

Working Together

Promoting Collaboration Among Archivists, Records Managers and Information Technologists



This briefing describes the issues that are being encountered in dealing with the long-term preservation of electronic records and documents and reports on a December, 1998 workshop sponsored by the Coalition for Networked Information (CNI) with support from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC).

Building on CNI's successful Working Together workshop format, previously offered to promote collaboration between librarians, information technologists, and others, CNI offered a specialized workshop focused on developing partnerships to address electronic records and archives issues in higher education institutions, state government, and other organizations.

The purpose of the workshop was to promote the inclusion of archival and records management issues in systems development projects, create incentives for supporting electronic records management concerns, remove organizational barriers that prevent archivists from implementing electronic records programs, and educate archivists and information technologists about their shared responsibilities and interests in preservation of and access to electronic records. The emphasis of the workshop was on ***teamwork*** -- bringing together teams of archivists, records managers, and information technologists who began to develop practical plans for electronic records management that could be implemented at their own institutions.

A number of factors are driving increased collaboration between archivists, records managers, and information technologists. These include:

- Need for integration of institutional information resources
- Laws, regulations, and litigation
- Management trends such as process re-engineering
- Need to support cross-disciplinary work
- Interest in exploiting the potential of technology

However, a number of factors are impeding collaboration within institutions, including:

- Lack of financial resources
- Difficulties with inter-unit communication

- Organizational issues such as territoriality
- Lack of support from upper management
- Fear of change
- Short-term thinking
- Unavailability of workforce
- Fluidity of technology
- Absence of standards

Some areas in which archivists, records managers, and information managers can begin to collaborate include:

- Long-term preservation of institutional websites
- Long-term preservation of official institutional e-mail
- Policies for retention vs. disposal of electronic records
- Clarifying authority for decision-making and policy
- Developing systems for identifying and locating records
- Educating institutional personnel about electronic records policies
- Integrating the archival perspective into system design
- Policies and mechanisms to ensure confidentiality
- Aligning the business interests of various organizational units
- Developing appropriate responses to the legal/regulatory environment
- Examining the long-term economics of electronic preservation

CNI is offering the workshop again on June 21-22, 1999 in Washington, DC.
For more information, see <<http://www.cni.org/>>.