

Systems Thinking, Management Standards, and the Quest for Records and Archives Management Relevance

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¹The views of expressed herein are mine and should not be attributed to my current or any of my previous employers



Outline

- Background
 - Records and Archives Management (RAM) Challenges
 - Prominence of Management System Standards
- Objective of the discussion
- Discussion in a multifaceted manner
 - What needs to change
 - Who is involved
 - What change is needed (MSS vs MSR adoption)
 - How it can be implemented (InterPARES models and Systems Thinking practices)
- Areas of further research
- Conclusion



Background - Records and Archives Management (RAM) Challenges

- RAM often seen as peripheral administrative function
- Often this is exacerbated by several related factors:
 - Narrow focus on compliance → “chore” image
 - Complexity and scope across all departments/business units and systems
 - Lack of senior management buy-in → underfunding, low priority
 - Difficulty showing immediate tangible benefits



Background - Prominence of Management System Standards (MSS)

- ISO MSS (9001, 27001, 45001) widely adopted globally
- Directly tied to high-visibility imperatives:
 - Revenue generation
 - Data breach prevention
 - Liability mitigation
- MSS trusted because they deliver measurable, immediate outcomes
- RAM lacks this visibility → marginalization



Objective of the discussion

- Computational Archival Science + Systems Thinking practices offer a pathway to reposition RAM
- Embedding RAM within Management System Standards (MSS) frameworks – especially Management Standards for Records (MSR)
- Reframe RAM as strategic enabler:
 - Business intelligence
 - Digital transformation
 - Safeguarding institutional memory



Discussion - What

CAS and Systems Thinking Practices

- Systems Thinking practices
 1. Investigating a complex system as a whole.
 2. Understanding the relationships within a system.
 3. Thinking in levels.
 4. Communicating information about a system.
 5. Defining systems and managing complexity.

ISO MSS and MSR

- Management System Standards (MSS)
 - Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) approach
 - High-Level Structure (HLS)
- Management Systems for Records (MSR) standards as a gateway for other RAM standards
 1. **ISO 30300** (published in 2020) - Establishes core concepts and roles.
 2. **ISO 30301** (published in 2011 then 2019)- Specifies requirements for records management systems, including policy and performance monitoring.
 3. **ISO 30302** (published in 2015 then 2022) - Provides implementation guidance.



Discussion

Who

- RAM professionals, CAS scholars, and practitioners
- Leading efforts to embed systems thinking into RAM practices
- Aim: reposition RAM as irreducible minimum of institutional functions

Why

- MSS adoption is very high globally e.g., certificates issued in 2023
 - ISO 9001 - 837,978,
 - ISO 14001 - 300,410,
 - ISO 45001 - 185,166,
 - ISO/IEC 27001 - 47,291
- MSR adoption is very low
- Need to reverse this disparity
- Embed MSR into institutional functions → strategic relevance



Discussion - How

Use InterPARES models

- Business-Driven Recordkeeping (BDR) model
 - BDR-A1 Manage Business Framework
 - BDR-A2 Carry Out Business Activity
 - BDR-A3 Manage Records
- Chain of Preservation (COP) Model
 - COP-A1 Manage Framework for Chain of Preservation
 - COP-A2 Manage Records in a Record-making System
 - COP-A3 Manage Records in a Recordkeeping System
 - COP-A4 Manage Records in a Permanent Preservation System

Apply Systems Thinking

- STP 1 Investigating a complex system as a whole
- STP 2 Understanding the relationships within a system
- STP 3 Thinking in levels
- STP 4 Communicating information about a system
- STP 5 Defining systems and managing complexity



Discussion - How

BDR	1 Assess Context	2 Leadership Buy-in	3 Plan integration	4 Implement & Support	5 Evaluation
A1	STP 5 STP 1	STP 4 STP 5	STP 5 STP 3	Minimal	STP 1 STP 4
A2	STP 3	Minimal	STP 2 STP 5	STP 2 STP 1	STP 3 STP 1
A3	STP 3 STP 5	STP 4 STP 3	STP 2 STP 3	STP 1 STP 2	STP 1 STP 3 STP 4

COP	1 Assess Context	2 Leadership Buy-in	3 Plan integration	4 Implement & Support	5 Evaluation
A1	STP 5 STP 1 STP3	STP 4 STP 5	STP 5 STP 3 STP 2	Minimal	STP 1 STP 4 STP 3
A2	STP 3 STP 5	Minimal	STP 2 STP 3	STP 2 STP 1 STP 3	STP 1 STP 3
A3	STP 3	Minimal	STP 2	STP 1 STP 2 STP 3	STP 1 STP 3
A4	STP 5 STP 1	Minimal	STP 5 STP 1	STP 1 STP 2 STP 3	STP 1 STP 4 STP 3

Highlight gaps in MSR adoption

Embed other standards (metadata, preservation, digitization) into MSS approach

Leverage HLS + PDCA for structured implementation



Areas of Further Research

- Empirical case studies of MSR adoption
- Quantifiable metrics for RAM benefits
- Leadership engagement strategies
- Expanded computational modeling (BDR, COP)
- Cross-MSS synergies (quality, security, safety)



Conclusion

- RAM and MSR face persistent challenges of perception and adoption
- MSS thrive due to visibility and measurable outcomes
- CAS systems thinking offers pathway to reposition RAM
- Reframe narrative: compliance → enablement
- Demonstrate quantifiable benefits + secure leadership buy-in
- MSR can become integrative platform for resilience and long-term value

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