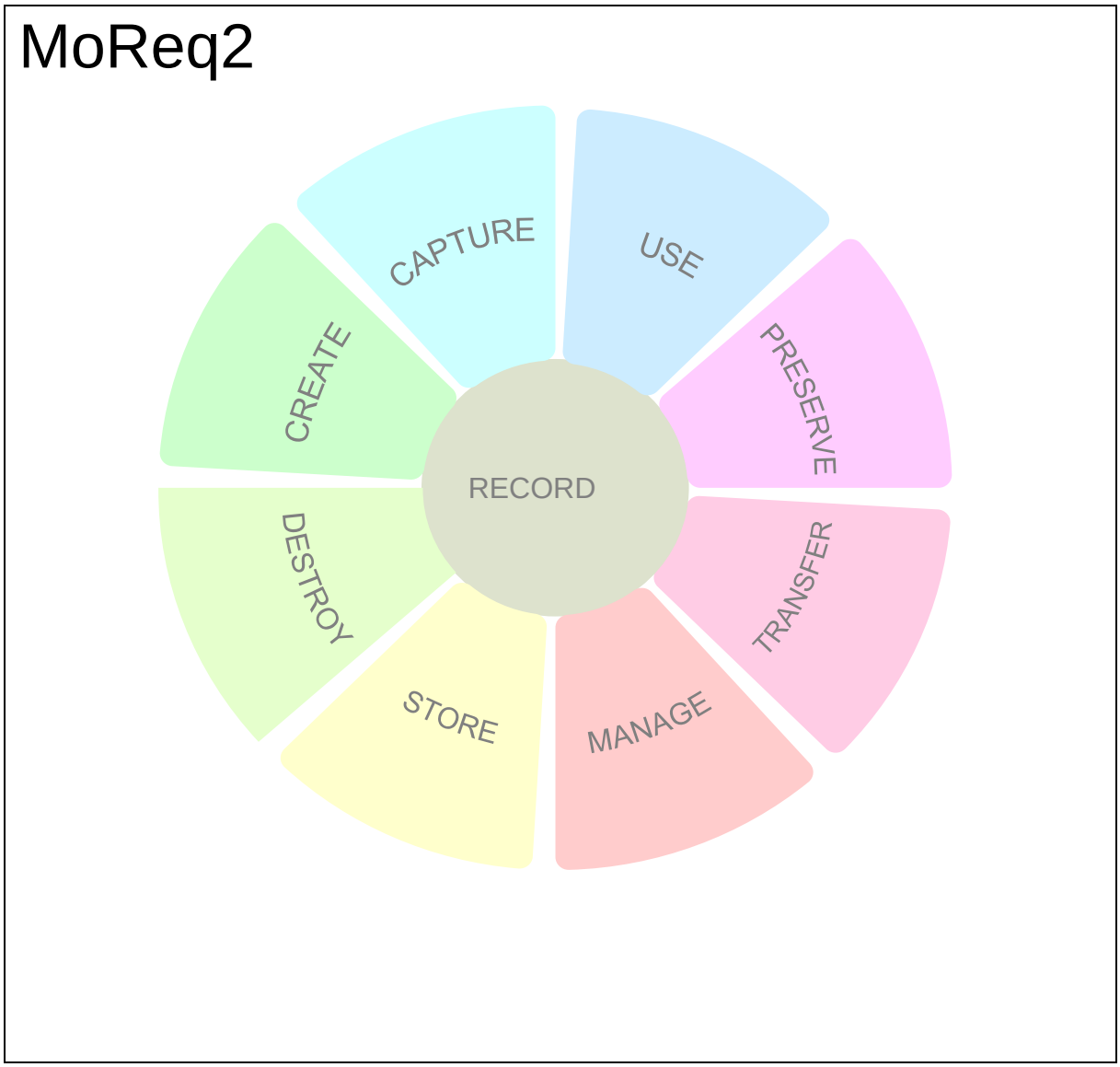

Fig.3 The MoReq2 functionality model.

The principal difference becomes even more obvious when we compare the ECM model with the MoReq2 structure model.

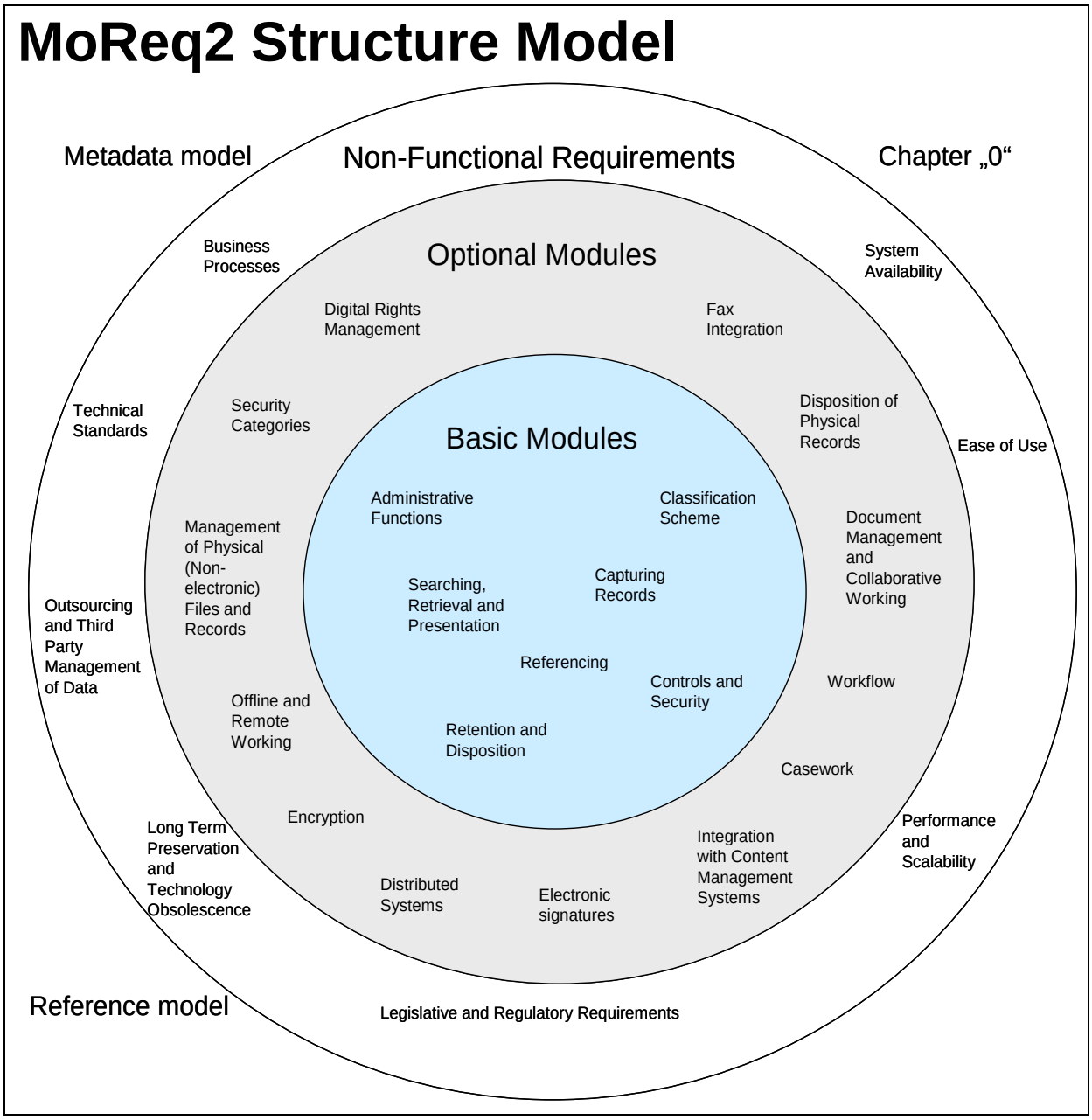

Fig.4 The MoReq2 structure model.

Most ECM components are only satellites in the MoReq2 records management model. The focus is different. In the future, records management can no longer be positioned as the “centre of the world” but must become an integral part of every business application. The ECM approach to records management is more realistic and more advanced.

This can be demonstrated as well in regard to the adoption of new technologies. ECM was enhanced in recent years to come to grips with the challenges of “2.0” whilst Records Management and Electronic Archival are just in an “experimental phase”. The wave of digital records, the information overflow of the last decade, has not yet arrived at the gates of archives. But first indicators are visible, i.e. the challenge of managing and archiving the

presidential records of the Bush administration, which caused substantial difficulty for the NARA National Archives and Records Administration. Millions of emails are possibly lost and the rest of the overwhelming mass of electronic documents from the Bush administration is in bad order.

3. Records Management challenges in the era of 2.0

New technologies provide many challenges to records management.

The technology challenge

Most "new" Technologies do not natively provide objects suitable to become consistent records or to be archived properly. This especially refers to personalisation & individualisation of web site content, media like blogs, twitters, instant messages and wikis, proprietary formats for multimedia objects, mashups and distributed resources, non-persistent URLs, links and content, etc. We might even have to repeat the discussion, if we need a definition of something like a "digital original."

The cultural challenge

New perceptions on how to generate and use information. The value of information is often disregarded or cannot be defined when information is originally created. Developments like social communities, digital immigrants versus digital natives, "always online," new ways of communication and interaction, rights management and data protection issues etc. change the landscape for records management. Records management today has to start with the creation of information, otherwise information cannot be managed when it arrives in records management and archive systems at a later stage. It is not only about the perception of records management and records managers' tasks; we might even have to discuss, again, the information society and social implications of what we are doing.

The information growth challenge

We face exponential growth of information and no sufficient "management" of it. It is not only the sheer volume of bits and bytes growing to petabytes and exabytes, it also about uncontrolled redundancy, the identification of the value of information, the growing dependency on the availability and accuracy of information, etc. Records management has to address the complete lifecycle of records and is in no way only a "pre-preservation" issue. Records management is essential to fight the uncontrolled growth of information. There also needs to be a discussion on whether records management should be part of every software application which generates, processes or receives information that might become a record. This would mean no more special records management solutions, but instead records management as part of every software and IT infrastructure.

The role of records managers and of records management users in the era of 2.0

To demonstrate some of the current challenges I use some provocative theses with possible positions of traditional records managers and archivists on one side, and on the other side the users who grew up with Nintendo, iPhones and Web 2.0.

"Records managers are excellent in structured search! They are used to expert facetted search forms. |
2.0-users hate complex data entry forms! They want to trust in automatic categorization."

"Records managers are aware of the importance of context information! They are used to spending hours to create orderly structures. |
2.0-users hate complex search forms! They love 'single field search' á la 'Google' finding everything everywhere."

"Records managers still believe they own their records and really care for them. |
2.0-users are just using information, it's their daily life."

"Records managers know perfectly how to navigate by tree views and folder-sub-folder-volume-hierarchies! It's just about having fun. |
2.0-users are lazy! They don't care where they store their stuff."

"Records managers know about the importance of selection and disposal! They work until late in the night to keep their repositories clean. |
2.0-users will loose their temper when the interface doesn't work like a media library or Youtube! Or they get bored and just stop to search what they have been looking for."

"Records managers are specialists in determining the value of records! They are working busily to keep information unique, sober, accessible and available for all time. |
2.0-users know, that a 1-TB-harddisk at the discount grocery store is now only 100 €! They believe that there will always be enough storage space for everything."

"Records managers are fond of their fileplans, thesaurus, taxonomies, ontologies and classification schemes! They'll go through 7 levels of hierarchy just to find the right spot for a note. |
2.0-users have no idea about a record and who might be responsible to store it safely! Everybody gets copies of everything, so somebody will take care of it."

"Records managers are prepared to work hard to learn every function of their records management solution! With extensive training every software interface can be turned into a usable tool. |
2.0-users believe in easy-to-use tagging and folksonomy! If there are enough users choosing the same tag, it can't be wrong."

> *"Records managers know by heart (or possibly by their retrieval system) the place of every object! They are in control of everything in the electronic realm and in the world of paper documents. |*
> *2.0-users love their iPod! If the user interface is not sexy and doesn't work like Facebook, they will just shut the application down.*
>
> *"Records managers still have an academic view of their work and often forget about the end user – who is not a trained records manager. |*
> *2.0-users are just users who want to have easy access to the correct information at any time."*
>
> *"2.0-users, the digital natives, started life in a virtual world …and the systems are no longer jailed in their silicon cages. With RFID, robotics, cameras, and sensors they are entering the real world and taking control. |*
> *Will the profession of the traditional records manager be replaced by the user or even by systems doing their job of declaring, classifying, ordering and archiving records?"*

The role of records managers and records management has to be redefined, including all processes of when and how an information object becomes a record. We are already running out of time, and future historians might name our era "The dark age of the early information society."

4. Where do we stand now with MoReq2?

MoReq2 might be an answer to the questions of how to handle and manage records in a professional way. In fact everything is now in place:

- The Moreq2 requirements are online and printed in English,
- The test material is in electronic form, including test cases and available test data. The test descriptions substantiate the text of the requirements
- The XML schema is defined and allows the creation of interfaces to exchange records and classification schemes to define the structures of the records management system
- The first contract with a test centre for the certification of MoReq2 compliant software products is signed, and the first test candidates are lining up.
- The MoReq Governance Board for the maintenance, dissemination and administration of the MoReq2 specification is established,
- First translations and "Chapter 0s" are coming in. The French translation and chapter 0 was published in time for the DLM Forum Toulouse conference.

This is a good starting point to gather experiences, initiate improvements and generate acceptance. There has been a lot of criticism of MoReq2 – too long, too many test cases, too restrictive, too complex. There is still much to do to make MoReq2 work and to demonstrate the value of MoReq2 for the public sector as well for private sector organizations, both on a small scale and for huge enterprise implementations.

There is an urgent need to demonstrate the usefulness and usability of MoReq2:

- Even a complex structure can be easily used with modern software architecture, optimized applications and ergonomic user interfaces.
- Used in the right way, MoReq2 will help save money and increase efficiency for all applications related to records management.
- Not everybody will need every function. We have to make the modular approach of MoReq2 work.
- Systems must not only be capable of MoReq2 functionality, they must also be able to support even office workers with their daily work. Records management applications must not be designed solely for the professional records manager and archivist.
- MoReq2 must also be used as an educational tool, in the academic world as well in day-to-day life.

The good news is that MoReq2 is prepared to serve these purposes.

Some ideas on DLM future activities

With regard to the future development of MoReq2, the DLM Forum must initiate further activities. The DLM Forum should concentrate on the Forum's assets, combining the competences of archives and records management. Future action plans should consider the following:

- **Archiving**
  Developing strategies for the challenge of new and ever-changing formats, defining interfaces between records management and digital preservation, standardization of a unique access interface for long-term archival systems, methods for lossless continuous migration, and other related archive-centric topics.

- **Connectivity**
  Testing the interoperability of MoReq2 solutions and the records interchange using the MoReq2 XML scheme in practice. The sponsoring and monitoring of such pilots with the dissemination of the results to public will boost the use of MoReq2.

- **Optimizing and Expanding**
  Putting more focus on the optional modules of MoReq2, expanding its scope to new technologies, and creating feasible productive subsets of MoReq2 will encourage the use of the standard by the ECM industry as well by the user organisations.

- **Dissemination**
  The dissemination of MoReq2 and related results from certifications, first practice and real-life applications must be combined with educational programmes, training, events, publications and other activities for building reputation and bringing the message to the public as well to the private sector.

- **Maintenance**
  Although the MoReq Governance Board is now established, we cannot just do maintenance of the MoReq2 standard, and especially not "indefinitely." Technology and the use of technology are changing rapidly! This will lead us to the need by 2010 at the latest of having to do a re-scoping of MoReq2 or even something like MoReq3. A new (or substantially updated) version – let's call it MoReq3 – will be necessary for the year 2013 by the latest.

A paradigm change is needed

Last but not least, we need a paradigm change in records management to adapt to technical and cultural change. Otherwise we will see a paradigm shift to a place where the records management and digital preservation community does not want to be! With the next version of MoReq, we really have to break the barriers of traditional records management.

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