

EVIDENCE-BASED GOVERNANCE IN THE ELECTRONIC AGE: THE IMPORTANCE OF RECORD KEEPING FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE

**SUMMARY SESSION 5, FRIDAY 28 MARCH 2003
1400 TO 1600 EDT**

Sites

- Washington
- Bahamas
- Cayman Islands
- Trinidad and Tobago
- St Kitts and Nevis (via audio)
- St Lucia (via audio)

The Current Situation and Present Needs

In the discussion of the current situation, participating countries began by outlining the current state of their records and access legislation and discussing the role of records in their societies. They then proceeded to discuss the following key issues:

- the fact that governments are moving from paper based systems to electronic systems, particularly to capture information in human resources and payroll; one major challenge is trying to get the right information to human resources managers so that they can make proper decisions
- the strong interest in computerising financial transactions and auditing in order to enable more efficient and timely reporting throughout government and better economic decisions; financial records must be managed as part of these initiatives
- the fact that there has been tremendous growth in the public sector in some countries, affecting the ability of departments to manage their staff and their records
- the difficulty of translating data from earlier paper-based systems to new electronic systems, resulting in inaccurate information
- the absence of standard records management policies in many governments, even though action is underway to automate records; in many countries, there is not a coordinated approach to automation, particularly with regard to the record keeping components

- the related absence of central policies for the management of registry systems, which means that ministries and departments can introduce automation independently without central control
- the fact that, while records management is the foundation of access legislation, many governments have not reconciled access and records legislation so that records are managed effectively
- the fact that public sector reform is underway in many countries, and many governments recognise records management as part of the larger information management/knowledge management concept
- the recognition that technology alone will not solve issues; governments want to take a common sense approach to records, information and knowledge management, as part of transparency and accountability in public sector administration
- the need for strategies to make the transition from paper to electronic records
- the need for adequate resources for all aspects of records management
- the need to sensitise people to information and knowledge sharing, both in relation to formal information sharing and in the wider public community.

The Way Forward

Participants then considered actions that could be taken to improve the record keeping environment in their countries and around the world. They identified the following central issues:

- the role of electronic records management policies as an important part of electronic government; such policies should take into account regulations, security issues, government controls of systems and electronic storage
- the importance of involving the archivist at every stage of development of electronic systems to be sure that the records these systems create are well managed
- the resulting need for archivists to receive adequate funding and training, as well as recognition from senior governments that they are not just keepers of warehouses but that they play a central role in the management of government records and information
- the need for an integrated approach to electronic records management, which requires the establishment of national policies and government-wide initiatives rather than ad hoc activities, especially for automation
- the fact that paper records will remain important to government operations and must be maintained adequately
- the continuing need for funding and financial support for all records-related activities.