



Nationaal Archief
*Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en
Wetenschap*

Risk-based appraisal of records

Charles Jeurgens

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Conclusions

- ❖ Archivists and records managers tend to treat all records as equally important
- ❖ Human- and financial resources available for records management to substantiate this basic principle are structurally insufficient
- ❖ The result is: lack of quality of information- and records management and high-risk of uncontrolled information losses
- ❖ Archivists and records management should be encouraged to make greater efforts in understanding the business processes to be able to develop balanced risk-management approaches in records-management.
- ❖ Appraisal and selection are an organic part of records management and risk-management strategy and start at the moment of creation of information



Risk and risk-management

Risk: the effect of uncertainty on set objectives/aims

Risk management:

Limited view: risk-reduction  **protect value** and control potential threatening and damaging effects

Expanded view: risk-taking  **generate value** (the hunting caveman was confronted with many dangers but without taking risks he would starve)





All records are equal, but some records are more equal than others

The basis of the Dutch Archives Law:

'governmental agencies are obliged to bring and to keep their records in good, accessible and arranged condition and bear responsibility for destruction of the eligible records'

❖ Based on a fictitious assumption that all records can be brought under control

But as we know: reality is different

❖ DMS/RMS manage only limited part of records





Different perspective



NO RISK
-
NO GAIN

“We will only be able effectively to appraise larger volumes of records if we focus on our appraisal methods, on selecting what should be documented rather than what documentation should be kept” (Bearman, 1989).



Why a different perspective is necessary?

- ❖ Managing all records at the required level is not realistic
- ❖ It is already common to make selections of records that are registered and brought under control (DMS/RMS).
 - ❖ these selections are often implicitly made without having an overall picture of the business processes
 - ❖ DMS/RMS contain limited kinds of records (generally no database records, emails etc)
- ❖ Discrepancy between business-processes and information management processes
 - ❖ Knowledge problem
 - ❖ Silo problem



Parliamentary Board of Inquiry ICT, October 2014

“After two years of intensive research and many information requests the committee concludes that the government is not in control of its information management. The committee received information late, incomplete and sometimes even incorrect. Government agencies have serious defects in their archiving processes, sometimes neglect legal retention periods and it is –to put it mildly- striking that in some sensitive matters there is no documentation at all. In this way the Parliament can not fulfil its constitutional right to carry out a parliamentary research. This is alarming and denies the constitutional position of the Parliament”.



Possible solutions

- ❖ Invest more in knowing the business-processes (Deming: If you can't describe what you are doing as a process, you don't know what you're doing)
- ❖ Identify the high risk processes. Risk areas have been defined as political, financial, legal, societal and operational management
- ❖ Focus is on being in control of information management of high risk processes.
- ❖ Pilots by:
 - ❖ Ministry of Defence
 - ❖ Ministry of Finance



Appraisal and selection

- ❖ Integrated in records-management and connected to business processes
- ❖ Retention-periods are based on explicit risk assessment
- ❖ Risk assessment is a continuum. It is no longer expedient to make retention schedules for a period of 20 years